

EcCoWell Community Recovery Program

Datong Taipei Report

Eugenia Chang, Datong Community College

The Datong report illustrates what can be achieved at a district level in promoting learning and building community with leadership from a local community college. Taipei's community colleges have been the main instruments for progressing the innovative Taipei learning city. The Datong report shows how this role continues to evolve with the focus of this report on building Taipei as an Eco-City and Happy Farm. The report shows how environmental objectives can be harnessed to promote the happiness and well-being of residents in the city.

Facing the pandemic this year, even though Taiwan has effectively controlled the spread of COVID-19 in our communities and the campus was not closed, this pandemic has still confronted people here with the shadow of uncertainty. Taiwanese people, just like all the other people around the world, will face an even more challenging life because of the uncertainties which the pandemic will likely characterize in the future. However, the lifelong Learning in Taipei's communities continued in March as well. And people could also choose either to take a course at school or to have their learning online.

In other words, in Taiwan the Community Colleges in Taipei City support each citizen in our communities, and all the students receive unparalleled care in a safe, supportive, and diverse learning environment. We have been providing them with every possible opportunity for lifelong learning. One of the most valuable features of Datong Community College (DCC) is the advanced preparation for the future. Citizens in our college are offered with a balanced, quality curricular program which is to date and has resulted in learning the importance of mental health and well-being in the community recovery from this pandemic.

Regardless of the continuous influence of Covid-19 pandemic, 2020 indeed will be a landmark year for DCC and the community with the official link establishment in order to work together to response, recovery and resilience from this pandemic.

At the same time, the partnership of DCC and community has also proved a major step forward in terms of learning about this virus pandemic in the neighborhood

It is also very important for DCC to determine how innovative and effective strategies can be used in community learning programs to help people face the pandemic and to encourage them to recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic will have an enduring impact on lifelong learning outcomes around countries. DCC aims to mitigate this impact by continuing to provide learning courses in the community and facilitating dialogue regarding COVID-19 response and recovery. In terms of DCC itself, it is another step in the evolution of promoting EcCowell2 program and lifelong learning in Datong community.

Established in 2001, Datong Community College of Taipei City (DCC), has continued to promote lifelong learning in Datong District in order to encourage citizens to immerse in learning and build Datong District as a cultural, ecological, cohesive co-operative community. While we are coping with the challenge of these unprecedented challenges, one of the most valuable benefits of Datong Community College is the advanced preparation for the future. During this pandemic of COVID-19, citizens are provided with balanced, quality curricular programs, among which there are self-health management and digital learning especially designed for seniors. All these programs to date have resulted in strengthening the goals of lifelong learning for all citizens and enhancing their feeling of well-being. Furthermore, Taipei's Community Colleges have long been a feature of lifelong learning for citizens and are deeply embedded in the social, cultural and economic ecosystems of their respective regions as well as having regional and international perspective.

Since 2010, Datong Community College has operated a learning city project in the neighborhood where the values of lifelong learning for all is the theme of the regional sustainable development to help people reach their full potential in a life span of lifelong learning. This development has included applying EcCoWell principles in local neighborhoods. The concept was developed by Professor Peter Kearns in 2012 following a visit to the Taipei learning city the previous year. The concept is based on an integrated holistic approach to build a sustainable learning city.

Base on practicing of EcCoWell project, Datong Community College has been working with local Rice Festival organizers in Kuoshun learning neighborhood to develop a range of complimentary learning experiences for citizens. Since 2017, following up EcCoWell2 project based on EcCoWell principles, DCC has developed local actions through activities, lectures and workshops to extend and enhance learning in neighborhoods, including two main initiatives: Eco-friendly farm experience for the next generation and knowledge of food traceability; Fostering entrepreneurship.

In doing so Datong Community College has enjoyed a long-standing partnership relationship with Datong neighborhood —in executing the EcCoWell and EcCoWell2 project, a mutually beneficial arrangement destined to grow further with the establishment of community network. It also can be partners in providing support to people's well-being, especially for elderly and vulnerable people in the uncertainty of this virus pandemic period.

Overall, during a period of Covid-19 pandemic, which is both challenging and uncertain for people, Taipei City continues to grasp the helm of an Eco-city educational vessel and chart its careful course into an Eco-city's bright horizon. Taiwan has been fortunate to succeed in controlling the outbreak of coronavirus spread and working in an environment where active and participative partnership is the norm. And the continuous focus is on the relevance and professional standing of the individual public health awareness. This is driven by the spirit of solidarity of community and active engagement with the work of Eco-city, inclusive culture and sustainable community, especially in this extraordinary period.

In response to the Eco-city policies, since 2012, Datong Community College has been applying EcCoWell principles to local neighborhoods and has become the main communication channel for issues related to the happy farm development. Furthermore, Datong Community College has collaborated with multiple governmental sectors to generate the implement plans and structures in communities.

On July 15, 2020 to promote a green stimulus program for the post-coronavirus communities and economy, Taipei City Government, Datong Community College and private sectors started working together to serve as a model for urban farming operations. Through working as a team, Taipei Eco-City Farm aims to prove that farming in urban environments is not only viable but greatly needed. These farms serve as areas to reconnect people of various cultures, backgrounds, and classes for fresher food in the city, and also to ensure that Eco-City's motto of "growing great food,

health and happiness in encouraging enterprise development and entrepreneurship neighborhoods as below:

A. Taipei Eco-city as a Happy Farm Development Vision

The series of events related to the urban farming initiatives are kicked off by the public and private sectors. The end result of all the discussions surrounding the urban farming initiative are organized and consolidated into the “implementation for Taipei Eco-city as a Happy Farm” project, summarized as: “Transform Taipei into a greener and healthier urban farming ecological city where education, living quality, public health and well-being are emphasized.”

B. Taipei Eco-city and happy Farm Result

As Eco-city farm has become increasingly intensively developed, urban farming is the channels for the public to come closer to the land, enjoy the nature and experience farming in communities. It indicates that urban farming is no longer a topic that only interests a small group of people but gains popularity and fondness of Taipei’s citizens.

Implementing Eco-city as a Happy Farm project in Taipei is under the concept of sustainable development. Making use of idle space to promote urban farming activities in communities has been viewed as a tool to reduce carbon emission effects, conserve energy and reduce the heat island effects. Practicing urban farming is no just about learning urban farming, but it also increases the greenery area and further expands the ecological and biological diversity in Taipei city.

The governmental units that participated in Taipei’s Eco-City as a Happy Farm project include Department of Education, Taipei Hakka Affairs Commission, Department of Urban Development, Department of Environmental Protection, Department of Health, Taipei City Hospital, Department of Land Administration, Department of Civil Affairs, the Public Works Department, Department of Civil Servant Development, Department of Social Affairs, Urban Regeneration Office, Department of Business Development, Department of Information and Tourism and the Research, Development and Evaluation Commission etc.

Taipei Eco-city as a Happy Farm has exploited land of 4 acres. The farm started with an outdoor small planting space in a highly residential area and now is known for its garden beds, and edible landscape. Happy Farm is like the farm “Certified Naturally Grown,” which is a practice "Designed for citizen participation in managing a model

of an Eco-city farm and a happy farm in community”, and is expected to actualize a green stimulus program that focuses on mental health and well-being for all aged groups.

At the same time, regulating the land use is just one factor; Taipei Eco-City Farm also works to appeal to citizens with different culture backgrounds. Nearly 60 percent of the volunteers are Hakka speaking. The farm has an education and outreach coordinator who is fluent in Hakka language as the farms are located in areas which many locals call " Hakka farm." It attracts people’s attention to address the cultural differences and reconnect people through food. It hopes to reach a broader audience in addressing exclusion and a sustainable learning culture in communities.

As farming techniques are different for urban agriculture, people in Taipei City can go through urban farming learning to understand and re-imagine what are the benefits to pursue an urban farming life style. For example, extensive sprayers do not water the crops and tractors do not till the soil. A part of changing farming into urban spaces is adapting the growing practices as soil, water, and even temperatures are all different in the city. Taipei Eco-City as a Happy Farm works with these changes to provide non-pesticide, fresh sustainably grown produce to people in local community.

The reasons of implementing urban farming are to satisfy the publics’ desire to grow their own vegetables. In other words, the implementation of Happy Farm is under the concepts that food system can enhance agricultural and food education through farming experiences.

And it also promotes the education of agriculture farming and safe food, ecosystem, and educates the public about food processing and ecosystem. “Hakka farm “is viewed as the classrooms to promote the idea of an Eco-City and a happy farm, participants can utilize their hands-on experiences to learn about healthy eating habits and different ingredients. It is to encourage citizens to develop a deeper connection with the foods they consume and become more aware of food safety and culinary practices in family life.

In addition to developing urban farming lands, sustained through Eco-City as a Happy Farm project and planned by related governmental units, schools and educational personnel should integrate agriculture planting into their educational curriculum and promote community engagement, digital websites learning. The results are as follows,

A. Taipei City's Greening and Ecology Education

- a. Include urban farming and cherish all the harvesting into educational curriculums to cultivate concept of conservation and healthy diet habits among students.
- b. Assist the public in urban farming and utilize edible landscape in order to cultivate a positive mindset about Eco-city as a Happy Farm.
- c. Encourage small and medium enterprises development in farm plan to combine fundamental education and urban farming concepts.

B. Happy Farm's LOHAS Lifestyle

- a. The Eco-city as a Happy Farm project hopes for the movement to be promoted in a bottom up fashion; through the urban farming experiences, the goal of sustainability development will be conveyed.
- b. The project allows people to farm, plant, harvest and to gain the experience the joy of being urban farmers. It also allows people to understand the hard work of rural farmers in order to develop a respectful attitude towards the environment, the food they consume, and realize the importance and preciousness of water and land resources.
- c. The implementation Structure and edible landscape developed through Taipei's Eco-city as a happy Farm project initiative promotes the aesthetic sense of the community and promotes healthier and LOHAS lifestyle.

C. Social and Community Connection

- a. The program of Eco-city as a Happy Farm in Taipei is developed to enhance neighbors' communication on a community level.
- b. It creates a sense of bonding experience, community care, sharing environment, communion, discussion culture, the learning of farming knowledge, and environment awareness.

In conclusion, Taipei Eco-City as a Happy Farm not only works to deliver food to vulnerable groups, but also provides resources such as planting training programs, nutrition-based workshops, the Beginner urban Farmer Training program, hosting composting classes, and beginner urban farmers learning. Furthermore, Taipei Eco-City Farm is a model for the future of urban farming, led by people who want to reconnect people and strengthen community bonds and citizenship in learning neighborhoods for promoting a sense of inclusion with the elderly, different genders or ethnic groups, regardless of their culture and class.

Through Taipei Eco-city as a Happy Farm project, the concepts behind urban farming

are actualized in the lives of the public. It is not only just about planting and harvesting, but also about developing deeper emotional connections within communities.

Overall, this program is to encourage people to participate in activities in communities and improve their living quality during this challenging period. It allows citizens to build general understanding and unique attributes of each community through their personal engagements. Furthermore, it is a holistic initiative that includes social, communal, and organizational aspects. And it will strengthen the public's participation in the global ecological and sustainable development.

Photos of Building Taipei City as an Eco-City and Happy Farm



The development vision of Taipei Eco-City as a Happy Farm project



The design and structure of Taipei Eco-City as a Happy Farm project



Mayor Ko of Taipei City watches the demonstration of how to make compost with fallen leaves with people from public and private sectors.



Mayor Ko of Taipei City personally made eco-walls for planting vegetables with waste wood.



Mayor Ko of Taipei City experiences how those physically-challenged seniors conduct the planting of vegetables in a wheelchair.



Mayor Ko of Taipei City leads all the participants to experience how to harvest and make the rice.



Happy Farm makes use of the recycled pipes and collects rainwater to irrigate the vegetables on Happy Farm.