

**Lahti**



# **Lahti – City of Wellbeing and Growth 2030**

**Council Agreement 2025–2029**

Lahti City Council

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# Lahti – City of Wellbeing and Growth 2030

The next four years mark a new beginning for Lahti. We, the political groups of Lahti, have decided to make a big shift during this council term and, as a city, we will be taking a leap to the next level.

We have decided to be the architects of our own future. Our goal is to build a better city more courageously, more decisively and together. We are creating an operating culture in which solutions are made wisely and responsibly, promoting the inclusion of city residents.

In 2030, Lahti will be not only a pioneer, but an inspiring and interesting city. We are an environmental city that fosters sustainable growth, a university city of new times, and a city of children and young people who are thriving.

This agreement also serves to initiate strategy work and set out the City Council's will on what the political groups want to achieve during this term. In the Council Agreement, the political groups have agreed on the development of Lahti's political culture.

Lahti, 15 May 2025

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# 1. An environmental city that fosters sustainable growth

Lahti is one of the world's leading environmental cities fostering sustainable growth. We support biodiversity and are greening built areas. As the city grows, we are making use of ambitious development work and excellence in the environmental sector. Lahti provides an excellent operating environment for businesses and attractive conditions for those wishing to relocate here.

## **Lahti will be the first of Finland's major cities to achieve carbon neutrality**

- Lahti will achieve carbon neutrality during this council term.
- We will decide on an emissions reduction buffer to help us ensure carbon neutrality.
- We will reduce transport emissions by increasing the number of public transport users, promoting the preconditions for electric transport in the city, improving the preconditions for walking and cycling, and lowering the speed of road traffic. In developing the transport system and ensuring the accessibility of the city centre, we will take into account the needs of all modes of transport.
- We will strengthen carbon sinks, work with partners to promote carbon-neutral solutions and develop a local compensation model.

## **A thriving, nature-positive Lahti 2030**

- We will achieve our goal of 5% of Lahti being made up of nature reserves by protecting the City's own areas and complementing them with private protection.
- We will strengthen the importance of nature work as a means of strengthening vitality and better highlight the business benefits of environmental and nature work.
- We will make use of the construction engineering expertise at LUT University and offer pilot projects for sustainable construction. We will boldly create our own operating model for construction and investment projects that are as natural-friendly as possible.
- We will increase levels of nature tourism together with Lahti Region, businesses in Päijät-Häme and third sector operators. We will develop the service provision for Finnish and international tourists.

## **Renewing industry**

- By offering diverse plots of land and education, innovation and growth services, we will attract investments, businesses, and jobs to our city. We are looking in particular to bring investments, expertise and jobs related to the green transition to Lahti. We will work actively in regional cooperation to improve the offering of business plots.
- We will develop invest-in services to be the best in the country and our permit services to operate on a one-stop-shop principle.
- We will intensify our cooperation with Salpaus Further Education to improve the value of vocational education and training, raise the level of education and meet the needs of a renewing industry and labour market.
- We will actively conclude growth partnership agreements with new companies starting up and growing in the region.
- We will strengthen partnerships with companies already active in the region and promote the growth and employment potential of all companies in the region. We will support the operating and growth conditions of small companies in particular.
- In our city, we will build green transition growth clusters and research, development and innovation activities that attract international interest in collaboration with our higher education institutions and companies. We will take measures, for example, in the electric transport sector, the civil and construction engineering sector, the circular economy and the food sector.

## Attractive and safe city

- We will strengthen the realisation of sustainable everyday life in our city. We will make the 15-minute city concept a reality, with easy access to services via sustainable modes of transport.
- We will purposefully implement the city centre vision.
- We will see through the construction of a water sports centre. Together with our partners, we will implement the Kisapuisto sports park complex, which includes a football stadium. We will promote the design of the multi-purpose arena.
- We will actively promote hotel investments.
- We will draw up a regional services programme to develop a diverse, safe and attractive city; to ensure equal treatment and development of different neighbourhoods; and to prevent segregation.
- We will develop the built environment of the city by building an aesthetically sustainable and high-quality urban environment.
- We will ensure the safety of residents and a safe city for all through intentional cooperation between our various parties and sectors. We will develop ways to identify and access timely information about growing instances of disruptive behaviour, crime and feelings of insecurity. We will strengthen early intervention activities.
- We will host the FIS Nordic World Ski Championships 2029 in Lahti in a high-quality and ambitious fashion as well as in a socially, economically and environmentally sustainable way.





## 2. A university city of a new age

In 2030, Lahti will be a real challenger to traditional university cities – a courageous, agile and international player. We will develop pioneering civil and construction engineering expertise, a new centre of expertise in ICT, and an internationally influential business school.

In Lahti, higher education institutions LUT, LAB and the University of Helsinki realise genuine everyday cooperation with businesses. We aim to increase the number of students; research, development and innovation activities; and the number of companies, jobs, start-ups and companies relocating here. We are building a campus of this new age in Lahti. We will create the preconditions for a stronger student culture in Lahti, to attract students and researchers from Finland and abroad.



## **A boldly growing university city**

- We are aiming to significantly increase the number of university students in Lahti going forward. We will prepare a growth partnership programme with the LUT Universities Group. We will work and make decisions actively to ensure that LUT University expands its operations in a variety of ways and launches new education programmes in Lahti.
- Together with higher education institutions, we will train experts to meet the needs of companies in the region.
- In addition to LUT University, we will also promote the development and growth of other higher education operators.

## **An internationally attractive campus**

- We will design the most attractive campus for Finnish and international students and researchers in Lahti in cooperation with the LUT Universities Group and companies.
- We will select a location for the campus during this council term and will raise the funding for it.
- We will promote private sector investments and financing around university activities.

## **A university city working with companies**

- We will double regional research, development and innovation funding in the Lahti region.
- We will support cooperation between businesses and higher education institutions by promoting new operating models between higher education institutions, Lahti Region Development LADEC, the City and other stakeholders.
- We will build and fund Finland's best research and development environments and laboratories in Lahti together with higher education institutions, businesses and other stakeholders.
- We will actively support the growth and development of business clusters of companies and universities in the region (in, for example, the manufacturing industry, electric transport, the food industry, construction, circular economy, and sports and wellbeing).
- We will emphasise internationality as a starting point for the City's activities: In Lahti, companies will benefit from higher education cooperation and experts with a foreign language as their first language. We will make active use of international networks and export operators to support business growth.
- In Lahti, we will launch a new type of business accelerator that will pique international interest and attract investors and external growth financing to the region. We will also make bold investments to create new start-ups in the region and accelerate the growth of existing companies.

## **An attractive student city where people stay after their studies**

- We will take a curious and open-minded approach to building new models for students to find jobs, internships and thesis jobs in businesses in the region and the City. The City of Lahti will serve as an example in its work to realise these activities.
- We commit to increasing the number of student apartments available. We will build new student apartments and increase the number of student apartments among the existing Lahti housing stock.
- We will be an international university city and our higher education institutions will be actively internationalising. We will offer better multilingual and simple language services to foreign students and residents.
- We will ensure that diverse and high-quality City events and sports and cultural services are part of the everyday life of students and all Lahti residents in the city. We will also take care of the operating conditions of the third sector.



### 3. A city for thriving children and young people

The wellbeing of children and young people lays the foundation for the future of Lahti as a whole. Thriving children and young people grow up to be balanced adults who participate actively in society and contribute to its development. We will strengthen the wellbeing of children, young people, families and local communities by addressing the root causes of a lack of wellbeing, such as intergenerational disadvantages, low schooling levels and public health challenges. It is our objective to respond to the problems mentioned in the wellbeing report and the Hyte index and to create an environment where every child and young person feels important and valued. We will seek out various ways to improve the learning outcomes of children and young people.

## **High-quality early childhood education and care and support for families**

- We will increase the participation rate in early childhood education and care.
- We commit to ensuring that early childhood education and care is of high quality and accessible to all families. We will offer families support and resources that promote the wellbeing and development of children as well as the growth of the number of children. We will ensure support for learning from the early childhood education and care stage.
- We will ensure accessible early childhood education and care with sufficient City-owned early childhood education and care places and a private early childhood education and care service voucher system to complement it.

## **An equal and safe school environment**

- We will ensure an equal and safe school environment for all pupils. Class sizes will be reduced, at least in preschool education and in the first and second grades of primary school, so that each child receives the attention and support they need. Ways to enable smaller class sizes throughout a child's school career will be explored.

## **Multidisciplinary youth work**

- We will take the lead in multidisciplinary cooperation in youth work. Youth facilities will provide a safe and inspiring environment for young people, and outreach youth work will reach those in need of special support.
- We will work closely with various operators to provide the best possible support and services for children and young people. We will recognise in particular the important role played by the third sector in youth work and ensure the operating conditions of youth organisations. Close and effective cooperation with the wellbeing services county is essential to improve the wellbeing of children and young people in Lahti.

## **Promoting wellbeing**

- We will reduce bullying and the lack of wellbeing among children and young people. We will identify at an early stage children and young people who are not thriving. We will provide them and their families with the necessary support measures. We will combat segregation by supporting children and young people with a foreign background and their families in particular.
- We will make determined efforts to reduce segregation in early childhood education and care and primary and lower secondary education.
- We will strive to boost the mental wellbeing of children and young people by providing them with support and resources to help them cope with stress and other challenges. We will actively promote access to mental health services, especially in connection with educational institutions.
- We will reduce the use of intoxicants by children and young people by supporting healthy examples and offering meaningful alternatives.
- We will promote healthy lifestyles, such as physical exercise and healthy nutrition, so that children and young people can grow and develop in the best possible way. We will promote a physically active lifestyle for all Lahti residents across different service areas. We will develop Lahti into an ideal city for everyday exercise and local exercise locations, and develop hiking routes and marked trails.
- We will develop a hobby guarantee model that ensures every child and young person can have a hobby they enjoy.
- We will strengthen the sense of involvement of children and young people by enabling them to participate in and influence decisions and activities concerning them.





## **4. Implementation of the Council Agreement**



## Finances

The economic sustainability of the City of Lahti means balanced economic growth without an increase in the debt ratio. This requires a sustainable economic baseline, loan ceiling and tax policy. We will also have courses of action prepared in the event of unforeseen economic emergencies.

Lahti will purposefully seek growth through the measures outlined above in this agreement. We are willing to find solutions to bottlenecks in growth and are actively looking for new opportunities to develop the city. We will focus in particular on the spearheads of expertise, growth companies and the development of start-ups. We will build a growth partnership with the LUT Universities Group and driver companies, and we will implement pilots and demos with them.

## Sustainable economic baseline

Controlling the growth of expenditure lays the foundations for sustainable finances. We will improve the quality and effectiveness of the City's service production while ensuring cost development remains moderate. We will strengthen the City's procurement expertise and promote local business and employment through public procurement whenever possible.

We aim to increase the yield from the City's assets. We commit to developing Lahti Energia and Lahti Aqua under the ownership of Lahti residents.

Where possible, investment financing solutions should be selected without significantly increasing borrowing. We are looking for partnerships to implement and finance investments and new solutions to mitigate the risks to the City. In particular, investments are aimed at increasing productivity, increasing yield, ensuring returns on assets or slowing down expenditure growth. We are investigating the possibility of testing a performance-based financing agreement (SIB) in one of the services provided by the City.

With regard to the City of Lahti's operational economy, we commit to ensuring that the costs incurred by the City's operations (operating expenses) do not increase more than the fees charged for services (operating income), tax revenue and central government transfers to municipalities in total. It is our objective that tax revenue, income from fees and central government transfers cover operating costs. This means that the operating margin of the City must not fall by any more than the overall tax financing increases. In financial planning, we will take into account that, in the medium term at the latest, the City's annual margin must cover the planned depreciation.

We will strengthen the tax base through employment and growth measures. In order to balance finances, we will review tax rate levels at the beginning of the planning period. The growth of the operating margin will be curbed primarily by a steady growth in operating income and increasing the profitability of service production and, as a last resort, by adapting the level of quality where necessary.

We will manage finances by prioritising preventive measures, taking into account welfare investments and impact assessments of decisions. We will phase out separate economic stabilisation programmes. We aim to reduce the number of person-years of the City's own personnel, especially between 2027 and 2029, making use of staff leaving.

## Loan and investment ceiling

We will strive to ensure that the loan portfolio of Lahti City Organisation does not increase significantly per inhabitant by the end of 2029. The loan ceiling may be raised by mutual agreement for a very well-founded reason, however, the investment needs of the 2030s must be taken into account.

During the council term, we will aim for a maximum investment ceiling of approximately EUR 60 million per year for the City of Lahti's investments. If there is a justified reason to deviate from the investment ceiling, the investment must generate long-term economic benefits and its implementation and financing must also include external financing.

## Procedure for unexpected exceptional negative and positive situations

If, during the contract period, the annual margin in accordance with the budget projection becomes negative or the accumulated balance sheet surpluses decrease significantly, we will implement separate adjustment measures.

If an unexpected and exceptional positive change occurs in the City's finances, which will result in a significant surplus, we will direct the use of funds towards measures that will improve the sustainability of the City's finances and the long-term return on assets. Alternative plans shall be subject to impact assessments, on the basis of which decisions on their implementation can be made. Our choices must ensure opportunities for growth in the city and related economic sustainability.

## Employment

We aim to reduce the unemployment rate to close to the national average. We will strive for individualised and effective employment services, improvements in integration and the promotion of employment opportunities for young people and residents who speak a foreign language as their first language. If the City of Lahti is accepted as a pilot area for the employment management deregulation trial being prepared by the Government, the City will have a good opportunity to renew the provision of services by cutting the administrative burden.

We will actively reform employment services and implement targeted and impact-based procurements in close cooperation with educational institutions, third sector operators and private service providers. We will focus on services effectively from the perspective of financial responsibility for the City's unemployment benefits. We will cooperate closely with the Wellbeing Services County of Päijät-Häme and require their commitment to employment management, in particular to ensure the rapid assessment of the ability to work of unemployed jobseekers. Lahti will develop the functionality and effectiveness of the intermediate labour market by creating new, innovative solutions to help those with most difficulty finding employment.

## Investments

During the council term, we will build a water sports centre. Together with our partners, we will implement the Kisapuisto Sports Park complex, which included a football stadium. The planning of Kisapuisto is proceeding in the first stage, through statutory land use planning. We will promote the planning and implementation of the multi-purpose arena in the longer term.

The City Board will set up a special committee to steer the preparation of the regional service programme and draft a proposal on it during 2026 at the latest. The regional service programme will be taken into account in the planning of the City's investment programme and the service network of various service areas at the latest starting in 2027.

## Lobbying

We will work actively on lobbying with the Regional Council of Päijät-Häme and the municipalities in the region, on both national and international matters. Our key lobbying targets are the promotion of the Lento-Airport Line railway project, central government transfers to municipalities, financing and educational responsibilities of the LUT Universities Group, the MAL (land use, housing and transport) agreement, the investment in Valtatie 12 at an overall level, a national winter sports centre and the funding of spearheads of expertise.

## Change in political culture

With the change in Lahti's political culture, we aim to improve cooperation, efficiency and equality, as well as to increase the quality of decision-making and mutual trust. We will strengthen political trust by committing to the careful, correct and appropriate handling of non-public, secret and confidential information obtained in decision-making.

We will improve the participation of city inhabitants, strengthen different ways of influencing the City's operations and improve the realisation of representative democracy. We want to increase voting levels and people's interest in local politics.

We are committed to developing a culture of political cooperation and negotiation in which the views of all parties are taken into account and decision-making is based on open and constructive dialogue. We will strengthen the work of the committee of the chairs of the council groups by appointing as its chair the person who is the chair of the largest council group.

We commit to using the time we are together at various events efficiently and appropriately so that decision-making is smooth and productive. In the preparation of decisions and decision-making itself, we will require prior impact assessments and knowledge-based leadership.

We will ensure good coordination between the City Council, the City Board and the committees in order to ensure a coherent and consistent flow of information and decision-making. This will improve the quality of decision-making and ensure that all bodies act in accordance with common objectives.

We commit to assessing the functioning of the elected official organisation at the mid-point of the council term, so that we can make the necessary improvements and ensure effective decision-making.

We will strengthen a political culture in which everyone can express their opinions without fear of discrimination, harassment or inappropriate behaviour. We will act with dignity and respect toward one another in all that we do. All members of the Council will treat each other equally and fairly.

The political groups commit to defending democratic principles and human rights and not to publishing and disseminating views inciting racism or other prejudices. We encourage decision-makers to engage in constructive and appropriate political debates in which the presentation of different and also critical points of view is appreciated and everyone's legitimate freedom of expression is respected.

Lahti's decision-makers will intervene in any inappropriate behaviour. The political groups commit to the common principles for dealing with situations of harassment and inappropriate behaviour.

**Lahti**