

Mémoire
le 29 aout 2013

MONTRÉAL: C'EST VOTRE VILLE

Plan du Développement de Montréal
Office de Consultation Publique de Montréal

To Mme Roy et les Commissaires, with admiration and gratitude for your dedication to the City of Montreal.

BIEN VIVRE DANS UNE VILLE COMPACTE: scéance du 5 juin 2013

The far-reaching views of Dinu Bumbaru and Clément Demers are clear and attainable. The practical perspectives of each panelist are facets of the visions for a richly diverse and animated city. The Panel and Conférence actually provided answers to the questions posed for the scéance.

Integration and implementation have to date been lacking in realizing the dreams of Montreal that thrives on its natural and cultural gifts. It is as though these must flourish in dry soil between parking lots and pavers.

Time to transfer the center of gravity from the weight of heavy building to the density of animated people.

As Mme Josée Duplessis remarked during the Sommet du Mont Royal, a shift may have begun from the city imposed on its site, to one growing in harmony with it. Though her reference was to the natural features of Montreal--between mountain and river, as Jean Décarie memorably says--it could also refer to our architectural heritage and cultural landscape.

The island of Montreal flourishing river to river, from the ground up, with a vibrant center and cohesive neighbourhoods will be a good home for residents, a desirable place to do business, and an attractive destination for tourists. The elements are all in place, but must be preserved, cultivated, and celebrated.

PRESERVE:

NAME, recognize, and protect what's left of Montreal's built heritage all over the island.

ELEVATE Héritage Montréal or its equivalent to a city agency with enforcement powers in urban planning, zoning, and protection at every scale: individual and adjacent buildings--commercial, residential, and public; clusters and city blocks; neighbourhoods; lanes and pedestrian thoroughfares; and every aspect of the urban fabric that still characterizes Montréal.

IDENTIFY and maintain without exception view corridors between the rivers and the mountain; height restrictions, protecting access to light and air 360 degrees around new buildings. if Paris can manage it, so can Montreal.

ENSURE that arrondissements on and off-island (Nun's Island) adhere to the view corridor provisions for all new building. Cut Port Royal down to half size to restore light north of Sherbrooke Street and up the flank of the mountain. Require architects of new buildings to produce and publish studies of light, shadow, and wind effects of their designs, 360 degrees, for a meaningful radius.

REQUIRE owners of heritage or architecturally relevant properties to preserve at least the facade, fenestration, and scale in any renovation. Why would le Musée de Beaux-Arts not insist its architects preserve the character and texture of the buildings to be renovated on Crescent Street to preserve context with the low-rise blocks? Facadism is still preferable to demolition.

ELIMINATE the travesty of owners of designated landmarks allowing their properties to deteriorate until they are demolished as "safety hazards."

ESTABLISH a distinct urban identity in the downtown core. Random, piecemeal development has resulted in the present patchwork of outsized, featureless high-rises dwarfing older buildings; parking lots bordered by broken fences and cracking asphalt; streets either vast and empty or clogged by traffic, both vehicular and pedestrian. The move of some corporations such as Alcan and Standard Life to the downtown core makes coherent planning imperative. A LEED building for Alcan is no triumph of design if the setting is a chaotic, out-scale downtown. Another loss for Sherbrooke Street would be a near empty, poorly maintained shell of Standard Life's former headquarters.

CULTIVATE:

PLAN and nurture a city that is both workable *and* livable. Mixed residential and commercial use of buildings, complexes, and areas promotes activity and community.

MIX use in the residential context to provide a spectrum: single family, duplex and triplex, apartments, from high end to affordable. In trying to expand its tax base, the city seems to have opted for expensive condos intended for a market that may not be sustainable. After September 11, 2001, New York City opted to rebuild and reinvigorate Lower Manhattan through a concerted effort to attract business and new families. Affordable housing was a required component of new residential development.

ENGAGE all residents in civic improvement. In Montreal, high-end condo buildings such as The Ritz, M sur la Montagne, and many others downtown, along with Griffintown and the Old Port are attracting buyers. Considering the demographics and population of the city, in fact, who are they? *Where* are they? How much are these occupants

contributing to the prosperity of the city where they own property but may spend little time? In New York City, for instance, many wealthy residents are equally public spirited: whether for a naming opportunity or personal satisfaction, they support the maintenance of parks, refurbishment of public spaces, restoration of landmarks. In effect, their generosity promotes civic pride shared by all citizens, whatever their income or status. Cumulatively, over years, the city benefits, and in turn generates well-being. Could there be a form of "cultivation and culture" tax--in addition to or on top of the "welcome tax"--on the sale properties over a certain high value?

REQUIRE integrated open and green space in all zoning and urban planning, downtown and island-wide. Open space is not limited to intervals between buildings; set-backs and cut-aways, plazas, pedestrian ways, and atriums all add to open outdoor and indoor space in dense areas. Green spaces are roof-tops, mezzanines, balconies, parking canopies, lanes and alleys, sliver and vest-pocket parks, in addition to established parks and playgrounds.

CELEBRATE:

RECOGNIZE and feature distinct aspects of downtown and all the boroughs and neighbourhoods--with their natural and built features--as vital hubs within the overall complex of the City of Montreal.

LINK these large and small centers with even more effective public transportation, with improved signage; in-station communication with schedule updates and audible announcements; expanded elevator access.

SOLVE the ruptured link between the Berri-UQUAM Metro station and the Gare Central, now. Shame on the city and the STM to lead residents and visitors--with children, strollers, walkers, canes, baggage--on a hazardous trek up and down stairs, or on an endless wait for a non-working elevator; through broken doors and an abandoned building; or over-ground past construction fences and cones, on uneven sidewalk. Get over the failed Ilot. Get on with solving the problems it created.

SOLVE difficult access from Champ de Mars Metro to Vieux Montréal. The gruelling underground concrete passage, with stairs, or the long detour around the station must not be the only options for regulars and visitors.

IMPROVE public access to Mont Royal with more frequent STM buses, and/or shuttles from two or three points of departure. Getting to the mountain is a challenge for people without cars, especially the elderly, and families with children. Having a car, and being able to afford parking, should not limit access to Mont-Royal.

CLEAN up. There is no excuse at all for dirty streets and sidewalks, overflowing garbage bins, and graffiti.

Require retailers to take responsibility for their stretch of sidewalk. Form business district zones with cleaning crews; let them wear sponsors' logos with pride on uniforms,

bins, and brooms. Increase staff and supervision of city maintenance crews. Deal effectively and swiftly with graffiti. A city that looks neglected is neglected; conversely, respectful care earns respect.

CELEBRATE the distinguished history, rich diversity, and immense potential of the Ville de Montréal.

The Office de Consultation Publique de Montréal has courageously and consistently encouraged citizens to take an active part in the life of the city, and to create from the sum of its parts a greater whole. May we all rise to the occasion provided by the OCPM in this Consultation Publique sur le Plan de Développement de Montréal.

BRAVO, and merci!

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L'AVENIR DU PATRIMOINE NATUREL DE MONTRÉAL: scéance du 12 juin 2013

This session was an inspired and fitting choice to conclude the Consultation Publique sur le Plan de Développement de Montréal. Le patrimoine naturel is after all the very ground of the city. And, with our mountains it is also the crown.

The genius of this day was a sudden shift of perception: a trompe-l'oeil switching "positive" and "negative" shapes.
"CITY" dominant--with nature attached--shifted to "NATURE" dominant--with city inset.

OBSERVATIONS:

What is "Nature?"

Karel Mayrand set us straight: nature is not a destination. We live *in* it. Ecosystems and biodiversity *are us*.

The CANOPY is a helpful image for the city's natural, encompassing shape. The canopy represents le capital écologique of the city's millions of residents, and corresponding value in greenspace, biodiversity, and system stress. This is Montréal's natural environment: better adapt now, to flourish later.

To sustain Montréal's natural environment? The answer should no longer be what it costs, but what it returns.

Each panelist's insights followed, with nature--the city's setting--as the logic determining the patterns of our lives.

Les trames bleues et vertes--under and overground streams and waterways, sentiers urbains and passages--are the thoroughfares that link us, naturally. Build on wet ground: wet remains. Block a path: short-cuts show up.

What is Montreal's "Nature?"

Sylvie Guilbault eloquently evoked the presence of Mont Royal--uniting nature, culture, and history. She explained our real connection: la montagne descend dans la ville. For many decades of the last century, the city sought to tame and appropriate Mt. Royal.

But La Colline Montérégienne is a feature of our own natural landscape. Now, we begin to see that minimizing the Mountain diminishes the City.

The afternoon séance described the city's natural attributes and their management: revelations should be a SHOCK to our collective systems as residents of Montreal. We are a city that lives and breathes.

The evening séance considered neighbourhoods' adaption to climate change through local measures and standards.

In urban strategy, this panel is unusually bold and forward-thinking.

ACTIONS:

Montreal: Island

Rendez-Vous St. Laurent reminded us of our defining rivers, north and south, and their tributaries essential to drinking water, reservoirs, transport, and tourism. Wasting and polluting water spoils them, as it harms us all.

Owen Rose described the continuing dangers of untreated water flowing into the St. Lawrence River. He notes that extreme weather events, including heavy rains, raise our events of flooding and contamination. Montreal must address those risks now, through planning and mitigating treatments.

As an architect, author, activist and commentator, M. Rose notes that plans and projections proliferate, but ACTION takes traction. Referring to "transversalité entre silos," M. Rose links transportation, water, housing, infrastructure, and all the tough issues faced by cities such as Montreal, where concern for sustainability compounds difficulties.

Montreal: Land

Presenters and questioners in this scéance raised specific issues often overlooked in policy discussions, even at the local level. What restraints are in place, and what resources are available to citizens for protection against imminent threat to iconic terrain in the immediate neighbourhood? Examples are in Shaughnessy Village, the "Franciscan escarpment," and the Notman House property trees on Sherbrooke and Clark Streets under threat in June, 2013.

Here's where the shift from negative to positive vision--that is, from urban destruction to preservation--would take effect: a help line to call when natural and built landmarks are threatened, to stop destruction, immediately. Set up an emergency line for threats to the city fabric: the 911 equivalent for emergency in the life of the city.

If the call to protect buildings, parks, or trees comes urgently, we must be in a state of

emergency. That is no place for Montreal--a city privileged in its natural site between rivers and mountains, and in its many cultures and traditions.

Let stability take the place of emergency; participation replace authority; community emerge from division.

Sounds like bonne volontée. Feels like change.