

ACTION PLAN FOR SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

in the Stockholm Region



Action plan for Sustainable Urban Development
RS 2024-0586

Action plan under the Business and Growth Strategy for the Stockholm Region
RS 2020-0780

November 2024

Graphic design and production: Luxlucid

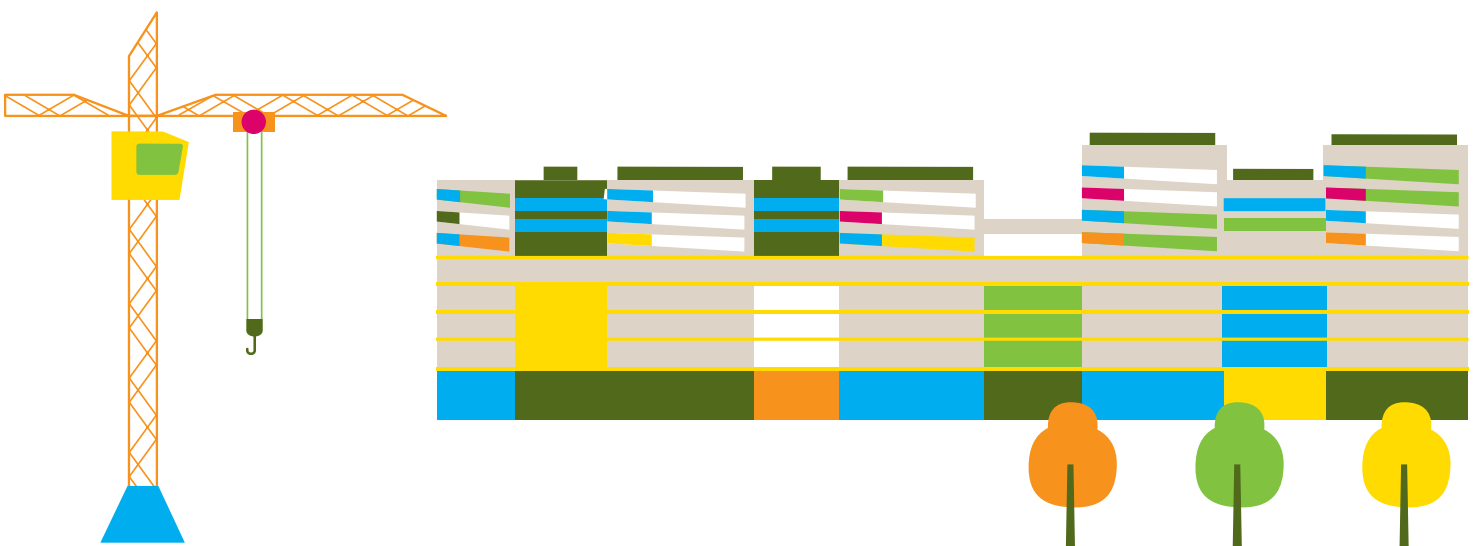
Introduction

THE ACTION PLAN FOR SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN THE STOCKHOLM REGION is based on the Business and Growth Strategy for the Stockholm Region, and will contribute to the vision of the Stockholm region as Europe’s most attractive metropolitan region. This action plan is limited to the priority area: Climate and environmental initiatives for sustainable urban development, which is one of four smart specialisation areas that have been identified as strategically important for public research and innovation efforts in the Stockholm region¹.

The activities outlined under this action plan are also in line with the Climate Roadmap 2050 for the Stockholm region. The Climate Roadmap was adopted by Region Stockholm in 2019, and aims to implement the regional development plan, RUF5 2050, in terms of climate impact. The overall goal of the roadmap is for the Stockholm region to be a resource-efficient and resilient region with zero greenhouse emissions by 2050.

Sustainable urban development in the Stockholm region

Urban development is central to the climate transition. Cities occupy just three percent of the world’s land area, while accounting for 72 percent of carbon emissions. More than 50 percent of the world’s population currently lives in cities; by 2050, that figure is set to rise to around 70 percent. With growing urban environments and increasing demands for emission reductions, solutions to reduce emissions in cities offer commercialisation potential.



¹ Read more about the Business and Growth Strategy for the Stockholm Region and smart specialisation on [page 9](#).

Climate and environmental solutions developed in the Stockholm region can help reduce emissions in our own region, while at the same time boosting the competitiveness of companies in the Stockholm region by selling the developed products on a larger market. Several urban development projects in the Stockholm region have been recognised both nationally and internationally, and environmental technology is also one of the seven areas of strength identified in our region. There is the potential to further bolster this area by investing in climate and environmental initiatives in urban environments.

The city's existing environment is constantly evolving, while new areas are emerging. While new construction of the built environment generally has a greater climate impact than transforming what is already there, new buildings and infrastructure may be necessary in certain circumstances. Climate and environmental initiatives therefore need to be implemented throughout the city, both in the existing environment and in new construction. The circular use of materials is crucial to reduce the climate and environmental impact of the built environment. Used properly, the digital transformation can strengthen the development of sustainable cities. Introducing digital systems in the urban environment is vital, but so is the availability of data and digital tools that can be used to analyse and develop innovations.

Capacity to include innovation in the planning and urban development process

Urban development is a complex field consisting of many actors with different roles (municipalities, innovators, developers, architects, contractors, building material manufacturers and others). Municipalities play a crucial role via the municipal planning monopoly. Strengthening innovation in this area requires understanding and cooperation across the entire chain of actors, as well as a shared knowledge of the various stages of the urban development process; who has what authority, possible business and governance models, the funding opportunities that are available and the regulatory frameworks that need to be followed. Innovation in planning is often required at an early stage. When actors come together, innovations can also be matched with the right actor, challenges can be matched with solutions and urban environments used as testbeds.

The importance of good conditions for testing, scaling up and demonstration

There are opportunities in the Stockholm region for testing innovations in sustainable urban development, and many innovations have been tested in both urban environments and living labs. The public sector is often involved in testing activities, because that is where the innovation will be implemented. The regional development plan, RUF 2050, states that regional city centres should be able to serve as testbeds and role models in the climate transition. Testing activities are largely fragmented and uncoordinated at the moment. Opportunities for testing need to be further developed and made more available and better coordinated. Increased collaboration can help to transfer knowledge, capitalise on synergies and develop new ideas. Opportunities for companies to showcase new solutions to potential customers also need to be developed. One challenge highlighted in particular is the difficulty of progressing innovations from the testing stage to the next stage.

Public actors can incentivise innovation

Public actors can play an important role in the mobilisation, testing and implementation of climate and environmental innovations through the opportunities they have to express preferences in public procurement or in the planning process. Tools such as innovation procurement, functional procurement and dialogue procurement can help, but are currently underused. This may be due to several factors such as lack of knowledge, unfamiliarity with the tools, or clients not knowing what the market has to offer in terms of new solutions. Municipalities can also use different types of incentives throughout the planning process. Comprehensive plans, local development plans and land allocations can all be used to steer towards greater use of innovation to reduce climate and environmental impacts.

Production

The activities in this action plan have been formulated based on the needs for change and development identified during its creation. The action plan is mainly based on a knowledge base from Barkarby Science². A workshop in autumn 2023 brought together around 40 participants from different sectors, including business, municipalities, Region Stockholm, academic institutions, research institutes, organisations, civil society, and innovation and business support to contribute to the action plan. As part of this work, Region Stockholm also consulted with a number of other actors to obtain their input on goals and activities. In addition, Region Stockholm has taken note of studies and reports in the field³ and applied knowledge from these in formulating goals and activities.

Implementation

The smart specialisation action plans are implemented in collaboration between Region Stockholm and actors relevant to the smart specialisation area in question. A coordination group composed of actors in the field is being set up to coordinate the implementation of the action plan activities.

In accordance with the recommendations from the European Commission, initiatives and development in the priority areas for smart specialisation must be continuously monitored and evaluated. Region Stockholm does this within the framework of action plan follow-up and feedback to the government. If necessary, the activities of the action plans are adjusted during follow-up.



² Hållbar stadsutveckling (Sustainable urban development), Barkarby Science, 2023

³ Klimatomställning av städer – En svensk governance-modell för att öka takten i omställningen (Climate transition of cities – A Swedish governance model to speed up the transition), Viable Cities, 2023; Hållbarhet blir standard – Uppskalningsprocess för hållbara lösningar (Sustainability becomes standard – Scaling up process for sustainable solutions), IVL, KTH et al., 2022; Innovation och stadsutveckling – En forskningsantologi om organisationsutmaningar för stad och kommun (Innovation and urban development – A research anthology on organisational challenges for cities and municipalities), published with support from Mistra Urban Futures, RISE and Vinnova, 2019; Fem perspektiv på stadens omställning (Five perspectives on the city's transition), Swedish Energy Agency, 2024

Goals and activities

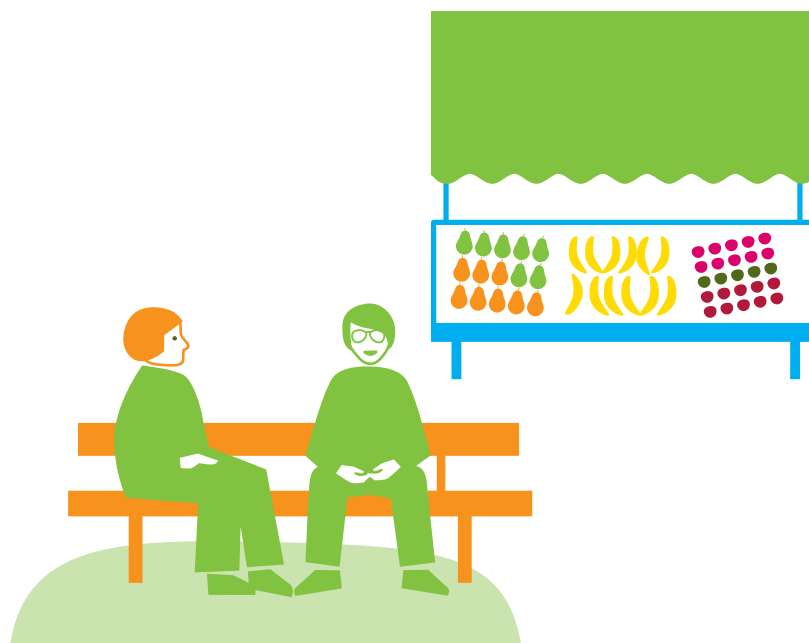
Three goals and associated activities have been formulated for the Action Plan for Sustainable Urban Development in the Stockholm region, based on the vision and goals for the development of the Stockholm region set out in the Business and Growth Strategy:

GOAL 1:

Capacity to include innovation in the planning and urban development process is strengthened in the Stockholm region

Activities:

1. Conduct surveys of relevant areas to improve the knowledge base for the implementation of sustainable urban development activities, e.g. in terms of actors, skills needs and national and international networks and initiatives.
2. Promote meeting places for interaction between actors in the planning and urban development process, with the aim of increasing understanding of opportunities, roles, regulatory frameworks and timeframes, to exchange knowledge and experiences, to communicate success stories and to match actors.
3. Conduct studies and develop tools on key issues, such as business models and governance models to facilitate innovation in urban development.
4. Create a network for ongoing needs-oriented project development in which participants develop, match and collaborate on project ideas, so that these are ready when relevant calls for tenders are issued.
5. Ensure regional and local benefits from national development work and funding opportunities such as Viable Cities and ShiftSweden.
6. In particular, explore how Region Stockholm can bring together and strengthen actors in the Stockholm region through its membership of and collaboration with the Viable Cities innovation programme.

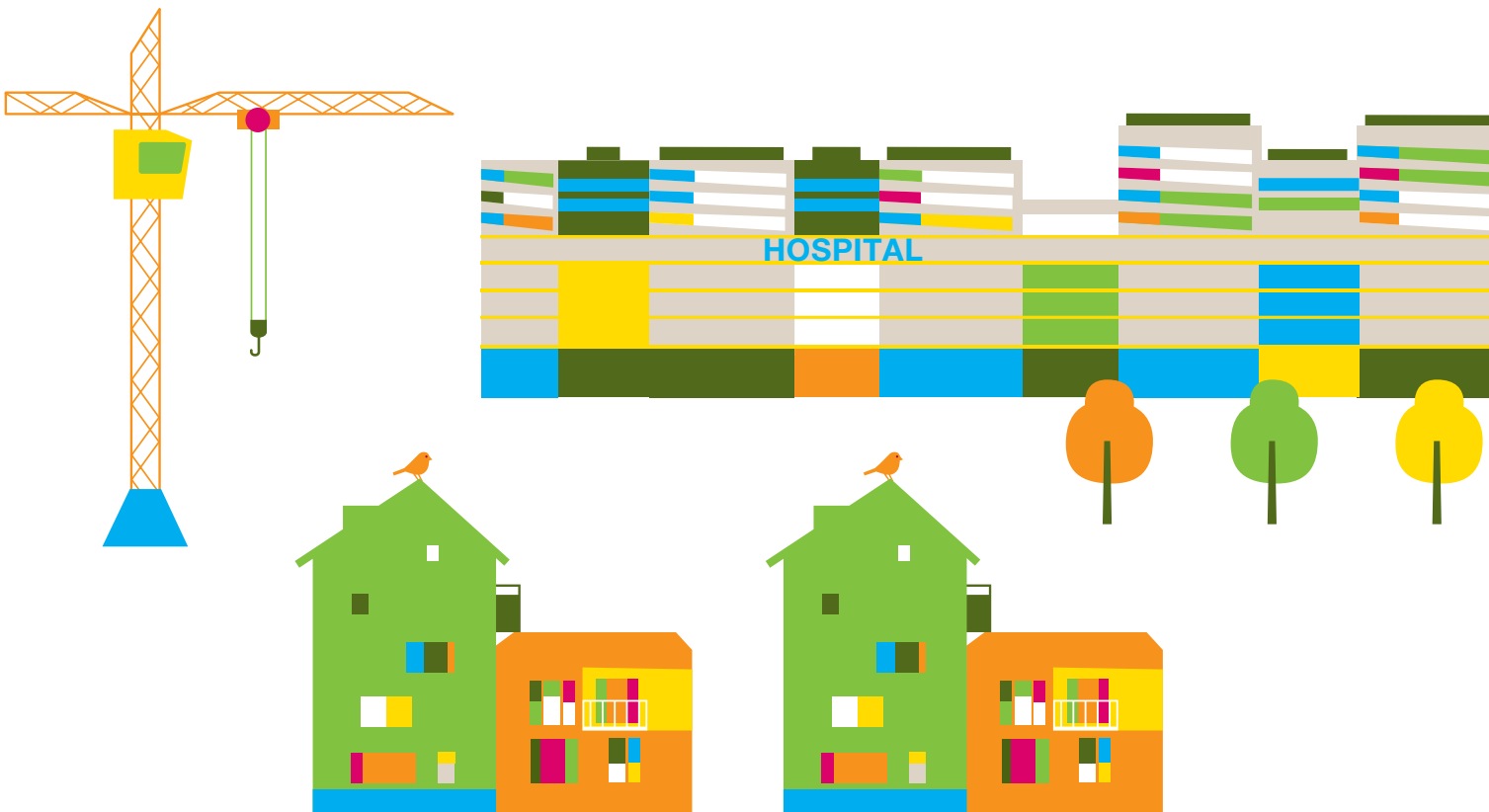


GOAL 2:

Improving conditions for testing, scaling up and demonstration in sustainable urban development in the Stockholm region

Activities:

1. Analyse testing activities in the field in the Stockholm region and publish the results of the analysis.
2. Promote greater cooperation between testing activities, availability and visibility, and increase demonstration opportunities for potential national and international customers.
3. Explore how to develop regional city centres as testbeds for innovation in sustainable urban development.
4. Endeavour to improve conditions for progressing from testing to scaling up, for example by identifying obstacles and solutions, developing tools and sharing experiences.



GOAL 3:

More public actors in the Stockholm region create opportunities for SMEs to test and commercialise innovative products that contribute to sustainable urban development

Activities:

1. Increase knowledge of how public actors in the Stockholm region can create opportunities for SMEs to test and commercialise innovative products through procurement and in planning and urban development processes.
2. Promote greater use of procurement and tools in planning and urban development processes that drive climate and environmental innovation.
3. Implement pilot projects in this area in cooperation with several actors in the Stockholm region.



Smart specialisation in the Stockholm region

The Business and Growth Strategy for the Stockholm region, which is also the region's Research and Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialisation, was adopted in June 2021. The Business and Growth Strategy is a concretisation of the Stockholm Region's Development Strategy RUF5 2050, and will contribute to the vision of the Stockholm region as Europe's most attractive metropolitan region and the following goals:

- a leading growth and knowledge region
- an open, gender equal, equitable and inclusive region

A strategic direction with four focus areas has been identified based on global trends, the strengths and challenges of the Stockholm region, extensive analyses and broad dialogue with the region's actors through discussions, workshops and written input. The four strategic focus areas to strengthen and develop are:

- Research, innovation and smart specialisation
- The competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)
- Internationalisation, exports and investments
- Strategic skills provision

In connection with the 2014–2020 Structural Funds period, the EU Commission launched the concept of regional research and innovation strategies for smart specialisation as a condition for funding initiatives for research, innovation and technological development via the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The aim is to identify and prioritise a limited number of key areas where public funding for research and innovation is expected to have the greatest benefit, and where regional actors have the right conditions to develop international competitiveness.

Based on regional areas of strength in business, research and the public sector, a regional analysis and buy-in process was initiated in 2015, through which four smart specialisation areas were identified as strategically important for public research and innovation initiatives in the Stockholm region. In many cases, these are clearly anchored in various regional city centres and their research and innovation environments or clusters. These prioritised areas are:

- Life science, care and health (there is a specific strategy for this area: Life Sciences Strategy for the Stockholm Region RS 2019-0751).
- ICT, tech and digitalisation
- Industrial transition through sustainable production
- Climate and environmental initiatives for sustainable urban development

The areas prioritised for smart specialisation will be strengthened and developed through actions from the four strategic focus areas.

To achieve the vision and objectives above, several actors may need to take action, both within their own organisations and jointly. Action plans are being developed with a number of more specific goals and activities to create collaborative arenas for coordinating implementation.

