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City of Växjö Expanding Partnerships with U.S. Cities

(Alexandria and Växjö, May 2010) The City of Växjö has taken advantage of the networking opportunities offered through the SACC-USA Entrepreneurial Days in an exemplary way. As a result of consistent participation in E-days over the years, Växjö has a Memory of Understanding with Savannah and has developed numerous business relationships across the U.S.

The region around Växjö has plentiful forestry resources, and the city's government has taken a position of environmental responsibility, specializing in energy-efficient, all-wooden housing and other green areas. Named "Europe's Greenest City" by the European Commission in 2007, the City of Växjö is prominent in its environmental achievements. In the mid-1990s, Växjö politicians vowed to make the city fossil-fuel free. They have been quite successful and have cut per capita emissions by 32 percent since 1993, in large part because of the use of renewable energy sources to power 90 percent of the city's heating. Växjö officials hope to reduce transportation emissions even further by using incentive programs to get consumers to buy cars powered by renewable fuels. Växjö proves that environmental improvement and a new green lifestyle is compatible with economic growth: while CO2 emissions have decreased, the standard of living has improved.

After E-days in Washington 2005, Växjö University signed a cooperation and exchange program agreement with Northern Michigan University (NMU). The presidents of each university have visited each other and student exchange in different disciplines and teacher visits in both directions have taken place. Several NMU engineers have visited Växjö to learn from district heating in preparation to change from coal to bio-energy for campus heating, cooling and electricity generation.

These are not the only opportunities for collaboration. Since 2007, when the SACC-USA Business Accelerator Program focused on South Sweden and E-days was held there, the city of Växjö has developed strong connections with Savannah. The same year, delegates from Savannah traveled to Växjö to develop an entrepreneurial pipeline between the two cities.

The highlight of the Växjö/Savannah relationship was when Savannah Mayor Otis Johnson and Växjö Lord Mayor Nils Posse signed a memorandum of understanding during the Savannah E-days in April 2009. This cooperative agreement established a strategic partnership that focuses on sharing best practices in the areas of environmental sustainability and green business development. Mayor Johnson said Savannah plans to learn from Växjö's environmental initiatives.

In September 2009, Mayor Johnson, Savannah Economic Development Authority (SEDA), and several Savannah businesses participated in a trade mission to Sweden. The representatives from Savannah requested that Växjö share its methodology for measuring the reduction of carbon emissions.



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After consulting with the Energy Agency for Southeast Sweden, Savannah began exploring how to replicate Växjö's model. While in Växjö, Mayor Johnson gave a presentation of the partnership between Savannah and Växjö at the Eco-Building Conference. Long-time SACC-Georgia affiliate and member Ross Harding of Energy Launch Partners, located in Georgia, was a keynote speaker. Several other representatives from the City of Savannah and SEDA participated in the conference as well. Mayor Johnson and the Savannah delegation also visited the

city of Borås in west Sweden to study passive houses and waste refinery issues. Mayor Johnson was truly inspired and found that Swedish waste management methods are directly applicable in Savannah's struggle to handle waste.

The relationship between Växjö and Savannah has evolved from clean tech and energy efficient solutions to include projects in the areas of tourism, media and film production, higher education, and community development such as:

- A partnership with the Savannah Music Festival to highlight Swedish performers.
- Potential for using the Savannah model of sporting and special events to increase tourism in Växjö.
- Exploring how Växjö can emulate Savannah's success as a destination for media and film productions.
- Sharing information on Savannah's master community planning including consideration of components that comprise the urban fabric such as mobility, parking, etc.
- Collaboration between Savannah College of Art and Design and Linnaeus University in Växjö, starting with a special focus on sustainable design.

During E-days in Seattle in May 2010, Energikontor Sydost (the Energy Agency for Southeast Sweden headquartered in Växjö) and EnterpriseSeattle signed a cooperative agreement to share knowledge and experience, with particular emphasis on clean energy, energy efficiency and other technologies.

In a world of fierce international competition to attract investment, strategic alliances have become increasingly important. Both regions recognize the importance of clean technology as a driver of economic development and as a commitment to environmental protection. By pooling resources, sharing information, and collaborating on projects, the goal is to increase the flow of ideas and opportunities, and to leverage each region's services and contacts to benefit companies from both. SACC-USA is pleased that Växjö has chosen to utilize E-days and the SACC network to forge business relationships with several actors on the U.S. market.