



Verdun

THE TERRITORY AND ITS POPULATION

In 1907, Verdun officially became a city. Thanks to the Sud-Ouest industrial boom and the Lachine Canal, its population quickly grew from under 2,000 inhabitants to over 60,000 in 1931, when it became Quebec's third largest city. L'Île-des-Sœurs belonged to the Congrégation de Notre-Dame for a long time before being annexed to Verdun in 1956. The idea was to create a model city that attracted a more well-off clientele.

Things became difficult for the sector in the 1980s because of its residential character, the attraction of the suburbs, an aging built environment, and the economic recession. Warehouse renovation and demolition programs, combined with efforts to revitalize Wellington Street, have given new life to this municipality, which became a borough of the Ville de Montréal in 2002. Since then, Verdun, just like Le Sud-Ouest, has been caught up in the currents of major community transformation, particularly due to gentrification and neighbourhood planning, income polarization, and the growing presence of immigrants.

However, the impacts of these phenomena vary from one area to the next, to the extent that Verdun now has three highly contrasted sectors (Wellington-de-l'Église, Desmarchais-Crawford and L'Île-des-Sœurs), which makes it difficult to use data that establish averages for Verdun as a whole.

A borough with three distinct sectors

The Wellington-de-l'Église sector is the furthest east and encompasses the borough's downtown area. It is the most underprivileged as well as the most populated with nearly 28,000 of Verdun's 69,000 residents. In terms of demographics, this sector is very similar to the neighbouring areas of Côte-Saint-Paul, Saint-Henri and Pointe-Saint-Charles. For many indicators, the scope of social problems can be seen both in percentages and absolute numbers. The numbers show a degree of underprivilege above other Verdun sectors and above the averages for the Island of Montreal. One out of four people lives on a low income, a high majority of households are renters (74%), two out of five families are headed by a single parent, and the number of single people continues to rise. Most Centraide-supported agencies are located in this sector.

Desmarchais-Crawford, located in the west part of the borough, is home to nearly 20,000 people and is more of a middle-class area. Here, the rate of people living on a low income is lower than the Montreal average (16%, compared to 21%). However, the percentage of single-parent families is high (38%), and the population has a lower education rate compared to other sectors of the borough.

SNAPSHOT OF THE TERRITORY

Growing population

Total population of 69,230 people. Verdun had demographic growth of 4.6% between 2011 and 2016.

A borough of three sectors with strong socio-demographic contrasts

Wellington-de-l'Église, Desmarchais-Crawford, L'Île-des-Sœurs.

Significant population of young adults

Nearly one out of five people is between the ages of 25 to 34 (19%, compared to 16% in Montreal).

Percentage of young people aged 0 to 14 years (14%) less than in Montreal (16%).

Percentage of seniors similar to the Montreal average (17%). However, one out of five people (21%) in L'Île-des-Sœurs is 65 or over.

Higher rates of poverty in the Wellington-de-l'Église sector compared to Verdun

20% of the Verdun population lives on a low income; this rate reaches 26% in Wellington-de-l'Église (Montreal: 21%).

For youth aged 18 and under, the percentage is 24% in Verdun (Montreal: 23%).

Single parents are a common feature of Verdun, especially in the Wellington-de-l'Église and Desmarchais-Crawford sectors

Families with children headed by single parents: 35% in Verdun as a whole, 37% in Desmarchais-Crawford, and 41% in Wellington-de-l'Église (Montreal: 33%).

Issues related to academic success of youth in the Wellington-de-l'Église sector

40% of children in Wellington-de-l'Église do not have all the tools they need to start school, which is higher than the averages for Montreal and Quebec (29% and 25%, respectively).

High-school dropouts decreasing →

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In terms of ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity, the sector has few immigrants or allophones. The sector does have an Anglophone community, although this population is declining in demographic weight.

L'Île-des-Sœurs is a more well-off sector in the south part of the borough. The people in this sector tend to have higher incomes, have a higher level of education, and are predominantly homeowners. The sector is experiencing significant demographic growth and is now home to over 20,000 people. Over half of the housing units are condominiums, and housing towers continue to spring up. Many immigrants move there, sometimes as soon as they arrive to Canada. Despite its reputation as being well-off, L'Île-des-Sœurs has pockets of underprivileged areas that are home to seniors who live in isolation and families who dedicate a significant portion of their income to rent. In these sectors, people may have problems accessing services either because they are too hard to get to or because there are simply not enough of them.

COMMUNITY DYNAMICS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Many agencies in Verdun have had roots in their communities for many years. This long-standing and very diverse network is mainly concentrated in the Wellington-de-l'Église sector. Most of the 13 agencies and projects supported by Centraide (representing an investment of over \$2 million in 2018-2019) provide positive leadership in their respective areas.

Eleven sectoral consultation mechanisms in the neighbourhood operate at varying speeds and are part of the Concertation en développement social de Verdun (CDSV). The CDSV includes representatives from institutional sectors (health and social services, municipal, school, etc.), economic stakeholders, and residents. It also has a somewhat complex structure: it is made up of delegates appointed by its various "components," and its board of directors can include up to 25 members. Acting as a neighbourhood roundtable, it is a central hub where people discuss the territory's issues and where they try to align different actions carried out in each of the borough's neighbourhoods.

A vast consultation process with the population and stakeholders started in fall 2014 to create Verdun's social development plan for 2016-2021. Unveiled in March 2016, the plan targets three priority issues: access to housing and gentrification, access to food, and education and schooling.

ISSUES THAT ENGAGE CENTRAIDE

— Food security

The consultations that led to the creation of Verdun's social development plan confirmed that food security is an unavoidable issue. In fact, many families and single people do not always have access to adequate and affordable food sources near their homes. According to neighbourhood stakeholders, these residents essentially come from the Desmarchais-Crawford sector, a sign that food challenges are no longer limited to Wellington-de-l'Église. Also, needs have been growing in L'Île-des-Sœurs, an area where many families have recently moved and that has been poorly served to date in terms of the number of community agencies.

High-school dropouts decreasing

High-school dropout rate of 25%, compared to 21% in Montreal (2012-2013).

A remarkable fact: this rate was 46% in 2003-2004 and declined by over 20 percentage points in nearly 10 years.

Population more educated compared to Montreal

39% of people aged 15 and over have a university degree (Montreal: 33%). 14% do not have a high school diploma (Montreal: 17%).

Percentage of people living alone slightly higher than the Montreal average

21%, compared to 18% in Montreal.

Two out of five seniors live alone

41%, compared to 36% in Montreal.

Percentage of immigrants lower than the Montreal average, except in L'Île-des-Sœurs

24% immigrants in Verdun, and 39% in L'Île-des-Sœurs (Montreal: 34%).

Rate of recent immigrants in the neighbourhood same as the Montreal average (7%). However, their percentages are uneven across sectors: 11% in L'Île-des-Sœurs, 8% in Wellington-de-l'Église, and 3% in Desmarchais-Crawford.

Note that nearly half of all immigrants in Montreal's south-west sector live in Verdun (approximately 16,300 out of 35,500 immigrants).

Number of people from visible minorities below the Montreal average

21% are members of a visible minority group (Montreal: 33%).

Rates of residential mobility and renters higher than in Montreal

In Verdun, half (50%) of residents have moved in the past five years. In Wellington-de-l'Église, the rate is 55% (Montreal: 43%).

63% renter households in Verdun, and 74% in Wellington-de-l'Église (Montreal: 60%).

Sociodemographic and economic data: 2016 Census; Profil sociodémographique 2016 de l'arrondissement du Sud-Ouest, Ville de Montréal; Québec Survey of Child Development in Kindergarten (2012), Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'enseignement supérieur.

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Food security is also a component of Verdun's action plan thanks to support from Centraide through its Collective Impact Project (CIP). Since the CIP started in 2017, stakeholders have created a portrait of the situation and taken ongoing action to get the entire community involved in finding solutions to food security. The goals are also to create a shared understanding of the situation when it comes to access to food, better identify existing resources and initiatives in the territory, and clarify the needs of the population.

In the medium term, the Verdun community would like to create a comprehensive food system that can meet the diverse food needs of vulnerable people. In the next three years, stakeholders will look at three components of the Verdun food system: local supply, product transformation, and education. The community would also like to deepen its reflection on emergency food assistance, continue its work to get people involved, and keep in touch with them to reinforce the collaborative work started this year.

Particular attention will therefore be paid to the emergence of collective initiatives that arise from the community, improvements to existing services, and the reinforcement of projects that are aligned with Centraide's food security orientations.

— Cultural diversity

The presence and diversity of immigrant and newcomer populations is a clear reality in many sectors of Verdun. This fact must prompt agencies and communities to take a particular look at diversity in their strategies to fight poverty and social exclusion. Immigrant families often face additional challenges in their journeys (culture shock, language barriers, social isolation, discrimination, etc.). Despite the deployment of some interesting practices, no common vision seems to have emerged from the community for the moment.

In the coming years, Centraide would like to help reinforce the capacity of agencies and communities to adapt their strategies and initiatives to the context of diversity. We also want to help ensure that agencies, in all of their aspects, better reflect the ethnic and cultural makeup of the populations they serve. We are therefore looking at activities that will help the community develop a common vision and allow people to network and share expertise.

— Housing and community planning

A priority for the neighbourhood in the years to come, access to affordable housing is also a component supported by the CIP. Recently, Montreal's entire south-west sector has been the site of many residential and urban development projects that have brought many changes. These transformations have triggered in-depth reflections that have led to the creation of a community-driven development (CDD) initiative in the Dupuis-Hickson sector that is spearheaded by the neighbourhood roundtable.

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A vast project to get citizens involved, the CDD has given rise to activities that have helped stakeholders grasp Verdun residents' concerns and aspirations about the sector's future. This process has come from a collective vision and many recommendations, for example, in the areas of building social housing, improving the living environment, and helping residents develop a sense of belonging. The community has also started a reflection process to implement a nonprofit purchasing group, which is a new mechanism to support the development of social housing, particularly in the Dupuis-Hickson sector.

In this context, Centraide will pay attention to collective and innovative solutions implemented by the community to mitigate the impacts of ongoing social and urban transformations on the most vulnerable populations.

— Youth success

The Verdun community has developed solid expertise in academic perseverance thanks to the concerted action and leadership of solid agencies. Their ongoing efforts have helped significantly decrease the school dropout rate, which is now 25%, whereas it was 46% nearly 10 years ago. However, challenges remain in terms of coordinating action in this area, particularly when it comes to intersectoral and multinetwork collaboration.

Centraide will pay attention to work done to scale up coordination and structural collaborative work that involves all stakeholders who are concerned about youth success.

INVESTMENT FROM CENTRAIDE OF GREATER MONTREAL 2018-2019

Living conditions

- Dawson Community Centre
- Jardins collectifs de Verdun
- Comité d'action des citoyennes et citoyens de Verdun

Community development

- Concertation en développement social de Verdun

Inclusion

- Auberge communautaire du Sud-Ouest
- Centre social d'aide aux immigrants (C.S.A.I.) - Verdun
- Projet P.A.L.

Youth and families

- Ancre des Jeunes
- Bureau de consultation jeunesse (head office)*
- J'apprends avec mon enfant (JAME)
- Toujours ensemble – Passeport pour ma réussite (Centre de persévérance scolaire Marcelle et Jean Coutu)

Neighbourhood life

- Dawson Community Centre (head office)
- Centre des femmes de Verdun
- Collective Community Services

* Regional vocation