



The North Star

UMEÅ, SWEDEN

Emissions domains addressed by the Pilot Activity



Consumption of non-electricity energy for thermal uses in buildings & facilities



Consumption of electricity generated for buildings, facilities & infrastructure



All vehicles & transport (mobile energy)

Key Focus Areas

Organisational lock-in | Systemic innovation | Collaborative capacity | Climate governance | Innovation officers | Transition leadership | Transition barriers

Levers of Change

Governance and policy | Learning and capabilities | Social innovation

Description of the Pilot Activity

Umeå is pushing the boundaries of climate governance by confronting the structural, behavioural, and institutional barriers that limit transformative action. The North Star pilot introduced a governance model rooted in systemic innovation—embedding innovation officers into key departments, delivering transition training for senior leaders, and building frameworks for cross-departmental coordination.

Impact & Results

The pilot achieved a systemic shift in how municipal leadership approaches climate transition. Innovation officers were embedded into key departments, enabling regular cross-departmental support. Senior leaders completed three-day transition training, enhancing their ability to lead change and creating a stronger culture of experimentation. A Chief of Sustainability role was formally created, ensuring continuity and long-term institutional commitment.

Beyond structural changes, the pilot generated a notable cultural shift inside the municipality. Staff and leaders reported growing openness to new methods, experimentation, and collaboration across silos. A replication handbook was produced to support transfer of the model to other cities. A systemic transformation prototype for grey water heat recovery indicated potential 25% reduction in heat and energy consumption when heat is recovered from grey water at city-block level.

Innovation Highlights

The innovation officer model demonstrates how dedicated facilitation roles can break down organisational silos and enable systemic coordination—providing continuous bridge-building rather than one-off interventions. The three-day transition training for senior leaders created shared language around transition processes and a culture of experimentation

Key Insight

Meaningful bottom-up change depends on shared direction and mutual understanding. Through respectful and honest exchange, trust and space is created to surface what usually remains unspoken — and to collectively explore ways beyond it.

Twining with Luleå, Sweden and Würzburg, Germany

Luleå - is focused on including circular principles in regard to demolition, renovation and new construction as well as investigating possibilities for shared storage of building materials. To handle these new business models, the municipality should work together with external actors and is hoping to learn from insights from Umeå's experience.

Würzburg - is focused on collaboration with local stakeholders and its potential to support climate mitigation goals inspired the replication of activities from Umeå. The "Local Green Deal(s) for Würzburg" aims to create a tangible impact on climate protection and climate adaptation within the economic sector.

