

The Revitalization of Vilnius Old Town, 1995 - 2005

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1. Vilnius Old Town Development

Over a decade has passed since the Old Town of Vilnius was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1994. During this period, the renewal of the Old Town has been a primary focus of funds and technical assistance from the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, the Vilnius Municipality, UNESCO, UNDP, and other international and local partners.

Vilnius first appeared on the cultural map of Europe in 1323 during the reign of Grand Duke Gediminas, when he wrote letters to Pope John XXII and to western European cities (Magdeburg, Bremen, Koln, and others) inviting merchants, craftsmen, and priests to settle in the city. Germans came at the beginning of the 14th century and settled near the town hall. The Jewish community took refuge here after escaping from the plague that was raging in Germany. When disagreements started at the time of the Golden Horde, at the end of 14th century, some Tartars made their home here and started to take care of the defense of the town. In 1387 Lithuania finally accepted Christianity, and Vilnius was granted the Magdeburg Rights.

In the 15th - 18th centuries Vilnius was the capital of the Great Duchy of Lithuania — the largest country in Europe at that time. The city was open to all nations and religions and has made a great impact on the cultural development of the region (which comprises Belarus, the Ukraine, Lithuania, and Poland). The first books in Latvian and old Slavonic languages were printed in Vilnius. Vilnius became an important center of Jewish culture. Vilnius University was founded in 1579. Three Lithuanian statutes (codes of laws) were prepared in the 16th century, and they made a great impact on the development of the legal systems in neighboring countries.

Major European styles of architecture can be found in Vilnius. Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, Classicism, Eclectic, Secessionist, and Constructivist architecture arose. Wars and frequent fires separated one stylistic period from another, with the architecture of earlier periods suffering the most on each occasion, particularly Romanesque structures, none of which have survived. In present day Vilnius, Baroque and Neoclassical buildings outnumber Gothic and Renaissance monuments.

“Despite wars, occupations and destruction, the architectural ensemble of Vilnius remains unique. A city lacking German or Scandinavian features, rather reminiscent of Prague or Rome, Vilnius differs greatly from the other Baltic capitals. It is the largest Baroque city north of the Alps, and the one farthest to the east. Yet, nearly all styles of European architecture from Gothic to Classicism are present in Vilnius. They used to reach Lithuania belatedly, but probably due to this reason their examples are particularly mature and flawless. Baroque domes and towers of Vilnius coexist with an irregular medieval city plan. The spirit of Rome in Vilnius merges with a mix of other cultural influences: the city has always contained a multitude of Russian Orthodox churches, synagogues and even mosques that sometimes imitated Baroque, but more often clung to their own models.”¹

2. Changes in Property Status After 1990

During the Second World War, the urban structure of the Old Town suffered some important losses. Entire blocks were burned down, especially in the area of the Jewish ghetto. After the war, some of the buildings underwent repairs, while others, in worse condition, were pulled down. During the period of the Soviet occupation (1944 - 1990), the conservation of cultural heritage was recognized as a necessary condition for the preservation of Lithuanian cultural identity. Three revitalization projects for the historic center were prepared during that period (1956-58, 1969-74, and 1988-92). The restoration of significant architectural monuments and complexes revealed many faded or damaged historical elements. In addition, parts of valuable buildings (churches, palaces, etc.) were not being used for their original purposes; this reduced their authenticity but the buildings survived physically. In the Soviet period, however, the government did not allocate enough resources for the maintenance and repairs of housing.

Therefore, in 1990—the time of the restoration of independence of the Lithuanian state—many structures were very dilapidated. Large ensembles of monasteries and churches were returned to the Roman Catholic Church and other religious communities, but the Church was not able to finance the restoration of all its properties. There were also municipal buildings that were leased according to the contracts to private companies, but some of those companies were also financially unprepared to undertake restoration. The normal annual municipal budget did not allow for the complex restoration of buildings. There were also private flats and buildings returned to their former owners; but only a minority of new owners could afford the costs of restoration.

Fifty years of totalitarian regime had in any case changed the popular attitude toward the maintenance of houses and other immovable property. In Soviet times all property was state owned, and people were therefore unused to taking responsibility for the proper repair of buildings, even if they were valuable heritage objects.

After the privatization of flats the situation did not change at once. It was expected that after privatization owners would establish home owners' associations. However, the process of their establishment was very slow due to ineffective legal regulations, a lack of supportive incentives, and the voluntary nature of such associations.

3. Heritage Management System

After independence was re-established in Lithuania in 1990, the legal base and system of heritage management underwent considerable changes, especially with the adoption of the Law on Protection of Immovable Cultural Heritage (1994) and the Law on Protection of Movable Cultural Heritage (1996). The updated Law on Protection of Immovable Cultural Heritage entered in force in April of 2005.

The Minister of Culture approved the Vilnius Old Town Preservation Regulations in 2003. The Regulations provide a historic survey of the city center's evolution, define territorial conservation and maintenance regimes, and describe the valuable protected properties. Vilnius municipality continues the preparation of Vilnius Old Town Detailed Plan.

The State Cultural Heritage Commission, accountable to the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania, formulates state preservation policy and manages its implementation. The Cultural Heritage Department at the Ministry of Culture, on the other hand, is responsible for the protection of cultural properties in Lithuania. The functions of the department include: managing operations involving accident prevention, repair, adaptation, research, conservation, and restoration; establishing protection zones; and preparing and managing the Register of Immovable Cultural Property. Additional tasks include: issuing licenses to conservation experts; assembling, systematizing, and disseminating information concerning cultural property and methods of its protection; organizing state records and scientific research; and promoting public awareness.

The municipal government also has its own conservation heritage services. However, in accordance with the Local Government Law, municipal institutions take care of cultural heritage objects (undertaking inventory, listing, repairs, etc.) only where they are municipal property. Otherwise municipalities are not legally entitled or required to maintain private cultural heritage objects located in their territories.

Nevertheless, cooperation between the municipal and private sector is very much endorsed at the municipal level, so there are examples where local government and private owners share the costs of conservation through public-private partnership contracts. The degree of autonomy of community conservation heritage services—when compared to the decision-making power of governmental authorities—is rather small. The legal interaction between the government and municipal structures is not clearly defined, and this is especially true regarding the protection and management of cultural heritage objects.

“One of my main concerns is the fact that at the moment there are a number of different agencies and authorities responsible for the protection of heritage. There is not a well-defined legal responsibility. There are conflicting national and municipal regulations.”^[10]

4. World Heritage Nomination

The Republic of Lithuania nominated the Vilnius Historic Center to the World Heritage List in 1993 and the UNESCO World Heritage Committee inscribed it in December 1994. The nomination was supported by criterion (ii), as Vilnius had a considerable influence on developments in architecture, town planning, and art within the cultural area (including Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, and Poland) from the 13th to 18th centuries. The nomination was further buoyed by criterion (iv) as the Old Town is an outstanding example of a network of medieval streets with an architectural ensemble of Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, and Neoclassical monuments. The final World Heritage site occupies 359 hectares (887 acres).

5. The Vilnius Old Town Revitalization Strategy

The World Heritage nomination drew attention to the need to protect the urban structure and to conserve and restore significant architectural monuments. Dynamic changes in the economy and social structure required the introduction of new management methods for the Old Town revitalization. *A Revitalisation Strategy for Vilnius Old Town* was prepared in 1995-1996 at the request of the prime minister and the mayor of Vilnius, with the support of the World Bank, the UNESCO World Heritage Center, and the government of Denmark. A joint Lithuanian-Danish-Scottish team developed the *Strategy*, and it was approved by the Vilnius City Council in late 1996 and the government of the Republic of Lithuania in early 1997.

This was the first document on the area's revitalization to cover not only architectural-urban landscape conservation but also other aspects of city life, including economic, political, and social ones.

The document was unique also in that it was based on international experience. It first assessed the condition of the Old Town and then set the key management principles and methods of maintenance and financing that could ensure success of the revitalization process.

"The work developing the strategy included thorough analysis of preconditions, including property ownership structure and resulting problems, heritage protection and management, system of approvals and permits and public and private investment practices in the Old Town. Extensive public consultations and opinion surveys were carried out, including issues such as Visions of Old Town, Living and Working in the Old Town, Problems of the Service Infrastructure, Streets and Squares, Traffic and Parking, Parks and Green Spaces. The strategy itself suggested long term principles, strategic goals, desired short term results and set out preconditions and instruments to attain them. It comprised a wide thematic scope beyond heritage protection including governance and offered an approach integrating multiple concerns and goals of different fields into a single document. Most importantly, it recommended integrating preservation and development concerns and seeking cohesive action of the authorities, community and private enterprise. During elaboration of the Strategy, survey of European and USA experience of institutional solutions for revitalizing inner city areas has been carried out by the project team. Building on the conclusions of this survey, the Strategy proposed to introduce a single institution – Old Town Revitalization Agency (OTRA) – with a broad mandate and multidisciplinary set of skills to coordinate production and implementation of an annual action plan including activities of the state and municipal authorities and the private sector."^[1]

6. The Role of the Vilnius Old Town Renewal Agency (OTRA)

The Vilnius Old Town Renewal Agency (OTRA) was established in 1998 as the main instrument for the implementation of the revitalization strategy. The agency operated under the control of the municipality and the Supervision Council, the joint-chairmen of the Council being the mayor of the city and the minister of culture. The Steering Council consisted of 19 national and local organizations that were related with the revitalization of the Old Town. The Council's role was coordination of efforts of various stakeholders acting in the Old Town.

The Vilnius Old Town Renewal Agency's tasks included: the development and implementation of the annual Vilnius Old Town Revitalization Program, the involvement of the local community and business sector in the revitalization process, the promotion of public-private partnerships (PPP), and international co-operation with conservation

institutions and with other heritage cities. The Vilnius Old Town Renewal Agency was to become the bridge between the government and the local community.

Working groups for the implementation of different projects were created—for example, the group for the implementation of the annual Old Town Revitalization Program and the group for the Ethnographic and Fine Crafts Program. Working group members came from various institutions and represented different interests. They tried to find consensus and common decisions.

Vilnius Old Town Revitalization Strategy identified three main priorities. First, historic buildings and the urban pattern that give Vilnius its character should be protected and restored. Second, the traditional mix of functions in the area—residential, commercial, and public space—must be maintained. The final main priority enumerated in the Revitalization Strategy was to promote public-private partnerships to revitalize the Old Town.^[iv]

The Vilnius Old Town Renewal Agency also defined additional priorities:

- To raise public awareness of heritage conservation;
- To revitalize traditional arts and crafts in the Old Town;
- To emphasize the conservation and restoration of *authentic* elements.

The Vilnius Old Town Revitalization Program included the physical renewal of buildings, streets, and public areas. It also undertook community development, involving residents and the business sector in the renewal process and raising conservation awareness within the community with lectures, seminars, exhibitions, and publications. Co-ordination of private and public funds additionally fell to the Program, as did information collection and data evaluation. International co-operation was a part of the Program, including participation in EU projects, cooperation with international organizations, exchange of experience with other World Heritage Cities, and international promotion of Vilnius Old Town.

7. Implementation of Vilnius Old Town Revitalization Program

The first Vilnius Old Town Revitalization Program was prepared and implemented in 1998. Since then, eight years of annual programs have implemented many significant renewal and restoration projects in Vilnius Old Town. The public funds allocated to the renewal of the Old Town have totaled about 28 million EUR. From 1998 to 2002, the Program was financed from state and municipal budgets (15.6 million EUR from the state and 5.4 million EUR from the Vilnius city council). Since 2003, the Program has been financed primarily by the municipal budget, with a small part coming from private funds (6.8 million EUR from the Vilnius city council during 2003-2005). Private co-financing during 2000-2005 totaled .6 million EUR. Public funding matched private investment with approximately the same amount, .6 million EUR.

The Program budget has served a number of purposes. It has paid for investigation and design works as well as renewal of facades and roofs of Old Town buildings. Improvements have been made to infrastructure and public areas, including streets, squares, parks, courtyards, and street lighting. Restoration of authentic heritage details of buildings was made possible, as was the installation of decorative lighting for important architectural monuments.

“That the strategy was approved by the city council and adopted by the Government helped mobilize massive funding from the State. The Government of Lithuania demonstrated a firm commitment to supporting the Strategy by giving a special 15 mil. Litas grant to Vilnius Municipality for face-lifting the Old Town in 1998. Strong message was given to the community and investors as many facades were repaired and repainted and street pavement renewed or re-established in historical character. This started the tradition of Vilnius Old Town Renewal Program that has continued ever since, while the special subsidy from the Government after 5 years was replaced by increasing municipal funding.”^[v]

Table 7.1 Financing of the Vilnius Old Town Revitalization Program

Financial sources	Annual financing in million EUR								Total mil. EUR
	'98	'99	'00	'01	'02	'03	'04	'05	
Special state subsidies	4.3	4.3	5.8	0.6	0.6	-	-		15.6
Municipal budget	1.7	1.9	0.3	0.6	0.9	1.2	2.0	3.6	12.2
Private co-financing			0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.6
TOTAL in mil. EUR	6.0	6.2	6.2	1.3	1.6	1.3	2.1	3.7	28.4

From 1998 to 2005 the Program helped refurbish approximately 300 public and residential buildings (including facades and roofs). In the same period, the Program helped renovate approximately 30 streets with new cover, pavement, and lighting. Decorative lighting was installed for 12 architectural monuments, such as churches, towers, and bridges. The Program's funds further worked to conserve 10 valuable heritage objects, including murals running down street facades, the Vilnius defensive wall and gates, and St. Catherine's Church. Improvements were also made to public areas, up grading 10 yards, three squares, sightseeing sites, pedestrian paths, and some cemeteries.

The story of St. Catherine's Church serves as a good example of the efficacy of the Program. The valuable Baroque church remained unused—and neglected as a result—during the Soviet period, but conservation research in 1976 led to the preparation of a restoration project 1987. Between 1988 and 1996, public funds supported some restoration of the church, because the building was registered as a state-level cultural monument. The owner of the church, the Vilnius Archdiocese, agreed to have the church adapted for public use as a concert hall. Unfortunately, due to financial constraints, restoration efforts stalled through 2003. After the work resumed in 2004, the Church was finally completed through the budget of the Revitalization Program, and the Concert Hall opened here in 2006.

Projects in the Old Town had high standards of workmanship. Special plaster was used for plinths to prevent moisture penetration into buildings, while hydro-isolation of foundations was carried out at the same time. New sewers were installed under streets and pavements, and cables were hidden within facades. These may seem like quite normal technical decisions, but these methods were not always used prior to Program implementation, and they were especially uncommon in private repair works in the Old Town.

Since 1998 the Vilnius Old Town Renewal Agency has been seeking to add private funds to the Old Town Revitalization Program's operating budget. However, no appropriate legal mechanism for this existed in 1998-1999. In 1999-2000, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) offered financial support for a community development project in Lithuania. The aim of the funding was to involve Old Town residents in the maintenance of Old Town buildings and surrounding areas, and to encourage the establishment of homeowners' associations for residential buildings.

At public meetings, specialists introduced the Old Town Revitalization Program to residents, addressing issues of renovation and maintenance, energy conservation and heating, and opportunities for long-term subsidized loans.

Special attention was paid to the promotion of homeowners' associations. It was important to establish homeowners' associations for individual buildings because of the common property: the roof, walls, staircases, and common engineering infrastructure. Without a homeowners' association, individual owners usually only tended to their private flat, and no agency or person took responsibility for the management of the larger house. This problem did not exist in Soviet times, when all properties were state owned, and there were state/municipal agencies responsible for the management.

The information campaign for homeowners' associations had good results. There were only 14 homeowners' associations in the Old Town in 1998, but by 2005, there were 96. An added benefit of the establishment of the associations was that negotiations over owner participation in the revitalization process became easier. Speaking with one designated chairman of a homeowners' association took less time and made it easier to find common ground.

Evaluation criteria approved by Vilnius City Board in 2001 was used to compose the list of Vilnius Old Town properties to be renovated. These criteria encompass: the heritage-conservation characteristics of the property, the property's function, the financial support relative to the applicant's investment, the applicant's efforts to maintain the property and protect its cultural value, the physical condition of the property, and the ownership status of the property.

Criteria act as a precondition and a guarantee for the development of mutual trust and cooperation among the municipality, the Vilnius Old Town Renewal Agency (OTRA), and the Old Town community. The main goal of the criteria is to create the right conditions for the maintenance and renewal of the Old Town, preserving its cultural value with transparency in the use of state and private funds.

In the interest of transparency, discussions at the Working Group of the Old Town Renewal Program involve the applicants for funds. The Supervisory Council and competent investment experts may also be called upon for additional reviews. Final decisions of the Vilnius City Board are made publicly.

Principles regarding the amount of state funding lend consistency to the process as well. Up to 50% of the renewal costs for roof-renovation, street facades, and building surroundings, and up to 40% of the renewal costs for yard facades and landscaping can be covered by state funds.

After the foregoing rules were approved, intensive negotiations with homeowners' associations and representatives of groups of owners began. The objective was to make agreements regarding the joint financing of building renewal work. Not all groups managed to come to an agreement, for many complained of poor personal financial situations. Ultimately, 65 objects (facades, roofs, balconies, and private yards) were refurbished through public-private partnership (PPP) contracts during 2000-2005.

Table 7.2 Number of PPP projects per year in 2000-2005

Renewed parts of building:	Number per year						Total number
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	
Roofs	2	2	4	1	7	4	20
Facades	6	5	6	3	3	2	25
Yards	2	4	1	0	1	0	8
Balconies	0	0	4	3	5	0	12
Total number of PPP projects	10	11	15	7	16	6	65

8. Conservation and Restoration of Authentic Heritage Objects

Some conservation specialists have criticized certain aspects of the recent renewal works. For example, historic buildings tend to acquire an aged patina. On constructional surfaces, this patina gives a feeling of authenticity; it leaves the imprint of time on historic craftsmanship. These critics believe that an old building should preserve aged curved walls with soft edges and rough brush strokes on painted lime surfaces.

Unfortunately, restoration often results in walls and vaults with a very thick and plain layer of new plaster, with edges that are sharp. They are, moreover, coated with synthetic paints. Traditionally, lime mortar was the main material for binding stones and bricks in Lithuania, while lime was also used for artificial decorative and protective finishing layers. It always corresponded to the requirements of material compatibility and reversibility. Unfortunately, cement mortars and synthetic paints were used in the restoration of buildings from 1970 to 1980 and sometimes even now, although conservation specialists in other countries refuse to use these modern materials in the restoration of buildings.

A sub-program for the conservation and restoration of the authentic heritage of "Lost Vilnius" identified and, in individual cases, reconstructed structures most significant to the city history. Identification allowed for restoration of authentic fragments and their adaptation to modern public needs. Such public works served to encourage self-awareness of the historical community context and promotes cultural tourism.

Under the sub-program, a qualitative new phase in the implementation of the Old Town Revitalization Program started in 2002. The new phase included polychromic research, preservation, and restoration of a number of wall painting fragments on Old Town buildings. In 2002 specifically, wall painting fragments that were found and restored included the southern facade of the Gate of Dawn and the facades of the Sacred Cross Church, as well as its alumni buildings.

Several Vilnius Old Town quarters destroyed during and after World War II, including the Greater Synagogue (formerly known as the Jewish Ghetto), were chosen for reconstruction based on the quality of the surviving iconographic material. The Restoration Program of Historical Jewish Ghetto Fragments of Vilnius was prepared and approved. It plans for some space in the reconstructed buildings to be allocated to the Lithuanian Jewish Cultural Heritage Support Fund, which aims to revitalize the Jewish cultural heritage and traditions in Vilnius.

The largest project financed by the Government is the reconstruction of the Great Dukes' Palace (or Lower Palace) in the heart of the Old Town; however, another important group of authentic heritage buildings better illustrates the preservation process. Approximately 2,000 wooden buildings in Vilnius were examined. The project defined protected areas, groups of wooden buildings, and single unique buildings. *The Strategy for the Protection of Wooden Architecture Heritage* was prepared in the municipality. Pilot projects started in 2005 and were financed through the Old Town Revitalization Program. Several wooden buildings in the Old Town and in Naujamiestis (New Town) were repaired following technical protection standards, and measures were taken for the restoration of decorative elements of the building facades. Future plans include the continued restoration of wooden buildings in the historic suburbs of Zverynas and Antakalnis, according to the Program in 2006. The inhabitants of these valuable protected buildings do not have, for the most part, the resources to restore their deteriorating houses. Rather, extensive outside investment is needed to preserve these buildings.

9. Community Development

The Old Town supports a population of 20,400 residents according to the 2001 census. In 1996, though, there were 30,000 residents, so the population decreased by 32%. This development is attributable to the gentrification process.

Vilnius Old Town is the most expensive area in all of Lithuania. The Old Town became increasingly popular with both foreigners and locals who could afford the extremely high property prices. In 1998, prices of apartments in the Old Town varied from EUR 350 to EUR 1,000, depending on the location and the physical status of the property, but the property prices increased dramatically over the last 10 years.

"New apartments located in the city centre and in the Old Town cost between EUR 1,100 and 2,300 per square meter. Prices outside the city centre range between EUR 600 and 870 per square meter."^[vi]

"Wealthy Lithuanians generally prefer spacious suburban villas, but Old Town apartments can offer historic charm and modern conveniences at a range of prices. For example, the building at Subaciaus Street 15, in the heart of the

Old Town, is not completed but its apartments have already sold out for as much as €2,000 per square meter. On Gedimino Avenue, the city's most popular shopping street, the Grand Duke Palace is being converted into 51 apartments, with prices as high as €2,400 a square meter. It is expected to be completed by the end of the year.^{lviii}

Traditional residents sold their flats to newly affluent buyers, including young urban professionals, businessmen, and foreigners. "Many sites purchased through privatization or assembled post-privatization from several owners to whole building and converted into hotels, offices, or improved apartments, with the ground floor usually occupied by catering or retail. Number of residents is said to keep falling and it may even more radically alter the character of the place."^{lviii}

New groups of inhabitants coming to the Old Town have sought to adapt the environment to their purposes, sometimes to the detriment of the existing historic urban context. Few of the social groups residing in or basing their businesses in the Old Town have sufficient knowledge of the history, culture, and heritage value of the area, and fewer have the functional knowledge of conservation methodology. The need for education in the management of immovable cultural properties has increased significantly, then, with the growth of renewal work in Vilnius Old Town, and with the potential for more active resident and investor participation.

Since raising awareness within the Old Town community is one of the most important goals of the Vilnius Old Town Renewal Agency, in 2000 the Agency set up the Old Town Information Center. As part of the Old Town Revitalization Program, community education is a priority activity being developed by the Information Center. The Center began implementing integrated heritage management training programs designed for citizens, students, investors, and other public stakeholders. The training programs encourage awareness of Vilnius Old Town values and explain preservation options.

In 2003 the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) funded a large-scale program in Lithuania known as Heritage Conservation in Supporting Community Development. The program focused on community development, with meetings, a seminar, youth programs, training, and publications. Specialists from the Lithuanian Monuments Restoration Institute have presented seminars for property owners and contractors on specific issues of heritage building renewal and renovation. Conservators, for example, explained the value of traditional materials and technologies as well as the usefulness of new techniques.

The Vilnius Old Town Renewal Agency's intermediary role between private investors and the Old Town residents and homeowners is a different function from other municipal divisions. As a result, the Agency has a variety of activities. It disseminates useful practical information with publications like "How to take part in the Vilnius Old Town Revitalization Program" and "Investors Guidelines." Constant work on raising awareness also necessitates lectures, meetings, and additional publications (like "Conservation Guidelines" and "9 Main Rules for the Maintenance of Historic Buildings").

Joining private and public funds through cooperation with the Old Town community is thus little by little resulting in increased awareness, increased community participation, and improvements in living conditions. The expectation is that this will gradually increase the quantity of conservation projects in the Old Town and also improve their quality. Cultural heritage should be a recognized and valuable object of community interest, and it can be an indicator of the quality of life in the urban environment.

Table 9.1 Publications issued by Vilnius Old Town Renewal Agency

Title of publication	Year	Supported by
Vilnius – World Heritage Site	1999	UNESCO
How to take part in the Vilnius Old Town Revitalisation Programme (I)	2000	UNDP
Vilnius Old Town Revitalisation Strategy Implementation: Co-operation, Results, Vision	2000	Municipality
How to take part in the Vilnius Old Town Revitalisation Programme. Preservation of Heritage Values (II)	2001	UNDP
Investors' Guidelines	2001	UNESCO
Conservation Guidelines	2002	UNESCO
9 Main Rules for the Maintenance of Historic Buildings	2002	Municipality
Vilnius Old Town Revitalisation 1998 - 2003	2003	Municipality
The Defensive Wall of Vilnius	2003	Municipality
Preservation of Authentic Elements of Built Fabric of Vilnius Old Town: Entrance Gates, Doors and Windows	2004	UNDP
Program of Study Tours for Youth	2004	UNDP
Ethnographic and Fine Crafts and Fairs Programme	2005	Municipality
Revitalisation of the Organ at the Holy Spirit Church in Vilnius	2006	Sponsors

“NGOs and Home owners associations from the Old Town as well as other city living districts such as Pilaite, Uzupis, Zverynas take an active role in discussing Vilnius Old Town Preservation and Planning documents, debating and criticizing private investors and/or Vilnius municipality regarding the approved, but to their opinion incorrect aspects of new construction/ development within or close the Old Town area. Representatives of these associations regularly write articles and take an active part in public media activities [sic].”^[ix]

In June 2004 the State Cultural Heritage Commission founded the Vilnius Old Town Senate. The functions of the new commission were to discuss any projects, actions, or emergent trends that could have an impact on the World Heritage site. It is essentially another cross-institutional body that coordinates the interests of the national government, the municipality, and the community.

10. Promotion of Traditional Crafts

In 2003 Vilnius City Council adopted the Ethnographic and Fine Crafts and Fairs Program. Its purpose is to facilitate favorable conditions for restoring the ancient crafts and trades; it additionally promotes ethnographic fairs in Vilnius Old Town. Aiming to connect heritage with contemporary life, the program encourages establishment of ethnographic workshops, shops, art galleries, and pubs. The program is undertaken with two main tasks: 1) to lease municipal non-residential space to craftsmen and businessmen on preferential terms; and 2) to rebuild the rundown historic Tymo area by setting up the “Crafts Town,” where traditional crafts and related businesses could be developed. Currently, 11 working craft galleries and workshops are being leased on preferential terms.

“This will serve you, city citizens, as it will entertain and bring new experiences and knowledge about Vilnius history and traditions. Everyone, who enters these workshops, is greeted by professional artists and craftsmen. Those who show interest will have an opportunity to try some forms of art or trade by themselves. Studio – galleries wait for all people who want to materialize their ideas, communicate with like minded, make a stained glass panel, a piece of jewelry, paint an Easter egg, knead clay and throw a pot, weave an Easter palm or learn knitting decorated mitten, order an exclusive piece of jewelry or forged iron article. If time permits, come here to cut paper ornaments and learn fabric decoration techniques which produce texture and coloring by means of hot wax. In the Amber museum – gallery you may watch amber being processed and jewelry being made and even buy a piece yourself.”^[ix]

The Ethnographic and Fine Crafts and Fairs Program is coordinated and supervised by the Vilnius Old Town Renewal Agency, which also acted as a mediator for artists and craftspeople during the implementation of this program.

11. International Support and Cooperation

International cooperation—including the exchange of management experience accumulated by other heritage cities—plays an essential role in the Vilnius Old Town revitalization process. Since the preparation of the Vilnius Old Town Revitalization Strategy, Old Town experts have been collaborating with a variety of international organizations. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the UNESCO World Heritage Center (WHC) provided major international support.

In 1999-2001, the UNESCO/WHC–UN/UNDP Technical Assistance Program was implemented, pursuing several ends. The Program promoted public involvement in heritage conservation, disseminated information among residents and investors, and improved management processes within the Vilnius Old Town Renewal Agency. One pilot project was a feasibility study on a block of the Augustinian Monastery. Also through the Technical Assistance Program two seminars were held: “Safety of People and Property in Vilnius Old Town” and “Investment Environments in Historic City Centers.”

Community involvement in the Old Town Revitalization process has been the main achievement of the Technical Assistance Program. Community involvement has greatly influenced the development of a positive social attitude. The focus of this part of the program on community participation was especially important given the lack of attention to this sphere of activities from local government.

The UNESCO/WHC–UN/UNDP Technical Assistance Program also had a substantial impact on management practices. It promoted the implementation of integrated urban conservation management principles in the unstable conditions of both an economy in transition and social change.

The International Center for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), through its Integrated Territorial and Urban Conservation (ITUC) Regional Program, has committed its support to ensuring access to preservation training for the appropriate officials. Since 1997, ICCROM's north-east Europe ITUC Program, frequently in cooperation with the UNESCO World Heritage Center, has organized a series of training workshops and seminars in Lithuania. These seminars were designed specifically for managers whose decisions could have an impact on the cultural heritage value of historic sites. The seminars demonstrated the importance of the integrated approach to urban conservation while also equipping managers with the negotiation and conflict-resolution skills necessary to achieve heritage objectives in diverse economic and social environments.

Vilnius has also collaborated with the Organization of World Heritage Cities (OVPM). Since joining the organization in 2001, Vilnius delegations have gone abroad to participate in international OWHC symposiums in Pueblo, Mexico (2001); Rhodes, Greece (2003); and Cusco, Peru (2005). In 2002 OVPM recognized Vilnius with a certificate for observing its international obligations. At the same time, Vilnius was lauded as a well-managed member of the Organization. Just a year later, the 2003 regional conference of OVPM, "The Continuation of Historic Urban Culture," was held in Vilnius with 153 participants from Budapest, Kiev, Copenhagen, Krakow, Minsk, Rhodes, Riga, Tallinn, Torune, Warsaw, Vilnius, and Zamosc.

12. The State of Conservation of Vilnius's Historic Center

For eight years OTRA analyzed physical changes in the Old Town, economic and social tendencies, and the progress of community development to lay the foundation for monitoring the World Heritage site, as required by the UNESCO World Heritage Convention.

By the order of the Lithuanian minister of culture, a working group prepared the report based on monitoring the site. The Lithuanian Ministry of Culture presented *The State of Conservation of Specific Heritage Properties: Vilnius*

Historic Centre in October 2005, in accordance with Section II of the charter, “Periodic Reporting on the Application of the World Heritage Convention.” The report included a summary of the current authenticity and integrity of the site, its management, its protection, and financial resources available, among other issues from the UNESCO questionnaire. In answer to the key question, “Have there been significant changes in the authenticity and/or integrity of the Site since inscription?” the report offered the following:

“Reconstruction and upgrade of main public spaces: squares and streets, and numerous historic buildings were performed successfully regenerating the historic city centre. Good restoration and adoption for appropriate contemporary uses of a significant number of churches, monastic and palace complexes. Reconstruction of the former Lithuanian Great Dukes’ Palace (Lower Palace) started in 2003 following Decree of the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania. High-rise buildings constructed in the close environs of the World Heritage site visually impacts panoramas and silhouettes visible within or from the historic city centre.”^[xi]

The report anticipated that future major changes would come from the “reconstruction of several former historic quarters destroyed during WWII.”^[xii]

It is possible to discern the annual rate of different economic activities by the number of construction/reconstruction permits issued for properties in the Old Town (data collected by Vilnius Old Town Renewal Agency). Fifty-nine percent of the permits issued in 2005 were for repair and reconstruction of residential properties. The share of residential permits in 2000 was the same, but between the two dates it varied from 55% (in 2001) to 35% (in 2003). The share of permits issued to commercial properties (offices, catering, hotels, and shops) was 21% in 2005. The share of commercial properties from 2000 to 2004 was 29-31%. The remaining percentages of permits issued were for permits for other uses (medical services and engineering infrastructure, for example). No data was collected from 1994 to 1998, so it is difficult to estimate the growth of commerce in the Old Town since 1994. It is possible, however, to state that there is a balance between residential and commercial functions in the Old Town at present.

Of the effects of the Vilnius Old Town Revitalization Program, the most positive impacts have come from the recruitment of private investment and the involvement of local residents in the preservation-development process. Both have resulted in significant growth of tourism, private services, and leisure businesses in the Old Town, all of which have made the area the most vibrant, attractive, and visited part of the city. The growth of tourism may be also be related to the improved marketing of the city, but the successful renewal of the Old Town and the city center has made it possible with the growth of accommodations, dining, entertainment options, and a more active cultural life.

The Old Town is the main tourist attraction in Vilnius. More than 80% of the tourists coming to Vilnius visit the Old Town. From 1995 to 1999, the number of visitors was quiet stable, remaining between 508,000 to 589,000 tourists. Rapid growth started after 2000, though. The number of tourists from 2002 to 2004 increased by 20%, but by 2005 the number had doubled. The majority of visitors come from Poland, Germany, Finland, Italy, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Table 12.1. The number of foreign tourists in Vilnius in 1995 – 1999 (data of Vilnius Old Town Renewal Agency)^[xiii]

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
The number of foreign tourists	508,000	589,000	579,500	550,400	572,500

Table 12.2. The number and expenses of foreign tourists in Vilnius in 2002 - 2005 (data of Vilnius City Municipality)

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005
The number of foreign tourists	609,000	717,000	1,000,000	1,200,000
Expenses	439.22 million LTL	610.88 million LTL	825.00 million LTL	990.00 million LTL

It appears that the main tasks of the Strategy have been partially achieved. Residents and businessmen have both contributed to the renewal process with the novel cooperation of private and public funds. Public funds were successfully used for the first time to manage cultural properties and to encourage owners to protect those properties. This was, moreover, achieved with transparency in the process of public investment. Ultimately, the Strategy increased public confidence in the ability of municipal authorities to manage development *and* heritage for the benefit of the Old Town's physical and human foundations.

"Modern technology, new economic, cultural and social investment and conservation using the highest quality standards for the urban fabric will be demanded. The aim is to protect and enhance the physical and spiritual character of the Old Town; one of openness, tolerance, integration and authenticity, where the historic center of the city becomes a regional and international center linking Western and Eastern Europe and its peoples."^[xvi]

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[i] Venclova, T. (2002), 'Vilnius, *R.Paknio leidykla*

[ii] Dr. Bondin, R. (22nd December 2004), 'Report re Vilnius Old Town, *a mission to Vilnius requested by the Lithuanian National Commission for UNESCO and the Organization of World Heritage Cities (OVPM)*

[iii] Kulikauskas, P. (2006), 'Case Study of Vilnius Old Town Revitalisation, *draft*

[iv] (1997), 'Vilnius Old Town Revitalisation Strategy, *Municipality of Vilnius, R.Paknio leidykla*

[v] Kulikauskas, P. (2006), 'Case Study of Vilnius Old Town Revitalisation, *draft*

[vi] Gage Morris, P. (April, 2005), 'Estates News: Residential Prices Climb as Boom Builds in Baltics

[vii] (04 03 2005), 'International Herald Tribune: a Renaissance in Vilnius

[viii] Kulikauskas, P. (2006), 'Case Study of Vilnius Old Town Revitalisation, *draft*

[ix] (2005), 'Periodic Reporting on the Application of the World Heritage Convention. Section II "State of Conservation of Specific Heritage Properties" Vilnius Historic Centre, *Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania*

[x] (2005), 'Ethnographic and Fine Crafts and Fairs Programme, *Vilnius Old Town Renewal Agency*

[xi] (2005), 'Periodic Reporting on the Application of the World Heritage Convention. Section II "State of Conservation of Specific Heritage Properties" Vilnius Historic Centre, *Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania*

[xii] (2005), 'Periodic Reporting on the Application of the World Heritage Convention. Section II "State of Conservation of Specific Heritage Properties" Vilnius Historic Centre, *Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania*

[xiii] (2000), 'Vilnius Old Town Revitalisation Strategy Implementation: Co-operation, Results, Vision, *Vilnius Old Town Renewal Agency*

[xiv] (2002), 'Conservation Guidelines, *Vilnius Old Town Renewal Agency*