

Helsinki's participatory budgeting OmaStadi

Q & A

Q: I've never heard of participatory budgeting, what is it?

A. Participatory budgeting has been implemented in various forms for more than 30 years in more than 1,500 cities or municipalities worldwide. It means operating methods where residents decide on how to use public resources. The scale may be small or large, and the methods of participation may vary, but most often, the process consists of an idea phase, a development phase and a vote. The United Nations named participatory budgeting as one of the best new methods in public administration in 1996. In Helsinki, participatory budgeting has been previously used in the planning of Central Library Oodi, in youth services and in schools, for example.

Q: What is participatory budgeting in Helsinki all about?

A. Every year, Helsinki opens up 4.4 million euros of its budget for ideas to be created and decided on by the residents. In Helsinki, participatory budgeting is referred to as OmaStadi.

Anyone can suggest ideas, and the proposals are developed together into feasible plans. Anyone aged 12 or over and living in Helsinki can vote.

Money can be spent on investments, procurement and services.

The total budget is 4.4 million euros and it is divided between major districts in proportion to population. Twenty per cent of the sum is reserved for realising plans that benefit the entire City. In 2019, the money was divided as follows:

Western major district €613,210

Northern major district €241,860

North-Eastern major district €559,680

Eastern major district €639,650

South-Eastern major district €288,390

Southern major district €653,250

Central major district €519,590

All of Helsinki €880,000

This is how participatory budgeting advanced in Helsinki during the first round: Everyone had the chance to submit proposals on the OmaStadi.hel.fi platform. City divisions assessed the feasibility of the proposals in relation to the limiting factors set.

The proposals that met the limiting factors advanced to the joint development phase, where they were developed into plans in cooperation between the city's residents, employees, communities and companies. City divisions drafted cost estimates for the plans. The estimates observed all of the expenses generated by the realisation of each plan, such as planning costs related to construction sites. In October, the residents of Helsinki will vote on which plans will be realised.

All residents of Helsinki aged 12 or over are eligible to vote in the participatory budgeting process. You can vote both for plans for a major district and plans for the entire city. Voting takes place in the omastadi.hel.fi service.

Q: How can I participate?

A. In October 2019, the residents of Helsinki can vote on the plans created by participatory budgeting. Voting takes place in the omastadi.hel.fi service. All residents of Helsinki aged 12 or over are eligible to vote in the participatory budgeting process.

Residents had the chance to submit ideas concerning major districts as well as the entire City on the OmaStadi platform during the proposal phase preceding the vote. People could comment on and recommend proposals in the [OmaStadi.hel.fi](https://omastadi.hel.fi) service.

During the planning phase, residents could participate in joint development events that were organised in each major district and for the entire City. People could attend these events even if they hadn't submitted a proposal of their own.

After the vote, residents have the chance to participate in realising the plans, where applicable.

Q: Could the proposals be about anything? What are the limiting factors of participatory budgeting?

A. There are some limits to what you could propose. Or you could propose anything, but only proposals in compliance with the limiting factors could advance to the vote. The proposals and plans involved in participatory budgeting must meet the following criteria, as confirmed by the City Board:

- Proposals' execution costs must not exceed the appropriation of the major district.
- However, the costs must amount to EUR 35,000, at the minimum.
- Proposals cannot involve matters outside the City's authority (for example, private land areas or HSL).
- Proposals cannot be in conflict with the current zoning plan or decisions made by a competent municipal body.
- Proposals cannot be contrary to Finnish law.
- Proposals cannot be contrary to the City's values or strategy.
- Proposals cannot involve the recruitment of permanent staff or other permanent operations.

Q: How many proposals were submitted and how were they divided between districts?

A. We received nearly 1,300 proposals during the idea phase, and we found 839 that complied with the limiting factors for participatory budgeting. Out of these proposals, residents worked together with City experts to formulate nearly 300 more detailed plans to put to the vote. The

proposals submitted in the idea phase and the plans submitted for the vote based on them are divided between the districts as follows:

	Proposals	Plans put to the vote
Southern	155	42
Northern	78	18
Eastern	177	36
Western	167	45
Central	167	31
North-Eastern	151	33
South-Eastern	115	33
Entire Helsinki	263	66

Q: What were the proposals like?

The love that the residents of Helsinki have for functional urban areas, nature and exercise as well as the community was evident in the proposals submitted for participatory budgeting. The proposals and the plans drafted based on them were largely focused on the improvement of parks, exercise facilities and green areas and increasing their number while remaining environmentally friendly. Many proposals included ideas that improve functionality, comfort and safety, such as lighting, benches, signs, trees, vegetation and environmental art. The proposals also included services, events and spaces that facilitate meeting other people and doing things together, such as various local lounge areas and workshops where people can make things.

Q: I want to vote! What should I do?

A. With the implementation of OmaStadi, the City of Helsinki is the first in Finland to use electronic voting with strong authentication in decision-making on this scale. You can cast your vote in one of the following ways:

- 1) Residents can vote online by visiting omastadi.hel.fi and using their online banking ID or a mobile ID.
- 2) Comprehensive school pupils in grades 6–9 can vote at omastadi.hel.fi using their Wilma IDs.
- 3) If you do not have a Wilma or banking ID, you can vote at the Helsinki Info point in Oodi, the digital support points at Helsinki's resident centres, at voting events held for senior citizens at service centres as well as at borough liaison appointments at certain libraries using your picture ID. Minors may use their Kela card. More detailed information on voting times and places can be found under question "Can I vote if I do not have a bank or mobile ID?"

Q: Can I vote if I do not have a bank or mobile ID?

A. Yes, of course! During the voting period, you may cast your vote at the Helsinki Info point at Central Library Oodi from Monday to Thursday, 9:00–18:00 and Fridays 10:00–18:00. You can also

vote at Helsinki's Community Centres during opening hours from Monday to Friday. In addition to this, borough liaisons will be on call in selected libraries during the voting period on Wednesdays and Thursdays 15:00–18:00. Some active service centres will also be hosting their own voting events. Below you can find more detailed information on voting times and places.

Libraries

Wednesdays 15:00–18:00

Thursdays 15:00–18:00

Laajasalo library (Yliskylän puistokatu 4) Pasila library (Kellosilta 9)

Itäkeskus library (Turunlinnantie 1)

Töölö library (Topeliuksenkatu 6)

Kannelmäki library (Klaneettitie 5)

Maunula library (Metsäpurontie 4)

Etelä-Haaga library (Isonnevantie 16)

Vuosaari library (Mosaiikkitori 2)

Kallio library (Viides linja 11)

Malmi library (Ala-Malmin tori 1)

Service centres

Syystie service centre (Takaniitynkuja 3), Tue 8 October 10:00–14:00

Kontula service centre (Kontukuja 5), Wed 9 October 10:00–12:00

Kannelmäki service centre (Urkupillintie 4 C), Thu 10 October 10:00–14:00

Kamppi service centre (Salomonkatu 21 B), Fri 11 October 10:00–14:00

Community centres

Punavuori community centre Betania

Open Mon–Tue 9:00–16:00, Wed–Fri 8:00–14:00

Perämiehenkatu 13, 00150 Helsinki

Hanna Partnership House,

Open Mon–Fri 9:00–16:00

Sturenkatu 12, 00510 Helsinki

Kontula Local Centre

Open Mon 10:00–15:45 and Tue–Fri 9:00–15:45

Keinulaudankuja 4 C, 00940 Helsinki

Vuosaari Local Centre

Open Mon 12:00–16:00 and Tue–Fri 9:00–16:00

Mustalahdentie 10, 00960 Helsinki

Asukastalo Oulunkylän Seurahuone

Open Mon–Thu 9:00–15:30 and Fri 9:00–15:00

Larin Kyöstin tie 7, 00650 Helsinki

Saunabaari

Open Mon–Thu 9:00–16:00, Fri 9:00–14:00

Metsäpurontie 25, 00630 Helsinki

Malmi Activity Centre

Open Mon–Wed 9:00–15:00, Thu 10:00–15:00, Fri 9:00–15:00

Kirkonkyläntie 2, 00700 Helsinki

Pihlajamäki Local Centre

Open Mon 10:00–16:00 and Tue–Thu 9:00–16:00 and Fri 9:00–15:00

Liusketie 3 A, 00710 Helsinki

Central library Oodi, Helsinki Info point (Töölönlahdenkatu 4)

Mon–Thu 9:00–18:00, Fri 10:00–18:00 Note! The information point is closed on Thursday 10 October 2019 due to staff training.

Q: How can things cost so much when they are realised by the City? A pier costs 5,000 euros/m² and a public toilet costs 150,000 euros, for example.

A. The costs of municipal construction is often high because public spaces and facilities must be very durable and safe; public toilets, for example, are made of metal. Furthermore, the location and construction conditions also impact the price. The depth of the water in which the pier is built and the sturdiness of the pier both affect the price, for example. The prices also contain many different types of costs, such as preliminary surveys and research, overall planning, illustrations, electrical and HVAC planning documentation, any competitive bidding, project management and the cost of wages and similar statutory fees for the personnel involved in implementing the project. We have tried to explain some of these costs in the OmaStadi cost estimate breakdowns. Precise cost estimates are made for projects that will be carried out based on the vote.

Q: I need more information, who can I contact?

A. You can contact your borough liaison or the participatory budgeting development manager. If you would prefer to be served in Swedish, please contact Development Manager Kirsi Verkka or Borough Liaison Silja Lindblad.

Participatory Budgeting Development Manager:

Kirsi Verkka kirsi.verkka@hel.fi, 040 3362281

Borough Liaisons:

Southern major district: Jarkko Laaksonen, jarkko.laaksonen@hel.fi, 040 5893373

Northern major district: Ella Tanskanen, ella.tanskanen@hel.fi, 040 3585417

Western major district: Silja Lindblad, silja.lindblad@hel.fi, 040 6617216

Eastern major district: Belinda Barbato, belinda.barbato@hel.fi, 040 5406342

Central major district: Antti Sarpo, antti.sarpo@hel.fi, 041 5121734

North-Eastern major district: Outi Rissanen, outi.rissanen@hel.fi, 040 5969574

South-Eastern major district: Pauli Saloranta, pauli.saloranta@hel.fi, 040 6206406

Further information: omastadi.hel.fi