

Local Food Strategy: Quartier Vert-Bois

AESOP4Food Sustainable Food Planning Seminar

Montpellier Lab

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June 2024

I. Introduction:

The subject of this research revolves around the transformation of the food environment in a Montpellier with the development of a new tramway line 5. The study specifically explores how this infrastructural development influences food accessibility, availability, and the overall food landscape within the neighbourhood. The research question was: “Depending on the social and urban characteristics of the selected neighbourhood, what ways can be found to improve its food environments?” The primary aim of was to develop a local food strategy that improves the food environment in a selected Montpellier neighborhood “Vert Bois”. Since I was working online and alone on this I relied on already existing studies, reports and maps to build the strategy accordingly.

II. Overview of Vert-Bois Neighborhood

Community: Transitioning area, formerly designated as QPV.

Demographics: 50% students, diverse resident profile.

Food Security: High vulnerability, reliance on discount food sources and university meals.

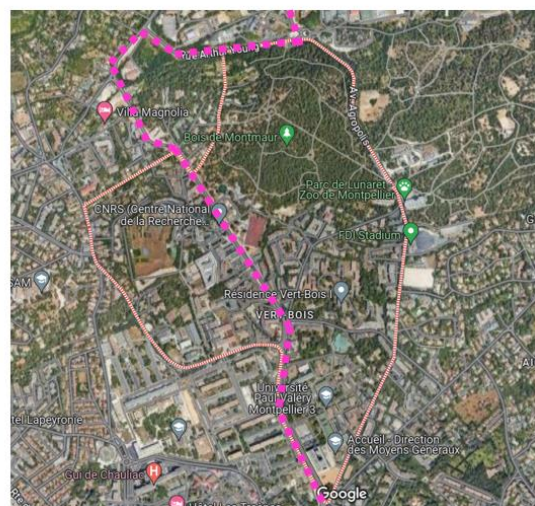
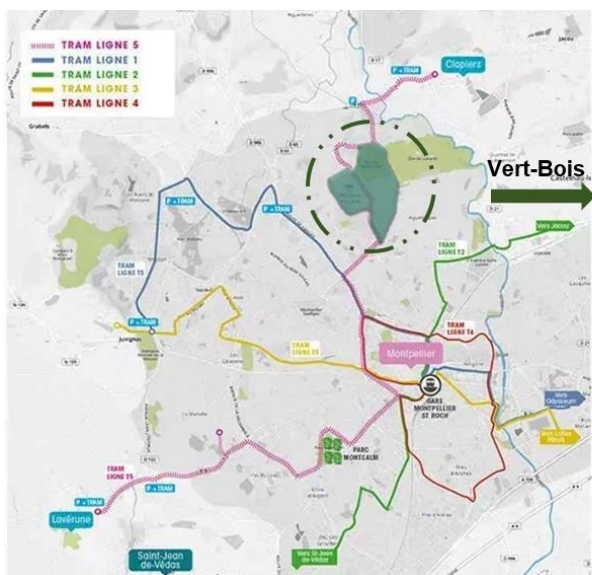
Accessibility: Poor public transport

Community Facilities:

- Limited access to socio-cultural and recreational spaces.
- Few local associations and community projects.

Food Landscape:

- Dominance of fast food and limited grocery options (delivery)
- Lack of diverse and healthy food offerings.



Quartier Vert Bois: A Pioneering Food Environment

Quartier Vert Bois is a pioneering model for integrating infrastructure projects within food planning. This approach will enhance food security, foster sustainability, and create a vibrant, inclusive, and resilient food environment.

In this vision, Quartier Vert Bois transforms into a food hub, where the academic and residential spheres integrate within a socio-technical arrangement. Continuous Productive Urban Landscapes (CPULs) play a central role in this transformation, fostering deep connections between the university campus, the neighborhood, and peri-urban agriculture. The introduction of Tram Line 5 (which goes from the city center, through this neighborhood, to peri-urban villages) isn't just an infrastructural upgrade; it becomes a lifeline that enriches these connections, making the neighborhood a dynamic space for learning, sharing, and growing together through food.

Objective 1: Transform « Place de la Voie Domitienne » into a regional food hub to Promote Healthy and Locally Produced Food by Integrating Tramway Line Infrastructure

Place de la Voie Domitienne is the intersection point between the tramway line and the neighborhood. As part of the construction of Tramway Line 5, efforts are being made to transform Place de la Voie Domitienne from a parking lot into a central hub of the neighborhood. This new hub will connect key routes and university facilities, feature 2,000m² of green areas, and include a 4,600m³ water retention area to prevent flooding¹.

Outcome: to benefit from this place and transform it into a regional food hub. The goal is to promote the consumption of healthy, locally produced food by leveraging the equipment and infrastructure of the new Tram Line 5.

1. Integrate food into the proposed design

Food Production Zone

- **Small-Scale Urban Agriculture Plots:** Allocate spaces for small-scale urban agriculture to promote local food production. Community members, urban farmers, and local gardening associations will be mobilized to create and monitor these plots under the supervision of the management team.
- **Food Trucks:** Set up a designated area for food trucks selling a variety of local produce and fresh products, ensuring a constant supply of healthy food options. (Local food truck operators, food entrepreneurs, and the management team.)

Multi-functional food activities Zone

- **Boutique Paysanne:** Design a space for small farmers' shops where local farmers sell their products directly to consumers. These boutiques will offer fresh, local produce, dairy products, meats, and other agricultural goods. (Local farmers, locals, and the management team.)

¹¹ <https://tram5-montpellier3m.fr/les-amenagements/deux-places-majeures/>

- **Farmers' Markets:** Organize farmers' markets twice a week—once on a weekday afternoon to accommodate employees and once during the weekend. (Local farmers, the management team, and the municipality.)
- **Events and Activities:** Organize regular events and activities, such as themed food weeks, cooking demonstrations, and food festivals to attract visitors and engage the community. (Event planners, local chefs, community organizations, and the management team.)

2. Leverage Tramway Line 5 Infrastructure:

Facilitate Access for Producers

- **Food Logistics:** Using tramway logistics to streamline local produce distribution from peri-urban farms to the food hub, ensuring efficient and timely access to fresh food. (Local farmers, tramway logistics teams, and the management team.)
- **Facilitated Access for Producers:** Create facilitated pathways for producers of healthy products to reach the “Food Hub” via tram access and offer incentives for producers to sell their products at the food hub, such as reduced rental fees for market stalls or promotional support.

Use the tramway infrastructure for marketing local and healthy food

- **Mobile Food Units:** Introduce mobile food units that can be stationed at various tram stops, offering locally sourced meals and snacks. These units can serve as both food distribution points and educational platforms about healthy eating and local agriculture. (Local food vendors, tramway authorities, and community health organizations.)
- **Promotional Campaigns:** Implement promotional campaigns along Tramway Line 5, metro stations, and within the neighborhood to raise awareness about the food hub and its offerings. (Marketing agencies, local government, tramway authorities, and community organizations.)

3. Attract Consumers from Outside and Inside the Neighborhood:

Promote Diverse Food Cultures:

- **International Food Festivals:** Host festivals celebrating the diverse culinary traditions of the student population, showcasing foods from different countries and cultures. (International students, local chefs, cultural organizations, and event planners.)
- **Collaborative Cooking Events:** Organize cooking classes and collaborative cooking events where residents and international students can share recipes and culinary techniques. (Local chefs, culinary schools, community members, and student organizations.)

Offering Incentives and Subsidized Cards:

- **Subsidized cards:** Provide subsidized cards for residents, especially the most vulnerable, to purchase healthy food at discounted rates from local markets and participating stores (management team and the municipality).

- **Loyalty Program:** Offer incentives such as discounts or loyalty points for people who regularly participate in community gardens, food workshops, and other healthy food-related activities. (Local businesses, food hub management team, and community organizations)



Place de la Voie Domitienne, une nouvelle centralité ²



² (<https://tram5-montpellier3m.fr/les-amenagements/deux-places-majeures/>)

Objective 2: Integrate the Food Hub within the neighborhood and the Surrounding Context Using Continuous Productive Urban Landscapes (CPULs)

Outcome: Create a cohesive and productive urban environment by linking key neighborhood locations with surrounding areas through green corridors and urban agriculture, enhancing food production, community engagement, and creating job opportunities in agri-food activities.

1. Create “Food Trails” connecting the Food Hub with Key Neighborhood Elements

Green Corridors: The development of green corridors aligns with the general vision of the tramline construction to make the cities greener and more attractive.

- **Integrate with Tramway Line 5:** Link the green corridors with spaces adjacent to Tram Line 5, and extend them in the future to reach Place du 8 Mai 1945, a key road intersection at the western entrance to downtown Montpellier, where tram line construction began on July 26, 2021.
- **Map and Design Potential Plots:** Identify potential plots and areas within the neighborhood and develop designs to extend these green corridors along the tramway line and main routes inside the neighborhood. The design must connect key elements such as the university campus, zoo, and stadium.
- **Enhance Aesthetic and Environmental Value:** Develop urban gardens, fruit trees, and edible landscaping along the identified trails to enhance the aesthetic and environmental value of the green corridors.

Who: City planners, tramway authorities, the management team, Urban planners, local gardeners, environmental organizations, and community members.

Educational Trails: Develop educational trails that integrate key elements of the agri-food sector, providing valuable learning opportunities for the community.

- **Identify Key Educational Elements:** Determine the main educational elements within the neighborhood that can be linked with the agri-food sector, such as botanical gardens, community gardens, and urban farms.
- **Create Informative Trails:** Design and establish trails that connect these educational elements. Install information boards along the trails to educate visitors about local flora, sustainable agriculture practices, and the benefits of urban green spaces.
- **Develop Educational Partnerships:** Collaborate with the university to create curriculums, exhibitions, and vocational training programs linked to the educational trails. Integrate these trails into university courses and community educational programs to maximize their impact.

Who: University faculty, students, local environmental groups, and the management team

Recreational Trails: Promote artistic activities, sports, theater, and plays related to agri-food and healthy diets, creating engaging and educational experiences for the community.

- **Community Kitchen:** Identify potential areas for developing community kitchens. Collaborate with Crous to utilize their facilities as community kitchens, providing spaces for cooking classes, workshops, and communal meals.
- **Artistic Activities:** Organize art installations, exhibitions, and workshops that focus on themes related to agri-food, sustainability, and healthy diets.

- **Sports and Fitness:** Develop fitness trails that incorporate exercise stations and provide information on the benefits of physical activity and healthy eating. Organize community sports events, such as fun runs, yoga sessions, and fitness classes, that emphasize the importance of a balanced diet and active lifestyle.
- **Theater and Plays:** Host theater productions and plays that address topics related to food security, sustainable agriculture, and healthy diets. Encourage community members, especially youth, to participate in creating and performing these productions.

Who: management team, university, crous, cultural organizations, and community groups.

2. [Link the trials with Montpellier Lunaret park and zoo](#)

Utilize the land available from the reduced space of the zoo to create an attractive destination that integrates with the food hub, providing amenities and activities for locals and visitors. Located on an 80-hectare site, Montpellier Lunaret park and zoo is the largest park in Montpellier today.

Recreational and Cultural Activities:

- **Recreational and Cultural Activities:**
 - Farm-to-Table Restaurant and Café: Establish a restaurant and café within the park, offering meals made with locally sourced ingredients.
 - Children's Play and Learning Area: Develop a safe and engaging space for children, including play areas, interactive educational exhibits, and hands-on gardening activities.
- **Artistic and Sports Activities:**
 - Promote artistic activities, sports, theater, and plays related to agri-food and healthy diets.
 - Include attractions such as sports facilities, open-air theaters, and spaces for community events.
- **Health and Wellness Programs:** Partner with local healthcare providers to offer workshops on nutrition, fitness classes, and wellness checks.
- **Agro-Tourism and Eco-Tourism Events:**
 - Farm-to-Table Dinners and Agricultural Fairs: Organize events such as farm-to-table dinners and agricultural fairs that highlight sustainable practices and local food production.
 - Eco-Tourism Tours: Create guided tours and informational materials to attract tourists and educate them about the park and zoo.

Who: Management team, Park management, local organizations

3. [Enhancement of Local Food Production:](#)

Increase local food production through initiatives that involve residents and students, supported by providing necessary resources, training, and land.

Internships and Training Programs:

- **Mentorship Opportunities:** Collaborate with farmers and landowners to provide mentorship opportunities for students.

- **Employability Enhancement:** Enhance the employability of students and locals by offering various opportunities in the agri-food sector (production, marketing, agro-tourism, etc.) such as internships, apprenticeships, and vocational training programs.

Who: Farmers, landowners, educational institutions, and community organizations.

Local and Student Farming Initiatives:

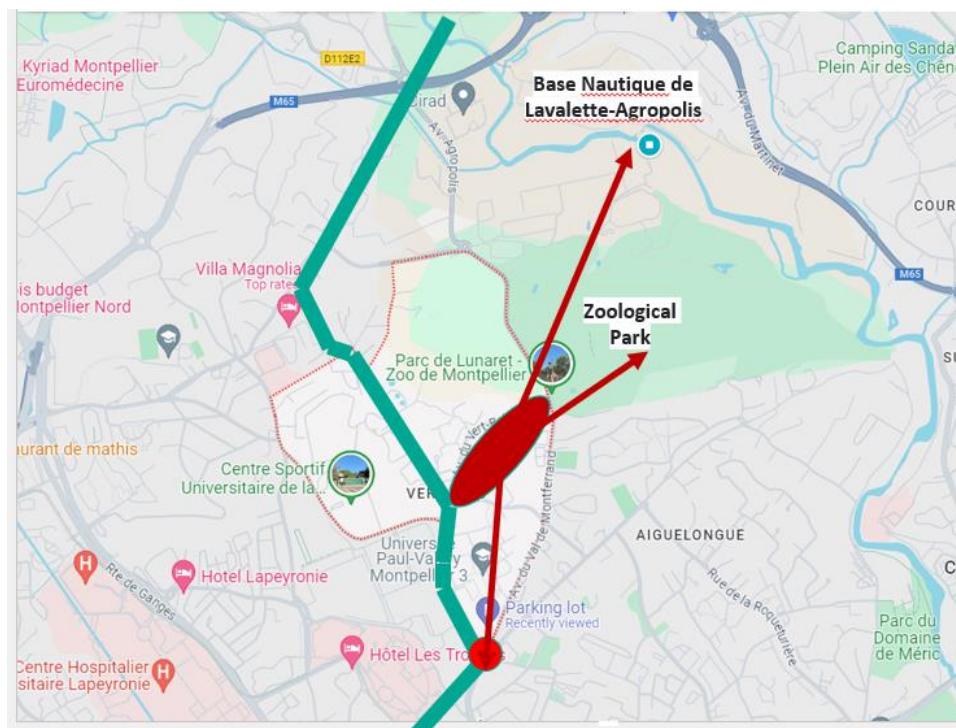
- **Land Allocation and Mapping:** Allocate lands inside the neighborhood or outside for food production initiatives. Map available lands such as Base Nautique de Lavalette-Agropolis, public spaces, and municipal lands.
- **Resource Provision and Training:** Provide resources and training to support these projects, focusing on sustainable agroecological practices.

Who: Agricultural experts, local government, and educational institutions.

Urban Agriculture and Community Gardens:

- **Conversion of Zoo Land:** Convert some of the freed-up land in the zoo into urban agriculture plots and community gardens.
- **Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) Programs:** Develop CSA programs where residents and students can purchase shares of the harvest or profits, promoting a direct connection between producers and consumers.

Who: Urban farmers, community members, and educational institutions.



Objective 3: Establish a Participatory and Sustainable Governance Structure to promote the execution and continuity of the strategy

Outcome: Ensure effective implementation of the strategy through cohesive action, community involvement, continuous engagement, and sustainable management practices.

1. Collaborative Territorial Governance:

Establish a Local Food Committee:

- **Form a coordinating body** composed of residents, students, local authorities, food producers, and other stakeholders to facilitate multi-stakeholder dialogue and decision-making. This committee will represent the neighborhood with surrounding areas, ensuring local voices are heard. This can be done in collaboration with the existing “Community Council” in the area that works on beautification, accessibility, safety, and cultural projects. To ensure its sustainability, the following actions must be done:
- **Election:** Develop a code of conduct to organize regular elections every 3 years for future committee members from the local community.
- **Capacity-Building:** Assess the needs of the committee and create a training plan to develop their capacities. Training sessions can cover topics such as communication skills, advocacy, food planning, and community development.
- **Proposals:** The committee will coordinate with different actors involved in this strategy and oversee its implementation. They will provide ideas and propose projects and initiatives to improve the neighborhood's food environment.

Develop regional networks:

- **Develop connections** with peer food initiatives across the region. The local committee will be mobilized to identify the existing networks and develop the needed type of coordination with them. A specific interest must be given for networks that might improve food initiatives and marketing of healthy food along the tramway line.

2. Inclusive Community Engagement:

Participatory Processes:

- Implement participatory processes that invite broad community involvement in food policy development and project implementation. The local committee will be responsible for developing local networks based on the needs they identify. This can be achieved through:
- **Community Outreach:** Engage with community groups, schools, and universities to encourage participation and visits, fostering a strong local customer base.

Collaborations:

- **Academic Collaboration:** Partner with university departments to develop research initiatives and explore innovative ways to improve the food environment on topics related to the food system.
- **Health Collaboration:** Work with the hospital to develop necessary tests and ensure the positive impact of food on public health.
- **Environmental Initiatives:** Collaborate with local associations, such as Le Passe Muraille, to manage food trails and green corridors, incorporating environmental initiatives and leveraging their expertise in managing shared gardens.

- **Local Business Partnerships:** Form partnerships with local businesses, such as restaurants, cafes, and sports facilities, to offer packages and discounts to people participating in food-related activities.
- **Volunteer Programs:** Create volunteer programs for students and residents to participate in the maintenance of productive landscapes and the organization of food-related activities. This can be done in collaboration with Social Living Space (EVS) project which engages residents in improvement projects and community decision-making.

Knowledge sharing and innovations

Establish a “Food Observatory”:

The observatory is dedicated to monitoring, analyzing, and providing insights into various aspects of the food environment. Its primary goal is to gather data, conduct research, and disseminate information to support decision-making, policy development, and public awareness related to food. This observatory will be led by the food committee in partnership with the university.

- **Knowledge Exchange:** Facilitate the exchange of knowledge and resources among the university, hospitals, local practitioners, and the community.
- **Scientific Backing:** Provide scientific backing for sustainable food initiatives, translating research into actionable steps and supporting existing food applications such as BoCal.
- **Continuous Monitoring:** Track key indicators, ensuring continuous monitoring and evaluation of the strategy for ongoing improvement.
- **Advocacy and Engagement:** Develop scientific data to be used by relevant stakeholders and the local community to advocate for improvements in the food environment.

Develop platforms for knowledge sharing:

- **E-marketing:** Develop new or existing applications for:
 - Food Mapping Applications: Develop new or enhance existing applications to map food-related activities. For example, create a Food Mapping App that shows the locations of food resources, including farmers markets, community gardens, and local food stores. Utilise existing initiatives such as BoCal (Bon et Local - Montpellier Méditerranée Métropole).
 - Food Waste Applications: Promote applications like Too Good To Go that help reduce food waste by encouraging restaurants to sell surplus food at reduced prices.
- **Communication Channels:** Regularly communicate updates, opportunities, and results related to food initiatives through tram stations, online platforms, WhatsApp groups, town hall meetings, and other accessible channels to keep the community informed and engaged.

Who: Food committee, marketing agencies, local government, community organizations, and residents.

Citizen Involvement in Building Knowledge:

- Use digital platforms and public forums to gather input from the community, ensuring diverse perspectives are included in decision-making processes.