Stockholm – the first European Green Capital

The Capital of Scandinavia
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Stockholm in brief

Stockholm is renowned for its beauty and architecture, its many green spaces and above all for its proximity to water.

The city is built on 14 islands and the surrounding mainland, and is a link between Lake Mälaren and the Baltic Sea. Because of its geographic location, Stockholm has four distinct seasons, making it possible to swim in the sea during the summer and ski in the winter. Stockholm combines great expanses of water and greenery with a mixture of historic medieval buildings and contemporary architecture.

Stockholm is growing quickly. The city’s population is currently 910,000 but by 2020 that figure is expected to increase to one million. This puts tough demands on ambitious and systematic efforts to develop the urban environment.
The first European Green Capital

In 2010, Stockholm was very proud to become the first European Green Capital.

The assessment was based on a number of criteria, including climate impact, local transports, green areas and air quality. The jury from the European Commission motivated their choice with the following statement:

“Stockholm – winner 2010: has an outstanding, long historical track record of integrated urban management also confirmed by its ongoing credible green credentials. Ambitious plans for the future clearly demonstrate continuity.”

One benefit of submitting the application for the title was that Stockholm gained an outstanding assessment of its sustainability efforts and an opportunity to compare with other cities in a range of areas. When all different aspects were brought together in the application, it also became clear how much Stockholm actually has been doing for the environment – combined with a strong economic development.

Building on the European Green Capital Award, the City of Stockholm has since 2010 based its work on the forward-looking perspective in the jury’s motivation, to realize its ambitious plans for the future.
A glorious year

Being the very first European Green Capital was naturally a great honour filled with opportunities. But it was also a challenge since the award was brand new. Together with the European Commission, the City of Stockholm worked to raise awareness for the award and its purpose.

Hence, communication initiatives were a prioritised area – and a project in itself. In order to achieve maximum output with limited resources, the strategy was to use existing arenas as well as established channels, events and activities for communicating.

Knowledge sharing and exchange of ideas

Main focus during the year as European Green Capital was on knowledge sharing and exchange of ideas between experts in cities all over Europe.

Below is an overview of some of the knowledge sharing activities arranged during the year:

- A study visit programme was developed based on the European Green Capital criteria. There have been many study visits to Stockholm also before the European Green Capital Award, but during 2010 more than 120 international delegations visited Stockholm. These programmes still remain in place and there are many delegations coming.
- A series of seminars and workshops were held where experts in different fields met to discuss common challenges at a very high level.
- At the end of the year, the City of Stockholm together with the European Commission held a European Green Capital Conference that attracted over 300 delegates from across the globe who wanted to find out more.
Activities to involve and engage Stockholmers

One challenge was to find ways to make the people of Stockholm aware of the award and proud of it. The Stockholmers were already heavily committed to the city’s environmental work but were not aware of the European Green Capital Award.

One way to increase awareness was to challenge the Stockholmers to make a green New Year’s resolution. Another was to ask them to nominate someone they wanted to see as the city’s environmental hero. This resulted in a campaign, where the winner was announced in December.

The European Green Capital Year happened to coincide with a royal wedding. The wedding was covered by over 500 journalists from all over the world, and of course this occasion was used for a massive celebration and included information about the European Green Capital in all materials and activities.

The city also organised green city walks and many more local activities to engage both Stockholmers and visitors from near and far.

Profiling events all over the world

During the year, representatives from the City of Stockholm attended conferences around the world to talk about experiences and to promote Stockholm. All in all representatives participated in more than 80 international conferences.

The COP15 climate conference in Copenhagen, already in December 2009, was a great opportunity for exposure. MIPIM in Cannes offered further exposure and another peak was during the World Expo in Shanghai in autumn 2010.
To secure that messages got across, externally and to all 40,000 employees within the city, 50 Green Capital ambassadors were trained to talk about the green Stockholm.

The European Green Capital Award also attracted a lot of media attention, both locally and internationally. There was an increased interest from journalists as well as from tourists who wished to experience a green destination.
The result – a change of mindset

The European Green Capital Award emphasised the change of mindset in policy making that has been going on in the city administration for a long time. Environmental policies have become even more prioritized and now are fully integrated in all city development.

Sustainability an integrated part of all strategies and city planning

Stockholm has a long tradition of making sustainability an integrated part of all strategies and city planning, not a separate issue handled by one single department. The city’s integrated system for management and follow-up on operations and economy, ILS, guarantees full implementation. As a result, potential conflicting objectives can be eliminated at an early stage and a sustainability perspective could be included into all policy areas. Sustainability should be a prerequisite for creating a high quality of life in Stockholm, not an obstacle.

The City Budget for 2015, the overall steering document, with the headline: Stockholm – a city defined by equality and sustainability, is a symbol for the mindset and demonstrates the ambition going even further.

Four sustainability principles

The budget is based on four sustainability principles:

1. Social sustainability
   A cohesive, well-integrated Stockholm where all children are given the same opportunities to achieve educational targets, where rented accommodation is available at reasonable prices, where the older generation is guaranteed a safe, secure old age and where equality, equal opportunities and accessibility form the natural basis for political decisions.

2. Ecological sustainability
   A climate-smart Stockholm where priority is given to cyclists, pedestrians and public transport, where an efficient, climate-smart transport system is combined with an increased proportion of renewable energy, where children are guaranteed a day-to-day life
that is free from toxins and where organically grown food is served in the city’s various operations.

3. Economic sustainability
An economically sustainable Stockholm where responsibility for municipal finances is combined with initiatives to improve the efficiency of the labour market, and where the authorities recognise each individual’s fundamental rights to employment, education and accommodation.

4. Democratic sustainability
A democratically sustainable Stockholm where human rights work is strengthened, discrimination is combated and all residents are guaranteed the same rights and opportunities.

Commission for a socially sustainable Stockholm
A commission for a socially sustainable Stockholm has been tasked with the overall mission to analyze and propose how the City of Stockholm can reduce unequal living conditions, in order to increase the wellbeing of all inhabitants.

The mission of the commission is to:
- Analyze unequal living conditions between groups and geographical areas in the city.
- Identify and develop objectives for a socially sustainable Stockholm.
- Propose strategies and measures to reduce unequal living conditions within defined areas for development.
- Suggest ways to measure and monitor the development of social inequality over time in the city’s system for management control and operational planning.
Continuously ongoing work

Five years have now passed since Stockholm received the European Green Capital Award. Five years of continued dedicated work to consolidate the position and to establish the new mindset where sustainability is an integrated part of all city planning and strategies.

Stockholm received the award for its longstanding and successful work on sustainable urban development, but most importantly – for its ambitious targets for the future. On the following pages some examples will demonstrate the progress so far.

Green city planning

Stockholm is a fast-growing city. All in all 140,000 new homes are planned until 2030. This entails many challenges to meet the goal of being a long-term sustainably growing city. The city plan from 2010 – The Walkable city – describes the development plans and strategies which will result in a more close-knit urban environment. The city plan states that the city should be dense and prevent urban sprawl. New houses should be energy-efficient and built close to public transports.

In a growing city it is also important to nurture the many green areas and their values. The Stockholmers are very engaged in the development of the city and very fond of their parks and natural reserves, places accessible and open to everyone. The eco-systems are also very important as they help mitigate the effects of climate change.

A strategy for eco-system services and a system that will compensate for green areas that has to be used for housing or other projects in the growing city are now being developed. Green areas and eco-systems are important contributors to the quality of life for the citizens and for the overall quality of the city. Eco-system services are key elements in the efforts to make Stockholm adapt to a changing climate.

Eco city districts

What does a sustainably growing city look like? Many of us would probably think of Hammarby Sjöstad, the first eco city district in
Stockholm. Hammarby Sjöstad has long served as a symbol for the future Stockholm and every year thousands of visitors are coming to Stockholm to learn more about what is making the district an international role model.

The initial idea was born back in 1990 and most of the district has now been completed. Once fully built, Hammarby Sjöstad will be able to accommodate 25,000 people in 11,000 housing units. Known as the Hammarby model, the solution is based on a closed eco-cycle in which waste and energy consumption is minimised and recycling is used whenever possible. The target: environmental impact should be cut by 50 per cent compared to conventional standards.

Now the next generation of eco city districts – the Stockholm Royal Seaport – is being developed in a former industrial and port area. Plans are under way for 12,000 new housing units and 35,000 workplaces that will be combined with modern port operations. The area has even higher environmental requirements than Hammarby Sjöstad and the target is to be fossil-fuel free by 2030 and adapted to a changing climate. Innovative green technology will enable the residents to manage their own energy consumption using their smart phones.

**Retrofitting**

Existing properties are being renovated and developed with high environmental standards. Many of Stockholm’s suburbs have properties from the 1960s and 1970s.

The city’s real estate companies are now making substantial investments in making them more energy efficient and, in many ways, more pleasant to live in – in close co-operation with the local citizens.
The north-western suburbs of Järva have now developed into the most solar frequent district in Sweden, with more than 10,000 m² solar panels installed. The solar panels will generate 1.3 million kWh solar energy per year and cover up to 20 percent of the energy consumption in the housing units.

The renovation costs were kept low to enable affordable rentals and for the residents to be able to live in their apartments even during the construction period.

**Climate strategy – fossil-fuel free by 2040**

Stockholm’s position far up north puts tough demands on effective heating. Stockholm has chosen to invest in district heating and biofuels. Stockholm’s district heating grid dates back more than 50 years and covers 80 per cent of all buildings. Today, the carbon dioxide emissions amount to 3.0 tonnes per inhabitant and year. The target for 2020 is 2.3 tonnes.

The City of Stockholm has also decided to become fossil-fuel free already by 2040. This of course is a big challenge. A road-map is being developing as a guidance. A close co-operation and exchange of experiences with other ambitious green cities will be a key to success.

Stockholm will be facing effects of a changing climate and is developing a climate adaptation strategy.
**Mobility strategy**

Another challenge Stockholm shares with other cities is to design transport solutions with minimal/reduced effect on the environment. This is a critical factor in order to reach the long-term target.

The city’s Mobility Strategy is a key to achieving the goal of becoming fossil fuel free and promotes public transport, walking and cycling all year round instead of taking the car – this is the starting point in all city, transport and infrastructure planning.

Over the years, the City of Stockholm has implemented a number of strategic measures that have significantly increased accessibility and reduced emissions – such as the metro system, a congestion charge and investments in clean vehicles and renewable fuels. The goal is for all public transport to be fossil-fuel free by 2025.

In early 2013, the City adopted a mobility strategy that outlined Stockholm’s plans for managing – in a reliable and sustainable manner – the increased need for transport generated by its growing population.

The Mobility Strategy is based on three related cornerstones:

1. Urban planning: high-density, varied urban development that reduces the need to travel.
2. Infrastructure planning: major expansion of public transport and a road network that directs heavy traffic out of the city.
3. Traffic planning: optimising the use of the existing infrastructure by promoting public transport, walking and cycling.
**Bicycle plan**

A key component of the Mobility Strategy is a special focus on bicycles as a means of transport.

During the past ten years, the number of cyclists has increased by 76 percent – a result of the city’s investments in improved cycling infrastructure and Stockholmers’ increased interest in and desire to cycle – in spite of a hilled terrain and long, cold and snowy winters. In Stockholm you solve that by putting on spike tyres on your bike.

**Unique digital infrastructure**

One important aspect of sustainable urban development is a well-developed IT-infrastructure. The term Smart City is increasingly used to describe the importance of IT and the social and environmental resources needed for a city to be competitive.

Stockholm has one of the world’s largest open fibre-optic networks and offers access to fixed and mobile broadband throughout the City.

A solid digital infrastructure enables Stockholm to grow in a sustainable way – to implement cutting edge technology (used for example for congestion charges and optimising traffic streams), to increase e-meetings and e-services and thereby reduce the need to travel.
Engaged citizens

The City of Stockholm strive to incorporate sustainability into every aspect of the city life, but to come all the way, it is necessary to have the Stockholmers onboard. And they are!

The citizens of Stockholm are deeply involved in their city. Nine out of ten believe it is important to have a long-term strategy for Stockholm’s development. Seven out of ten are interested in environmental issues and believe the city should impose strict requirements on its residents with regards to environmentally friendly living.

Eight out of ten use and are satisfied with the public transport system in rush hour. More and more Stockholmers also chose to buy organic and fair trade produced food.
Sustainability enhances the Stockholm brand

Being named the first European Green Capital is a fantastic acknowledgement of Stockholm’s long-term efforts and future ambitions.

Stockholm is also highly recognised in several international indexes measuring quality of life and standard of living:

- In a study 2013, OECD recognised Stockholm as the leading city when it comes to the reduction of carbon emissions. OECD was also impressed by the city’s water quality and waste handling.

- According to Ericsson's Networked Society City Index 2014, Stockholm is number one when it comes to ITC development and urban sustainability.

- In Arthur D Little’s Urban Mobility Index 2014, Stockholm is second best among 84 cities when it comes to infrastructure.

- Stockholm is ranked number four in Monocles Quality of Life survey 2014. Copenhagen and Tokyo topped the list.

- Stockholm was ranked number six for its ability to handle climate change in the Resilience cities report 2014.

- PwC’s 2014 Cities of Opportunities Index ranked Stockholm number seven.

- Stockholm was also ranked number seven out of 64 cities in a study published in World Review of Science, Technology, and Sustainable Development 2014.
Challenges ahead

The City of Stockholm is tremendously proud of the European Green Capital Award, while it also carries a great responsibility for Stockholm to be a role model for others.

The city’s strategy is to continue to share good examples and learn from the successful accomplishments of other cities. The European Green Capital Award has given Stockholm an even stronger position in this context. The award is the strongest recognition of the city’s environmental achievements and it clearly confirmed that the city is on the right track. The award is now clearly an integrated part of our brand.

There are many challenges ahead. It is vital to have a common approach to goals and involve others in, and outside, the City of Stockholm. Together we can make a difference for a sustainably growing world.

The aim for Stockholm is to always be a green capital.