

Citizens' Guide - Frequently Asked Questions [FAQ]

An accessible guide to the **Hej Våxnäs! Vision**: your step-by-step guide to transforming an industrial zone into a vibrant and sustainable neighbourhood for Karlstad.

1. Why transform Våxnäs—and what makes **Hej Våxnäs!** essential?

Våxnäs is a district with untapped potential. Located just two kilometres from central Karlstad, it is shaped by its industrial past: wide roads, vacant warehouses, poor stormwater drainage, and underused public spaces. Presently, streetscapes are considered unsafe, unwelcoming and uninviting by nearby residents, due to poorly lit streets, lack of pedestrian paved areas, absence of cycle paths and minimal greenery, with streets designed on a large scale for industrial car traffic. Increasing flood risks, driven by impermeable clay soils, expansive paved surfaces, and large parking areas, prevent natural water infiltration and contribute to urban heat islands. These physical conditions, combined with growing climate risks, currently limit the area's liveability and accessibility, offering little incentive for evening strolls or any urban life. Beyond physical challenges, the site presently forms a psychological and social barrier, disrupting Våxnäs' urban tissue and limiting the city to reach I2-Forest by foot.

Hej Våxnäs! aims to change that by re-sourcing existing assets and integrating nature-based solutions, such as water-smart infrastructure that channel stormwater into green corridors, bioswales and wetland parks. Former industrial buildings will be repurposed into co-working hubs, creative studios, and sports facilities. New timber housing developments will reflect local craftsmanship and industrial traditions. Streetscapes will become safe, vibrant, and pedestrian-friendly—featuring permeable surfaces, expanded green areas, and connected cycling paths that link to pocket parks, public plazas, Låglandet Park, and I2-Forest.

This transformation is about more than fixing what's fragmented. It creates a blueprint for how post-industrial neighbourhoods can become climate-resilient, inclusive, and future-ready—with community and biodiversity at the centre of the change.

2. What are the key implementation strategies that will help transform Våxnäs?

Large-scale urban transformations require flexibility, feedback, and trust. That's why **Hej Våxnäs!** unfolds in several stages taking into account local needs:

Early activation: The process begins with pilot projects that breathe new life into existing industrial buildings, mainly around the existing bus depot, as a logical starting point. Through adaptive reuse, these spaces become creative hubs, bridging the area's productive past with its emerging residential future. Innovative housing models are introduced to take full advantage of new urban and natural spaces. These early interventions invite community participation, giving residents the opportunity to shape their surroundings before permanent changes take root.

Adaptive building: Building on insights from the pilot phase, the next stage of development brings modular homes, cultural spaces, and enhanced mobility infrastructure to life. Former warehouses are thoughtfully repurposed into vibrant community assets—hosting new services and amenities that grow alongside the evolving character of the neighbourhood. This phase ensures that each intervention responds to real needs, reinforcing a flexible, future-ready urban fabric.

Long-term integration: Strategic infrastructure—pedestrian pathways, public transit links, and renewable energy systems—anchors the district for the future. These elements ensure each layer of development supports the next, weaving together a resilient and connected urban fabric.

This phased approach balances early momentum with thoughtful adaptation. Each stage serves as both a prototype and a learning opportunity. By pairing fast, visible actions with long-term investments and lasting infrastructure, **Hej Våxnäs!** remains responsive, builds lasting trust, and cultivates a thriving, resilient community—rooted in local knowledge and shared innovation.

3. How will Hej Våxnäs! become reality, and what key milestones will guide its journey?

Phase 1 - Reactivate: Hej Våxnäs! starts by introducing new life into the industrial landscape, establishing a north-south green spine that seamlessly ties Karlstad's centre to the I2-Forest. At the heart of this transformation is the area around the decommissioned bus depot, where the new park and its surrounding housing developments are carefully integrated to form a vibrant, cohesive district. A revitalized Låglandet Park anchors this transformation—flood ponds are reimagined as sports fields and community gathering areas, while drainage-friendly pavements replace asphalt, channelling rainwater into bioswales and pocket wetlands.

Community workshops and real-time feedback guide the co-design of each street. Protected bike lanes trace paths through repurposed lots, while underused hangars are transformed into maker studios and pilot homes built with modular timber construction. Early milestones include the first mobility hub with a rooftop park-and-play space, the revival of Våxnäshallen Park, and the conversion of warehouses into innovation centres. Even the former bus depot finds new life as a startup incubator. These early Reactivate actions demonstrate how once-inactive grey fields can become vital green connectors—building trust and setting a strong foundation for future phases.

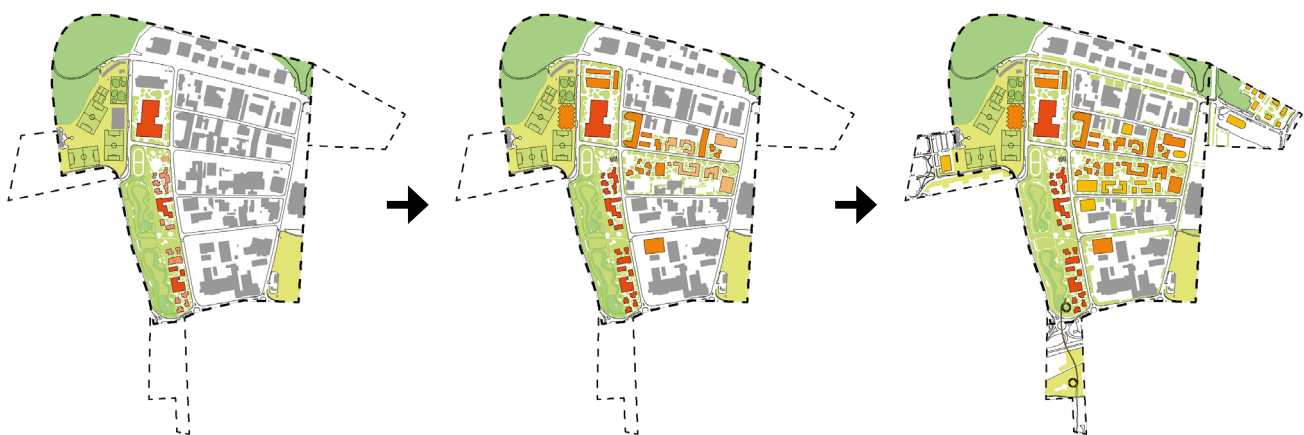
Phase 2 - Reintegrate: Hej Våxnäs! forges a perpendicular east-west spine, linking Tingvalla Isstadion and other sports venues back to Bromsgatan's renewed residential corridor. Reclaimed warehouses along Bromsgatan gain new life as office clusters and modular bioclimatic lofts, while rooftop play areas crown the second mobility hub.

Adaptive reuse honours heritage: Fotbollshallen undergoes modernization into a multifunctional sports and events venue. Mixed-use buildings rise from former industrial plots—shops at street level, homes above—creating an active, walkable neighbourhood fabric. Reintegrate strengthens the promise of Hej Våxnäs! to unite housing, heritage, and healthy living within a cohesive and future-ready urban framework.

Phase 3 - Reconnect: Hej Våxnäs! establishes as a vibrant, naturalized neighbourhood and a replicable blueprint for industrial districts. Embracing mixed-use at every corner, the area hums with activity day and night—coffee shops, workshops, and residences blend seamlessly along streets alive 24 hours.

A new pedestrian bridge spans over the E18 road, providing a fast, safe link to Karlstad's city centre. The third mobility hub opens, featuring rooftop playgrounds and fitness zones that invite communal use. Residential development extends across the railway tracks, where bioclimatic homes and co-living units rise alongside terraced gardens. Key milestones mark the district's maturity: the District Eco-Energy Plant begins delivering low-carbon heat and power; a purpose-built kindergarten nestles within green courtyards; and the network of parks, rain gardens, and trails is fully realized.

Through Reconnect, Hej Våxnäs! not only completes its transformation but also codifies ordered processes—setting clear benchmarks and demonstrating how industrial zones can thrive into climate-resilient urban districts.



Phase 1
Reactivate
2027

Phase 2
Reintegrate
2035

Phase 3
Reconnect
2050

4. What would a day in Hej Våxnäs! feel like?

Imagine beginning your morning with a stroll through a biodiverse greenway. Rainwater disappears beneath your feet, absorbed by permeable paths and bioswales lined with native vegetation, while birds sing from the treetops above. You hop on your bike, gliding along a dedicated cycling lane as a quiet electric bus arrives with commuters from across Karlstad.

On your way, you pass rooftop playgrounds and open-air sports facilities atop mobility hubs, surrounded by vibrant mixed-use developments. What was once a warehouse is now your workplace—an innovation centre buzzing with creativity, powered by solar energy and built for collaboration.

At lunchtime, you gather with co-workers in a lively market hall, where fresh local produce and communal spaces foster connection and exchange. As evening sets in, softly lit boulevards lead you to adaptive sports fields—equipped with safe, modular surfaces—where the sound of children’s laughter blends with the quiet hum of sensors monitoring air quality. Your home—crafted from sustainable timber—is both energy-efficient and welcoming.

On weekends, residents from across greater Karlstad are drawn to Våxnäs and the I2-Forest. The area has become a popular destination for enjoying nature, outdoor recreation, and a wide range of sports. The area offers a variety of outdoor activities—including hiking, running, and cross-country skiing in winter—making it a vibrant year-round retreat. This connection is strengthened by a new pedestrian bridge spanning the E18, linking the city seamlessly to nature. Along the way, a series of rest stops, picnic areas, and playgrounds invite visitors of all ages to pause, play, and enjoy the landscape.

In **Hej Våxnäs!**, every aspect of daily life is shaped by thoughtful, sustainable design—proving that climate resilience and community can come together in a seamless, vibrant new urban rhythm.

5. How will citizens participate in shaping and implementing Hej Våxnäs!?

At every stage of **Hej Våxnäs!**, citizens are not just consulted—they are co-creators. The transformation unfolds through a hands-on, transparent process that turns local insight into lasting impact.

First, interactive **local exhibitions** and **online platforms**, present initial proposals and collect suggestions via digital boards and feedback kiosks. Next, on-site “design days” —dynamic events where future residents, neighbours, and key stakeholders engage directly with scaled models, mapping out preferred green corridors, playground layouts, and features of the mobility hubs. Input is gathered and synthesized weekly, guiding municipal planners and developers to refine pilot installations in real time.

Quarterly **co-design workshops** bring together resident delegates, city officials, and technical experts to review prototypes and agree on adjustments. A dedicated online platform tracks each suggestion, displaying progress on public dashboards so everyone can see how input shapes funding allocations, permit applications, and construction schedules.

As infrastructure transitions from **pilot study** to permanent, citizen-led testing teams assess comfort, usability, and safety, submitting performance reports that inform final adjustments.

Through regular **steering committee meetings**—balanced between community representatives, Karlstad’s urban department, and project managers—decisions remain accountable and inclusive. A transparent feedback loop—including public dashboards and performance reports—ensures community voices are heard and acted on.

This layered approach—combining exhibitions, workshops, digital tools, real-world testing, and shared governance—anchors **Hej Våxnäs!** in collective stewardship. Here, participation isn’t a formality—it’s the foundation. The district grows through the creativity, experience, and commitment of the very people who live it.

6. Why will Hej Våxnäs! inspire other cities?

Across Europe, many cities face the challenge of revitalizing post-industrial areas—places where former industrial zones have become physical and social barriers, dividing neighbourhoods and disconnecting communities. **Hej Våxnäs!** offers a compelling response: transforming an industrial quarter into a thriving, eco-centred neighbourhood through strategic phasing and deep community engagement.

The first phase delivers highly visible interventions that build public trust and momentum. Further developments—such as timber housing and repurposed cultural venues—showcase scalable circular economy practices. Meanwhile, long-term investments in climate-resilient landscapes, eco-energy systems, and data-driven governance lay the foundation for a net-zero emissions district.

By blending early pilot successes with transparent feedback loops and shared governance, **Hej Våxnäs!** becomes more than a development—it's a living experiment. The strategies behind **Hej Våxnäs!** position it as a replicable and adaptable model for cities around the world looking to transform post-industrial sites into inclusive, resilient, and people-centred neighbourhoods.

Key strategies include:

- +Using temporary interventions to test ideas and spark community momentum.
- +Re-sourcing existing buildings to reduce waste while preserving local heritage.
- +Designing modular, flexible housing and infrastructure that can evolve with community needs.
- +Anchoring change in renewable energy and open, data-informed decision-making.
- +Centering citizen engagement at every step to ensure relevance, ownership, and belonging.

Hej Våxnäs! stands as a living laboratory—one that others can learn from and build upon. If your goal is to turn an industrial quarter into green, inclusive, and climate-ready neighborhoods, **Hej Våxnäs!** is your proven guide.

From a grey monofunctional industrial estate...

...to a vibrant & green sustainable community!

