

network news

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The Sustainable Cities: PLUS Network is an international peer learning Network of cities sharing their experiences, expertise and tools to undertake very long term planning for urban sustainability. Please visit our website at www.plusnetwork.icsc.ca

Soundbytes “Cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens. They are the most vigorous, the most independent, the most virtuous, and they are tied to their country and wedded to its liberty and interests by the most lasting bands” - Thomas Jefferson

ICSC Wins Canadian International Cooperation Award

Sustainable Cities Foundation, Vancouver, Canada - On May 21st, The International Centre for Sustainable Cities (ICSC) won the Desjardins International Award for Long-term Commitment to International Development at the 6th Annual Canadian Awards for International Cooperation. This award celebrated ICSC's 15 years of experience and promoted the innovative projects that ICSC has undertaken in collaboration with over 40 Canadian businesses. The award featured several of ICSC's demonstration projects and endorsed the Sustainable Cities: PLUS Network for advancing urban sustainability.

Sustainability Highlight Growing Urban Solutions

Local governments are increasingly committed to the development of urban agriculture, mobilizing existing local resources, institutionalizing urban agriculture, recognizing urban food production as infrastructure, and allocating budgets for urban agriculture practices. Economic benefits are generated through the commercialization of locally produced food, farmers markets, on-site sales, and value added processing opportunities. Urban

agriculture projects foster collaboration between businesses, community groups, city councils, provincial initiatives, and urban and rural farmers, who work to establish stable agricultural activities in and near cities and integrate urban agriculture into a broader sustainability strategy. By taking an integrated approach, cities can link food production to municipal and regional responsibilities such as recreation, water storage, nature conservation, and zones with high flooding risk. Innovations are occurring in many places: some cities are integrating urban agriculture into storm water and liquid waste management plans, and new green roof standards have been adopted in bylaws and building codes. Brownfields are being considered for urban agriculture space, particularly for techniques that do not depend on soil quality, such as raised beds, composting, aquaculture, hydroponics, and greenhouse production.

Planning for the long term requires cities to designate areas and strategies for urban agriculture.

In light of the increasing attention being paid to the international food and energy crisis, this newsletter highlights some of the contributions of urban agriculture to community development, generation of jobs, increased self-esteem, environmental improvement and food safety.



Experiences from the field Local Procurement Practices

Markham, Canada, a diverse municipality of more than 285,000 residents, recently adopted a procurement practice for its municipal food services, an initiative to help support Ontario's farm economy, address climate change, reduce green house gases and pesticide use, and to promote environmentally responsible purchasing. This initiative was established in partnership with Local Foods Plus (LFP), a non-profit organization

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that certifies farmers and processors and links them with local buyers. Certified farmers and processors work to employ sustainable, non synthetic and unmodified production systems; provide safe and fair working conditions; provide healthy and humane care for livestock; protect and enhance wildlife habitat and biodiversity on working farm landscapes; and reduce food related energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. With the assistance of LFP, Markham will ensure a minimum of ten percent of its municipal purchases come from LFP certified Ontario farmers, with future increases of five percent each year. (www.markham.ca)

Livelihood improvements through urban greening in Sri Lanka

From 2000-2002, ICSC conducted an Urban Greening project in Thailand that successfully applied urban agriculture as a strategy to address poverty and environmental degradation. Based on the successes of this project, ICSC transferred and scaled up the project to three communities in Sri Lanka. By introducing



Agricultural training in Matara, Sri Lanka

urban greening initiatives and engaging the community, this unique three-year project improved the status of the poor (particularly women) by increasing family income and savings through increased food production.

Community groups worked together to convert unused, derelict areas into gardens and green space and any produce/herbs cultivated in these spaces were shared amongst the participants. By the end of the project, most of the communities had implemented composting programs of different scales. Through organizing citizens to develop local green plans and establishing market gardens, the project resulted in improving the livability of cities through urban landscaping, urban agriculture and solid waste management. (www.icsc.ca)

Land Reserves

The Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), a collection of land in British Columbia, has existed since 1973, representing an area in which agriculture is recognized as the "highest and best use". The Reserve, an area of about 47,000 square kilometres, protects valuable agricultural land from being developed. It includes private and public lands that may be farmed, forested or are vacant. Farming is encouraged and non-agricultural uses are controlled. Despite having been in existence for over 30 years, the ALR continues to be threatened by urbanization. In general, the use of "purchase of development rights" (PDR) allow private landowners to conserve working landscapes, using market and incentive-based, non-regulatory techniques. PDR transactions give landowners a way to realize the development value of their

land without having to develop it. Land reserves are an effective way of ensuring that there is proper agricultural zoning and there are boundaries between urban and rural areas. They support the local agricultural industry and preserve green space from development. (www.alc.gov.bc.ca and www.wi-ei.org)

Supply Management in the Agriculture System

Canada's poultry and dairy industries operate on a unique supply management system that contributes to sustainable food solutions. In an agricultural supply managed system, farmers control their production to coincide with forecasts of demand for their products in the same period, and imports are restricted. By effectively controlling production, costly surpluses and shortages, and the market price swings they create, are avoided. Managing supply is complex in agriculture because of the large number of production units involved and due to long production lead times. Weather, trade and other uncontrollable factors affect production cycles as well. Supply managed agriculture balances the provision of reasonably priced, plentiful food products that are safe, nutritious and high quality. The costs of meeting these high consumer expectations are not paid by governments or hidden in agricultural subsidies, but rather are factored in to the price of the products. Local supply management reduces the need for transporting goods long distances. Poultry and dairy farmers provide a strong and vibrant foundation for Canada's rural communities are important drivers of the rural economy. Supply management is an ongoing Canadian success story that proves food production can be managed efficiently, while benefiting consumers, government and farmers. (www.cdc.ca)

Green Roof City – Chicago

First planted in 2000, the City Hall rooftop garden was conceived as a demonstration project, but now Chicago is the number one city for green roof implementation in North America. The garden sits atop Chicago's City Hall, an 11-story office building and consists of 20,000 plants selected for their ability to thrive in sunny, windy and arid conditions. Like all green roofs, this garden improves air quality, conserves energy, reduces storm water runoff and helps lessen the urban heat island effect. The garden's plants reflect heat, provide shade and help cool the surrounding air through evapo-transpiration, which occurs when plants secrete or "transpire" water. Plants filter the air, improving air quality by using excess carbon dioxide to produce oxygen. The rooftop garden mitigates the urban heat island effect by absorbing less heat from the sun than tar, keeping the inside cooler in summer. The garden absorbs and uses rain water, retaining up to 75% of a 1 inch rainfall.



Chicago City Hall Roof Garden

Chicago continues to pioneer urban greening initiatives. It has transferred city-owned and tax-delinquent lots to community groups as a means of creating new neighborhood spaces, and works with a non-profit corporation to maintain vacant land, including over 230 community gardens. (www.cityofchicago.org)

Enhancing Sustainable Dairy Production Capacity in Cuba

The Enhancing Sustainable Dairy Production Capacity in Cuba is a demonstration project in which Canadian dairy farmers share their experience in herd management with a Cuban farming cooperative. The goal is to increase milk production from sustainable, pasture-based dairy units called Pedestals- which are an innovative grass/legume rotational pasture system. This environmentally and economically sustainable approach relies on solar energy, rotational pasture management practices and farm ration practices, not imported inputs. Solar electric fencing was introduced which raised the standard of farming practices and technologies. Farmers have doubled milk production and



Building calf pens at the farming cooperative, Cuba

are generating more income. Herd management practices have been altered allowing more time for farmers to develop other components of their farm and family life. Women have been trained in calf rearing and will become part of the farm management system. The surrounding community can now rely on the local production of milk which is essential for the health and nutrition of their children. (www.icsc.ca)

Green Streets

The City of Vancouver runs a Green Streets program that offers residents an opportunity to plant traffic circles or corner bulges in their neighbourhood. Street gardens are run by volunteers, contributing to colourful, interesting and personalized neighbourhoods. They build a sense of community pride and ownership which ultimately benefits the entire city.



In Conclusion

Long-term food security requires care for and maintenance of farmland in and near cities. There are significant long-term costs to a public health care system when large numbers

Street garden in Vancouver, Canada

of people go hungry, are poorly nourished, or eat unsafe foods. Securing long-term commitment for community gardens, entrepreneurial farms, and other urban agriculture ventures is imperative to ensure the environmental, social, and economic value of the land. Incorporating urban agriculture in city land use plans is a desirable civic activity that improves the quality of urban life, food security, neighborhood safety and environmental stewardship.

Upcoming Events

PLUS Network Biennial Conference September 15-19th, 2008 - Durban, South Africa

There are only two months left before the 2008 Biennial Conference! To date, 23 cities have registered.

Mayors, elected officials and practitioners will address the key political hurdles to long-term approaches, and highlight successes and failures that have contributed to the learning in their respective cities.

Don't miss this important opportunity for learning about long-term planning framework.

News from Network Cities

Portland, USA – Portland, the newest member of the PLUS Network, has been pursuing a community visioning process that has engaged tens of thousands of people (www.visionpdx.com). One aspect of the vision is to continue to build on the comprehensive planning that has made the city a recognized leader in sustainability. Current efforts are to incorporate a plan for greenhouse gas reduction and a carbon modeling plan.



Saint John, Canada – On May 31st, the City of Saint John received the 2008 Federation of Canadian Municipalities-CH2M HILL Sustainable Community Award in the Energy category for their Municipal Energy Efficiency Program (MEEP). MEEP, adopted by the city in 1996, comprises a comprehensive annual analysis of energy consumption and related costs of municipal operations. The main objective is to reduce municipal operations energy consumption by 25% by 2011. (www.saintjohn.ca)

Web Dialogues – In May and June, four web dialogues focused on urban sustainability issues and solutions were run in collaboration with Royal Roads University. The topics included: Sustainability Indicators; How to Engage Youth in City Planning; Integrated Community Sustainability Planning; and Emerging Trends in Urban Governance. A range of practitioners from around the Network and participating cities contributed their

ideas, challenges and strategies during the dialogues. The dialogues can be reviewed by visiting the website at: www.e-dialogues.ca

The sustainability race is on! – Two US cities, Montpelier and Olympia, have embarked on an unprecedented race to be the first sustainable state capital. This cooperative effort engages the mayors, the city councils, and the staff of each city, along with local stakeholders and citizens. The cities are working together to agree on guideposts and milestones that will mark their progress. The guideposts will note times when they host peer exchanges on specific issues they face while the milestones mark progress toward a goal that can be measured, such as a plan completed, a strategy implemented, indicators reported, or new directions taken. The PLUS Network is excited to watch as the race unfolds.



The challengers: Michael Mucha, Olympia and Gwen Hallsmith, Montpelier

Recent Events

Niagara Peer Exchange – The Regional Municipality of Niagara hosted a peer exchange focusing on local economic development, community revitalization and sustainability. The cities of Calgary, Saint John, Edmonton, Buffalo and Curitiba attended. The discussion on revitalization looked at opportunities that exist in shrinking cities to transform and reinvent themselves. Strategies included fostering new and innovative governance that breaks down silos, looks at urban areas as economic engines, thinks long-term, and works regionally across jurisdictional boundaries for greater coordination and alignment.



Peer Exchange in Niagara, Canada

Dakar Peer Exchange – The cities of Dakar, Dar es Salaam, Durban, Curitiba, and Montreal met in June for a peer exchange focused on strategic long-term planning, using Dakar as a case study. Discussion focused on the process of informing and involving institutional and elected officials, and the appropriate degree of general public and stakeholder involvement. Key conclusions included: the importance of marrying long-term planning with immediate action, which reduces community distrust of planning versus action, and the importance of leadership at the municipal

level. The delegates visited a community demonstration project in the municipality of Hann Bel Air, where they are turning perishable waste into compost for community gardens.



Peer Exchange in Dakar, Senagal

North Vancouver – In June, a peer exchange on “Vision to Action” was held at the District of North Vancouver. Portland, Calgary, Whistler, Coquitlam, North Vancouver, the District of North Vancouver and the District of West Vancouver participated. Portland and Calgary shared lessons on their visioning and implementation processes. Whistler spoke about their experiences in maintaining their sustainability vision throughout the years of implementation, and an ICSC research associate shared his research on the Imagine Durban process by exploring governance and implementation.

Thank you to our sponsors:



For further information on the PLUS Network please visit www.plusnetwork.icsc.ca or contact:
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