

## **Brief to the OCPM regarding the use of the former Royal Victoria Hospital site**

**From Robert Hajaly**

**Nov. 9, 2021**

I wish to argue primarily for two uses of the Royal Victoria site, apart from the part of it to be used by McGill University; specifically, its use for social housing, and for a public swimming pool and adjacent public recreational park.

First, I wish to see as much as possible of the buildings on this site being developed for social housing, especially, though not only, for homeless people, together with services to support these people. There is a great and now unfulfilled need for such housing in the western downtown area. Roughly 40% of the residents in this area, specifically of Peter McGill city district, are below the federally defined low income line, according to the 2016 census, while rents in this area are among the highest in Montreal. There are also many homeless people in this area, including, but not only, Indigenous people. And attempts to provide social housing for these people have been mostly fruitless, so there is very little social housing in this area. So the development of the Royal Victoria site provides an opportunity to help rectify this situation. To this I would add that if such a development were combined with similar such developments in the former Hotel Dieu, Hopital de la Misericorde, and Institut des Sourds et Muets buildings downtown, this could provide a major part of the solution to the problem of homeless people. The redevelopment of the Royal Victoria site should be viewed and considered in this light.

Second, I would like to see the former swimming pool behind the Allen Memorial building on the Royal Victoria site rehabilitated or, if necessary, rebuilt, for public use. Although this was originally built for the use of Royal Victoria Hospital employees, it was subsequently opened to the public, and was very popular until it was closed when the Hospital moved. It would be the only public outdoor swimming pool in the western downtown area, and is beautifully sited, surrounded by grass and trees. Reopening it would be a very popular development with the local residents, and in fact the Projet Montreal political party promised in 2017 to reopen it, but they haven't so far. This should be corrected. As well, Projet Montreal promised also to develop a public recreational park, especially for use by families, on the Royal Victoria parking lot just to the west of the swimming pool, which would help rectify the very limited availability of outdoor public recreational spaces in the western downtown/Peter McGill area. Again, this hasn't been

done so far, but should be, as soon as possible. So I'm asking your Commission to recommend these uses of the Royal Victoria site.

Finally, I just want to say more generally that I support the continued public use and management of the Royal Victoria site, with as much input as possible, on a continual basis, from the local community, and which would include public access to the grounds of this site.

In closing, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to express my views on this issue, and for the opportunity for other members of the public as well.

Yours sincerely, Robert Hajaly