



#### Urban Agenda Platform

*The global platform for sharing progress, action and knowledge on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda to achieve sustainable urban development.*

## III. A City For All – Youth

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|-------------------------------|--|
| Region                        | North America  |
| Award Scheme                  | Guangzhou Award  |
| Sustainable Development Goals | Goal 11 - Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable |

### Summary

As part of its vision for an inclusive community for all, the City of Repentigny has developed in 2016 an attractive and innovative project in order to foster the participation and involvement of the youth through the use of new technologies. Located in a traditional municipal library, the Crealab is a multimedia lab through which the users have access to digital technologies focused on creative individual and group activities.

### Background and Objective

The City of Repentigny is one of the 82 municipalities of the Montreal Metropolitan Area and has a population of 85,000 people. According to the 2016 Census, more than 10,000 citizens of Repentigny were teenagers, aged between 10 and 14 years old (5,250) and between 15 and 19 years old (5,250). Over the years, the interest of teenagers for the traditional activities of the municipal libraries had been declining. Considering the educative mission of public libraries as an essential tool for skill learning and knowledge transfer, the municipality commissioned a survey and focus groups to better understand the perceptions of teenagers and young adults of the services offered by the municipal libraries and of their interest in culture and technology. The results indicated that the traditional library was not considered a stimulating environment corresponding to their image and outlined their wish to have access to a user-friendly and creative environment instead. The municipality undertook to take advantage of the new technologies in order to develop an innovative concept attractive to the teenagers and young adults in the community. Almost unique in Canada, the Crealab aimed at creating a strong link between the youth and the municipality, in the perspective of the development of a sense of belonging and of social integration. As well, the objective was to provide opportunities for individual, academic or collective achievement through the development of creative skills. The Crealab wanted to become a focal point of the activities of a large proportion of the youth in our community. The City of Repentigny has taken the lead in developing this innovative project. A close partnership has been established with the regional schoolboard and teachers in order for school groups to visit the Crealab and to be introduced to the potential of new technologies. A partnership was also forged with a regional community-based organization which has for mission to foster the integration of immigrant families and youth. A collaborative approach has been developed with the regional Chamber of Commerce in order for young entrepreneurs to take advantage of the Crealab for networking and skill development. Some 230 members of the Chamber are below the age of 40. For the choice of the equipment, the municipality involved, the Society for Arts and Technology (SAT), a non-profit organization recognized internationally for its active and precursor role in the development of immersive technologies, virtual reality and the creative use of networks very high speed. With its triple mission artists' center, research and training in digital art, the SAT was created to support a new generation of designers /researchers in the digital era. A well-known young host of the popular TV program Techno Planet played the role of ambassador of the project. The project required a total investment of CAD 700,000, of which CAD 200,000 were financed by the provincial government of Quebec through the agreement for cultural development between the municipality and the Quebec Ministry of Culture and Communications. A dedicated and specialized team has been recruited to manage the Crealab as part of the work of municipal library.

### Actions and Implementation

Many cities across the world face the challenge of integrating the youth, of developing a sense of belonging to the community and of contributing to the development of their skills and knowledge. Municipal libraries have traditionally played a key role in this regard. However, the interests of the youth have been evolving and many of them are highly attracted by the potential of new technologies. The Crealab project is one example of how a substantial change can be brought in the services offered by a municipal library that could become a focal point for the activities of the youth in a secure and creative environment. The potential of new technologies has been harnessed for the benefit of all the youth. The process that led to this initiative was based on a strategic and innovative municipal vision, on the involvement of the youth in all the phases of the project and on the establishment of strong partnerships with the academic community, the private sector and community organizations. The City of Repentigny would be glad to share this experience with other municipal counterparts in the different regions of the world. In 2017, the municipality has been invited to present the Crealab initiative at an international conference held in Sydney (Australia) organized by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions that focused on STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics) programs in public libraries.



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## Outcomes and Impacts

Since its opening, the Crealab has registered more than 18,000 admissions of teenagers after school hours, including more than 200 in only one day. It confirms that this initiative responds to the needs and expectations of the youth of our community. The teenagers tend to spend long hours at each of their visits. The Crealab proves to be a unique place for socialization and interaction, skills' learning and creative digital arts activities. It is worth noting that a majority of the users are girls. The Crealab has welcomed so far some 1,300 high school students who have attended initiation and training sessions organized jointly with the schoolboard and the teachers. These training sessions are in accordance with the nine skills to be acquired specified in the Quebec Provincial Educational Guidelines. Two types of workshops are offered. The first one is focused on the technical aspects (image, video and programming) and the second one on the informational aspects (sources, research and digital citizenship). Groups of 5 to 60 students participate in these one to two hours workshops. In addition, some 500 students with behavior problems, learning disability, intellectual handicap and autism have been initiated in small groups to new technologies, with the participation of their teachers. Two career forums on new technology jobs have been organized for those students and 200 of them have attended those events. Five integration workshops have also been organized for 100 immigrant youth in partnership with a regional community-based organization. More than 250 young entrepreneurs have also benefited from the Crealab, attending networking events, training seminars and using the specialized equipment. The statistics compiled on the daily admissions to the Crealab and on the participation of school groups and other youth groups are a testimony to the relevance of this initiative which has been met with tremendous success. A strong connection between the municipal library and the youth has been reestablished. The decision to table on new technologies to foster the social integration of the youth, to encourage school perseverance, to improve skills and to support young entrepreneurs has been a strategic one for our municipality in the perspective of developing a human city for all. Many parents have expressed their satisfaction towards this initiative that is adapted to the needs and interests of teenagers. The same can be said of the interest and support of school managers and teachers. The City of Repentigny will continue to monitor closely, to support and to promote the activities of the Crealab and to proactively develop partnerships with its institutional and community partners in this regard. This initiative is part of the broad vision of the City of Repentigny to continue to develop an inclusive city at a human scale and to table on innovation and creativity. We are one of the leading municipalities in this regard in the metropolitan Montreal area and throughout the province of Quebec. The Crealab received in 2018 an OCTAS award, in the category of municipalities of more than 500 employees, from the IT ACTION Network, which recognizes organizations for their creativity, vitality and exceptional contribution to the growth of the information technology industry in the province of Quebec.

## Sustainability and Scalability

Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable Target 3: Participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management

## Initiative Contribution

The project is in line with the vision set for in the Repentigny Strategic Development Plan 2014-2019 which is centered on a "totally human city", on an innovative environment and on the adaptation of the municipal services according to the needs of all the citizens. It meets the objectives of the Digital Cultural Plan of the Quebec government. It contributes to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals that call for learning opportunities for all, inclusive cities and participatory approaches.

## Innovative Initiative

The Crealab project was undertaken in the context of emerging trends and of the need for municipal organizations to adapt and reshape the services they provide to the citizens. From the perspective of traditional public library programs and activities, we could consider this initiative as revolutionary. Using new technologies to offer creative activities, to stimulate innovation and interest for digital arts and to provide an opportunity for skills' development, the Crealab is also a living and secure environment for teenagers. The young entrepreneurs of the region have also a place to share ideas, learn and exchange skills and develop partnerships. The concept of the Crealab was inspired by the growing interest for venues focused on the initiation to new technologies such as Fab Lab or media lab. A limited number of projects of that nature have been undertaken recently and the City of Repentigny has been a pioneer in transforming the idea in a concrete realization for the benefit of the youth. Right from the start of the project, the City of Repentigny wanted the creation of a space « for and by the youth ». In addition to the survey and the focus groups mentioned above, an advisory committee of some 12 teenagers has been associated with all the phases of the development of the Crealab. The result is a dynamic environment fostering the creativity of the youth. The project called for bold architectural choices, departing from the traditional concept of municipal libraries. Its features combine industrial open warehouse style, multifunctional and user-friendly spaces for interaction and 3D design and container style well equipped rooms for training and creation (music, videos and photos). Occupying a space of 275 square meters, the Crealab is equipped with 14 computer stations, a video studio, a video camera, a large 3D printer, a professional drawing board, a mixing table and many other hi-tech features and computer applications and programs. The Crealab is a learning



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and collaborative environment in which the youth share their knowledge and learn from each other. Digital creation includes audio and video creation, musical creation, motion animation, comic strips, photography, computer graphics and robotics. A large touch-screen is also available to the users. In addition the Crealab has become a living environment for teenagers where they can chat, relax, do their school home works and eat meals together. It has been noted that many shy teenagers have developed their socialization skills through their participation in the activities of the Crealab. One of the challenges of the project has been to set up a team for the management of the Crealab. In particular, the position of manager called for a unique combination of up-to-date technological knowledge, administrative skills, a capacity to organize participatory activities with the youth and to develop partnerships. The search profile put the emphasis on a strong interest for new technologies and for collaborative work and knowledge sharing. We succeeded in recruiting a young librarian with a passion for technologies and experience with the youth. The team is now composed of the manager, three specialized technicians and two librarians. As well, special attention has been given to inform and discuss the project with all the existing personnel of the municipal library, in order to foster a better understanding of the initiative and dissipate any apprehension. This approach provided for a smooth integration of the Crealab inside the library and for the technical and administrative adjustments which unfolded.

## Resources devoted to delivery

BASIC CITY DATA Population size: 84,965 Population growth rate (%): 11.00 Surface area (sq.km): 71.25 Population density (people/sq.km): 1,192.50 GDP per capita (USD): 19,360.00 Main source of prosperity: Industry, services, creative industry, tourism and culture  
<http://www.guangzhouaward.org/a/930.html?lang=en&page=3>