



Sustain Your Community: Evaluation 2014-2017

SUSTAIN
KANATA
NORTH

SUSTAIN
WEST
CARLETON

SUSTAIN
LOWERTOWN

3 Years of Sustainable Community Development |
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**
YOUR COMMUNITY

Effective
Measures



Mesures
de l'efficacité

Ontario
Trillium
Foundation



Fondation
Trillium
de l'Ontario

Sustain Your Community | Overview 2014-2017

Purpose

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



Focus of the Project

Develop community-led initiatives that engage residents and volunteers in projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, cost-savings and overall, citizen involvement in environmental sustainability actions.



Three Communities - Three Priorities

Kanata North

Lowertown

West Carleton



Project Timeline

2014-2015
Adoption

2015-2016
Adaptation

2016-2017
Long-term Engagement

Theory of Change

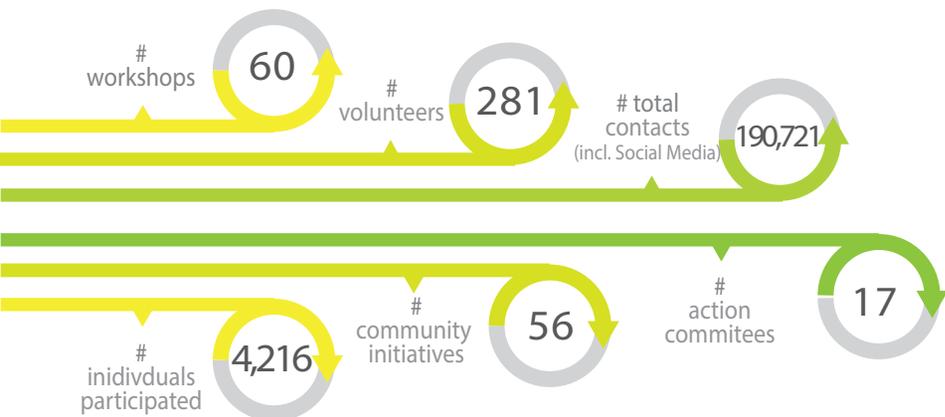


How Much Did We Do? How Well Did We Do It?

Participants getting involved, raising awareness and taking action to increase community sustainability



Level of satisfaction reported by participants who completed surveys



Initiatives & Events



What Are People Saying?

The critical success factors were the enthusiasm and effectiveness of the staff. - Kanata North participant

Thanks to Sustain, we held the "Great Big Crunch" event and it was a hoot. We had 800 people in the room all eating local vegetables and the series of workshops came right after that. Kids and parents got to see local food in action – that goodness right here in the community – and that it's not onerous to eat local, quick and healthy. The kids couldn't get enough of it. I don't know how much more effective you can get than that. - West Carleton participant

I really enjoyed working with the people in the Sustain project and at the EnviroCentre. They have great intentions and get the best use out of grant money to push these issues forward, and they're really good at listening to people. - West Carleton farmer

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

"Sustain" was very positive for Kanata North and it exceeded expectations. I thought it could maybe get a couple of initiatives going, but it did a lot more than that. It showed that with the right coordinator in place and a little bit of funding you can get sustainability initiatives moving forward in Kanata North and get people involved. - President, Kanata-Beaverbrook Community Association

I would like to share extreme appreciation for all Sustain did for the Deep Roots Food Hub. I think we would be in a very different place, and not in a good way. Our volunteers are busy, especially those in the root cellar project. So Sustain was able to keep on top of all the moving parts. Just having dedicated hours was a critical success factor along with the style of intervention and flexibility. This allowed the volunteer work to move forward, and to keep people motivated and on track. It was a job extremely well done and we will really miss the support. - Board Member, Deep Roots Food Hub

How is the Community Better Off?

Positive changes and progression reported by participants, volunteers and coordinators

OUTCOMES

Is anyone or anything better off?

3

4

MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGES

Most important changes, as identified by participants and coordinators



Assets & Infrastructure

Increased sustainability infrastructure and resources support action, making it easier for people to choose to do things that contribute to sustainability or GHG reductions. An on-going legacy of the project, and a key outcome supporting sustainability actions in the long term, are the 44 assets that were developed within the communities.



24 assets supporting production and consumption of local food

- 5 new community gardens, and support to continue or expand 3 others
- Water collection or solar water pump at 2 additional community gardens
- Development of a community root cellar
- 4 Good Food Box drop locations & 2 community supported agriculture drops
- 1 farm stand & 4 sites for the Good Food Market or MarketMobile
- "Good Food" in corner stores in 2 communities
- Food security plans for 2 communities

6 assets supporting active transportation

- Research and advocacy that contributed to over \$1 million in federal infrastructure dollars, including for cycling infrastructure
- Sidewalk and cross-over improvements
- Cycling maps & a community cycling transportation plan for Kanata
- 2 bike repair stations

14 assets supporting other sustainability issues

- 12 energy audits
- 1 energy efficiency video available on-line
- Greening and park improvements including "seed bombing" with low impact seed in neglected urban spaces, park revitalization to beautify and support pollinators and butterflies

ENGAGED COMMUNITY

The project was extremely successful in engaging more people and organizations in initiatives supporting sustainability and GHG reductions and has left a lasting legacy of informed residents, mobilized volunteers and community infrastructure.

SUSTAINABILITY ASSETS

The project developed 44 permanent community-level assets for local food, sustainable transportation and energy conservation, making it easier for people to choose to take actions that contribute to sustainability or GHG reductions.

LOCAL FOOD

88% of participants involved in food initiatives increased their consumption of local produce.

SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION

The project contributed to securing significant resources to improve cycling infrastructure, raised the level of discussion at the City on sustainable transportation in suburbia, and has the potential to meaningfully reduce GHG emissions through increased cycling and better public transit.

CAPACITY BUILDING

The project drew residents in and connected them to on-going initiatives, built volunteer capacity and developed networks and partnerships to maintain the momentum. It has resulted in empowered volunteers, connections between residents and partners in each community, and organizations and businesses working collaboratively on initiatives in each of the communities.

NETWORK OF STAKEHOLDERS

The project played an important role in enhancing the work of existing local partners, to build a stronger network of stakeholders working together on these issues.

Context & Challenges

- Increasing community sustainability requires systems change and government action.
- Our Theory of Change is a good model for community-based improvements. Mobilization and developing assets have the most impact.
- Bigger forces have a significant impact on the ability to change behaviour. Time and cost are key factors. Cycling is impacted by the lack of separated bike lanes and school board policies re attending local schools.
- Trends in volunteering have implications for the mobilization strategy.
- There is an inherent competition between increasing food security for low income residents and financial sustainability of a local food system (and farmers' incomes).
- Environmental sustainability can be a low priority for low income residents, and may be seen by rural communities as an urban issue.
- Food really brings people together and is a gateway into sustainability issues.

Increased Knowledge & Skills

- Workshops are a great engagement tool. They were well attended, enthusiastically reviewed and most participants intended to try some behaviour change based on the information. However, moving from knowledge to behaviour change at a meaningful scale is significantly impacted by larger issues. People also need to see others making the change – so work to make certain behaviours the norm, like cycling to an event.
- Whether face-to-face or on-line, training is a great way to get people involved and interested while they learn new skills. It also builds community capacity re informed residents and volunteers.
- A best practice: Make the activities fun! "So now teachers, parents and children think, 'This local food is great. It's worth that little effort'" And that's the starting point to get them thinking and talking about how we can support local farmers."

Mobilized Community

- Critical success factors were:
- Paid coordinators with local knowledge, good relationship-builders, enthusiastic and well organized. Short term or volunteer contracts are not realistic
 - Active involvement of volunteers
 - Local people deciding what will work in their community, with guidelines of doable projects.
 - A little bit of funding for initiatives
 - Linking into networks and key people re mutually reinforcing opportunities
 - Being nimble re new ideas and opportunities
- Good practices:
- volunteer training and templates for a common base of knowledge
 - providing food at activities
 - creating time-limited volunteer opportunities
- The capacity of volunteers and of other organizations are a big factor (esp. time and complexity). People tend to stay at the same level of involvement.

Increased Assets for Sustainability

- Creating sustainability-related infrastructure is very effective in supporting involvement in the long-term. However, it can be difficult to build projects and activities around areas where the group lacks expertise or time.
- The regulations and timelines of bureaucracies particularly the City, the NCC and landowners, can make it very difficult to develop assets. Relationships are a great asset but there can still be significant barriers in terms of building code bylaw, official plans, financial priorities and liability. These difficulties impact the volunteers involved.
- It is challenging for volunteers to successfully raise the funds for assets and these efforts can lead to tensions among participants.
- Assets are key to ensuring lasting benefits





Priority Improvement

Spotlight on:

Active Transportation

Why Is This Important?

“Community design that supports active transportation has been demonstrated to provide multiple transportation, environmental and public health benefits, including promoting physical activity, improving air quality, reducing contributions to climate change, and even improving community livability.”

Healthy Canada by Design CLASP Initiative (Coalitions Linking Action and Science for Prevention) — Canadian Institute of Planners, Public Health Agency Canada and others, 2011-2012. Active Transportation, Health and Community Design: What is the Canadian Evidence Saying?, p. 2. Retrieved from <https://www.cip-icu.ca/Files/Healthy-Communities/FACTSHEETS-ActiveTransportation-FINALenglish.aspx>

Priority Issue for:

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Local Initiatives Making a Difference

“ The [cycling] maps were flying off the shelves so fast that we could not keep them stocked. People were telling us that that wanted to get back into cycling. ”
- Gillian Johnston, Ottawa Public Library Beaverbrook location

RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY: “CYCLIE IN” REPORT

The “Cycle In” report supported a collective effort to raise awareness of the need for better cycling and public transit infrastructure in Kanata, especially to the business park. The efforts led to improved public transit and over a million dollars for the infrastructure (including for cycling) while highlighting active transportation in the suburbs.



CYCLING MAP

Published by the pre-existing “Transportation Action Committee Kanata” (TACK) with support of this project, the map has been very popular, and serves as a model across the City, showing routes categorized by safety levels. It is available in hard copy or on the TACK website.

PEDAL PLAY BIKE RODEO

This one day mobile bike rodeo is a partnership event, designed to help families gain confidence, skills and motivation to cycle short distances within their communities. It was high energy with activities for the whole family. 50 volunteers were trained in bike safety, increasing cycling expertise in the community.



BICYCLE REPAIR STATIONS AND WORKSHOPS

In Lowertown, 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. We saw the need and responded with training and new repair stations.



Priority Improvement

Spotlight on:

Local Food

“Food is an issue that galvanizes communities and catalyzes action like few other topics can. It greens the environment, promotes biodiversity, contributes to the local economy and provides countless opportunities for education, social inclusion and community-building.”

City of Vancouver, 2013. What Feeds Us Vancouver Food Strategy, p., 3. Retrieved from <http://vancouver.ca/people-programs/vancouver-food-strategy.aspx>

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Local Initiatives Making a Difference

“All of 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. - Lowertown Partner Organization

FOOD PRODUCTION AND PRESERVATION WORKSHOPS

“In the workshops, kids and parents could see its’ not onerous to eat quick, healthy and local.” - Stonecrest School Parent
“Food is a direct link between the environment and people, and workshops are a great way to open discussions with all ages and in any community on food justice and food access. The main barrier to healthy eating is income, not education.” - Coordinator



COMMUNITY GARDENING

“Gardening in Lowertown gives me a strong sense of community involvement and of place. It also gives me carrots, tomatoes, cucumbers, sunflowers, and garlic!” - Lowertown community gardener

COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE, GOOD FOOD MARKETS AND MARKET BUCKS

“Sustain worked with me, as a farmer, to enable an increase in the scale of my farm and get more local food into the hands of eaters and reduce food miles. The market bucks enabled access for those with lower incomes. ” - West Carleton Farmer



LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM ADVOCACY AND THE DEEP ROOTS FOOD CELLAR

The Deep Roots Food Hub, with support from Sustain, is tackling the local food system, with many initiatives including expanding local food production, developing a community root cellar, a distribution network and local educational activities.



Priority Improvement

Spotlight on:

Energy & Water Conservation

“In terms of energy policy, efficiency is often referred to as the low-hanging fruit for reducing emissions, meaning that efficiency actions like upgrades, weatherization, and other improvements to buildings can be less expensive and easy to complete compared with more complex energy projects, like trying to capture and sequester carbon dioxide emissions at coal- red power plants.”

Zeller, T. (2009, February 24). Home Green Home: The Low- Hanging Fruit. New York Times. Retrieved from <http://green.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/02/24/home-green- home-the-low- hanging-fruit/>

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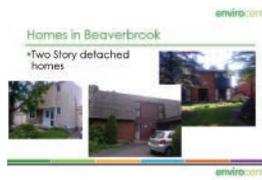
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Local Initiatives Making a Difference

“Housing accounts for approximately 17% of secondary energy used in Canada. While most consumer products have been commoditized globally, housing is built and renovated locally, providing us with the ability to dramatically reduce the home’s energy footprint. . . (Housing Research (NRCAN web page) <http://www.nrcan.gc.ca/energy/efficiency/housing/research/13628>)”

GREEN RENOVATION & ENERGY CONSERVATION WORKSHOPS

Research indicates that access to information is an important barrier for the uptake of green renovations and energy conservations. Sustain’s workshops ensured residents had clear and accurate information about the most effective approaches. Resources are also on-line at <http://www.envirocentre.ca/learning-centre/beaverbrook-home-energy/>



ENERGY AUDITS

Energy audits completed in all three communities provided the property owners with information on the most impactful actions to take. Ten template energy audits for the most common housing designs in the area were published online using an interactive Beaverbrook map to enable homeowners to identify actions they could take, including do-it- yourself strategies.

SOLAR WATER PUMPS

A solar-powered water pump was purchased for the Trailing Edge Community Garden. Its inked to storage containers and rain barrels with enough on-demand ability to meet gardeners’ needs. They also educated members on watering techniques to promote conservation and garden success. It models green power.



PUBLIC EVENTS PROMOTING SUSTAINABILITY IN GENERAL

Sustain coordinated with existing events to promote recycling, composting, cycling, home renovations and other strategies for sustainability. Events hosted by the project took sustainability into consideration offering composting, recycling, local food and incorporating waste reduction measures.