

GreenZone - a Unique Environmental Quarter in Umeå

By Stina Fahlgren

In Umeå, a unique environmental motorquarter was established in 2000. The quarter is unique because of its adaptation to the recycling principal. It offers services both for cars and drivers with its complete car-facility, “an energy station” with a grocery store and a fast food restaurant. The project is named GreenZone. In this article the project is viewed from an urban planning point of view.

The area is situated in the northern outskirts of Umeå, Sweden, and it is a facility centre for motorists. It consists of a Ford motor facility, an energy station Statoil, and Macdonald's. The wooden building with its' natural colouring and sedum-covered roof easily rises attention. There is a pond and the area is surrounded by a stream for the local rain water management. The driving lanes are covered with grass-armed tiles, gravel or concrete tiles to facilitate permeation of the surface.

Alternative placement

In the spring 1997, the Umeå Agenda 21 group aimed to start an ecological pilot project. At that time, an environmentally interested car salesman Per Carstedt appeared at the office and asked if he could locate his new building, later called GreenZone, in Umeå. His partner was Mr Anders Nyquist, an architect competent in ecological and healthy building principles. The Agenda 21 group was delighted about this proposal, but the road to implementation was not so easy.

According to the Umeå spatial plan there was no suitable place for this kind of establishment. Eventually, a good site was found, but there were already houses there. Finally, the problem was solved as one of the houses was moved and the other demolished and recycled.

Planning work

Aim of the objectives for the planning process was to take environmental solutions in the buildings and recycling into



View of the GreenZone from the road.

account as far and as well, as possible. All buildings within the site should fulfil strict environmental requirements. The companies interested in starting up a business in the area had to fulfil these environmental requirements. An environmental programme, containing exploitation agreements between the city and the companies, was set up. The programme covered both the construction and the maintenance stage of the buildings. It also stated that the staff in the businesses should be educated in environmental issues and that all businesses should have an environmental management system.

All the building material should be healthy and contain no hazardous substances. Selection of plants is important for the recycling of water within the area as well as the pond, use of solar energy and reuse of heat energy was also looked upon as important.

The company Ecosystem in Scandinavia Ltd. will take part in the follow-up and evaluation of the project together with the municipality and the University of Umeå. The site was ready in summer 2000.

Money

Is it economically feasible to build something like GreenZone? The project was, of course, more expensive than a conventional one because on the development work that had to be carried out before construction work. If municipalities in the Baltic Sea Region would like to facilitate this kind of projects, Mr Per Carstedt gives them the advise to look over their taxation systems and the fees to create a good incentive for companies that want to invest in environmentally friendly techniques.

More information:
www.greenzone.nu