

Imperial Designs and Local Realities: The Implementation of Rēzekne's 1778 Master Plan (1778–1836)

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Received 2024-10-08; accepted 2024-12-22

Keywords

Historical urbanization, master plan, Russian Empire, Rēzekne (Latvia), visual sources, urban planning.

Abstract

This article examines the implementation and challenges of the 1778 Master Plan for Rēzekne, a town in modern-day Latvia, over the period from 1778 to 1836. Developed as part of the Russian Empire's broader urban planning efforts under Catherine the Great, the plan aimed to impose Enlightenment ideals of order and rationality. However, its execution faced significant challenges due to the geographical and social distance between the imperial centre and its peripheral colony. The plan's failure to account for Rēzekne's actual topography – particularly its swampy eastern areas – along with resistance from the town's predominantly Jewish population contributed to its partial and problematic implementation. Despite these obstacles, the 1778 Plan laid the groundwork for future urban development, which culminated in the 1836 Master Plan under Nicholas I. By analysing contemporary maps and visual sources, this article highlights how imperial ambitions clashed with local realities.

Introduction

Climate change is an intensely experienced reality in the Arctic, requiring urgent adaptation. However, anthropogenic activities, including the sustainable energy industry, such as wind farms, mining, and logging, might have even more significant local impacts. The Arctic, which has long provided important natural resources, is now the target of many governments' strong promotion of energy and resource extraction projects. In Northern Europe, also wind power is presented as a sustainable solution. Governments in Finland, Sweden, and Norway, lower taxes, offer subsidies, and loosen regulations to advance renewable energy production. The transition to renewable energy requires significant amounts of metals, such as lithium and cobalt – critical metals in batteries. Significant investments are made in the mining industry, and existing mines are expanding their operations. Mining claims and energy production have significant national and global value, but they also might have negative local impacts. Prolonged and problematic planning processes, including industrial and logistical projects, are typical

in Northern Europe [1]. The planned new land uses can make it challenging to practice traditional livelihoods, especially reindeer husbandry.

The Sámi are the only officially recognized Indigenous people in the EU. The self-governing country Greenland is not a member of the EU, although all citizens of Denmark residing in Greenland (Greenlandic nationals) are EU citizens. Inuit – the Indigenous peoples of Greenland – make up most of the Greenlandic population. They are recognized to have their own culture, languages, and livelihoods, such as semi-nomadic reindeer husbandry, hunting, fishing, trapping and farming, and political institutions. However, they have a history of colonization with forced assimilation, boarding schools, racism, and discrimination [2]. The definition of The late eighteenth century marked a period of significant expansion and administrative reform in the Russian Empire, accelerated under Catherine the Great. One important aspect of this was the integration of new territories through urban planning. This research explores the urban transformation of Rēzekne, a town in present-day Latvia, following its incorporation into the empire after the Partitions of Poland.

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In 1778, Rēzekne, together with 21 other towns in Polotsk Governorate, received a regular construction plan [1]. The original location of Rēzekne's plan remains unknown, but several copies of the plan have survived to this day, along with later city plans that allow us to trace the development of the town in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

This study examines the implementation of the 1778 Master Plan and its impact on Rēzekne's development. The period of research spans from 1778 to 1836, covering the area on the left bank of the Rēzekne River between the present-day Smilšu Street and the former St. Petersburg Highway (now Atbrīvošanas Alley). The plan and development of the new part of the town along the St. Petersburg Highway are not addressed in this study.

In 1834, the highway was constructed near the town, connecting the imperial capital of St. Petersburg with Warsaw and further with the rest of Western Europe, and the governorate surveyor developed a new plan. This plan, approved by an emperor in 1836 (hereafter 1836 Plan), proposed relocating the town parallel to the new highway, gradually ceasing the development of the old part of the town. The 1836 Plan illustrated the state of the existing town as of 1834, which showed the culmination of the town's development under the 1778 Plan.

The construction history of Rēzekne has been explored by various researchers. The urban formation of Rēzekne has attracted more interest from urban planners and architects than historians, but that is not a local phenomenon and is noted by other researchers as well [2], [3]. Architect Jānis Krastiņš (1943) [4], local historian Vladimirs Nikonovs (1955) [5], and architects from the Cultural Heritage Restoration Design Office (Kultūras pieminekļu restaurēšanas projektēšanas kantoris) [6] have studied some of the city plans used in this study. The 1778 Plan was also examined by the historian Boļeslavs Brežgo (1887–1957) [7], [8], [9], while architect Rita Zandberga (1929–1993) [10], [11], [12], [13] conducted a reconstruction of Rēzekne's medieval urban history and also briefly addressed the 1778 Plan in her work. Most researchers have concluded that the 1778 Plan was either not implemented or only partially executed. However, a detailed analysis of its implementation and the reasons for its failures remains lacking. Additionally, some of the plans used in this study have not previously entered academic circulation.

The study primarily works with visual sources, which provide a better understanding of the town's geometric composition, the location of buildings and infrastructure, functional zoning, and other information not contained in written sources [14], [15]. Visual sources are not widely accepted in the predominantly logocentric historical discipline, resulting in a lack of well-developed methods for their use. To address this, the author applies and adapts methods proposed by David D. Perlmutter [16] and Bonnie M. Miller [17]. Schematic reproductions made by the

author adapt them to suit the particular sources used in the research.

This research contributes to a broader understanding of urban planning in the Russian Empire by addressing the challenges faced in implementing the 1778 Plan for Rēzekne. Common obstacles encountered across the empire – such as topographical inaccuracies, socio-economic resistance, and financial limitations [18], [3, 14] – are explored through the case of Rēzekne. By illustrating these challenges, the study sheds light on urban planning practices during the era and the broader implications of partial or failed plan implementation.

I. Catherine the Great's Urban Legacy: Planning, Standardisation, and Control

During Catherine the Great's reign (1762–1796), urban policy in Russia saw a significant transformation. While regular city planning existed before, by the late 18th century, only St. Petersburg had been fully developed according to the plans of Peter the Great (1672–1725). St. Petersburg's layout, building materials, and architectural details were strictly regulated. Elsewhere, urban planning was handled mainly by police, focusing on street widening and straightening [18, 8].

Catherine II's reign introduced systematised urban planning throughout the empire, aligning with the era's Classical principles [18, 8]. The principle of regularity, which was introduced in all spheres of state administration and public life, was equally applied to urban construction [19].

Planning became part of state policy, with administrative figures, including the Empress, governors, and senators driving the process [18, 18]. Provincial architects and non-professionals oversaw the execution of plans [18], with standardised façade designs enabling uniformity without direct architect involvement [20, 78].

A pivotal 1763 decree established city plans as the main development document, leading to new plans for over 400 cities. Initially, these plans were introduced case by case, but the 1775 administrative reforms spurred widespread construction of state buildings and infrastructure, setting the stage for long-term urban development [18, 16]. Though not all cities fully implemented their plans, many, including Rēzekne, continued to follow them into the 19th and 20th centuries. In some cases, for example, in Kursk, the plans remained in use for over a century [3, 20].

The plans approved by Catherine II were characterised by rectangular blocks on either side of a central street, with a main square surrounded by administrative buildings. The arrangement of equal blocks, segregated by social status, facilitated population control and order [3, 20]. Though initially planners sought to completely overhaul old layouts, later plans integrated existing structures and general functional zoning with new designs [18, 9].

Catherine's urban planning reforms shaped the long-term development of Russian cities. Her emphasis on regularity, standardisation, and social control influenced city layouts that persisted for centuries, as seen in the grid-like patterns and central squares that still define many cities today.

II. The 1778 Master Plan for Rēzekne: Layout and Design

After the First Partition of Poland in 1772, Latgale was incorporated into the Russian Empire, and by 1778, Rēzekne, Ludza, and Daugavpils were granted city plans [1]. The pre-1778 layout of Rēzekne is unknown, though the 1778 Plan, which outlines some earlier roads and buildings, shows a chaotic street network on the left bank of the Rēzekne River, with wooden houses closely packed together. In 1784, Rēzekne had 1651 inhabitants, 71 % of whom were Jews, with the rest being Polish Catholics and Russian Old Believers [21]. No nobility was recorded until 1836.

The original 1778 Master Plan is lost, but a graphical reproduction from 1839 in the "Polnoje sobranije zakonov Rossijskoj imperii" provides an accurate depiction [22]. The plan preserved Rēzekne's location, with boundaries defined by nearby streams and the river. Gates were planned at the city's main entrances, each with designated squares: a grain market at the Daugavpils Gate, a Jewish market at the Ludza Gate, and a hay market at the Polotsk Gate. A central square near the church was to house administrative buildings, including a state institution, residences, warehouses, and an arsenal.

The city layout (Fig. 1) included a main street connecting the Ludza and Daugavpils gates (Fig. 1, 2 and 3) and another leading to the Polotsk Gate Fig. 1, 13). Residential quarters were allocated for nobles, petty bourgeois, and Jews. The Master Plan also called for the preservation of the castle ruins (Fig. 1, 8) and the Catholic church (Fig. 1, 17), the construction of state buildings, market stalls, and a bridge over the river. Additionally, it aimed to straighten roads to Polotsk and Ludza, though an error placed the Daugavpils road (Fig. 1, 2 and 14) incorrectly, likely due to a surveyor's mistake.

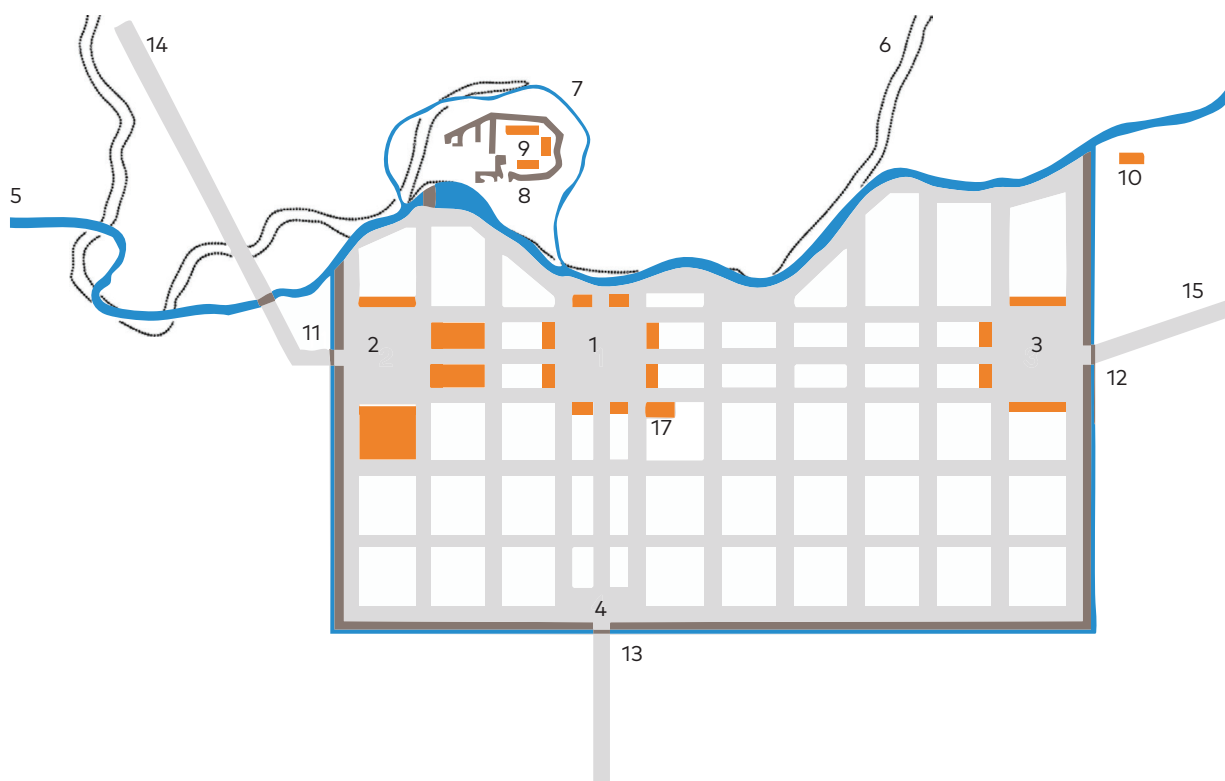


Fig. 1. Schematic reproduction of the Plan of Rēzekne from the very beginning of the 19th century according to "Geometricheskij plan gor. Rezhicy s iz'jasneniem na onom publichnyh stroenij" [24]:

1 – central square; 2 – grain and grocery market; 3 – Jewish market with butcher shops; 4 – hay and wood market; 5 – riverbed according to plan; 6 – actual riverbed; 7 – moat; 8 – castle ruins; 9 – munitions and grain storage; 10 – slaughterhouse; 11 – Daugavpils Gate; 12 – Ludza Gate; 13 – Polotsk Gate; 14 – Daugavpils road; 15 – Ludza road; 16 – Polotsk road; 17 – Catholic church.

III. Urban Development in Rēzekne: Implementing and Deviating from the 1778 Plan

The undated copy of the 1778 plan [23], probably from the early 1780s, provides more clarity regarding the proposed urban improvements. According to the plan, older structures, including the house of the city head and the salt warehouse, remained intact, located beyond the castle mound on the opposite side of the city. Although the central square had not yet been built, a stone state institution building was already in place, situated along its planned perimeter (Fig. 2, 6). This building housed various official offices, including the lower and land courts, the guardianship of the nobility, the city head's chancery, the district treasury, the surveyor's office, and a prison. Adjacent to it stood a wooden magistrate's building (Fig. 2, 7), while other planned facilities – residences for key

city officials (city head, cashier, surveyor, and deputies), a pharmacy, warehouses for provisions and salt, and an arsenal – were still awaiting construction. Moreover, the three market squares proposed near the city gates were yet to be developed.

The existing buildings followed a single street, one block south of the proposed central street. However, the layout suggests that the central street had not yet been fully established, with buildings, including a Catholic chapel, still occupying its intended route. One issue that persisted in the plan of the 1780s was the erroneous placement of the Daugavpils road (Fig. 1, 14), which had not been corrected. The 1784 general land survey plan [24], however, shows that the Daugavpils road followed the left bank of the river westward, contrary to the master plan, which depicted it crossing the river and heading northwest. Additionally, historical sources confirm that this road had taken the left bank of the Rēzekne River since at least 1700 [31].



Fig. 2. Schematic reproduction of the Plan of Rēzekne from the very beginning of the 19th century according to "Geometricheskij plan gor. Rezhicy s iz'jasneniem na onom publicnyh stroenij" [24]: 1 – central square; 2 – square housing the grocery market; 3 – city boundary where a moat is planned; 4 – castle ruins; 5 – Catholic church with plebania; 6 – stone state institution building, formerly housing the state chancery, lower district land court, nobility guardianship, district city head's chancery, district treasury, surveyor's office, and detainee guardrooms (currently in disrepair, now housing only the treasury store and police); 7 – wooden city council and magistrate building; 8 – wooden horse exchange postal station; 9 – houses for court assessors; 10 – firefighting equipment warehouse; 11 – market stalls owned by the city; 12 – almshouse; 13 – Jewish prayer house and kahal; 14 – taverns; 15 – Jewish public bathhouse; 16 – watermill owned by the manor; 17 – bridges over streams; 18 – residential quarters; 19 – unbuilt quarters according to the master plan; 20 – slaughterhouse; 21 – buildings not conforming to the master plan; 22 – Christian cemetery with Catholic chapel; 23 – contour line indicating the master plan [22]; 24 – Daugavpils road; 25 – Ludza road; 26 – Polotsk road; 27 – road to Lohorži village; 28 – riverbed according to the plan; 29 – actual riverbed; 30 – granary and salt warehouse.

A later, undated plan, likely drawn in the early 19th century, illustrates the changes that had occurred over the previous 20 to 30 years [26] (Fig. 2). This plan reflects both the existing situation and references to the master plan approved by Catherine II. As will be discussed further, the depicted street network represents the intended, rather than the actual, situation. When comparing the later plan with the original master plan (see the dashed line in Fig. 2), it becomes clear that the street network had only partially developed. Notably, the rampart and moat around the city, intended in the master plan, were never constructed, and the moat remained a consideration in the later plan.

The central street proposed in the master plan had shifted south to the location of a parallel secondary street. Furthermore, only two of the four planned market squares were built (Fig. 2, 1 and 2). Of the administrative buildings proposed around the central square, only two had been constructed: a wooden magistrate's building (Fig. 2, 7) and a masonry state institution building (Fig. 2, 6). The latter had aged and was no longer suitable for its original purpose, resulting in private homes being rented for state institutions, while only the police and a chancery warehouse remained in the state building. An irregularly placed Jewish prayer house and kahāl had also emerged in the northern part of the square (Fig. 2, 13), despite their original planned location being near the Ludza Gate. On the eastern side of the square was the tavern district (Fig. 2, 14), which frequently changed due to the use of rented private houses. In the southeast corner stood a Catholic church (Fig. 2, 5), along with an almshouse (Fig. 2, 12) and a bell tower along the central street, both likely built after the master plan was approved. Deeper within the block, a plebania and gardens were located.

The second square near the planned Daugavpils Gate (or bridge) was disrupted by an existing square that divided it in half (Fig. 2, 2), suggesting the inability to clear older structures for the new square's intended purpose. This square housed state-owned warehouses for grain and salt and a fire equipment warehouse and was divided from the central street by an assessors' house, city-owned market stalls, and a postal relay station with stables (Fig. 2, 8).

Outside the city limits, a planned slaughterhouse was constructed upstream along the river (Fig. 2, 20). Its location poses a mystery, considering the city's reliance on river water for consumption [27], leading to potential water pollution and epidemiological risks. Additionally, a watermill located near the dam appeared in this later plan (Fig. 2, 16), though not in earlier ones. However, it is known that watermills have existed at this site since at least 1590 [27]. Close by was a public Jewish bathhouse (Fig. 2, 15).

Old structures, particularly a cluster of buildings to the west of the city limits and a small section in the city's northeast (Fig. 2, 21), were not included in earlier plans but predated them. Nearby, a Christian cemetery (Fig. 2, 22) had likely existed prior to the territory's annexation by the

Russian Empire, despite not being marked in earlier plans. Though cemeteries within city limits were prohibited by an imperial decree from 1772 [28], the appearance of this cemetery with a chapel in later plans suggests it had been preserved. Another cemetery, a Jewish one, was located illegally in city-owned meadows and pastures.

The Master Plan had intended to relocate the city's Jewish population to nine blocks in the eastern part of the city. However, by the early 19th century, Jews, who comprised the majority of the population, continued to live in the city centre and had constructed a prayer house and kahāl in the central square. The designated Jewish blocks in the eastern part of the city remained unbuilt and were marked as swampy. Despite drainage efforts in the 20th century, this area still remains relatively sparsely populated and swampy.

Upon comparing the plans, some deviations can be attributed to inaccuracies in the master plan's topographical layout. The riverbed, as shown in the master plan, was incorrectly marked compared with the riverbed (Fig. 1), as was the swampy area intended for Jewish settlement. Consequently, the eastern part of the city remained undeveloped. Additionally, the transport routes to other cities, as outlined in the master plan, differed from those shown in the 1784 general survey plan, which more accurately depicted their courses. Only one smaller road leading to Lohorži village (at the time owned by the von Korff family, the owners of the Rēzekne starosty), appeared besides the major roads (Fig. 2, 27).

The Latvian State Archives holds a schematic town plan from 1818 [29] (Fig. 3), drawn to assess how closely the town's development aligned with the general plan and to identify deviations. The sketch, however, is a freehand, unscaled drawing that represents the desired rather than the actual situation. For example, while the sketch depicts 10 streets, in 1835, Rēzekne had only four [30, 1]. Moreover, three long streets connecting the central street to the Ludza road are depicted as significantly longer than their actual length, which does not exceed 200 meters in reality.

When comparing the 1818 sketch with earlier plans, the development situation in 1818 appears schematic. The streets and buildings could not have been as regular as depicted. However, denser development is visible along the central street, indicating that it had already been straightened by this time. For the first time, the plan shows development to the west of the central square along the riverbank, which may have formed part of Rēzekne's oldest street, dating back to at least the late 17th century [25]. The northeastern part of the city had also developed significantly along the Ludza postal road, forming three fully developed blocks, possibly as part of efforts to implement the master plan.

The master plan approved by Catherine II lost its primary planning status in 1836 when a new city plan [32], developed by provincial surveyor Anton Mozalovsky, was



Fig. 3.
Schematic reproduction of the 1818 Rēzekne plan sketch according to "Delo o snjatii zastrojannyh domov po gorodu Rezhica zastroivshih po planu" [29]:
1. – central square;
2. – grocery market square;
3. – Catholic church;
4. – approximate location of the river;
5. – dashed line indicates early 19th-century situational plan [26].

approved by Emperor Nicholas I (1796–1855). This plan proposed relocating the city along the new St. Petersburg–Warsaw highway, incorporating both the existing city and guidelines for future development. Mozalovsky's project noted that the original plan did not correspond to the city's specific conditions, making its implementation unfeasible [33, 11b]. The moat around the city was never dug, and some private houses were still located on the projected street routes [33, 11b].

Mozalovsky deemed further construction in the old town irrational due to a lack of suitable land [33, 11b]. At this time, the town had four unpaved streets and 286 plots: 279 petty bourgeois wooden houses, two government masonry houses, seven merchant houses (six wooden, one masonry), 16 soldier houses (15 wooden, one masonry), and one peasant house [30]. Seventeen plots housed non-residential buildings, including a Jewish hospital, butcher shops, the Gurvich house (likely a colonial goods or meat shop), two Jewish prayer houses, three forges, a church, an almshouse, a bell tower, a tavern, plebania plots, and a bathhouse for invalid soldiers [34].

In 1836, Rēzekne's population was 1,085 [30, 7], and it lacked any industries, education institutions or teachers. Public care was provided by one midwife, four hospital staff, and two almshouse workers [30]. The city had 25 tailors, 15 shoemakers, and three blacksmiths [30, 17].

The 1836 Master Plan depicts the city's situation around 1834, enabling evaluation of the 1778 plan's implementation. Development was mostly within city

limits, with the undeveloped eastern part still too swampy for construction. The central street and northern areas toward the river were developed, but the hilly south remained sparse. Three streets extended southward: one followed the old Polotsk road (not straightened to imperial standards [31, 117]), another relatively straight street (unmarked in prior plans) had intense development, while the third street was newer, sparsely built, and dead-ended near the city's edge. In the northeast, the central street connected to the Ludza road via early 19th-century streets, with dense Jewish craftsman activity [33, 4a–6b].

The central square remained, and in 1830, a horse post station was built on its eastern side [35], continuing perimeter development with state institutions. By then, the square housed two Jewish prayer houses [31, 136]. The grocery market square in the western part had vanished by 1834, replaced by densely built blocks. A large orchard was marked on plebania grounds, with two more across the river.

One cemetery remained, with a new chapel, presumably Orthodox, next to the Catholic chapel (Fig. 4, 6). The city's imperial armed forces, mostly Orthodox Christians, likely used this chapel for services.

New development appeared west of the Rēzekne River and toward the St. Petersburg–Warsaw highway. A dense ridge of buildings paralleled the highway (the westernmost street in Fig. 4, 9) along with a northwestern extension of the central street. Further expansion was blocked by the Rēzekne manor lands [31, 148].



Fig. 4. Schematic reproduction of the situational plan of 1834 according to "Plan gor. Rezhicy. 1836 g." [32]: 1 – central square; 2 – Catholic church; 3 – Rēzekne River; 4 – castle ruins; 5 – orchards; 6 – Christian cemetery with two chapels; 7 – road to Ludza; 8 – road to Vipinga manor; 9 – roads to Janopole manor and village; 10 – road to Daugavpils and Warsaw; 11 – old road to Daugavpils; 12 – road to Riga; 13 – road to St. Petersburg; 14 – castle moat after dam removal; 15 – proposed new development area; 16 – Rēzekne starosta manor; 17 – the boundaries of the 1778 Master Plan are marked with a dashed line [22].

IV. Topography, Finance, and Resistance: Barriers to Rēzekne's Urban Transformation

Like in other Russian Empire cities [13, 17], Rēzekne's 1778 Master Plan began with straightening the central street, constructing corner houses at future intersections with state funds, and clearing streets of existing buildings where possible. Initially, the plan required demolishing houses not fitting the regular layout, nearly all of them. Owners were compensated and allocated plots based on social status, required to build homes according to strict construction norms and state-mandated façades [36]. This caused public dissatisfaction. Temporarily, only widening and straightening existing streets were allowed, but larger projects or fire-related rebuilding had to strictly follow the plan [13, 9].

The market square was the most significant element, symbolizing the transition from fortress walls to open public space [15, 54]. As in other cities, the central square aligned with the existing market square, maintaining the market and church in place [31, 128]. Due to topography, the central street was shifted southward, through a chaotic network of lanes and dead ends. Reducing buildings along the new street likely took half a century. The 1836 plan shows significant deviations from the planned street network due to the existing haphazard development.

The plan also reorganized major roads. By 1834, the Pskov, Ludza, and Daugavpils roads retained their original routes, which remain unchanged today. Although the plan proposed reconfiguring the street layout, the oldest street along the Rēzekne River, ending at a dam and the market square, remained unchanged.

More active street formation, partly following the regular plan, began in the early 19th century. Three cross streets connected the central street to the Ludza road bend. Development progressed slowly until the 1830s. The 1836 plan shows streets dictated by plot boundaries rather than vice versa [32]. The timing and principles of plot allocation remain unknown.

Of four planned squares, only two were built. The central square likely evolved from the market square, while a second, for a grocery market, existed briefly but was replaced by densely built alleys by 1834. The plan influenced only the central street and four cross streets.

The first state-owned building, still standing, was built in 1780. Other buildings like the magistrate, city council, horse postal station, and officials' houses no longer survive. Only part of the horse postal station, built in 1828 on the central square's east side, remains.

The central street was initially reserved for the nobility and wealthy burghers, with Jews (three-fifths of the population) designated to a small and swampy district in the east. However, this plan was soon abandoned, likely without official approval. By the early 19th century, a Jewish prayer house was already present in the central square, and by 30 years later, there were two. In the Russian Empire, where Jews faced restrictions, the presence of prayer houses in the city centre suggests significant Jewish influence or weak governmental control over urban development.

Topography and limited finances also hindered the master plan's full implementation. Rēzekne lacked nobility and had few wealthy merchants. Low tax revenues meant that major construction relied on state funding. Although the plan envisioned brick buildings with standardized façades along the central street, only a state-owned building, a merchant's house, and the 1828 post station were built. The street was mostly lined with small wooden cabins with thatched roofs. Contemporary accounts described Rēzekne as small and poor, with significant change only coming after the St. Petersburg–Warsaw highway in 1836 and railway in 1861 transformed the city into a more attractive destination for merchants and artisans, that lead to a rapid increase in population.

CONCLUSIONS

The implementation of Catherine the Great's urban planning principles in Rēzekne provides a detailed case study of the broader urban transformation efforts across the Russian Empire. The town's 1778 Master Plan, despite its incomplete execution, laid a foundation for systematic urban development that persisted into the 19th and 20th centuries. Key elements of the plan, particularly the grid-like street layout and central squares, ultimately shaped the town's urban form and function, reflecting Enlightenment ideals of order, rationality, and progress.

The Master Plan devised for Rēzekne in 1778 reflects the Russian Empire's Enlightenment-driven planning practices, which emphasized geometric layouts to promote strategic, economic, and military goals. However, it also highlighted the difficulties of applying imperial designs to local realities. Overlooking the town's topography and socio-economic conditions, the plan faced implementation challenges that left it only partially realized. Rēzekne's Master Plan thus serves as a valuable lens to examine the interplay between imperial ambitions and local constraints.

The full realization of the Master Plan was hampered by various factors, including financial constraints, geographic challenges, and resistance from local residents. Only certain aspects – the central street and key administrative buildings – were constructed as initially planned. The plan did not adequately account for Rēzekne's topography and environmental conditions, particularly the riverbed and swampy areas to the east. Additionally, the socio-economic composition of the town, dominated by Jewish residents engaged in crafts and trade, posed challenges to strict implementation. The intended relocation of inhabitants to designated blocks was never fully realized, and existing buildings and roads influenced how the new layout was applied.

The 1836 Master Plan, approved by Emperor Nicholas I, marked a significant shift in urban planning for Rēzekne. This plan acknowledged the limitations of the 1778 plan and provided a more feasible framework for future growth by incorporating both existing structures and new development guidelines. Despite the incomplete realization of the 1778 plan, the principles of systematic planning introduced in the late 18th century continued to shape Rēzekne's urban development. The regular grid layout, central squares, and standardized building designs became enduring features of the town's landscape.

The urban transformation of Rēzekne, as seen in the evolution of these two master plans, illustrates the broader challenges faced by the Russian Empire in implementing Catherine the Great's urban reforms. Similar obstacles were encountered in other provincial towns across the Empire, including topographical inaccuracies, socio-economic resistance, and financial limitations. The case of Rēzekne mirrors these broader trends, where state-led planning initiatives often clashed with practical and economic realities, resulting in a patchwork of realized and unrealized projects.

While the ideals of Enlightenment-driven planning were partially realized, practical considerations frequently necessitated significant adaptations. The town's peripheral status within the Russian Empire, limited resources, and pragmatic responses to local needs reshaped its development over time. In sum, Rēzekne's urban evolution underscores the complex interplay between imperial ambitions and local realities, revealing how the lega-

cy of Catherine the Great's urban reforms impacted city layouts across the Russian Empire. The grid-like street patterns, central squares, and standardized façades established during this period became defining characteristics that shaped urban growth for centuries.

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