



SUSTAIN
LOWERTOWN

Sustain Your Community | Community Development for Sustainability | A project funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation |

Delivered by EnviroCentre in collaboration with various community partners

| Evaluated by Effective Measures of the Social Planning Council of Ottawa

www.envirocentre.ca/initiatives/sustain-your-community

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Sustain Lowertown | Evaluation Report

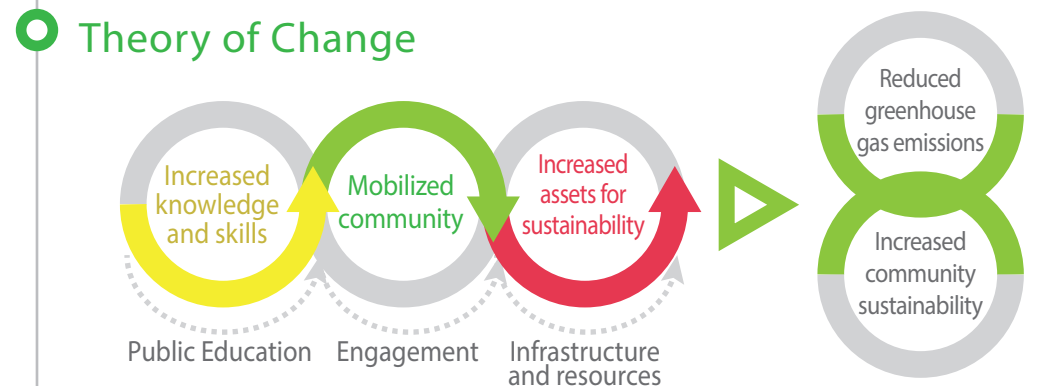
Purpose

This evaluation report examines the findings for the final period of the three-year project (2014-2017) carried out by EnviroCentre to support environmental sustainability at the local level and expand assets for sustainability.



Focus of the Project

Develop community-led initiatives that engage residents and volunteers in projects that increase local sustainability practices and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in targeted communities.

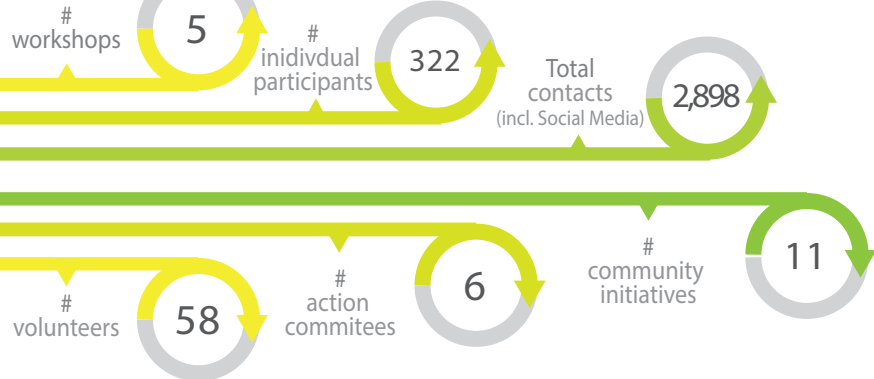


Sustain Lowertown | Themes: **Transportation and Food Security**

Resources used / participants getting involved, raising awareness and taking action to increase community sustainability

OUTPUTS How much did we do?

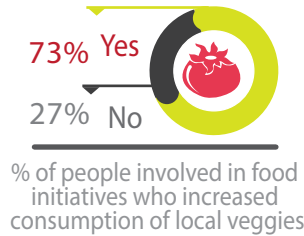
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QUALITY How well did we do it?

2

Level of satisfaction reported by participants who completed surveys



"Overall the project had a very positive impact on the community and it's something we can build on. It's amazing how much grew even in our small garden. So it showed that it doesn't take much - growing food is attainable. So for people just seeing it, it was encouraging to think, "Hey, I can do that too."
Anne-Marie, Community House Co-ordinator

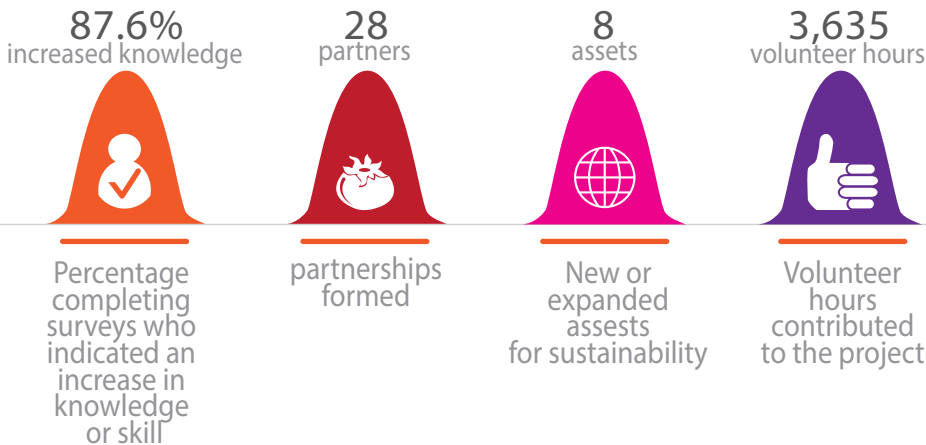


"The coordinator did a great job and I know how much residents enjoyed working with her. There was a lot of enthusiasm. She created really strong relationships."
Lowertown Partner Agency

Positive changes and progression reported by participants, volunteers and coordinators

OUTCOMES How is the community better off?

3



LEARNING Feedback for improvement

4

Lessons learned that will help us move forward on GHG reductions and/or sustainability actions

Lessons learned...

Different people get engaged in different ways, so provide a range of opportunities to get involved - from short-term to on-going leadership.

Word of mouth works best in low income communities.

Focus on food in low income neighbourhoods as it is a high concern. Food really brings people together and can be a gateway into sustainability issues and other benefits.

Context and challenges...

Infrastructure projects like building new community gardens, often encounter red-tape (such as by-law issues) which are frustrating for volunteers.

Increasing community sustainability requires systems change and government actions.

In low income communities where people are struggling to meet their basic needs, environmental issues may not be seen as a high priority. Initiatives need to respond where there is synergy - food security, lower energy costs, etc.

Sustain Lowertown | 2017 Highlights

Most Significant Change

The engagement on food was the most significant change.

"All the work around the community gardens for the community represents food, of course, but also a sense of community and inter-generational and inter-cultural connectedness. The gardens are beautiful and send a strong message that food is important to us... We can have healthy food and beautiful green spaces, even in our low income community."

"If it hadn't been for those gardens I'd never have met those people you know. They'd never have talked to me. There is something about gardens. I'll say it, it's therapeutic. For real, thanks."
- Resident

Increased Knowledge & Skills

"Let's Talk Food" was an empowering event on food security. Residents were informed of the options available and explored inspiring new ideas. It led to more collaboration between the community gardens and a plan for better communication on resources and how to get involved in the community gardens."

Other workshops included gardening, seed saving, canning, healthy eating, bike skills and saving energy.

"I really liked helping build the gardens and seeing how much people can feed themselves with the vegetables that grow there."
- Youth participant

The project also helped St Anne's School achieve their eco-school status certification

Mobilized Community

Community involvement and volunteers were at the heart of everything in the project. Sustain has played a role in community building and resident empowerment by supporting residents and encouraging them to share their skillsets. For example, the more experienced community gardeners are modelling to other gardeners, doing workshops and sharing knowledge and skills between communities to help design, build and run community gardens.

"Having people that can share their knowledge - that's valuable."

Increased Assets for Sustainability (Year 3)

The food infrastructure will provide a lasting benefit for food security - community gardens, Good Food in Corner Stores, Market Mobile / Good Food Box and knowledgeable residents. Having food growing all around a low income community is powerful.

The bike repairs at events was very popular. Children came to events with their broken bike and left with the bike working. In most cases the bikes only needed a little [repair], but these repairs were completely out of reach of the residents, rendering the bikes useless. The new bike repair station will be an on-going assets.

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