

SPLASH SHOT

Joacim Winqvist

Particularly in rural areas with sparse skylines, a well-designed water tower can represent an opportunity to make a statement — a blank canvas. The right paint job and design elements can convey the local water provider's identity and values, whether this entails messaging about water quality or support for the local sports team.

In Varberg, a town on the west coast of Sweden, the local water utility sought to push the public-outreach potential of its newly upgraded water tower by rethinking conventional norms of how a water tower should look. The result is an eye-catching public-art installation called Våga, completed in late 2024 after 6 years of planning and construction.

Built upon a small hill outside Varberg with high visibility from a major traffic artery, Våga boasts a unique shape that departs from the traditional cylinder. It stretches 187 m (613 ft) in length but only 9 m (30 ft) in width, consisting of eight identical concrete segments



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designed with a concave profile. Each façade mimics the shape of a cresting wave, paying homage to the site's location along the North Sea.

This complex design interacts with shadows and sunlight in a way that means no two viewers will see the exact same Våga, said Lead Architect Per Hultcrantz, who spearheaded the installation's design on behalf of White Arkitekter (Gothenburg, Sweden) in partnership with local water provider Vivab (Falkenberg, Sweden) and construction contractor Veidekke (Oslo, Norway).

"All these elements — the slender shape, wave motif, concave façade, and interplay of shadows — make the tower appear entirely different depending on the time of day and viewing angle," Hultcrantz said, adding that the word *våga* means both "wave" and "dare" in Swedish. "This dynamic ensures the tower never ceases to surprise."

Våga is as much a triumph of function as of form.

Sized to accommodate Varberg's growing population — which has surged by 30% within the last 25 years — Våga has a 10,000-m³ (350,000-ft³) capacity. This volume, which is enough water to fill four Olympic-sized swimming pools, represents a five-fold increase over the capacity of the town's previous water tower.

Våga's reservoir stands atop nine pillars. The one in the center differs

in design from its neighbors, shaped to house an elevator and staircase that provide ease of maintenance.

Additionally, the landmark doubles as a community amenity. In consultation with Varberg's municipal ecologist, project designers sowed wildflowers beneath the water tower and enriched the service road with topsoil, providing an attractive greenspace for locals to congregate. This also gives viewers a chance to view the finer details of the tower's striking design.

"Våga holds a prominent place in the landscape, but the tower is also designed to be appreciated up close," said Agnes Orstadius, one of White Arkitekter's architects behind the project. "Our ambition was to create a structure that will stand for centuries — and always remain beautiful."

Visit www.whitearkitekter.com for more details about Våga. ↗



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