

## **La Bibliothèque du Quartier des grands jardins**

The Atwater Library and Computer Centre is an incorporated charitable organization that has been serving Montrealers since its founding in 1828. Originally called the Montreal Mechanics' Institution and still legally named The Atwater Library of the Mechanics' Institute of Montreal, the organization has a mission to promote learning and build the community.

In 1920 the organization moved from what is now Old Montreal to its present building at the northwest corner of Atwater Avenue and Tupper Street, facing Cabot Square. The Library's property is just west of the boundary between Montreal's Borough of Ville-Marie and the City of Westmount. However the physical and service orientation is to the east, to the Quartier des grands jardins of Peter-McGill District.

The Atwater Library is mandated to serve everyone regardless of municipal address. Of the people who make over 90,000 user visits a year, some 90% are residents of the City of Montreal. A high percentage of the clients reside in the adjacent Peter-McGill District but people come to the Library from all over the Montreal region.

The Atwater Library is the *de facto* community library and cultural centre for the residents of the Quartier des grands jardins. There are no such community facilities within the technical boundaries of Peter-McGill District.

The organization's mission today is "to build a strong, sustainable and more connected community by promoting cultural, educational and social programs for the diverse Montreal community".

The Atwater Library has stayed relevant by embracing new technologies. Whereas in the early decades there was an emphasis on training for the construction trades, for the past 30 years the Library has had a modern Computer Centre and is now a hub of new media production.

The Library's programming, usage and revenues have all been on the upswing in recent years. In the past two years alone, Library loans increased by over 50%.

Following are programs and services that the Atwater Library provides to Montrealers:

### **Library**

- 38,000 books, other print materials, DVDs, and audio materials
- Home delivery service for downtown residents living with a loss of autonomy

### **Computer Centre**

- Hourly rentals and free Wi-Fi
- Courses and tutoring
- Digital Literacy Project serving youth, schools and community groups, e.g. Trafalgar School for Girls, The Yellow Door, Head & Hands, Carrefour Jeunesse-Emploi Sud-Ouest de Montréal's Jeunes en Action

### **Educational and Cultural Events**

- Lectures, readings by writers and poets, book discussions, musical performances, visual arts displays

### **Community meeting facilities at low cost**

#### **Home for other community organizations – 1/3 building leased to**

- Montreal Children's Library
- Quebec Writers' Federation
- English-language Publishers Association of Quebec
- Peter McGill Community Council
- La Fondation Aubin

The Library's building, designed by the architectural firm Hutchison, Wood and Miller, is an elegant facility constructed out of quality materials. The Government of Canada has declared it a national historic site.

On both the Atwater Avenue and Tupper Street sides of the building there is a beautiful garden with trees, shrubs, lawn and large flower beds containing perennials and annuals. A team of volunteers assists the staff in tending the garden.

In 2010 only 11% of the Atwater Library's operating budget came from governments. The central City of Montreal provided only \$20,700, exactly the same as it has for the previous many years. There has been no allowance for inflation.

**There are two main purposes of this mémoire.**

The first purpose is to call on the Borough of Ville-Marie to adopt a vision for the Quartier des grands jardins recognizing that the Atwater Library is integral to the planning area. The Library's physical and service orientation is to Cabot Square and the east.

The second purpose of this submission is to urge the Borough of Ville-Marie to contract with the Atwater Library to be a service provider for citizens of the Borough, particularly for residents of the proposed Quartier des grands jardins. An example of such a cost-effective and cooperative arrangement is the Borough's contract with the City of Westmount for the provision of recreational services to the residents of Tradau.

It is clear in these times that residents want the highest level of service possible but have little appetite for great expenditures. By contracting with the Atwater Library to provide programs and services for its residents, the Borough would get a phenomenally high rate of return on its investment. At the same time, the Borough would be helping to sustain a cherished Montreal institution and conserve a beautiful heritage building.

Respectfully submitted by:

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