

Position		

## Affordable housing and edible landscape on the table

Millennium Development Goals, to achieve "significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers, by 2020." But the formal declarations have not been accompanied by enforcement, activists say.

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### ON THE WEB

World Urban Forum 3 takes place in Vancouver June 19-23. Check out these websites for more information:

- [www.wuf3-fum3.ca](http://www.wuf3-fum3.ca)
- [www.unhabitat.org](http://www.unhabitat.org)
- [www.womenincities.org](http://www.womenincities.org)
- [www.fcm.ca](http://www.fcm.ca)
- [www.rooftops.ca](http://www.rooftops.ca)
- [www.creativecity.ca](http://www.creativecity.ca)
- [www.citiesalliance.org](http://www.citiesalliance.org)
- [www.mcgill.ca/mchg](http://www.mcgill.ca/mchg)
- [www.ville.montreal.qc.ca](http://www.ville.montreal.qc.ca)

Municipal politicians and community workers aren't the only Quebecers planning to attend the United Nations third World Urban Forum in Vancouver next week. The conference is also a draw for academics, who get a rare opportunity to mix with the other groups.

"It's a bit like a fair," Michel Barcelo, an urban-planning professor at the Université de Montréal, said. "There are all kinds of sessions going on at the same time."

Barcelo said he's planning to explore the theme of affordable housing at the forum.

"What worries me about the term 'affordable housing' is it hides a lot. Affordable could mean 'less expensive' but not necessarily social housing."

Montreal and the Quebec government define "affordable" as spending not more than 30 per cent of annual family income on housing. "But if a family is poor, it won't be able to get proper housing on that," he said. "I would like to see what other cities have to say about it."

He and Nicolas Douay, one of his doctorate students, will first attend the World Planners Congress in Vancouver, which precedes the World Urban Forum. Douay, whose research compares metropolitan planning in Lyon, France, and in Montreal, will be presenting a paper at the planners' conference.

Meanwhile, McGill University will have the largest Quebec exhibit at the forum. "Making the Edible Landscape," a three-year project of the McGill school of architecture's Minimum Cost Housing Group and the International Development Research Centre, will be showcased on about 860 square feet of exhibition space, said project leader Vikram Bhatt, director of the Minimum Cost Housing Group.

The exhibit will demonstrate urban food-production techniques his team has used in four cities: Montreal; Colombo, Sri Lanka; Kampala, Uganda; and Rosario, Argentina.

The research showcases Montreal's community gardens as an example of urban agriculture. The research in other cities includes growing medicinal plants, using trellises to grow gardens vertically in dense urban areas and building a new neighbourhood in Kampala with space for productive gardening.

Bhatt, Montreal Mayor Gérald Tremblay and the mayors of the other three cities will host a workshop discussion on urban agriculture on Wednesday.

"The challenge now is to get people to recognize its value," Bhatt said. "That's what I'm hoping to achieve at this forum."

LINDA GYULAI