

BLUE GREEN CITY

Blue and Green Infrastructure for Sustainable Cities



Action Plan

Växjö municipality

Part I – General information

Project: Blue Green City

Partner organisation: Växjö Municipality

Country: Sweden

NUTS2 region: _____

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Part II – Policy context

- The Action Plan aims to impact:
- Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
 - European Territorial Cooperation programme
 - Other regional development policy instrument

Name of the policy instrument addressed:

The policy instrument addressed is the Comprehensive Plan.

Initially, the idea was to address the Green Plan. In Växjö municipality, the entire structure and system of steering documents (such as plans) has dramatically changed during the last years. New plans do not include any goals or specific action plans. The new Green Plan will also have this new format and is planned to be produced during 2022. There will of course be a ESS perspective in the new Green Plan but as the format will not be the one that was initially planned, the Comprehensive Plan is more suitable as policy instrument in the Blue Green City project.

Why does the policy need to be improved?

The Comprehensive Plan is the individual plan that governs most of the urban development in Växjö municipality. Other plans and activities that also concern urban development use the Comprehensive Plan as a basis and all work is based on positions and guidelines in that particular plan. Trying to work on implementing ecosystem services in other plans and activities first would not carry the same weight and lead to impact. Therefore, it is of great importance to start work on ecosystem services precisely with the Comprehensive Plan.

Background

The purpose of Växjö's action plan is to integrate the ecosystem services perspective in the Comprehensive Plan, and thereby indirectly throughout the whole Spatial Planning and Building Process, ensuring that ecosystem services are taken into consideration in planning and management. The focus is on working methods and new routines.

In Växjö's case, there is a considerable amount of both political will and good data on this topic. However, a plan for how to transform intention to action has been missing.

Therefore, Växjö's action plan consists of one action that is integrated into the Comprehensive Plan.

Learning and knowledge exchange

The action and activities in this action plan result from an extensive learning and collaborative process at the municipality.

One of the main challenges when working in a municipal context is to 'break the silos' and to stimulate and ensure communication and collaboration between departments and administrations.

Introducing new ways of working with blue and green infrastructure and ecosystem services requires that officials recognise their role in the process. Each department and administration must take responsibility for implementing new methods and for using new data and instruments.

During the project, a municipal strategic green group has been re-started. The group has existed before but has been dormant for many years. During the Blue Green City project, the need for an inter-administrative group with responsibility for strategic green and blue issues has arisen again. The group is led by the Comprehensive Department.

The green group meets regularly, is responsible for strategic 'green issues' in the municipality and will monitor the action and the future work with ecosystem services after the end of the Blue Green City project. The municipality also has a limnic environment group that can be supportive in monitoring the 'blue issues'.

Interregional exchange

Växjö has taken inspiration from project partner **Ingolstadt** and their workshop and good practice on animal-aided design and faunistic spatial resistance analysis. In activity b, "Ecosystem services in the digital planning map tool", we aim to complete the current ecosystem services data in the municipality with data on ecological corridors for specific species.

In addition, workshops, meetings, presentations, and feedback from other project parties have also helped us in developing and refining our action. A workshop between Växjö municipality and the **Southern Region Assembly** 22nd February 2021 was particularly rewarding and provided inspiration on which areas of urban development can be prioritized in terms of ecosystem services. This led us to state that it is of great importance that the Comprehensive Plan contains positions on ecosystem services to influence at all stages of community building, which inspired us to activity a.

This also drew inspiration for activity c, to further clarify the intentions of the Comprehensive Plan. Having positions in the plan that are unclear and that cannot be translated into practical work is counterproductive and needs to be clarified in order to achieve results.

How the action is expected to improve the Comprehensive Plan

It has been Växjö's focus to achieve tangible results and effects from this project. The overarching goal is to develop and improve blue and green infrastructure in Växjö Municipality for the benefit of biodiversity, public



health, and climate adaptation. Thus this is a governance change that we target with the action plan.

How the municipality plans and develops the land is crucial to reach the goal. It is the quality of the landscape elements and structures that determine the quality of the ecosystem services produced.

Therefore, focus on this project has been on the policy instrument that has the absolute strongest impact on how the land is planned and developed which is the Comprehensive Plan. It is the overarching policy instrument for developing the municipality. The Comprehensive Plan is the base of the Spatial Planning and Building Process and all the following stages in the process depends on the Comprehensive Plan and its positions. Changing and adapting the Comprehensive Plan to ecosystem services enables more changes further down the process, to create a holistic perspective regarding ESS in municipal community planning.

The action creates prerequisites for a successful and appropriate result oriented work with ecosystem services by introducing new ways of working, new contacts and communication corridors between departments and knowledge enhancement among employees at the municipality.

For further details on how each new routine/instrument (below named activity a-c) improves the overarching policy instrument (the Comprehensive Plan), please see activities a-c.

Part III – Details of the actions envisaged

ACTION 1: ECOSYSTEM SERVICES IN THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

1. The background

The Comprehensive Plan describes the municipality's overall development direction. It's the guiding document for the entire subsequent Spatial Planning and Building Process, and it's therefore important that the municipality's position on ecosystem services is made explicit in this plan.

All municipalities in Sweden must have an up-to-date Comprehensive Plan that covers the entire municipality's area. The Comprehensive Plan must state both a long-term and overall development direction as well as the basic features of the intended use of land and water areas and what consideration should be given to public interests. The Comprehensive Plan will strike a balance between different public interests and provide guidance on how the built environment should be used, developed and preserved.

The Comprehensive Plan is not legally binding but indicative and of great importance for long-term sustainable development. It is designed to achieve the target images in Växjö municipality's sustainability program Sustainable Växjö 2030 to ensure that these permeate the physical planning. The Comprehensive Plan shall be a guide when detailed plans and area regulations are drawn up, building permits are examined and when Växjö municipality or other authorities make decisions concerning land and water use in the municipality.

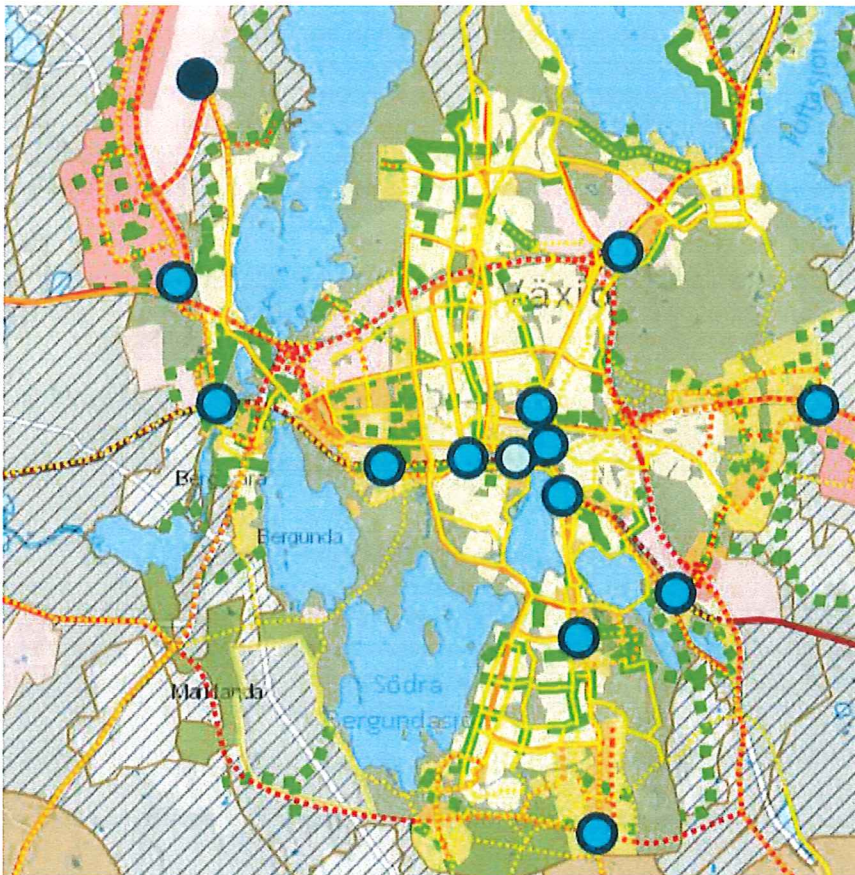


Figure 1. A screenshot from Växjö municipality's Comprehensive Plan showing intended land and water use for the city of Växjö.

The Comprehensive Plan includes several common planning prerequisites, which consist of data that forms the basis for both the Comprehensive Plan and later the rest of the Spatial Planning and Building Process. Correct and updated data and information leads to well-founded decisions. The administrator map is the individual planning tool that is most used by the administrators in the Spatial Planning and Building Process. Therefore, it is advantageous if map data showing ecosystem services can be compiled and presented there.

Developing a municipality implies trade-offs and priorities. In cases where lands with areas with green and blue infrastructure with high values are used for development (for example buildings, roads), the municipality needs guidelines for compensatory measures. In Växjö municipality's Comprehensive Plan, there has been a position on compensatory measures since 2012:

“Densification must not take place at the expense of green areas of great importance. If a green area is used for another purpose, this must be compensated with a new green area or increased quality in another nearby green area.”

However, there are no guidelines that explain how this position is to be used and therefore it has become ineffective as compensatory measures have not been able to be applied.

2. Activities

a. Positions on ecosystem services

This activity aims to integrate positions of ecosystem services into the Comprehensive Plan. It aims to ensure that the descriptions of how to conserve and develop green and blue infrastructure contain an ecosystem services perspective. The activity also includes keeping the Comprehensive Plan up to date regarding descriptions of green and blue infrastructure and ecosystem services. The outcome of this activity will be a Comprehensive Plan including positions on ecosystem services, adapted by the City Council and which has gained legal force. This outcome is expected to be finished during June 2022.

Status: The concept of ecosystem services and how they link to green and blue infrastructure have been integrated into the Comprehensive Plan by the Comprehensive Planning Department. The Comprehensive Plan is adapted by the City Council but have not yet gained legal force.

During the project a municipal strategic green group has been started. The green group meets regularly and is responsible for strategic 'green issues' in the municipality and will monitor this activity after the Blue Green City project ends. The municipality also has a limnic environment group that can be supportive in monitoring.

b. Ecosystem services in the digital planning map tool/administrator map

The administrator map is the individual planning tool that is most used by the administrators in the Spatial Planning and Building Process. Correct and updated data and information leads to well-founded decisions both in the Comprehensive Plan and in other relevant planning processes as the Detailed Planning Process and the Building Permit Process. Therefore, it is advantageous if map data showing ecosystem services can be compiled and presented in the map tool.

The first step in the activity of compiling existing layers on ecosystem services (such as areas prone to flooding, urban heat islands, parks, green walkways) that the municipal already own and organize the data in the categories of provisioning, regulating, cultural and supporting ecosystem services.

The next step in the activity is to check the need for supplementary data on ecosystem services. For example, the ecological corridors of some species have attracted attention for being a layer that Växjö municipality lacks, following inspiration from Ingolstadt's workshop on animal aided design. In addition, the category of cultural ecosystem services needs to be supplemented.

Status: Compilation and categorization is mostly developed. The draft of the map tool has been distributed to those involved throughout the Spatial Planning and Building Process and the BGC project group encourages them to use the draft map layer in their everyday work and to implement this activity. The strategic green group is responsible for monitoring that the information shown in the map is current and updated as necessary, and for identifying the need for supplementary data during 2022.

c. Guidelines for compensatory measures

Developing a municipality implies trade-offs and priorities. In cases where lands with areas with green and blue infrastructure with high values are used for development (for example buildings, roads), the municipality needs guidelines for compensatory measures. In Växjö municipality's Comprehensive Plan, there has been a position on compensatory measures since 2012:

“Densification must not take place at the expense of green areas of great importance. If a green area is used for another purpose, this must be compensated with a new green area or increased quality in another nearby green area.”

However, there are no guidelines that explain how this position is to be used and therefore it has become ineffective as the compensatory measures have not been able to be applied.

The activity therefore consists of developing municipal guidelines for compensatory measures regarding ecosystem services and biodiversity, based on the position on current compensatory measures contained in the Comprehensive Plan.

Following steps will be taken during this activity:

1. Set up reference group.
2. Define value words in the position, like “great importance” and “another nearby green area”.
3. Definition of guidelines and work routine.
4. Approval by steering group.

The development of the map tool will be very much helpful in order to assess the values of green areas on the basis of ecosystem services, which is why activity b is relevant for the implementation of activity c.

Status: Ongoing. The activity started in October 2021 and is expected to be completed in January 2023. As a first step, a reference group including comprehensive planners, detailed planners, developers/project leaders, landscape architects and ecologists, will be interviewed by the project group. Implementation and monitoring will be relevant after the project Blue Green City ends and is not yet decided.

3. Players involved

The project's reference group (parts of this project's stakeholder group) and steering group took part in identifying the need to develop and perform the action and activities.

For each activity, the relevant departments are involved. Knowledge exchange and the development of a mutual understanding of the different steps in the Spatial Planning and Building Process are essential components in this project. New routines cannot be implemented unless there is an acceptance and an understanding of why we need to work differently.

Development of this action has taken place within the framework of the project Blue Green City. Implementation of the activities takes place entirely within the municipality's regular activities.

Until Januari 2023, the project group of the Blue Green City project is responsible for monitoring that

the respective departments implement the relevant activities.

After the project ends, the municipality's strategic green group is responsible for monitoring that the activities are implemented in the spatial planning and building process (with some exception mentioned above). Several departments and perspectives are represented in the group.

Players involved in each specific activity

Activities a-b: The Blue Green City project group and the Comprehensive Planning Department have together developed this activity.

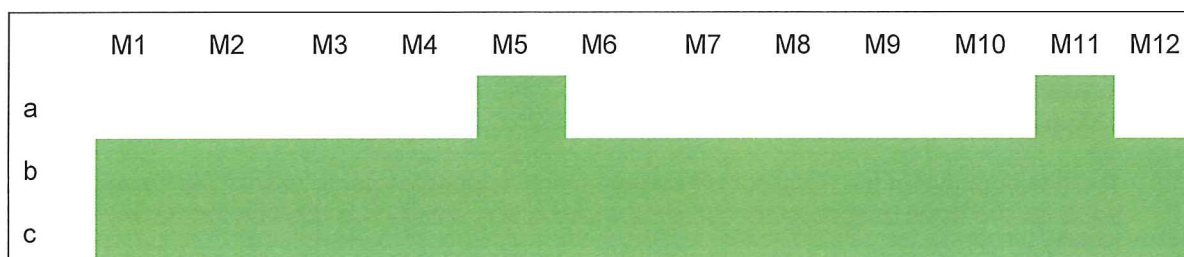
Activity c: The project's reference group including comprehensive planners, detailed planners, developers/project leaders, landscape architects and ecologists, will be involved in developing this activity alongside the project group.

4. Timeframe

Development of the action plan began in January 2020 and will end by January 2023. Implementation is already well underway.

For each activity's timeframe, see below:

- a. The development of this activity started in December 2020 and ended in September 2021. Monitoring will take place twice during phase 2.
- b. The development of this activity started in January 2021 and the development will end in January 2023. Monitoring will take place in January 2023.
- c. The development of this activity started in October 2021 and ends in January 2023. Monitoring will take place in January 2023.



5. Costs

The action is fully designed and prepared within the BGC-budget.

Implementation of the activities takes place within the municipality's regular activities and budget frame. For some parts of activity b, government grants may be relevant.

Until January 2023, the project group of the Blue Green City project is responsible for monitoring that the respective departments implement the relevant activities.

For each activity's estimated cost during phase 2, see below:

- a. The activity costs about 15 working hours, ~1500 €.
- b. The activity costs about 30 working hours, ~3000 €. There will be a cost for the supplementary mapping data that turns out to be needed to get a full scale map layer of ecosystem services in Växjö municipality. That cost is estimated at 25 000 €.
- c. The activity, developing the routine, costs about 60 working hours, ~6000 €. Thereafter, the compensatory measures may lead to costs. How to handle this will be investigated as a part of the activity.

The total cost for phase 2 of the whole action will thus be 35 500 €.

6. Funding sources

Financing of Phase 2 activities will take place mostly within the municipal framework. Government grants may be relevant.

7. Performance indicators

Each activity has one or two specific performance indicator, see below:

- a1. Comprehensive Plan with positions on ecosystem services that has gained legal force.
- a2. Minutes of strategic green group meetings.
- b1. A comprehensive map layer of ecosystem services in Växjö municipality's administrator's map.
- c1. Guidelines for compensatory measures.

Date: 2022-02-22

Signature: 

Stamp of the organisation (if available): _____

