

URBAN AGRICULTURE IN MONTRÉAL

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Memoire Submitted By:

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Introduction:

It is with great pleasure that I write this brief on behalf of the gardeners of Les Jardins Collectif de L'Allée des Tanneries (JCAT). We are a group of local residents and community groups who share the wonderful green space that is a hidden jewel in the western Saint-Henri community know as the Village des Tanneries. As founding members of the GTAU, it can be assured that we the gardeners of JCAT, support the findings and initiatives of the group, fully and completely. We need a new policy that reflects the interests and initiatives of both citizens and civil society.

Enhancing Spaces for Urban Agriculture Production:

The first major issue is that of preserving and enhancing the access to public spaces for Urban Agriculture. Public institutions, churches, roof accessible spaces and most notably public community housing complexes have vast amounts of grass that cost money to cut and groom. These lands could be easily converted to food producing sites that would benefit those most vulnerable in the immediate vicinity.

The JCAT is in fact a perfect example of reclaiming unused and contaminated land by way of building above ground garden beds protected by a Geo-textile membrane that allows for food production mere metres from community housing. As many others who have deposed a memoire here or during the recent PMAD hearings, we as well request for a preservation and expansion of the agriculture territory in western Montreal. The memoire deposed by Mesdames Alison Hackney and Linda Besner, regarding the Parc Agrcole du Bois-de-la-Roche is a salient and perfect template as to how the functioning farm could become a key element in four major areas. Notably as a major element of Local Food Security, as an educational facility for urban agriculture, as a major contributor to alleviating Heat Islands in an urban milieu and finally it helps fulfill the Ville de Montréal mandate towards sustainable development of this island city.

Zoning restrictions should and must be eliminated or altered so as to encourage the production of food-stuffs on lands, school property and industrial and commercial roof tops.

Supporting Access to Information, Education and Training:

The gardeners of JCAT believe in the mapping of the collective public spaces used for Urban Agriculture and the necessity of a program to identify public property available for gardening.

There also seems to be a need for the creation of a streamlined process for sharing of data and documentation made available to support urban agricultural developmental projects throughout Montréal with a major effort within areas of community housing, social exclusion and areas of lower annual revenues.

Organize Partnerships:

Organize a system for the donations of materials that could be provided by the Ville de Montréal or its contractors (compost, soil, mulch, etc.). Particularly for collective garden initiatives with minimal budgets and financial resources.

Politically and financially support opportunities and networking approaches so as to enhance the acceptance and common good that comes from Urban Agriculture.. This includes the support of and the development of gardens in school courtyards, daycare parks, community centres along with the public health network and social services in partnership with other levels of government.

Supporting Innovative Projects:

Allow for the installation of Bee Hives in a safe and secure manner as they contribute positively to the polenization process and provides very healthy end products of honey and honeycombs. These should be placed in strategic spots so as to maximize their présence as an aid to Urban Agriculture.

There needs to be a continued effort to put the accent on the support of Urban Agriculture initiatives yeilding highly productive gardening for the local market in proximity to the gardens. These should include projects for social integration and for the benefits of the social economy.

There needs to be strong, unwavering political and financial support for the creation of community greenhouses for year round cultivation and Encourage and support civic initiatives, and encourage creating a mentoring program built in collaboration with local stakeholders.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, it is most important that the commissioners understand the importance of the Urban Agriculture initiative going forward and realize that there is no holding back the many ideas expressed throughout these hearings. With limited resources available it would be recommended that substantial efforts should be made to expand the collective garden networks as city lands are rare and becoming more scarce. The education of citizens should be a priority along with the raising of the profile and benefits of said practices. Simply put, we believe the more citizens of Montreal become aware of the ease and joy of gardening, there will be a substantial increase in the demand for education, training and spaces to partake in urban gardening.

It is in the best interest of the Ville de Montréal, that they keep up with this most essential element of a livable, sustainable, clean, green 21st century Montréal.

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