

November 10, 2011

Mrs. Louise Roy, Présidente
Office de consultation publique de Montréal
Cours Mont-Royal
1550, rue Met alfe – Bureau 1414
Montréal (Québec) H3A 1X6

RE : CADRE DE RÉVISION DES HAUTEURS ET DENSITÉS DU CENTRE-VILLE – MODIFICATIONS
PROPOSÉES POUR LE SECTEUR OUEST

Dear Mrs. Roy and commissioners,

On behalf of myself and all other professionals that work with and are directly affected by the proposed modifications to the Planning Program, I would like to convey my professional opinion regarding the benefits of the intended changes, and in particular, the changes that are foreseen within the Western Sector, corresponding to the Bishop-Crescent neighbourhood.

Although many residents and smaller merchants may be opposed to the City of Montréal's preliminary document issued this past June, 2011, it is clear for professionals related to construction field that increasing density as well as building heights will greatly improve the current state of the borough for the better. Not only will these proposed modifications lead to an increase in economic activity, but the borough of Ville-Marie, as well as the surrounding boroughs will experience a social shift as well.

In the eyes of a citizen, it is understandable that concerns may arise due to a fear of change, where a neighbourhood that was once known for its 19th century Victorian buildings and modest building scale may eventually disappear. What is important to stress, is that, as professionals, we know the importance of preservation and the ability of a neighbourhood to adapt to its surroundings and changes throughout time.

Although quite informative, the document in question fails to illustrate how the proposed modifications, and in particular the increases to density and building height can be a positive thing. What one first has to understand is that land is a commodity; however, land within a downtown core of a major metropolitan city is priceless. A density that is low, coupled with lot coverage that in some cases may be less than ideal, equate to a landsite that will never be able to reach its maximum potential. In other words, wasted space that is extremely valuable.

The western sector in particular, is home to multiple parking lots, which in several cases occupy a large portion of the city block they are located on. These lots although valuable to the daily driver, represent a potential for an increase in residential units, office space and businesses. The loss of parking stalls, despite not being the issue at hand, can be mitigated by several means, such as underground parking or vertical parking lots such as what can be found in New York City and Tokyo.

To put the issue into context, if we are to look at the Western Sector identified within the document, the proposed increase in both density and building height will be greatly beneficial along De la Montagne Street between Sainte-Catherine Street and De Maisonneuve Boulevard. An analysis of the sector shows that in recent years, the upscale area, which is home to Ogilvy department store and the Loews hotel has seen the construction of several taller mixed use buildings such as the ones located at 1200 and 2000 De Maisonneuve Boulevard. In addition, the proposed modifications to Ogilvy, coupled with the vacant lots located on either side of De la Montagne Street, at the corner of De Maisonneuve Boulevard leads to a potential for development that is unparalleled within the sector.


Not only is this area a prime example of how the proposed modifications can be beneficial, but it also proves that "building up" does not always have to be linked to negative connotations.

The increase in building height from 44 to 65 meters, along the central part of the De la Montagne axe will allow for a development project with a similar construction scale found within the central downtown core. In addition, the permitted density will insure a volume that respects and harmonizes with the heritage buildings that are located within the area.

As a result, several elements such as economic activity, housing, and social welfare will all increase, all the while decreasing unwanted blights within the sector.

As an advocate for development and the future of this City, I would like to express my favouritism towards the proposed modifications to the Planning Program that have been brought forward by the City of Montréal. The modifications will ensure a continual growth and improvement for the City, while ensuring the preservation of its heritage.

Cordially,



Simon Péloquin, architect