Attend the Stockholm Urban Shortage
Preface

Attend the Stockholm Urban Shortage

The main task of The Stockholm Chamber of Commerce is to make Stockholm an even better region for free enterprise, business and company development.

Urban planning in Stockholm is aiming for a considerable increase of housing developments. But at the same time, local authorities have decided that this has to be accomplished on already developed land. This will have serious consequences for the economic and industrial life of Stockholm. Harbours, air-ports, terminals and industrial areas are threatened as they have to make place for new residential areas. Noise standards and other environmental legislation make it difficult for many enterprises to remain in present locations when new housing gets closer. Nevertheless, it is of utmost importance that new housing is built in the inner parts of the region and at good locations for public transport, in order to avoid the negative environmental consequences of long journeys to work.

The Chamber of Commerce therefore is of the opinion that building activities and development has to be permitted as well on previously not developed land. Naturally it is of great importance that precious cultural and natural values are protected and preserved. But far from all unbuilt land in Stockholm is of that character. The Årsta Field is one example. It is as large as the Old Town of Stockholm, but today a windy and inhospitable field between traffic routes and blocks of flats built in the 1960’s. The field is not highly appreciated by it’s neighbouring population. Only six per cent of the inhabitants in the Årsta area visit the field once a week or more. This is a good example of unbuilt land that would benefit from new development. The Årsta Field would be more attractive if transformed into a town with pleasant dwellings, streets, squares and parks - compared to being preserved in its present condition.

The theme of this report is “more town in the city of Stockholm”. The attractivity of the very limited urban inner city area of Stockholm is linked to the building structure itself. But since the war we have built suburbs instead of a real cities. This report illustrates that it is possible to build new real urban environments in Stockholm, that the amount of real urban places could be expanded and that new city districts could become just as attractive as the old city itself. That could be done by building in the Årsta area, thereby linking together two housing suburbs from the 1960’s, Österberg and Valla Gärde, giving the inhabitants there new and exciting surroundings.

The Chamber of Commerce regards this as one example of how it is possible to increase housing construction in the central parts of Stockholm without squeezing away companies, firms and other activities vital to the growth of the capital.


Stockholm, February 2006

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Stockholms Handelskammare ser som sin främsta uppgift att verka för att Stockholmsregionen blir en ännu bättre plats för företag, företagande och företagsamhet.


Temat för denna rapport är "mer stad i Stockholm". Att innerstaden upplevs som så trevlig beror på själva bebyggelsestrukturen. Allt sedan kriget har det byggts förorter i stället för stad. Denna rapport åskådliggör hur man kan bygga en ILLUSTRATION showing possible buildings according to proposed TOWN PLAN for THE ÅRSTA FIELD with surroundings in the city of Stockholm Scale 1: 2000, presented by Anders J Soderlind
The present plan for the Årsta field. Does this plan constitute the best possible land use, taking into consideration the present acute urban shortage?
Urban development of today – both with regard to traffic and rent levels – shows that the demand for genuine city milieus in Stockholm is greater than the present supply. Some short observations:

1) The unique mixed environment of the old inner city becomes more and more coveted and popular. Both young people and the growing group of active pensioners – as well as companies and business people – make for the inner part of the city in search of urbanity, activities, meeting-places and shopping. New shopping gallerias and exclusive dwellings crowd together with renovated offices, restaurants and congress halls. This is basically something very positive.

2) The inner parts of the city are not seriously threatened by the new areas of commerce and housing that expand on the suburban fringe. New urban districts still have a long way to go before they can match the experience of urbanity density, mixture, pulse and activity of the old city. The growing tourism and travel industry also take the old inner city as a departure point when presenting the region in leaflets and advertising brochures – even if the real congress halls and conference hotels that are offered in this material often are situated outside the heart of the town.

3) Today competition for access to the qualities of the inner city makes the prices of dwellings, offices and premises constantly rise. In the same way, the demand for the urban core tends to make the inner city streets overcrowded. Touring coaches and taxi cabs fight for room with private cars and company transports in a limited street space.

4) In the long run car tolls and higher parking fees cannot solve the problem of an overcrowded inner city. Those setting out for the centre of the city often have good reasons for doing so. They look for events and experiences that can only be found there. In times of war ration-cards is of course a good method to handle the distribution of a limited supply of food. Car tolls can be looked upon as a kind of ration-card – they eliminate part of the queues to the inner city but not the reasons for people wanting to get there.

5) In a market economy, the answer to a situation of shortage is usually to increase the production of the goods and services that are most wanted and which therefore have the highest prices. If a popular restaurant is overcrowded the owner does not in the first place raise the prices in order to keep customers away. Instead he or she tries to get in more tables and chairs. Or maybe considering to enlarge the premises or starting a second new restaurant with a similar offer. This way of reasoning can also be applied to the problem of overcrowding in cities.

6) One effect of the lack of balance between supply and demand of urban areas is that less profitable undertakings – antique shops, second hand bookstalls, cultural activities, cheap dwellings, workshops and service establishments – tend to be forced out of the inner city. This hurts the cultural meeting place, the ABF-house, of the labour movement at Sveavägen as well as small bookstalls in the plush city district of Östermalm and car repair shops in the district of Kungsholmen.

7) Some of those activities are difficult to establish and have a hard time to survive, if relocated to the suburbs. This development gradually kills the thriving undergrowth of unique activities necessary to keep a city alive and thriving – both from a cultural and an economical point of view. In some extent, small and mostly unprofitable theatres are a condition for bigger and more profitable cultural institutions to thrive – as the small institutions provide the big with new ideas and human capital and know how.

8) A consequence of this urban shortage is that industrial and business areas often are transformed into more or less “dwelling only” areas. In the long run this transformation of uses threatens the economic foundations of the city, as a thriving economic life needs both areas for mere offices and areas for production, repair, service, maintenance, distribution, specialized shopping and wholesale trade. The idea of creating a mixed city – with both dwellings and places of work - is not controversial. But “mixture” can also mean to create a good mix of different areas suitable for different types of trade and business.

9) A consequence of “less clean and tidy” activities being squeezed out of the central parts of the city, is that the traffic load in the region tends to increase. A service firm or a small con-
struction company that is forced to move from a central location out to the suburbs, will have longer distances to their customers. The result is an “unpractical” city – which could be compared with a poorly planned apartment with a hundred yards between the wardrobe, the laundry and the bathroom. This fact alone is a strong argument for the need of creating more of the highly coveted inner city qualities - in more than only one single place in the Stockholm region - and in other places than present industrial areas.

The conclusion is simple: The inner city of Stockholm is too small. The urban shortage can only be cured by offering new city environments that can relieve the pressure on the city centre – environments with the same intensity, mixture and accessibility as the old urban core.

This can be achieved in several ways:

- Transformation of existing industrial areas into new city districts.
- Building of new city districts in places not yet developed or only sparsely built.
- Complementary additions to existing dwelling areas and transformation of these into real cities.

The choice of place for development is important. The number one requirement is that new developments will improve and beautify what is already built in the chosen area. That those who already use the place are offered better conditions and more attractive surroundings after the development has been completed – as compared to the present situation.

For that reason, it is questionable to regard all industrial areas suitable for housing development.

For that reason it should be regarded as natural to develop unbuilt land - even where today grass and trees are growing.

This is certainly not a new idea. Urban development has always replaced woods, open fields and arable lands. This is the way Stockholm has grown from the very beginning. Imagine that all cultivated land on the two (today densely built) islands of Södermalm and Kungsholmen had been “saved” from development in the 18th and 19th centuries – for the sake of respect for the “green structures”.

Then the urban core and the area now called “the inner city” of Stockholm would have been drastically smaller. And we would, as a result of this, have a Stockholm with even longer distances, more traffic, more pollution and more crowding than today.

In order to avoid new isolated suburbs, like those built in the sixties, we must find unbuilt – and buildable - areas that are situated close to already developed areas.

The formula will be:

Find a sufficiently large green unbuilt area close to – or between – some existing suburban areas that would like to have more “attractive neighbours” and perhaps also wish for better parks, better squares, better street qualities, better public transport, better services and better places for shopping. Upgrade this area into a town – a dense city with urban parks and squares.

The Årsta Field is a place that answers to all these requirements…
Comparison between the Årsta Field and The Old Town of Stockholm – both in the same scale.
Proposal
A Town at the Årsta Field– why then?

Stockholm has presented a clear picture for future development. The report “Vision Stockholm 2030 – a platform for dialogue on the development of Stockholm” clearly confirms that a considerable increase of the population is necessary to strengthen the position of Stockholm and Sweden in Northern Europe. To reach a durable growth of a city four things are needed: the city must be Dynamic, Attractive, Permitting and Effective. The city has to break up the social segregation, increase housing production, create effective means of transportation, strengthen Stockholm as an international meeting place and promote commercial and industrial life.

The strategy of “building the city inwards”, densifying central areas, in this vision is completed with the idea of creating several new “urban nucleus” even in the suburbs. A metropolis with a number of urban core areas – apart from the old city centre, is also part of the vision of the regional planning office (RTK).

The concept of preserving the Årsta Field– with new allotment gardens and sports activities, new footpaths and cycle-tracks, preserving and restoring the old Svea Highroad - was launched in the beginning of the 1990’s, when the building industry was hit by a severe economic decline and demand for buildable land was low.

The present plan for the Årsta Field does not generate any revenues to the owners, on the contrary it asks for more investments from the town of Stockholm. At the same time, the inhabitants around the field have plenty of free spaces and green grounds at their disposal. The green areas in old Årsta are highly appreciated, not the least by children.

The Årsta woods down towards the Årsta Bay is the most popular, like the small parks in the central parts of the district. If anything is lacking, it is more linked to a more comprehensive and attractive urban environment, with both residences, places of work, different kinds of services and – not the least important – a richer offer of shops.

Just before the new highway tunnel, The Southern Link, was opened in 2004 – which reduced local traffic disturbances - a quite different plan for the areas close to the Årsta Field was presented. The project “The Årsta Passage” from 2003 lies more in line with the present urban policy of Stockholm. It proposes the tunnelling of two power-lines from The Globe Arena to the wholesale business area, in order to free the ground for new mixed development.

A sweep with a dense and more city like environment, with about 2 000 dwellings and offices follows the new tramway, and in some places also transforms existing transport routes into urban streets like those of the inner city. The dwelling quarters of Årsta from the 1940’s are in this plan connected to Valla Gärde, a housing suburb from the sixties, with new blocks and streets.

Even more in line with the “Vision Stockholm 2030” would be to link together two suburbs from the sixties and two industrial areas around a new urban district with new urban parks. The proposal in this report develops further the ideas of the “Årsta Passage” project, and shows how a real estate structure of small scale can create a dense and varied city environment situated south of the inner city in a central position with good communications.

The Årsta Field and surroundings can gradually be transformed into an integrating and integrated city. The today geographically isolated factory and dwelling areas can be converted into a dense and continuous urban structure with small and large parks, squares and markets with new meeting places both indoors and outdoors.

The Årstad Project implies a number of simultaneous possibilities:

• Solving a part of the present shortage of housing and urbanity.
• Regeneration of two suburban areas from the sixties.
• Creation of an inviting urban park instead of a rarely used suburban field.
During the last few years a lot has changed around the Årsta Field. The highway tunnel, The Southern Link, has opened up new areas for possible development and reduced the disturbances from the heavy through traffic. The tramway passing Valla Gärde has become a success. A bridge for cyclists across the Årsta bay has been built and a new commuter train station in East Årsta near Nyboda has opened.

The wholesale area to the east of the Årsta Field is likely to be transformed and developed, as more heavy businesses tend to leave. With increased accessibility and less traffic disturbances real estate levels are likely to increase. This creates a pressure for new development. Previously isolated and "low value areas" suddenly emerge as profitable to exploit.

These are some reasons for the Årsta Field being a suitable place to cure a part of the Stockholm urban deficit. The more than ten year old planning proposal for an updated suburban field is not up to date. A more contemporary plan is possible, given a few prerequisites:

- That it is possible to reach political consensus on the general outline of the project.
- That commercial and industrial as well as environmental interests can reach an agreement.

In order to simplify the realization of the project, it connects back to the type of robust town planning regulations that were used during the development of the central parts of old Stockholm and old Sundbyberg. This means that city officials merely regulates the most important features of the project:

- A Town Plan that defines only the layout of streets, blocks, open squares, parks and natural reserves.
- A Building Code that defines only the maximum building height and floor space ratio.

This means that the kind of legally binding and very precise so called “detailed plans” for each quarter and building, characterizing present urban planning, need not to be produced in the first step of. Formally, the Town Plan and the Building Code can be adopted as, what in Swedish building legislation is called a “fördjupad översiktsplan” (in depth general plan) with “generella områdesbestämmelser” (general area provisions).

To increase the speed of the project it can be presented as a “free zone” where new regulations and new ways of planning are tested – adopted to the realities of today. For a swift implementation it may be advisable to anchor the proposal with the Swedish Planning Board (Boverket), the County Administration (Länsstyrelsen) and the Government. The entire project could be launched as an experimental Building Exhibition with the focus on TOWN planning, for example a (Town) Building Exhibition in 2008.

In a free zone for urban development, the very same rules which made it possible to build the attractive inner city of Stockholm are applied – at least to begin with. These kinds of regulations have in fact proved, in the course of time, to have generated the most socially and functionally well integrated urban environments in our country. And in the same time, so far, our most cost-, resource- and transportation-effective cities.
A sustainable urban development combines what is economically feasible and effective with what is socially desirable and defensible and what is ecologically long term resource efficient. A city at the Årsta Field–merging together with two industrial and two housing districts – is a realistic proposition, viewed from all the three aspects of sustainability:

Economically:
The project generates revenues instead of demanding money from the tax-payers. Increased real estate values combined with better accessibility makes a project of this kind profitable. The proposed Town Plan as well as the Building Code can be legally ratified prior to land assignment to individual builders.

Revenues can be generated by selling or signing of long rental contracts with a multitude of construction companies, real estate developers and organisations. With new neighbours, the present wholesale business area would experience a large increase of value of their estate – which in turn would create considerable proceeds to the owner, the city of Stockholm.

An increased use of the public transportation systems in the area, as well as of existing roads, waterworks and waste water systems would reduce initial investment thresholds. The proposed “European Park” is costly to build, although it is placed in the more “marsh” part of the field that is difficult to build on. On the other hand, it increases the real estate values of the blocks around it – in the same way as Humlegården in Stockholm and Central Park in New York raise the prices of the real estates nearby.

Socially:
The project is likely to reduce the social segregation in the vicinity. The plan mixes new/expensive apartments with the old/cheaper apartments already built in e.g. Valla Gärde. The borders between existing housing of today and new housing to be built are dissolved by new streets and new blocks that mix new and old buildings. The new urban structure that links together housing areas of not very high state, the today isolated apartment areas Östberga and Östbergahöjden will gain in attractiveness. Preconditions for a higher level of social mixture are achieved, by the geographical and physical integration of the plan itself. New and highly attractive blocks close to the proposed European Park will be built near the present suburban apartment areas.

The plan offers a real possibility to establish a large urban district in which social integration is the result of development – not only a superficial goal. In some extent, the project may also moderate the strain on the central parts of Stockholm. If the new city becomes attractive enough, families and enterprises in the central parts of Stockholm may choose to move here and so counteract the gentrification tendency of the central parts.

Ecologically:
The project offers alternative locations for dwellings, offices, shopping, education, research, entertainment etc in a central location with good preconditions for public transport. In comparison with new areas for detached houses, “garden suburbs” and “ecological villages” in the outskirts of the region – such as Värmdö and Haninge – the “Årcity” would be relatively resource efficient, both with regard to construction and maintenance. In a large extent, existing infrastructure can be used. Ecology in urban planning can be characterized as the effective use of resources, vicinity, closed circuits, low transport dependency and a low rate of material consumption. If, on the other hand, ecology is understood solely as the preservation of open unbuilt land, it is logical to establish allotment-gardens in this very central location.

In “reality based” ecological terms the project can be looked upon as an example of re-use and vitalizing of a less well functioning suburban structure. The loss of a relatively isolated green area should be weighed up against the possible ecological gains, as well as economical, social and cultural yields.
Town plan with new quarters and streets. Existing buildings are marked gray.
Summary of TOWN PLAN and LOCAL BUILDING CODE for THE ÅRSTA FIELD with surroundings in the City of Stockholm

A complete description of Town Plan and Building Code for the Årstad project is to be found as an appendix.

It can be loaded down on:

http://www.chamber.se/se/arstad.pdf.

It can also be ordered from The Stockholm Chamber of Commerce.

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The purpose of this Town Plan and its Building Code is to create the legal and physical preconditions for the growth of a genuine city environment around the Årsta Field in Stockholm.

The aim of the proposal is:

• To show that it is possible to convert a field surrounded by roads, two housing areas and two industrial grounds into a lively town.
• To present an alternative to the present plan for the Årsta Field and its surroundings.
• To suggest a local Building Code for the area around the Årsta Field, integrating places of work, dwellings, parks, services, nature and traffic.
• To concretize present discussions on sustainable development in urban planning, and to show that there is no antagonism between ecological durability, economic growth and social integration.

A background of the proposal is that the increased mobility of companies and household tend to will raise the competition between towns and regions. The local environment then becomes an important competition factor.

As Europe embarks on the path towards a supranational integration, combined with greater independence for towns and regions, it is conceivable that different local building codes can substitute in part for central rules and regulations.

These rules have provided us with a relatively high technical building standard but often also with an anonymous environment void of local characteristics.

A local building code – for an urban district, a community or a small town – can offer different actors long lasting and explicit rules of the game.

At the same time, the competition between different sets of rules (e.g. different building codes rules in different towns) may promote pluralism and an openness for different solutions to similar problems.

What political scientist refer to as “Institutional Competition” has been an important propelling power in the history of European civilisation.

The rules and regulations, which in practical testing, have proved to be the best for enterprises, economic stability, ecological sustainability and so forth, may also become the rules most widespread.
A second Sundbyberg can take form in the Årsta Field.
A small town in the big city. Årstad.

Building according to demand
There are plenty of housing districts, working areas and commercial centres in Stockholm. On the other hand there are very few mixed areas. The urban district placed at the top of the queue list of the local housing authority in Stockholm – already ten years ago – was Södermalm. If Stockholm for the last ten years had been planned in order to meet this demand, at least one more Södermalm would have been built – a mixed use city with about an even proportion of dwellings and working places. The newly built urban district of Hammarby Sjöstad (Hammarby Waterfront Development) did not wholly turn out as a mixed use district. It became more of an ecologically sustainable housing district with services and shops close to a working place area.

Why this shortage of “city”?
What we generally refer to when using the word “city” can be found in the central parts of Stockholm, in the old parts of Sundbyberg, at the old city square of Gullmarsplan, along the Råsunda Road in Solna, in the squares along the number 12 tramway in Bromma and along some of the streets in Aspudden, Midsommarkransen and Gröndal. The rest of Stockholm consists of different variations of the theme of “suburb” or of “area development”. The reason for this is not that it is technically or economically impossible to build more of what we refer to as a “city”. The problem is the very ideas that have directed urban planning towards building suburbs, not cities. This process has started to change – one recent good example is the new area around the Liljeholmen subway station, as well as Järla Sjö and the new shopping quarters in Sickla in Nacka Community.

This plan offers a possibility to go further: a large project, a sequel of sorts to Hammarby Sjöstad, but with a more fine grinded scale and with more of mixed use. Gladly with ecological development as an objective.

Breaking loose from words that dominate thinking.
The proposal shows that it is possible to build more of the mixed use urban environment – outside the inner city. One precondition for this to be possible is to stop thinking with the aid of words that prescribe the content; words as “housing area”, “working area”, “shopping centre” and “traffic control”. Words have a great power over our thinking. The first step in winning back the city is to recapture the language.

To say: urban district, block, street, square, park, house, courtyard, fence and pavement.
Instead of: area, traffic feeding, parking area, recreational area, cycle track, playground, footpath, noise-shelter and shopping centre.

A city connected to its surroundings.
Not a “suburban island” surrounded by highways.

The Årsta Field is today surrounded by two housing areas and two industrial districts and was until recently framed by heavy thoroughfares which made the field disturbed by noise and difficult to reach. Now the Southern Link highway tunnel has taken away the traffic barrier. This makes it possible to let the areas grow together around the field and form a genuine city environment. Borrowing from pattern models of the most pleasant and attractive urban districts that Stockholm can offer – or Sweden or the rest of the world.

Small is beautiful – and nice and diverse
The proposed city consists of rather small blocks with streets ranging from 8 to 32 metres width, a few rather tight squares and a great number of small urban parks. Streets are designed to eliminate the feeling that “here begins the new part of the city” – what is old and what is new is linked together. Very seldom we do like this when planning for building something new. Most often new urban districts take the form of tiny islands with buildings on them. Also most often they lack contact – physically as well as socially - with the older parts of the city. Some streets in the plan are straight and strict with long vistas, others are short and winding or ends abruptly. The plans pattern is a combination of the medieval twist and the square-shaped quarters of the 17th to 19th centuries. As opposed to suburbs we have built – and still keep on building – the traffic goes inside the city, not in thoroughfares outside or past the development.

The European Park – an attraction and an adventure
In the middle of the field where the ground is watery and hard to build on, a park looking like the map of Europe is placed. The European Park will be a little larger than the Humlegården Park in Central Stockholm. The park consists of lawns, plantations, trees, perhaps a lamppost or a park.
bench marking each of every European capital and water in ponds with the same form as the Atlantic, the Mediterranean Sea and other big lakes in Europe. One old Swedish ell-measure (0.59 meters) in the European Park corresponds to ten kilometres in the real Europe. One ell-measure is about the length of a step when walking. The park may give Årstad an identity and a peculiarity of its own, perhaps also some kind of exclusiveness.

One line of thinking is to give Årstad such an attractive milieu that different kinds of activities, organisations, businesses and people looking for dwellings will find this a satisfactory alternative to the inner parts of Stockholm. This is of course to aim very high.

To make the same demand on product development and progress in urban planning as in, let’s say, the computer industry, is unusual but all the same necessary.

New computers are on all hands superior to and more user friendly than old ones. So why could not a new urban district be superior to all previous “versions” of the “product” city? In the world of computers we see constant upgrading, that is improvement of both hard ware and soft ware. The time is more than ripe for upgrading of our town planning.

Göta Landsväg – an integrated cultural heritage
Across the Årsta Field we find the old Göta Landsväg (Göta Old Country Road). This is a cultural heritage that must not be destroyed. In the proposal, Göta Landsväg runs like a green passage through the built up area, in about the same way as Katarina Bangata in Södermalm, although a bit more green and broader. An oblong urban park – or a broad avenue. Planners often pay respect to older milieus and buildings by creating distances.

We often place a “protective zone” between the old cultural heritage we want to preserve and the new “devastation of the environment” that the new development often is regarded as. This proposal takes the contrary action. The new buildings are placed close to the cultural heritage Göta Landsväg and are designed as to respect and work together with the traces of history.

Mixing of old and new is one way of creating the NEW cultural heritage, not only preserving the OLD that already exists.

Building Codes for small scale and variation
To prevent individual building companies and architects from building shopping malls, suburban housing and dull large-scale officetowers, the plan is completed with a set of building codes. These are in short:

• Buildings can not be higher than the width of the adjoining street – though maximum 18 metres. This will give streets and yards sufficient light and prevents high buildings from shadowing lower buildings. Above the maximum cornice height (equivalent to street width) buildings can have a roofs with gradient of no more than 45 degrees.

• Each block has a limited building volume. This volume is divided in different parcels of land by town authorities, creating a number of smaller parcels of real estate.

• All buildings shall have a frontage in direct line with the pavement. Buildings can not be erected in the middle of a lot. Instead they shall build up the walls of the streets and form sheltered inner yards – the block being large enough for that.

• All ground floors must have a ceiling height at a minimum of three metres, to make it easy to establish shops, offices, restaurants etc in the bottom floors.

• The urban planning office has the right to demand dwellings in all blocks. At least one third of the floor-space should be reserved for dwellings.

• Each quarter shall be divided in several smaller real properties that should have different owners. A divers ownership pattern is significant for older urban districts.

• The municipality has the right to deny selling large connected grounds to a few big building companies. A few large building or real estate companies are not likely to create a varied and living city.

• The municipality also has the right to prevent one big company from purchasing a large number of buildings. Competition and pluralism is good, monopoly is bad.

• An entire block can not be developed at the same time. 25 per cent of a blocks maximized building volume can be built no sooner than five years after completion of building of all other lots in the block. This may give a more varied architecture and opens up to build what is shown to be lacking.

• Blocks above a certain size shall have an open inner yard where trees can grow.

• The property-holders shall pay an annual sum to maintain trees and plantations along the streets, markets and parks.

Small scale ownership and slow growth
One reason for older parts of cities being so alive and attractive is that they have a mixture of houses of different age, even within the same block.

This makes it possible for expensive activities to thrive near cheap ones, luxury restaurants next to antique shops. The building code admits that a site in the first step is only occupied by a low and cheap building. When the city deve-
All real cities have been built successively, not as from the beginning completed objects. A small scale plan, a small scale structure of ownership and rules permitting a slow development might give preconditions for the growth of a genuine small city around the Årsta Field.

Like a gardener, the town planner can only create the preconditions for growth, putting up a lettuce work for roses or buildings, not prescribing how the result shall turn out.

A tramway within the city – not outside
The crossline from Gullmarsplan – Valla Gärde – Liljeholmen to Alvik already has increased the attractiveness of the surrounding urban districts. Unfortunately the tram line was not drawn through the old part of Årsta and down through the suburban district of Valla Gärde. The plan shows such an already lost possibility. But it is still possible to make a link from the tramway through the proposed Årsta city down to Östberga. That could give a great basis of travellers and link together Östberga with its surroundings.

A new, inexpensive and beautiful Sveaväg above the Southern Link
The Southern Link facilitates the implementation of the proposal. With a car tunnel below and passing Valla Gårde and the Årsta Field, the possibility of creating a network of streets is considerably improved. A street grid with a moderate degree of passing through traffic.

Highway tunnels - giving room for more real city
Less car traffic and fewer motor thoroughfares have been a subject of discussion all since the conference about the environment in Rio in 1992 – both within EU and FN. Highway tunnels can be positive if they take care of passing-by traffic and open up new grounds for suitable development. The area around the Årsta Field is such an example. The investment in the Southern Link can be made even more profitable if “liberated areas” are taken care of in an intensive and urban mode.

An alternative to a suburban field
The 1990’s proposal for an ecological park in the Årsta Field is an answer to the question of how a desolate suburban field can be made more living and agreeable. But it is not answer the question of how new housing and offices can be produced in a growing region. The limited aim of preserving green grounds is an example of a narrow perspective on the challenges of town planning.

A more forward looking planning can show how both parks and buildings could be planned at the same time and in symbiosis with each other. The park is an element just as natural and necessary for the good city as the square and the street. With more space for a real city outside the old inner city, we can prevent the inner city from being overcrowded, losing all open green spots. The inner city needs more parks, rather than more buildings.

Perhaps a new Sundbyberg – but greener?
Compared to the small city of Sundbyberg the Årsta city would have more parks and squares. It is not only important to make places in the city big enough. Creating a number of small places is just as important. Perhaps also concealed places which are secret and difficult to find.
The renewal of the suburbs – in the hands of the residents

The plan for Årsta city shows a heavy condensation in the suburban districts of Valla Gärde and Östberga. New streets, squares, parks and buildings are included in the plan. The question remains to be answered: Why should the people living in these areas today accept such a concentration of new buildings and activities in their green and sparsely exploited districts? The answer to that question is, as in many other instances, linked to how the project is carried through – on whose initiative and on whose conditions. The first condition for making this densification possible is of course that the residents are in favour of the plan. Secondly, that an easily understandable plan exists, that makes it easy and practical to densify. And last but not least – the power and decision making has to be transferred. From housing companies to the people living in the urban district in question.

The intention is quite simply to divide the grounds in Valla Gärde and Östberga in smaller blocks. This also implies a division of ownership. Each block, e.g. along the old Southern Link, can be a self-administering legal unit, in the form of a building-society, a co-operative residential society or a limited company owned by the residents. The plan opens up for new and concentrated building in each block – but only up to a defined level. But no densification – no building of new houses – will take place before the residents – the new owners of the blocks – give their permission.

If the inhabitants control the real estate of their block, they can resolve whether new houses should be built or not – and also make some money from the new development. In this way we can eliminate the risk that construction companies destroy the environment and block the views of the residents in pursuit of income. We will have a balance between utility (in the form of profit and a more attractive built environment) and loss (in the form of less free grounds and limited views from existing apartments). This is a more realistic way to densify sparsely built neighbourhoods – and a lot more democratic. In the quarters along the old Southern Link the illustration (page 3-4) shows different types of densification – from totally surrounded courtyards to new tower blocks along one street only. The inhabitants in one quarter have in this example chosen to build quite a lot, in another similar quarter residents have chosen to build more sparingly. In some cases it might very well happen that the residents do not want any new houses at all. That is OK. The inhabitants have the right and the power to decide.

The plan also shows how a new network of streets and a new real estate pattern in Östberga can create new conditions for complementary building. A more integrated network of streets will make it possible to allow cars to park along the streets instead of separate parking places. Grounds previously used for parking can be transformed into larger parks and open green spaces. A division into smaller quarters gives a more distinct city structure and will make it easier to change rental apartment houses into other forms of ownership – building societies, cooperative societies, condominiums, ownership apartments or limited companies.

Östberga might prosper a lot if this plan is implemented. It becomes a part of a new small city south of Södermalm. It will no longer be an isolated dwelling area far away from shops and public transport. Rather a part of a small town with a mixture of old and new houses, with real streets, parks and squares. If the old city has grown too small – then let the city move to the suburb. Anyone arguing against?

Better places for work and service – a new “Lugnet” area

A main point of this proposal is to promote building in other places than those with already established and well functioning businesses. The area around Slakthuset, near The Globe Arena, the industrial area of Vinsta and Värtan Habour are examples of an “industrial infrastructure” which in the cause of time may be threatened by the pressure for new dwellings.

Very often new dwellings near or within industrial sites tend to squeeze out business activities. Partly because rules and regulations concerning noise, traffic, air quality, security, environment and so on – well adjusted and suitable for dwel-
To sum up:

The very “idea of the city” is to gather as many diversities that need each other as close to each other as possible. A city is an organism for combining the maximum of differences with a minimum of distances. Or, so it could be planned. If the will and the courage is really at hand.

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