

RECLAIMING TERRITORIES

INTRO

Forget the single-minded economical focus when developing Piteå - we must create a holistic city that will sustain!

With the new North Bothnia Line Piteå has the potential to grow into a thriving urban hub, with rich qualities within research, culture and recreation. But within this golden opportunity lies also a potential urban recession: the new proposed line for the railway will cut the city off from Sörfjärden - a major recreational value for Piteå – and have the city turn its back to the waterfront, its basis of existence.

The city of Piteå has many existing qualities which must be enhanced. The city is everchanging, as the coastline is constantly moving due to geological processes. This is therefore Piteå's third location. Originally built as a coastal city to provide ground for the wood industry, the city has always been closely linked to the waterfront. Old maps dating back as far as the 1790's clearly show the city's grid layout, which was back then surrounded by a full peripheral ring of unbuild green land and total circular access to the waterfront, as the city was then not as connected to the mainland.

With this proposal for the future development of Piteå we wish to reclaim the territories of the coastal line, recreate the narrative of the industry and resurrect Piteå as a living city! This is done by creating new connections across all levels of the urban environment, particularly linking the city centre to the waterfront and new districts.

TYOLOGIES FOR CONNECTION

We propose laying out the traffic hub, Piteå Station, in the intersection Timmerleden / Västergatan. This will create an urban space, which also serves as a link in-between the three new districts: Västra Kajen, Railway Yard, and Södrahamn. Through Piteå centre the railway tracks are laid out along Timmerleden, gathering heavier infrastructure in one zone. This is done due to several reasons: first and foremost, it gives up space for a new and larger waterfront useful for endless recreational purposes. Second, from an urban standpoint that Piteå and its new districts must consist of social, economic, fun, serious, messy, global, local, historical, futuristic, closed, open, loud, quiet, surprising and diverse layers. The development of Piteå should not only be made up by a conventional 'buildings, plots and spaces focus', but should be approached with a holistic mind, to assist urban evolution that will sustain. Piteå Station, which the city could have easily turned its back on, should be introduced to the environment as a space for urban potential.

This line of traffic through Piteå Centre creates the opportunity for new connections to arise. We propose three new visible types of connections:

The tunnel: the current Uddmansgatan is heavily trafficked but takes up a privileged place in the grid structure. An important quality of the grid is its' long sightlines allowing for visual connection with Sörfjärden. When planning the railway, this should be restored by laying out a tunnel beneath the traffic corridor. This connects Piteå Centre and the new Södrahamn district with the new cultural hub and recreational area in the Södrahamn Park.

The tunnel should be quite long and not very steep to allow for visual connection from afar, as well as to give the possibility for a new urban edge to arise. On the edge steps allow for relaxation and play to take place. And from large plant beds trees can grow, creating cover and space. The tunnel can be used for markets or serve as an art space. With this urban connection an important existing quality from Piteå is maintained whilst generating new features and experiences.

The bridge: spanning across the Piteå Station we propose connecting the new districts with a pedestrian and bike bridge. This will rise above the city towards west as a landmark welcoming both locals and visitors of Piteå. From the Station Square the bridge links to the new Sörfjärden Square ending in a set of stairs allowing for beautiful waterfront views.

The exploration path: The original peripheral ring of green should be restored, reclaiming territory. Within this ring we implement the exploration path. This path will in this contemporary version be much more urban, connecting different areas of green and social meeting points. Towards Sörfjärden a new modified waterfront allows for recreational activities in both green and blue surroundings: following the promenade one will cross the new boat club, cultural hub and sea water bath, each serving as satellites connecting to the larger grid. On Västra Kajen the new green Sörfjärden connects to Västra Kajen sports park. This area allows for space to potentially develop further in the future as a forest city. A new light pedestrian and bike bridge spans the forestry area across the railway and Timmerleden to the new Railway Park district. Old tracks and the train depot are kept, leaving industrial traces to tell the origin story of Piteå. From here the path runs through Cecilparken up to Sundsgatan which is greenified and towards east programmed into an active boulevard with basket lanes and ping pong tables – a great way for students to spend the afternoon after finishing classes at the local school or for guests staying at the local hostel in the City Park to hang out. The exploration path can also be linked to a greater context, perhaps creating a hiking path to Farön or to sister-paths in nearby cities e.g., an industrially themed trail in Sikfors or the archaeology trail in Jävve, and can in this way narrate the cultural heritage of the area.

The tunnel, the bridge, and the exploration path are the most significant and important connections, as they play a key role in bridging history and existing qualities, creating urban spaces and experiences, and most crucial in making Piteå a holistic city, with a strong connection to its' origin: the waterfront.

NEW DISTRICTS

Within the existing centre lies many qualities, which we wish to take into the development of new districts. As mentioned, the grid structure allows for long sightlines, green courtyards, and squares to emerge. The wooden houses with roofs of metal and various detailing creates a charming cityscape. This typology can serve as an inspiration for developing a new sustainable building typology for Piteå.

Piteå Station: By placing the station within the urban environment, a new type of scenery is added to the city. The environment surrounding a station is busy and should accommodate needs quickly. Therefore, a kiosk, a café, coffee-bikes etc. will light up the station square during the day and create a lively environment. As a local this is perhaps also where you can go and grab your morning paper and a coffee before you head

towards the Sörfjärden steps for a beautiful view or to the sea water bath for a refreshing start of the day. From the station we propose two tracks going through the city – why not challenge the single-minded economical focus that has planned this railway on a macro level? When laying out the heavy traffic zone, it should be as narrow as possible. But space for three tracks has been reserved and is possible.

Södrahamn District: In the new Södrahamn district development will take place in the existing grid structure. It is key to adapt the grocery stores and the parking lot to the grids' existing scale of housing, commerce, cafes, and restaurants. The large low-dense grocery stores will remain, but housing and commerce should be added on top. Traffic by car is cut down to make room for cyclists, pedestrians, and green areas to serve as a buffer to the traffic zone. This will expand the existing centre with mixed housing, business and commerce. In-between buildings green courtyards allow for recreation for all ages. Courtyards can serve as informal social spaces – imagine having your own beekeeper's guild or a community garden shared with your neighbour whom you have just met!

Södrahamn Park: The new modified waterfront allows for a large park with endless recreational possibilities. Depending on the season, water activities such as swimming, rowing or ice skating can take place, and such are accommodated through sheds and bridges. Biodiversity should be enhanced as some areas are kept wilder and more diverse. All year-round locals and visitors can enjoy events in the new cultural hub. The beautiful view towards the inlet can create for a magical setting in which communities of all ages can emerge – visiting theatrical groups can take residency here, local dance schools can perform and seasonal concertos can lure people from the upland in.

Västra kajen: The newly accessible district can host spaces associated with the station such as hotels and conference venues towards north, thereby creating a buffer to the railway and allowing for a higher building typology to take place. Housing can be placed in the southern part of the district towards the forestry area and the new sports park – here children will be able to play a football match on summer evenings, or easy and independently go for sports training. The district will have a view of the paper mill – an important typology in the narration of Piteå, as this industry holds the origin of the city. The new district is laid out in a distorted grid, an interpretation of Piteå's centre. Towards Sörfjärden an urban space with commerce and restaurants can attract locals and campers to go out for dinner, shopping or simply enjoy the lively waterfront.

Railway Park: The existing centre will expand into the new Railway Park district. Here industrial traces such as the old train depot, existing warehouses, sheds, and old tracks meet mixed housing, commerce, and business. The new building typology is placed in the grid structure, creating a natural extension of the city. Once again this adds the quality of the large green courtyards. Towards the station space is kept free to allow for a green parking area and a bus station. In the western part the grids dissolve and open to the large railway park. On the tracks old carriages can create small contemporary spaces or fulfil neighbourhood needs. How playful it could be to have one as a nursery, almost resembling a circus wagon, or to use them for rehearsal spaces for local bands.

Each of the new districts contains around 500 units, making it a total of 1500 new types of housing. When developing these new areas, the industry can for some seem as a barrier

for development, but it is crucial to see it as an important layer in the narration of Piteå. The extraordinary nature of North Bothnia provides a beautiful scenery for the often large, fascinating typologies industry will provide. Furthermore, these areas are much more interesting to develop in the future, rather than starting off with bare land.

Another element to keep in mind when developing Piteå is the many scales that must be taken into consideration. Small scale, big scale, high-dense, low spread are all factors which create attractive, sustainable, living environments. In the new districts higher and denser elements can be used to create a buffer and more urban environment towards the railway, whilst small components spread out near the waterfront generates a temporary feel useful for communities and culture to arise. The diversity in the urban landscape allows for urban potentials and possibilities. Connections – both physical, visual and narrational – creates coherence and a sense of something place-bound.

Forget the single-minded economical focus, Piteå will resurrect as a holistic city for all.
Reclaim territories, reclaim Piteå!