Development of a community garden in the peri-urban area of Pointe-Claire, Québec

a McGill initiative for Food Security in partnership with Bread Basket St-Louis

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Background information

Pointe-Claire is an on-island suburb of Montreal in Quebec, Canada. Although mainly residential, it is also the site of several economic activity such as retail, light manufacturing, various corporate offices and a hospital. If the average family income falls within the Canadian range, certain areas in the city regroup low-income households that might face food security problems. These households often consist of monoparental families or immigrants, and present a higher illiteracy rate.

Bread Basket Lac-St-Louis is a non-profit organization based in the West Island of Montreal, who provides a variety of food security and education initiatives such as community kitchens, food skills workshops and food provision programs. The partnership between McGill University and Bread Basket Lac-St-Louis allowed the launch and development of a community garden in a low-income housing area of more than 140 households in Pointe-Claire.

Project description

A total of 13 different vegetable crops were planted in the garden throughout the summer and were cultivated using organic techniques, without the use of pesticides, herbicides or chemical fertilizers. Tenants were encouraged to participate in the maintenance of the garden and the harvest of the produce.

The development of the garden was coupled which a research project on food security in the same housing group. Consequently, advertising for the garden was done repeatedly over the course of the gardening season to more than 100 households.

Impact on the community

• Improved social networking and physical activity for the households involved
• Improved knowledge on nutritional benefits of vegetable consumption and organic agricultural techniques
• Garden used as an educational platform for a series of workshops for children; themes include seeding, germination, pollination/bugs, soil and nutrition

Perspectives for the future

The garden will continue it’s activities in the next season (2015) with a new infrastructure and a gain of visibility among the tenants. Increased autonomy and involvement is to be expected, and a variety of educational tools can be brought on the site to ensure sustainability of function. Moreover, the ongoing research project will assess the impacts of the garden on food security across the neighborhood.

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