

**L'Office de consultation publique de Montréal (OCPM)**

**The Dalle Park and Turcot Park**

**November 15, 2018**

**Al Hayek**

## **Fulfillment of the MCM Dream**

In the 80's, the MCM (Montreal Citizen's Movement) was in power and Sharon Leslie was councillor for the Loyal District in NDG. Around this time the MCM had proposed to set up a network of green paths in NDG connecting various green spaces. Areas under hydro lines, through parks, or along railways tracks were to be connected with green spaces leading all the way to the canal. One of the greenways would pass through Concordia University. An entire walking network would be created. The local newspaper of the time, "The Monitor", reported on these proposals.

Today we see this dream coming true. With the Dalle Park, hikers and cyclists will be able to go to the Falaise, the Band Verte, Turcot Park and the Canal. Citizens of NDG will now have access to natural spaces within walking and cycling distance, something which they have never had. The bicycle path along Maissonneuve Blvd will be a funnel bringing walkers and cyclists to the Dalle Park at Cavendish and ultimately Turcot Park.

Personally, I would find it a dream come true: to be able to walk from my home in western NDG along the reasonably pleasant Maissonneuve Blvd, to the Dalle Park and ultimately to Turcot Park and the Canal.

## **Build It and They Will Come**

About fifty years ago the Federal Government began to green the Lachine Canal and open it up to the public. It began with bicycle and hiking paths along a small section of the Lachine Canal in St. Henri. Over the years it was extended until it stretched from the beginning of the Canal at Rene Levesque Park in Lachine all the way to old Montreal. Thousands upon thousands of cyclists and hikers use this corridor each year. It is so popular that at times it even becomes congested.

It used to be that if you wanted to cycle downtown, you lined up with the cars. There were few cyclists that did so. Now we have the bicycle path along Maissonneuve Blvd. extending all the way through the downtown, and there is a continuous throng of cyclists that use it every day.

Build it and they will come.

I think the same will be true of the Turcot Park, particularly with its access through the Dalle Park.

## **The Benefits of Greenways and Natural Spaces**

The paths along the Lachine Canal and on Maissonneuve Blvd., in providing opportunities to walk or cycle, are providing significant mental and physical health to those who use these facilities. The same will be true of the Dalle Park providing connections with the Turcot Park, the Lachine Canal and beyond.

As far as the Turcot Park goes, there are many benefits of natural spaces and they have been enumerated at various other OCPM hearings. Having access to natural spaces and even living near them has been shown to correlate with better health outcomes.

## **The Dalle Park**

I think that the Dalle Park should blend in with the Falaise as much as possible. I like the idea of the winding ramp such as the Vancouver Land Bridge, Vancouver, WA, USA. Its gentle slope would provide easy access to cyclists and walkers to gain the bottom of the Falaise. It should be somewhat greened to blend in with nature and the Falaise. It should provide lookouts on the Falaise, like on the mountain, all along its path. It should be constructed so that animals could use it to go from one area to another. It should connect with the Band Verte and with the Falaise.

I am not in favour of towers and elevators. Such structures would break up the ambiance of being in nature, away from the contraptions of urban life. Also, elevators and towers would require continual maintenance and are to be avoided.

## **Turcot Park**

Turcot Park will be a welcome addition to the natural spaces on the Island of Montreal. As The Gazette reports ("Park upkeep costs more here than other cities Result of limited space, heavy use, official says", Thursday, November 15, 2018) "...the city has less green space per capita than other cities..." and "That means our parks attract more users,...". Turcot Park will relieve some of the pressure on our other parks and provide neighbourhood access to natural spaces to those living in NDG, LaSalle and South-West Borough.

I believe Turcot Park should be mainly natural spaces. In replanting, let us keep in mind that if we plant the right kind of vegetation we can attract birds and other forms of wildlife. There needs to be some recreational equipment such as playgrounds for kids, and picnic tables, but please, no soccer fields with artificial turf.

## **La Falaise**

It is encouraging to see that the Falaise will have a conservation and protection plan.

## **A Larger Vision**

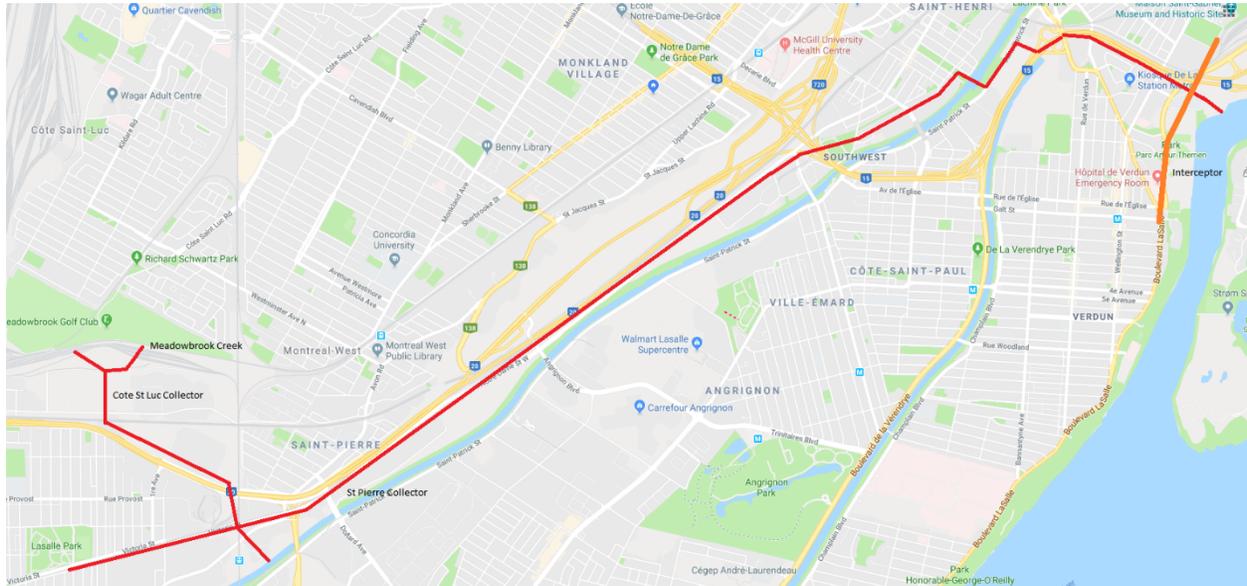
Let's go beyond the Dalle and Turcot Parks by linking to Angrignon Park by way of either Rue Senkus or Rue Irwin or both. A path through the Douglas Hospital grounds could thus lead hikers and cyclists to the St. Lawrence River and Parc des Rapides. We just might catch a bit of the magic of the footpaths of Old England.

## **Restoring the St. Pierre River**

I would also like to see the little St. Pierre River, currently underground, connected once again to the reborn lac à la Loutre . At present, the little St. Pierre River conduit is not that great a distance from the proposed lac à la Loutre. It is partly a sewer, partly a conduit for rainwater. At present both Montreal West and Cote-St-Luc are working to clean up the cross connections of sanitary sewer pipes with rainwater pipes within their jurisdictions. This would mean that the water, up to Meadowbrook Golf Course, would be clean of household waste water. On exiting Meadowbrook, the little St. Pierre River becomes a combined sanitary/rainwater sewer. While it might be costly to convert this section of the little St. Pierre River to rainwater only there are considerable financial benefits to do so. First, its water could be diverted into lac à la Loutre. This would reduce the volume of water sent to the waste-

water treatment plant in the east end, thus reducing costs. Secondly, it would reduce the volume of water filling our drains during periods of heavy rains and thus reduce the risk of flooding in homes. Thirdly, it would eliminate the discharge of sewage into the St. Lawrence River without being treated as happens during periods of heavy rain. It may also save the costs of building yet another reservoir to hold water during periods of heavy rainfall.

Of course, a spillover would have to be build to divert water from lac à la Loutre to the Lachine Canal during heavy rains.



## Conclusions

We spend a lot of time in our cities. We also want to be able to live in them. Just as the opening of the Lachine Canal to the public, and the bicycle path along Maissoneuve Blvd. downtown, so too the Dalle and Turcot Parks will make our cities more liveable. All of these things contribute to our mental and physical health and make Montreal more of an attractive place to live.