Context

Toryglen was developed as a social housing scheme in the 1950s and 1960s. It was one of Glasgow’s earliest experiments in multi-storey housing and provided modern homes with indoor bathrooms and central heating to approximately 2,500 households from Glasgow’s inner city.

By the 1980s, the optimism that had surrounded the policy of high rise housing had waned. Communal spaces were poorly maintained and a lack of facilities impacted negatively on community cohesion. As the local economy declined, unemployment in the area rose, and many residents became concerned about drug and alcohol misuse, crime, and vandalism.

Project Background

Urban Roots evolved out of Toryglen Gardening Club. It is a community led organisation, working across the Southside of Glasgow, committed to working with local people on projects that improve the environment and health of residents through a range of activities including community gardening, conservation work and biodiversity improvements. It aims to inspire people and communities to connect with nature and to take practical action to tackle the root causes of climate change.
What it did
In 2012, Glasgow City Council provided Urban Roots with two acres of vacant land located behind the Polmadie Recycling Centre and the high rise flats of Prospecthill Circus, for the development of a market garden and orchard. Funding obtained from the Climate Challenge Fund enabled a Project Coordinator to be employed to develop proposals for the market garden. Over 900 local residents were consulted on the plans for the site and the final proposals were implemented in partnership with volunteers from the local community. The idea is to bring in as many people as possible to experience the Community Market Garden. Every week, Urban Roots facilitate two sessions for local people to assist with the growing of fruit and vegetables. Volunteers include people with additional support needs, mental health problems, addiction issues and the long term unemployed. Volunteers are given the opportunity to learn about gardening and have the opportunity to take away a share of the produce in exchange for a day’s labour. Also, the Community Market Garden provides space for seven local families to grow their own produce in purpose-built beds. Any food that is not taken home by the volunteers is delivered to local shops where it is sold to the local community at accessible prices. The income generated from the sale of this produce helps to reduce reliance on external funding and contributes towards financial sustainability of the project. The Community Market Garden also acts as a hub for learning and personal development. Four local residents have been given the opportunity to gain work experience in managing the garden, horticultural practice, harvesting, packing, and supporting volunteers. In addition, Urban Roots has developed a workshop programme covering activities such as construction of living willow structures, herbal remedies, foraging, organic gardening, beekeeping and cookery. Urban Roots is working with five local schools and colleges to develop projects in the Community Market Garden. The projects focus on biodiversity and garden design, and build awareness of the benefits of locally produced fresh fruit and vegetables. These projects complement the Eco-Schools Awards Programme and the Curriculum for Excellence, and provide relevant learning material across a broad range of subjects. The Community Market Gardens has hosted two open doors events, such as the Blossom Festival, attracting over 300 people. These events give visitors the opportunity to participate in hands-on activities such as felt making, green woodworking, herbal remedy making and other environmental skills that promote the project as a whole.

Urban Roots - Market Gardening in Glasgow

Awards
It’s your Neighbourhood, Outstanding Award, Keep Scotland Beautiful, 2012.
Greener Scotland – Greener Communities Award, 2013.

CSGN Learning & Support
This initiative demonstrates what can be achieved from permitting a community group to bring a local vacant and derelict site into use. In terms of improvements to the local environment the biodiversity and amenity value of the site been dramatically increased. But its’ main strength appears to be as a community resource and catalyst for the regeneration of an area suffering from social and economic issues. As a market garden, this modestly sized piece of land supports activities which increase the local residents’ physical and mental well-being and boosts the local economy. It is a base for education, learning and training across all age ranges and abilities, and it is a venue which can accommodate cultural events which enrich the lives of local residents and increase local community cohesion in the Toryglen area. In 2012, Urban Roots was successful in a CSGN Development Fund application and was awarded £73,419 to further develop the Market Garden and associated activities.

Urban Roots - Market Gardening in Glasgow

Future
In addition to continuing the Market Garden in Toryglen and developing this site further for the benefit of the local community. Urban Roots is also keen to supply more home grown produce to local cafes and shops. The organisation also wishes to further develop its strong links with sustainable activities including training people in cycling, cooking and beekeeping. Urban Roots is continues to develop additional community led greenspace projects across Toryglen. More recently the organisation has been working across the Southside of Glasgow, sharing its learning by working with and supporting other community groups to develop their own projects.

Outcomes
Reduce Vacant and Derelict Land: The project has removed 2ha of VDL from Glasgow, improving the aesthetic of Toryglen and also the biodiversity potential of the site.
Increase Community Cohesion: The Market Garden is a shared community resource in which residents, from a variety of backgrounds, can meet and share experiences and ideas.
Improve Employability: Provides opportunities for local residents to cultivate practical skills, helping to instill them with confidence and provide them with the work experience necessary to be more competitive in the labour market.
Reduce CO2 Footprint: Seeks to reduce food miles by increasing the availability of locally grown, fresh fruit and vegetables and raises awareness of the impact of air freighted produce.
Better Health: Physical and mental wellbeing improvements through encouraging people to improve their diets and providing opportunities for in physical exercise through gardening.
What is the CSGN?

The CSGN is a national development within the National Planning Framework which aims to make ‘a significant contribution to Scotland’s sustainable economic development’. It involves public agencies and stakeholders (those with an interest in our work) working together to align their policies, programmes and actions to achieve a common aim. That aim is to change the face of Central Scotland by restoring and improving the rural and urban landscape of the area.

Getting in Touch

To discuss this case study please contact: Stephen Hughes, Monitoring & Evaluation Manager, Central Scotland Green Network Support Unit. E-mail: stephen.hughes@centralscotlandgreennetwork.org

For further information on other case studies please visit: www.centralscotlandgreennetwork.org

Location

The location of Toryglen Community Market Garden in Glasgow is shown in the map below within the context of the CSGN area.