A Partnership-Based Intersectoral Approach for Val-Martin

Submitted By: Ville de Laval



Organization Profile

Organization Name: Ville de Laval

Organization Type: Subnational government

Website: www.laval.ca

Practice Details

Country(ies): Canada

City(ies): Laval

Start Year: 2013 **Ongoing:** Yes **End Year:** N/A

Main Adequate Housing Components:



Housing Thematic Areas:

- Social Housing
- Housing Rights & Social Inclusion
- Housing & Climate Mitigation
- Housing, Land & Spatial Planning

Relevant SDGs:



UN-HABITAT

Problem & Context

The Immeubles Val-Martin (IVM) housing complex includes 534 dwellings, which were built in the 1950s and converted into social housing in the 1970s. IVM is owned by the Société d'habitation du Québec (SHQ) and managed by the Office municipal d'habitation de Laval (OMHL). The built environment presents significant issues, including contamination due to water infiltration, poor energy performance, high heating costs, and its location in an enclosed area spanned by a busy boulevard. Some 240 contaminated dwellings are empty, which gives rise to a feeling of insecurity among the remaining occupants. IVM is also located in a food desert and a heat island. Given the urgent need and growing demand for social housing and community services, the revitalization of this area has become a priority for the City of Laval owing to its concentration of social and economic deprivation, social tensions, increasing urban violence, and lack of recreational activities and community spaces.

Solution Developed

The New Urban Agenda for cities calls for sustainable urban development with a focus on social inclusion and the elimination of poverty.

Target population

- Residents of the IVM

Objectives

- Triple the site's density through different work phases
- Phase 1 (2019-2025): 359 social and affordable dwellings
- Integrate a municipal community centre and a solidarity grocery store
- Open up the area through the development of a road and a park
- Integrate social and recreation services at the local level
- Integrate a local food supply chain and edible landscaping
- Promote resilient development and buildings
- Promote mixed-use projects and social inclusion

Innovation

- Integration of a living environment with the housing project, as a strategy to fight against poverty and social exclusion.
- Partnership-based intersectoral and multi-network governance:
    1. With local community partners: site manager, school, health care, philanthropic and community stakeholders
    2. With inter-municipal services, between urban planning, major projects, culture, recreation, and social development; and with various public policies in support of housing policies

3. With government partners

Implementation

The urban planning city team first reviewed the file in 2016, with a mandate to plan and implement the project following the initial overview carried out in 2013. In 2017, the governments of Canada and Quebec announced an investment of $28.2 million to complete Phase 1 of the site. The plans and specifications drawing were created with an integrated planning approach, which marked an innovation: an intersectoral committee (local partners, community organizations and city representatives) was created in 2018 to support the revitalization's conceptual framework and the development of the community hub.

The dismantling and reconstruction of the dwellings began in 2019, followed by the construction of the community centre and the solidarity grocery store. At the same time, the community roundtable began implementing a local food system. In 2021, a work cell was created to develop social services within the housing complex, and a needs analysis was conducted with residents.

Several joint actions have been carried out since 2023: a continuum of care offer to families and residents, urban agriculture spaces and temporary urban plaza, public artwork and a mural, the co-design of a park through a collaboration between the city and community partners.

The community centre and solidarity grocery store opened in 2025, and the park and urban agriculture space are slated to open in 2026. The three levels of government invested close to $91 million to complete this project.

Enablers & Obstacles

Key Drivers

- Joint investment by three levels of government and philanthropic community
- Alignment between multiple public policies, orientations and financing
- A dedicated city team assigned to financing, planning and coordinating the work phases
- Intersectoral and multi-partner governance to promote the integration of an interdisciplinary vision
- Community engagement and prior presence of strong community partnerships

Challenges

- Different tempos, strengths and limitations of each organization, requiring establishing channels of communication and building trust
- Leadership issues, requiring that governance, roles and responsibilities be clarified
- Information transmission issues, requiring the creation of clear protocols

- Collective work challenges, requiring a commitment to innovative practices from the management teams
- Explosion of construction costs, requiring the investment of additional municipal funds
- Obsolete water infrastructures, that had to be replaced

Results & Impact

Phase I (2019-2025) involved the reconstruction of 124 low-rental dwelling units, and the construction of 235 new social and affordable dwelling units. Phase II will involve the construction of 302 new dwellings, including a building for low-income seniors, out of a total futur redevelopment of 1,500 dwellings.

IVM population is composed of single-mother families, seniors living alone, and immigrants, with high socioeconomic deprivation status. We hypothesize that the residents' involvement in public art projects and in the local food system will promote their social and economic empowerment, as will the establishment of community services within the same housing complex.

The site's design respect the universal accessibility guidelines, with 74 dwellings adapted and geared toward seniors, along with dwellings designed for persons with limited mobility or large families. The park was designed with a Gender-based Analysis framework, with a focus on the safety needs of teenage girls.

Novoclimat certification is being sought for the seven buildings constructed, and LEED Gold certification is being sought for the community centre. For Phase 1, the aim is to secure LEED ND (planning) and LEED-ND Silver (project) certification via the densification of the site, the proximity to public transit, the ecological management of construction waste, greening and underground parking to mitigate heat island effects, the addition of green spaces, wastewater recovery and water management.

Replication & Scale Up

The City of Laval, the OMHL and local partners aim to develop the same approach to the revitalization of a second social housing project in Laval: Place Saint-Martin:

- Financial commitment from various levels of government
- A transversal interdisciplinary vision
- Multi-partner governance, in collaboration with local and community organizations.
- Collaboration with cross-sector public policies to support the housing policies
- Potential for densification, strategic location close to all services
- Alignment with community local plan
- Involvement of the government property management

- Align different sectors, government level and public policies to support housing policies: community-based plan, philanthropic, public art, Strategy against poverty and social exclusion, Food communities' development plan, etc.
- From 2023 to 2025, a consulting team documented the project and trained stakeholders in interdisciplinarity planning approach (report: Fall 2025)
- INRS is conducting a longitudinal study on the trajectories of IVM residents
- Scenarios for local food systems integrated to urban planning were studied by University of Montreal's Fayolle-Magil Construction Chair

Policy Uptake

This housing practice has informed or been partially integrated into policy discussions, strategies, or pilot-level policy instruments.

This approach marks a first for Laval. The city has since adopted a housing policy and a heritage action plan. Since 2022, the initiative served as a pilot project under the Municipal action framework for integrated urban revitalization in disadvantaged and devitalized areas. The nourishing neighbourhood is a core component of the neighbourhood plan by the community development table. The project recently earned a Mérite Ovation award from the Union des municipalités du Québec. The partnership-based interdisciplinary approach will serve for subsequent IVM redevelopment phases.

Lessons & Takeaways

Takeaways:

- Earmark budgets
- Train stakeholders on the intersectoral approach
- Develop tools to promote social innovation within municipal mechanisms
- Clarify roles and leadership
- Involve local partners

Note

Image credit: David Boyer Photographe / Propriétaire Ædifica