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MCGILL AND IDRC ANNOUNCE GLOBAL THREE- CITY PROJECT: “MAKING THE EDIBLE LANDSCAPE”

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OTTAWA — Canada’s **McGill University** and the **International Development Research Centre (IDRC)** today announced the launch of a new international research initiative that may have a major impact on how planners, architects, and municipal leaders map the city of the future. The announcement took place today at the World Urban Forum in Barcelona, Spain.

Making the Edible Landscape (see attached backgrounder), a three-year collaborative project, will demonstrate the value of including urban agriculture as a permanent feature in city planning and housing design. With support from IDRC, the Minimum Cost Housing Group of McGill University, and the Urban Management Program of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), coordinated research will be undertaken in three cities: Colombo, Sri Lanka; Kampala, Uganda; and Rosario, Argentina.

“Modern cities are seen as centres of food consumption and rural areas as places of production,” says Professor Vikram Bhatt, director of the Minimum Cost Housing Group at McGill. “Designers and planners tend to create city landscapes for beauty, not utility. But many kinds of urban agriculture already exist around the world—from balcony gardens to poultry farms. What we learn from these three test sites will enrich city-scapes of the future, both North and South.”

In each of the sites, city officials, architects, and urban planners will form a collaborative team, working closely with local communities. Researchers will test housing designs that include food-producing gardens to demonstrate the potential of urban agriculture. Sites were chosen by a competitive process to reflect global biodiversity as well as different ways of combining living, working, and growing food within the city.

As the world’s population becomes increasingly urban, cities everywhere—but especially in developing countries--face a mounting challenge of ensuring clean water, sanitation, and food security for their people. This project will contribute to meeting the United Nations Millennium Development goals by improving housing, income, and food security for the poor.

The results of *Making the Edible Landscape* will be showcased at the 2006 UN-HABITAT World Urban Forum in Vancouver, Canada.

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