

Bonjour,

As a resident of Montréal, I am adamantly opposed to the demolition of the former Le Bourbon to make way for yet another high-rise condominium development in the historic neighbourhood we know as Le Village. This sort of proposal shows a blatant disregard for and contempt of the needs of the local population, as well as the architectural value of the locale. For years now, Montréal has been experiencing an appalling wave of demolition and new construction that is transforming the character of the city for the worse. New condo development is completely out of control and shows no sign of slowing or changing course.

Obviously there may be economic benefits to be had from these new condos, but it seems that Montréal is rapidly and relentlessly selling out its historic architecture in favour of the ugliest new buildings imaginable. I am not against new high-rises in principle. In fact, I support them as a means of combatting suburban sprawl and increasing urban density. But how can Montreal continue allowing these monstrosities to poison our skyline?

In New York City- where I grew up- new condominium developments are often designed in collaboration with renowned architects so that they contribute to the beauty and identity of the city (<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/06/realestate/a-richard-meier-building-in-black.html>). This almost never happens in Montréal, and the result is the “uglification” of neighbourhoods that is burning through the city. New York prides itself not just on its architectural landmarks, but on the “ordinary” commercial and residential buildings that define its neighbourhoods: the tenements of the Lower East Side, the lofts of Tribeca, the canyons of art-deco towers along Broadway, and much more. People come from all over the world to experience these streets. Montréal, on the other hand, salivates at the prospective demolition of old buildings to make way for new ugly ones (the vast majority of which are “luxury” condominiums). Why does Montreal have such a craven disregard for its architecture?

Contrary to the people who think that this emphasis on architecture is a “trivial” “frivolous” or “petty” concern that must come second to economic benefit, this has a very real and detrimental impact on the urban fabric and cultural caché of the city. When people visit New York or Paris, a huge part of the experience is being surrounded by miles and miles of historically significant architecture. Montreal is also a beautiful city- for now- but the pace of demolition and the utter tastelessness of these new buildings is truly appalling. Griffintown has essentially become a “condo city” and is now one of the ugliest parts of Montreal. I’m sure the city is falling over itself to collect the property taxes generated by these buildings, but it comes at a terrible price. Can you imagine if all the skyscrapers in Manhattan were replaced with the Griffintown condo towers? Montréal is certainly going in that direction. It’s disgusting.

Montréal, je vous aime avec tout mon coeur. Mais vous êtes en train de perdre votre âme, et ça me rend triste comme pas possible. Bonne chance.

Huei Lin, résident de Montréal