

VÄXJÖ

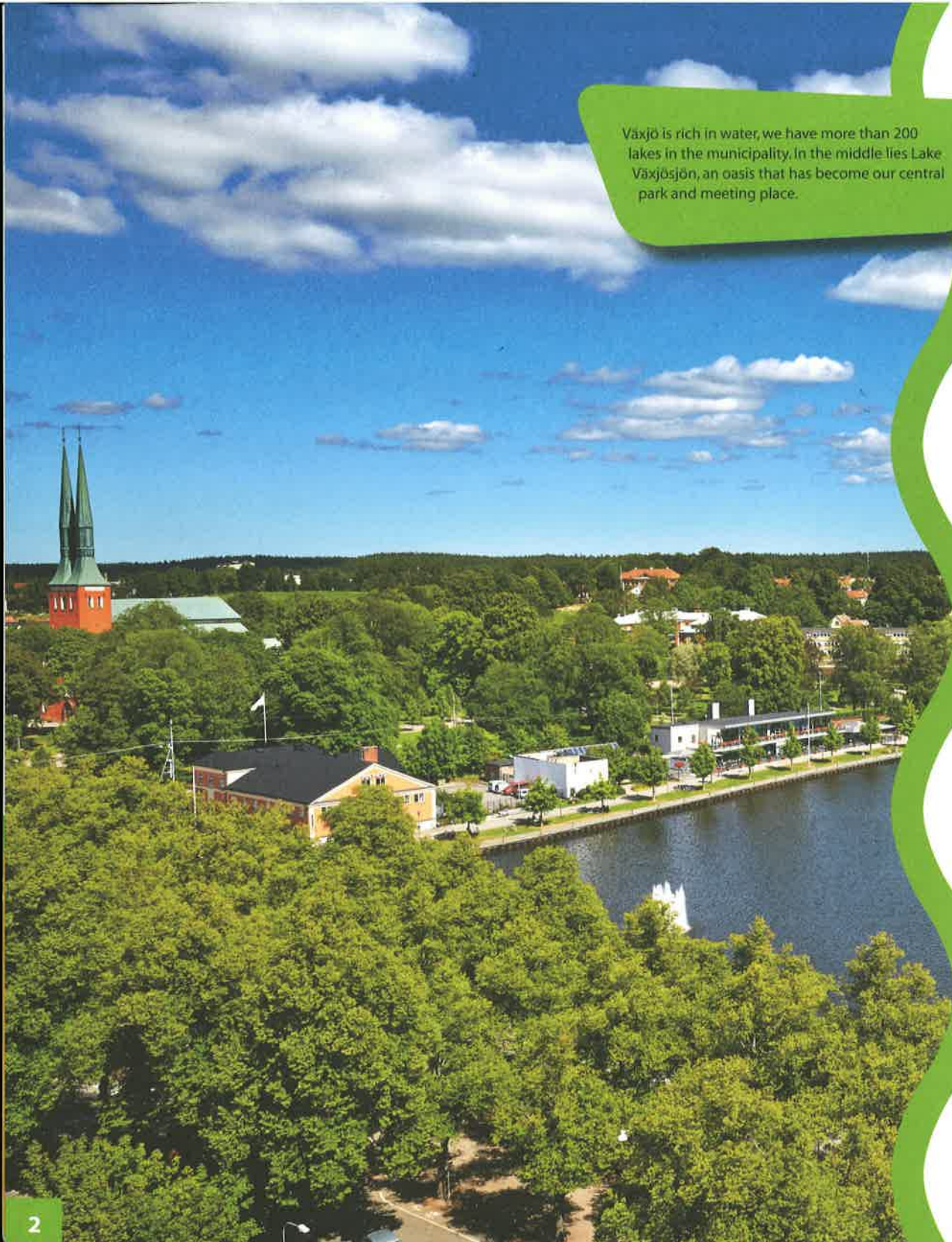
The Greenest City in Europe



VÄXJÖ

*A dynamic municipality that views life
through green-coloured glasses*

Växjö is rich in water, we have more than 200 lakes in the municipality. In the middle lies Lake Växjösjön, an oasis that has become our central park and meeting place.



The Green Line

Why is Växjö called the Greenest City in Europe?

Basically because it has not only broken new ground and taken the lead with its progressive environmental work, but has done so with a broad political consensus. Consensus is a strength when making vital decisions that could impact the future.

In 1996, a famous decision was appointed that put Växjö firmly on the map: local politicians decided that Växjö would stop using fossil fuels such as oil. Växjö is the first local authority in the world to have gone this far. All fuels from finite resources that cause emissions and climate change are to be phased out and replaced by fuels that are gentler on the environment. The goal is a fossil fuel free Växjö by 2030, and we are well on our way to achieving that.

Newspapers, radio and TV companies from all over the world come to Växjö to report on the tiny municipality that had the nerve to make such a large and crucial decision, and how we are living up to it. Almost every week, flags from a variety of countries flutter in the wind outside the City hall. This tells us that delegates are here to learn about Växjö's green progress.

Greenest City in Europe, is not only a vision and a pointer for the municipality and all the companies and organisations, but also an invitation to everybody who

lives here. It was the BBC who first coined the phrase when talking about Växjö during a programme on challenging green ventures in Europe. The council took it on board and made it part of the branding. Calling yourself the Greenest City in Europe could be regarded as sticking your neck out somewhat, but it all goes back to the 1970s and an innovative approach that has paved the way for all the good environment work now being carried out. Växjö Municipal Council works long-term and goals-oriented towards a greener society together with residents and its partners.

www.vaxjo.se/miljo
www.vaxjo.se/sustainable

One of the municipality's most important tasks is to make it easy for residents and companies to live and think green. This means creating real opportunities. It should be easy for residents and visitors to cycle, take the bus, act eco-smart, buy organic locally produced food, to meet and to socialise.

Replacing oil with forest residues

As we live in the heart of a county with an abundance of forest, it is only sensible for the municipal energy company to use biofuels like woodchip from forest residues in the region to heat buildings. Våxjö was first out of the blocks here as well. Our energy company was among the first in the world to take the plunge and invest in large-scale woodchip combustion.

After the difficult oil crisis of the 1970s, ingenious innovators began putting their heads together to find alternatives when they realised they had the world's best fuel right on their doorstep. The combined heat and power plant in Våxjö today produces eco-friendly heating, cooling and electrical power. With the new extension the power plant will be fossil fuel free.

District heating and green electricity

The majority of the houses in Våxjö are connected to district heating, which has played a major part in cutting

out the use of fossil oils almost completely. In Rottne, Braås, Lammhult and Ingelstad outside Våxjö, homeowners can connect to local heating plants that use only renewable energy. It is district heating on a smaller scale and it is hoped that more households connect to it.

District cooling

District cooling is based on the same concept as district heating; a large plant reaches out to many users by pumping water through a pipe grid. Instead of a hospital or company investing in their own electrically driven cooling systems, the cooling comes from a central plant that produces green energy. Increasingly more cooling will be needed in the future to cool offices, industries and shopping malls.



A green investment in solar panels and energy saving innovations is underway in apartments and schools in and around Våxjö.

Växjö likes wood

Växjö is building new, tall and energy efficient timber buildings. A lot of people come here to learn how Växjö works with wood in construction, and the city hosts a national conference called VäxjöSämtalet. An exciting collaboration is underway between the municipality, Linnaeus University, the forestry industry and the construction industry about modern timber constructions.

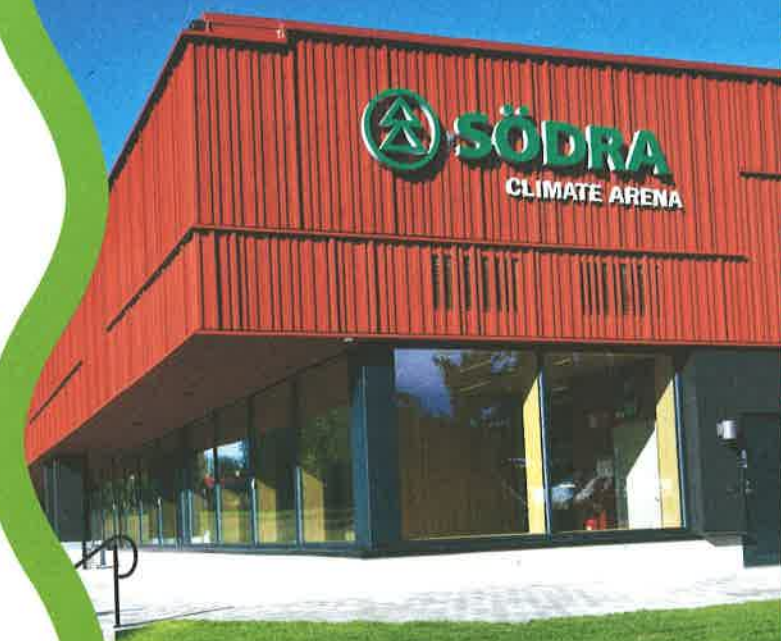
The greatest advantage with wood is that it binds carbon dioxide and is a recyclable and renewable building material. It is also quick and easy to assemble.

With the forest right outside it is only natural to research into, test and develop the advantages of timber constructions.

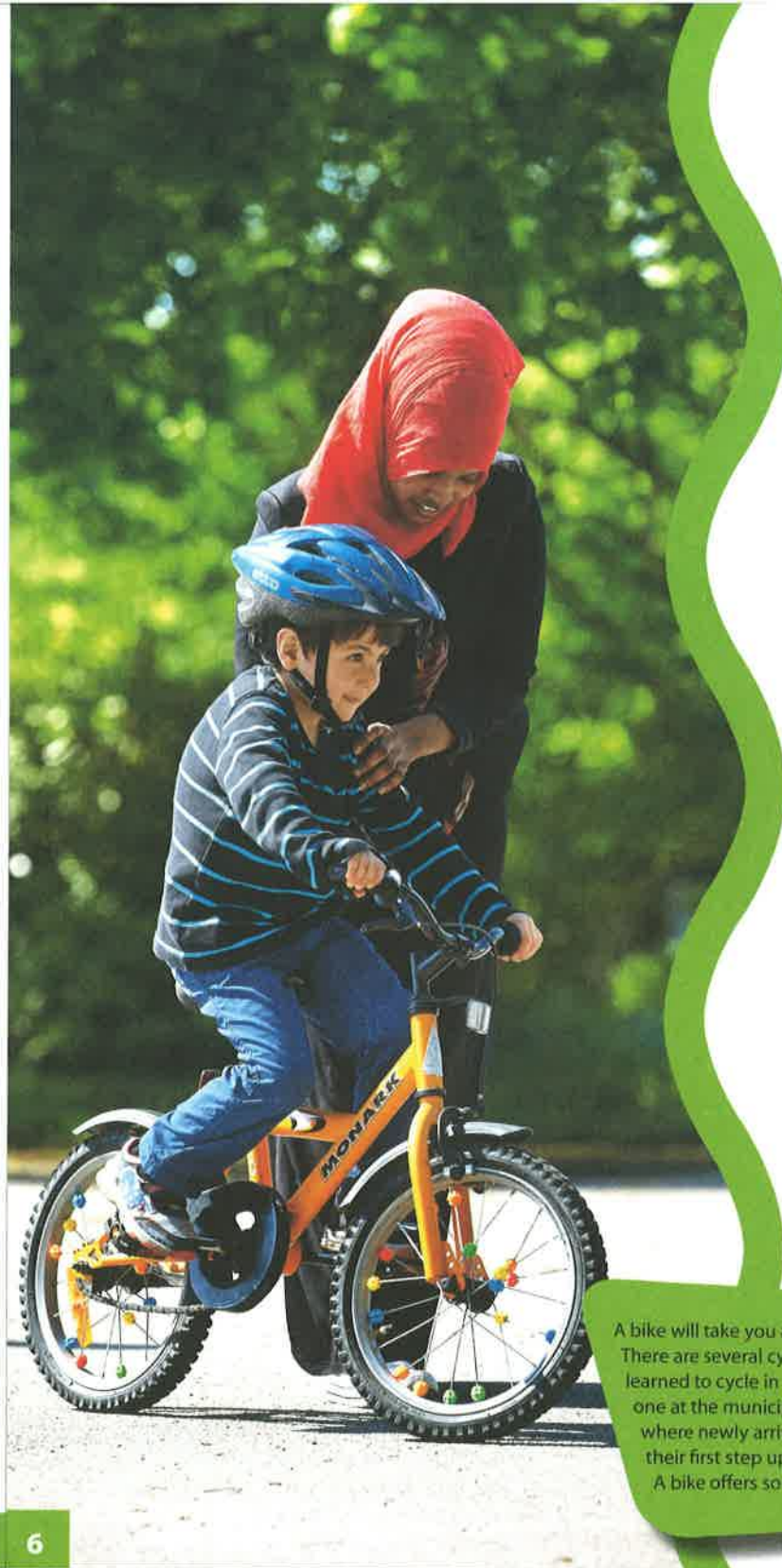
Green lakeside homes

Vikaholm is a housing project on the outskirts of town being built to an environmental standard with eco-smart ideas. The houses are energy efficient and well-insulated. Most of the homes are heated by the town's green district heating. The municipality also encourages everybody who wants to build passive houses.

Long-term and sustainability are the key words for the area, which will be clearly marked by cultivation and greenery. The property owners and the municipality take care of the rainwater by filtering and purifying it before it runs out into the watercourses. This takes place through green roofs with drainpipes that lead straight out onto the lawns. The Vikaholm housing project is a vital piece of the puzzle on the road to a fossil fuel free municipality.



We have famous timber buildings at Campus, in the Välle Broar area and the new Arenastaden, where an energy saving concept has been used throughout the construction process. We also have the Södra Climate Arena, an award-winning tennis arena, the first of its kind in the world, built using passive house techniques and designed by architect Kent Pedersen. Växjö's goal is for 50 per cent of all municipal constructions to be built from timber by 2020.



Why drive when cycling is healthier?

The bike is enjoying a renaissance in Vaxjö, an ideal cycling town with few hills and surmountable distances. But to encourage more people to leave their car at home you have to make cycling appealing. The municipality wants to spread the message that cycling is good for your health, your economy and the environment. All cycle paths have recently undergone a thorough inspection. They will be improved and made safer with improved access.

We have many excellent cycle paths around the town, the 42-kilometre Vaxjö Runt being one of the most popular. Cycle counters have been set out in strategic spots around the course for you to see and be inspired by how many pass by every day, and there are cycle parking and several pumps dotted around the town where you can pump up your tyres at any time.

These days, town planning always puts cycling high on the agenda. Cycling has a new and important role to play because the more people who cycle, the closer we get to our vision of a fossil fuel free municipality. Cycling is a key part of the strategy in a municipality that has the goal of reducing the carbon footprint of all local residents.

www.vaxjo.se/cykel

A bike will take you anywhere you want to go in Vaxjö. There are several cycle schools for people who never learned to cycle in their own countries, including one at the municipal Landningsbanan initiative, where newly arrived people in Vaxjö are given their first step up into the community. A bike offers so much freedom.

In 2013 new green biogas buses appeared on the streets of Växjö. There are more buses, improved frequencies and new routes. The investment has been successful, surveys show an increase in the number of passengers and that they are satisfied with the green buses. The country buses also run on green fuel, RME, which is made from rapeseed.



New attitude towards cars

In a municipality that has made the decision to stop using fossil fuels, much thought has gone into how to replace cars and how to make people change their attitude to driving. Car journeys are what most affect the environment and the air we breathe. Offering green alternatives would be a way to bring about change. One of the industrial estates in Växjö has a filling station for environmentally aware motorists who use bio gas. Electric cars and electric bikes are on the increase in the municipality and more and more charging points are appearing around the town.

Transport pooling reduces emissions dramatically

With smart purchasing and wise planning the municipality has succeeded in greatly reducing both transports and emissions. When all the deliveries to schools,

nurseries and care homes were loaded together, the total number of journeys dropped dramatically from 1,900 deliveries a week to 350! The transport companies used by the municipality have gone over from using diesel to greener RME in their vehicles. Since the change, their fossil carbon emissions have fallen by over 95 per cent!

Trains are up and running again

The return of local railways is an exciting development and old stations have sprung to life once again. It is now possible to commute environmentally friendly once more using the Växjö to Lammhult and Växjö to Gemla lines. The regional trains now also stop in other parts of the county: Markaryd, Diö, Älmhult, Moheda and Vislanda. New green alternatives that give motorists even more reason to leave their cars at home.

*Fancy a trip
around the
lake?*



Fancy a trip around the lake?

Växjö is surrounded by water. We have seven lakes at cycling distance from the city centre. People head off to Lake Växjösjön as soon as the sun appears. The lake's popularity is confirmed by one of the large dating websites. Many prospective couples meet at the lake for the first time. The lakeside trail is 4½ kilometres long and is popular for walks and jogging.

Picturesque, blue-green Växjö

The municipality has over 200 lakes of various sizes. Lake Helgasjön is the largest and the most popular recreational lake. Örken, Innaren, Lammen and Torsjön are other beautiful lakes that enhance the natural beauty of the municipality's largest population centres. Växjö municipality also borders on Rottne and the large lake Åsnen, which stretches across three municipalities. The blue is surrounded by greenery, forests and natural areas. Be sure not to miss Växjö's hinterland!

Crystal clear water

Växjö has been fetching its drinking water from the Bergaåsen gravel esker near Ljungby since 2005. It is a naturally purified groundwater that is pumped to our taps through a 50-kilometre long pipe grid. Nowadays Växjö water is associated with quality. In 2010 it was given the distinction 'Götaland's Finest Tap Water' by the Swedish Water & Wastewater Association. We have previously had great problems with foul smelling, polluted lakes and drinking water with an earthy taste.

www.vaxjo.se/vatten

Those wanting to vary their route have the campus lake, Trummen, in the immediate vicinity, with Linnaeus University, Teleborg Castle and newly built timber buildings along the way. A tour around both lakes offers a greater challenge, a route known as Växjö Eight because it is 8.1 kilometres long. The lakes and their environs have become Växjö's central park and green lung, and has an exciting, growing sculpture park. This is where we socialise, exercise, bathe, fish and relax.

In 1970 a world event took place when Lake Trummen was dredged and enormous amounts of sludge were removed. It received a great deal of attention. A few years later Lake Växjösjön was also restored in the same way, quickly followed by Lake Södra Bergundasjön.

The time has now arrived again. The municipality and a team of lake experts have drawn up a plan to improve the Växjö lake water. The goal is a reduction in the phosphorous content, improved water transparency and less algal bloom. This is achievable by purifying the water that runs into the lakes, cultivating useful plants and, more importantly, treating the bottom sediment with a substance that is normally used to purify wastewater and drinking water. If everything goes according to plan, Lakes Södra Bergundasjön, Trummen and Växjösjön will all get cleaner water.

Rainwater is purified in beautiful grounds

Växjö is surrounded by dikes, beautiful wetlands and green fields created by the municipality to absorb the grimy rainwater from streets and roofs. When the water is filtered through the soft soil, it is purified before it runs out into the large waterways and lakes. It also reduces the flooding risk.

The air we breathe

Carbon dioxide emissions have fallen in Växjö by 40 per cent in 20 years, mainly attributed to the expansion of the district heating and the increasing number of customers. The percentages of benzene, sulphur and nitrogen dioxide have also fallen dramatically. Measurement findings have led to a change of approach. This shows that we can do something about toxins and hazardous emissions when we really have to!

Växjö is taking the lead and sharpening the environmental target for air quality by lowering the accepted level of nitrogen dioxide.

Organic and locally produced food

Växjö municipality is striving for organic and locally produced food throughout its activities. The target is 80 per cent of food in schools and care homes to be organic and/or locally produced by 2020. In 2013 the figure was 40 per cent. It is easier for the small local food companies to deliver to the municipality now when there is only one distributor and place of delivery, Råppe just outside the centre. Another target is to inspire the residents to achieve the goal of buying a minimum of 25 per cent organic and/or locally produced food by 2020.

The countryside delivers, have a taste of Växjö

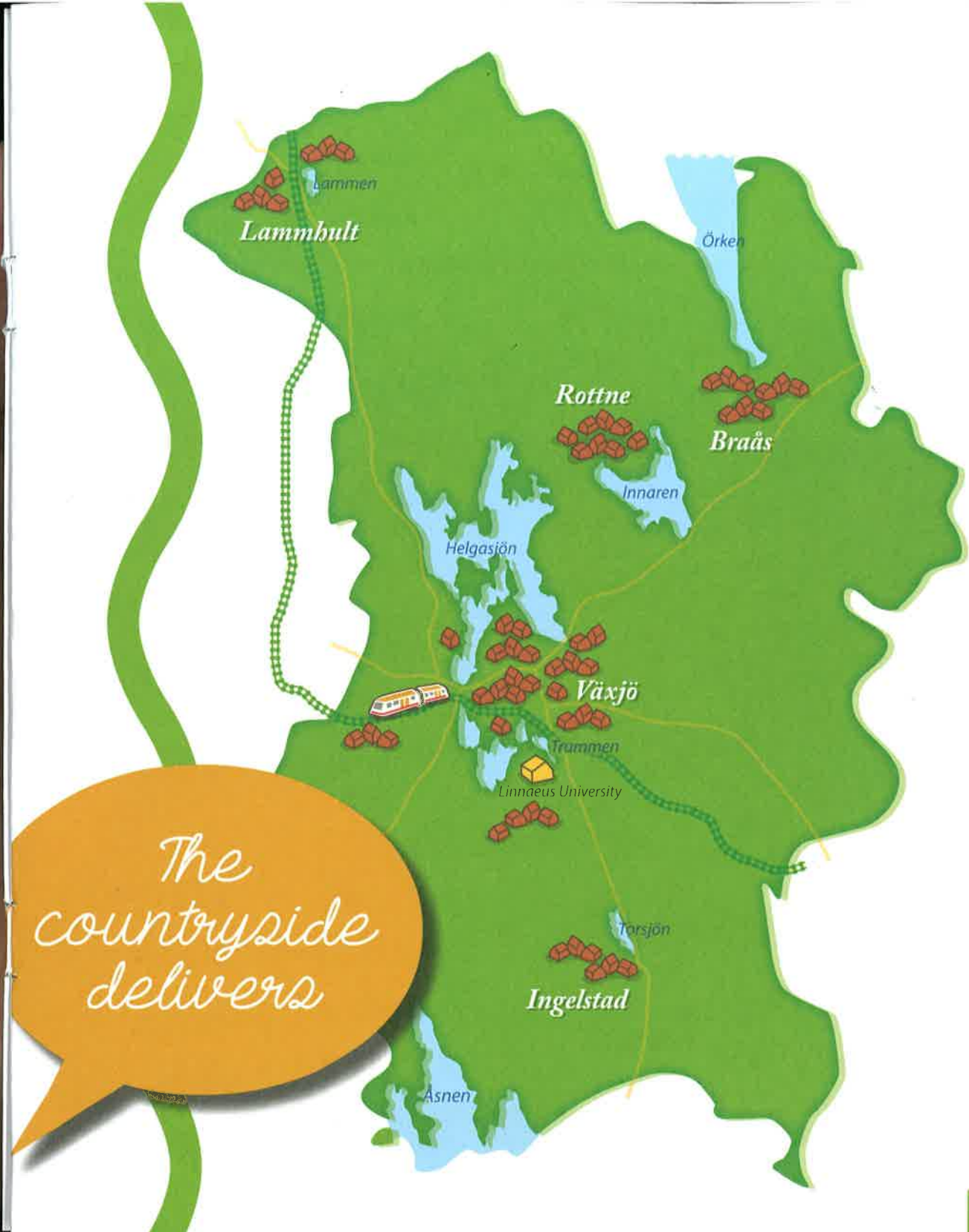
The municipality has an abundance of highly skilled food companies who grow, bake and deliver produce to their own farm shops and Växjö's restaurants and shops. They stock a selection of locally produced and organic food, usually inspired by old recipes: cheeses, sausages, fish, bread, eggs, pastries, cheesecakes and lots of other products.

Växjö is Sweden's Food Capital 2015. The award is presented by the Swedish Ministry for Rural Affairs. The jury's citation underlined the fact that Växjö emphasises the importance of local food and that commerce and the restaurant industry have a long tradition of close cooperation with primary production.

Every autumn we hold an inspiring Food Fair in Växjö, which attracts around 45,000 visitors. New exciting flavours, innovations and inspiration are on show. It is the country's largest market for small-scale food producers, with traditional food products on sale along with new innovations, all locally grown and sustainable. The Swedish Championships in Artisan Food are held here, as is the final of the Young EcoChefs, with young chefs from the country's restaurant schools. In addition, there is plenty to learn about good food at the range of seminars on offer. www.mat2014.se • www.mat2015.se

Award-winning restaurants and food stylists, a gastro hotel, organic food stores, city allotment plots, the markets and the annual food fair are a big part of Växjö Sweden's Food Capital 2015







*Växjö
just keeps
growing*

Our food scraps are made into biogas for buses and cars. It is good to know that egg shells, vegetable scraps and coffee grounds are put to such good use! Biogas improves the Våxjö air.



The joy of green gardening

Expert enthusiasts with green fingers have taken the initiative to set up the allotment plots on Östrabacken in the heart of town. Collectives and experienced gardeners work side by side and restaurants, shops and schools can all have their own plots there. Between spring and autumn it is a green, flowering oasis. Våxjö has several allotment areas. Anybody who wants to is allowed to. A bustling street market and alternative shops provide us with local vegetables.

Wellness among the foliage

Våxjö just keeps growing. This is why it is so important to create green oases around the town to provide some peace and tranquility. Our 24 nature reserves have a teeming wildlife, both large and small. We also have a

famous bee paradise and a unique arboretum (botanical research gardens with the focus on trees). Being close to water and greenery is good for our health. All the greenery prevents pollutants from finding their way into the lakes and watercourses, absorbs carbon dioxide and makes the air healthier to breathe.

From food scraps to biogas

We who live in Våxjö all contribute to the green fuel, biogas, when we put our food scraps in the brown bags. All organic waste decays and becomes biogas. Many of us love the feeling of being part of it all. We are also very adept at recycling our waste.

www.vaxjo.se/matavfall

We welcome all ideas

In several places around Vaxjö are people who have taken their own exciting green initiatives. The carpooling in Tolg is much talked about across the country. People in rural areas are often dependent on at least one car to go shopping or get to work. The people in Tolg have set up a mobile network to get in touch with each other when they need to carpool. The mobile carpool in Tolg won the Rural Innovation of the Year Award 2011 and a Green Action award from the municipality. The mobile carpooling initiative has saved Vaxjö from several tons of carbon dioxide and, as an added bonus, the local people have got to know each other a bit better. The idea is now taking off in other parts of the country.

Utilising human resources

One of many exciting local initiatives in the service of the community and the environment is a cooperative called Macken. This is a social company that was formed to give newly arrived people in Sweden a different kind of opportunity to learn and progress. Macken utilises

human resources and works creatively with things that people throw on the rubbish tip. The municipality and Macken plan to erect a whole recycling village at the Norremark recycling facility. It will be a place where people can leave things and buy recycled building material, vintage clothing and flea market items. In the centre will stand a spectacular earthship with a café and information on circular economy and ecological approach. The recycling village will create eco-friendly jobs.

Multi-coloured diversity

Vaxjö has the goal of becoming a sustainable and fine place in which to live. It has lakes, forests and extensive walking areas as well as the city's prized restaurants, cosy cafés, theatre, university and culture park, home of the County Museum. The effervescent cultural life offers a variety of events each day: art, music, theatre, film, poetry, evenings with writers, book circles...



Muhammad Muhebi was a shepherd in Afghanistan. Thanks to the municipality and the social company, Macken, he has had help to start his own company. His grazing sheep can be seen in several places in Vaxjö and he has won a Green Action Award. www.vaxjo.se/vgg

*Växjö isn't
just green...*



Our growing Växjö now has close to 100,000 inhabitants. Creating new green oases to improve life in a densely populated city is a vital challenge for municipal officials and decision-makers. Despite our growth, we are still a small and accessible municipality; it is possible to see the consequences of decisions, become involved and have a say, and hold a dialogue with those in power.
Take part in the debate – act – react. Think and act eco-smart!

The greenest city in Europe is all about ensuring a sustainable future. The aim is to be a green community that works to achieve strong growth, openness and well-being through broad, innovative environmental initiatives and joint efforts for the future. Together we make a difference!

Join us on the journey towards a greener Växjö
www.vaxjo.se/sustainable



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