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To Whom It May Concern,

I am pleased to confirm that McGill University's Edible Campus project meets the criteria set forth in AASHE's STARS Reporting Framework for Innovation credits.

A collaboration between McGill's Minimum Cost Housing Group (from the School of Architecture) and two local NGO's (Santropol Roulant and Alternatives), the Edible Campus project incorporates productive growing into underutilized and leftover concrete spaces in the University's downtown campus. This design prototype is unique in that it is not restricted to traditional garden plots or green rooftops. Instead, it uses various growing techniques such as self-watering containerized gardens and raised beds to produce food in non-traditional, challenging urban spaces, including vacant lots, paved areas, urban corridors, balconies, railings, and any other underutilized spaces.

There are many environmental benefits to this project: Reducing food miles, recycling plastic containers, reducing waste, and reducing the 'heat island' effect, particularly in paved hard surface areas in downtown Montreal. There are also many social benefits to this project, including active community participation, volunteerism and the donation of the harvest to vulnerable populations. Most importantly, the project offers increased educational opportunities in addition to curricular and co-curricular activities for students. The scope of the project was recently expanded to include apiculture: workshops are held on beekeeping to help protect the vulnerable bee populations and the bees from nearby hives on the roof of the Frank Dawson Adams Building adjoining the Edible Campus initiative conceivably assist with pollinating the crops of the project in addition to local flora.

Since its inception in 2007, Edible Campus has grown to occupy a quarter acre of land with 275 self-watering containers and three permanent gardens. In 2010 alone, one ton of produce (including 28 different vegetable varieties) was harvested. In all, Edible Campus has allowed McGill not only to promote environmental and social sustainability on its own campus through opportunities for active learning and engagement, it has also allowed McGill to demonstrate and promote productive planting in urban spaces and explore additional strategies for food production in the city.

As an early adopter challenging social, legal and economic barriers of urban agriculture, the Edible campus is a multi faceted, innovative and replicable model of planting in urban spaces, by and for the community. As a model, it has proven itself to be safe and sustainable which I believe qualifies this project as an Innovation Credit in STARS.

Sincerely,

Vikram Bhatt
Professor, McGill School of Architecture
Project Head, the Edible Campus Project