

Marianopolis: A civic community and natural wild space

My name is Anushree Varma. I am a former Marianopolis teacher and student, and I have lived across the street on Cedar Avenue for most of my life. **I object to the zoning being changed from institutional to residential.** I insist that the City of Montreal, and Maire G Tremblay, respect the Mount Royal Draft and Plan which states unequivocally that Mount Royal should not be built on, that all development projects should be looked at with great circumspection. Not respecting this plan will turn it, and the thousands of hours of effort taken to produce it, into a grand hypocrisy.

La Patrimoine de Quebec et Montreal

Cessons de vendre notre histoire, cessons de vendre notre patrimoine, cessons de vendre notre montagne qui est la fierté de tout le Quebec et le joyau de notre ville.

La patrimoine quebecoise est menacé encore par ce projet pour quelques individuels et non pas pour la peuple de Quebec qui ont, avec leurs dons à l'église chaque dimanche (et quels privations elles ont soufferts, ces grandes familles de 14 enfants pour ne pas souffrir la honte de rien donner à la collection!), contribué à créer cet environnement. C'est leur tour de profiter. Gardons ce bijou pour la peuple de Québec.

I am not against development BUT NOT on heritage sites and green spaces, that echo Olmsted's vision, such as Marianopolis is. "Never in its history has Mount Royal been so well protected," stated the Montreal city council, and it should stay true to its words. Marianopolis was instituted as an educational space in 1894. **It must remain an enriching part of the community, a civic space that contributes to the public prosperity of all Quebecois and not solely private profit.**

Turning it into condos, it will lose its essential character and be closed to a population that should enjoy its beauty, open spaces and history. As an institutional space, Marianopolis has enjoyed a beautiful, welcoming relationship with the people of Montreal and Quebec. It is unfair to the people of Quebec to change the city's zoning laws to suit private profit and not the good of the public. The tax revenue does not make up losing this beautiful space, and its wild beauty.

It is insulting to suggest that Quebec would have to use public funds to raise a belvedere for pedestrians to enjoy a view (then blocked by multiplex condos) that once belonged to them. It returns us to the days of Gabrielle Roy when the people of Montreal had to look over the fence of the people of Westmount. **Ne retournons pas cette époque d'angoisse, d'humiliation et chagrin. On mérite mieux, svp.** Why try so hard to benefit the pockets of Mr. Bizotto and Mr. Miceli instead of all Quebecois.

In the long term, it is more lucrative for a city to hold onto its heritage sites by deeming them institutional properties—and preserving their function as civic spaces. The future generations will not forgive us if we give this last jewel away. **It is just another step in**

erasing the Quebecois history from the Montreal cityscape, and turning it into a faceless, Canadian Mc-city. Be very careful—if you allow the zoning to change, this space will be lost to the sons and daughters of Quebec forever. It is the mountain, it is their heritage. We do not have a coliseum like Rome, or Botticellis like Florence—but we have these little wild spaces. This is our Quebec, our Montreal. Do not sell it to put the profit of it into private pockets of Mr. Bizotto and Mr. Miceli—keep it for the people of Quebec. Why do it? It is for the citizens, the mountain.

When I asked my students at the Cegep du Vieux Montreal what they thought of this project, they said they felt like their “patrimoine” was being stolen from them. For them, the patrimoine of Montreal is the mountain, the old buildings and churches and the vieux port. But the mountain they said, again and again, was what all of Quebec knows about Montreal what makes it special as a city among the other cities of the world.

The Ecology

I know the flora and fauna of this environment intimately. Pouring 19 new buildings including multiplexes, several hundred cars and people will chase out the animals and erase the beauty of this place. Green is not a matter of counting trees, it also has to do with tranquility, lack of pollution and open spaces. I think it is irresponsible to think of putting so much more carbon monoxide into this space. We are not Toronto. I remember in the ice storm, many trees were damaged but through the years repaired slowly and rose again, noble and brave. Some of these trees are slated to be cut down. Do not do it to them. They cannot be replaced with new trees. There is absolutely no reason for us to do this and it would be negligent and immoral for us to do so. At a time when NYC is planting 1 million trees and other cities in Europe and North America have pledged to preserve and renew their green spaces, we will be viewed as a barbaric and backward Quebec, unable to value its own natural treasures. **Once a natural environment, a green space is gone, it does not return.**

The Community

Many studies show that children who grow up without enough green space around them are suffering increasing behavioural and psychological problems. At a time when asthma and obesity are on the rise, we would be fools to tear down this beautiful, highly functional sports centre loved and used by many, including seniors and children. It should be a model for other communities, not a demolition target. Quebec society benefits in untold millions when the health of its citizens is kept intact. Many of these people, particularly seniors, have stated that the loss of this athletic centre will be terrible for them. Why take it away? To benefit Mr Miceli and Mr. Bizotto? I don't think so. Gardons le pour la peuple de la ville, pour leur sant ■. Additionally, the green space is a quiet refuge for animals and birds who need spaces to be undisturbed. The additional lights, and traffic of humans and cars will chase them out of yet another space. Many birds and squirrels nest here, falcons live here, as do foxes and marmots. Please consider

them. They will not be able to withstand further pressures of traffic, pollution and noise. Nor will we.

As for the traffic, the streets round the college, especially CDN and Cedar are bumper to bumper traffic through the day and especially at rush hour. Our infrastructure cannot take more cars, nor more sewage—it is impossible. It will reduce the standard of living. Though Mr Micelli and Bizotto say the traffic will not change from the days when Marianopolis was a school, I can tell you that that is highly unlikely.

Already, people from other provinces tell us that our services do not match theirs. Overburdening our infrastructure more will worsen the quality of life, dragging Montreal down, not raising it up.

The Process

I must end this by saying that I am very disturbed by the process of these public consultations. It seems to me to be coercive to say that we must talk about the project, and not reject the project. It forces us to give opinions on a subject that should never have been opened. It makes it seem like we agree with parts of the project when we do not wish to even talk about giving over our precious land to residences and private profit, rather than institutional, civic contribution by a chosen proprietor.

The 3500 people who gave their opinions in the Mount Royal Plan for Protection and Enhancement must be listened to—and they said again and again, preserve and protect the mountain; DO NOT BUILD on the mountain. If you change the zoning regulations you will be going against the voices of the people of Quebec. You will be going against the voices of all the people here demanding you, as our public officials and representatives, to uphold the zoning regulations, to not change them, to protect us and our city and our heritage.

As Shakespeare said, a city is its people. The people, with the exception of the developers and those who will profit monetarily by their actions, are asking you to STOP this project. Either the city should buy back this land and turn it into a heritage park and school or some other institution or we should work together, community and city, to find new proprietors who will not build and will add to the richness and beauty of our community. Je répète, le patrimoine québécois est menacé encore par ce projet pour quelques individus et non pas pour le peuple de Québec qui ont, avec leurs dons à l'église chaque dimanche contribué à créer cet environnement. C'est leur tour de profiter.

Ne changeons pas le zonage. La ville et la communauté doivent travailler ensemble pour trouver un propriétaire qui respecte le zonage comme tel, et qui contribuera à notre belle ville.