

Jan Vapaavuori

Jan Vapaavuori is the former Mayor of Helsinki, a part-time senior adviser at NREP and a board member and a part-time senior adviser at Millton Group. He has previously served as the Finnish Minister of Housing and Urban Planning, as the Minister of Economic Affairs and Vice-President of the European Investment Bank in Luxembourg.



Mr. Vapaavuori has a keen interest in global urban affairs and he participates actively in numerous international platforms. He currently serves at the World Economic Forum's Global Future Council and Stewardship Board of Platform for Shaping the Future of Cities, Infrastructure & Urban Services, at the Bloomberg New Economy Cities Council, and as the co-chair of the Urban Economy Forum 2021. Additionally, Mr. Vapaavuori serves as the President of the Finnish Olympic Committee, as the Vice-chair of the Finnish National Opera's Board of Governors and chairs his family foundation that supports contemporary dance and visual arts. He graduated with Master of Laws from the University of Helsinki and holds an Honorary Doctoral Degree from Hanken School of Economics.

As the first politically elected **Mayor of Helsinki (2017-2021)** Mr. Vapaavuori set forth an ambitious city strategy championing Helsinki as the "most functional city in the world" with a special focus on sustainable growth, digitalization, global affairs, and high-quality services for all equally. The strategy also defined Helsinki as a testbed for start-ups and smart city developments resulting in an increased global relevance and international collaborations. As the operative leader of the biggest employer in Finland Mayor Vapaavuori paid special attention to modernizing the city administration with emphasis on digital capabilities, strategic planning and communications. He created new corporations to enhance Helsinki's international competitiveness including Helsinki Partners, a new real-estate and place-making corporation and a major events foundation, and pushed forward the most substantial digitalization reform in the history of the city. During his term Helsinki managed to grow its annual investments by more than 50%, up to more than one billion euros annually, and simultaneously diminishing the municipal tax and decreasing the city's indebtedness. He also started several substantial urban development projects including transforming a former hospital into the biggest start-up hub in the Northern Europe ([Maria01](#)), developing the downtown Helsinki waterfront ([Makasiiniranta](#)), laying ground for a new architecture and design museum ([Uusi Museo](#)), developing a new private main indoor arena and multifunction complex in Central Helsinki ([Garden Helsinki](#)), and generating a central event and festival district to an old industrial site ([Suvilahti](#)).

As **Vice-President in the European Investment Bank (2015 - 2017)**, the EU's bank, and the largest multilateral financial institution in the world, and as a member of the Bank's Management Committee, Mr. Vapaavuori held supervisory responsibility for EIB operations in the Nordics and the Baltics and in several countries outside the European Union, including Eastern Partnership and Central Asian countries. He was also in charge of horizontal issues such as eligibility and technical & economic assessment of the projects financed by the Bank, Urban Development & Housing, Advisory Services and Corporate Social Responsibility.

As the Finnish **Minister of Economic Affairs (2012 - 2015)**, Mr. Vapaavuori was responsible for energy, innovation, and regional development. He negotiated the historic Meyer Turku shipyard sale that played a key role in rescuing and renewing the famous Finnish maritime industry. He also assumed coordination responsibility for the crisis corporation Talvivaara within the national government and succeeded in stabilizing the corporation's situation both financially and sustainably.

As the **Minister of Housing (2007 - 2011)** Mr. Vapaavuori created and implemented a revolutionary Housing first -program that resulted in a decrease of long-term homelessness by fifty percent. The model has since gained international recognition. He also played a key role in fighting urban sprawl especially practically blocking the construction of ill-located large supermarkets and shopping malls, and in creating a common platform for the State of Finland and the capital region cities on agreeing on common action in housing, urban planning, and traffic infrastructure. He also renewed the national building codes enabling large-scale wood construction, and highly ambitious energy efficiency requirements.