

**BRIEF**

**REVITALIZATION OF MONTREAL DOWNTOWN WEST**

**LE PROGRAMME PARTICULIER D'URBANISME DU QUARTIER DES GRANDS JARDINS**

Version préliminaire

Presented by

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to

**l'Office de Consultation Publique de Montréal**

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I represent a group of US-based private equity real estate investment companies. We are long term owners with a portfolio of over 16 million square feet. We have invested in a number of Montreal commercial properties, all of which are currently located in the Ville Marie borough. We are the owners of the Montreal Forum.

While we applaud the PPU's stated objective to revitalize the commercial health of St. Catherine Street, we are concerned that the proposed means of implementation may be of limited value in fostering a commercially successful retail sector.

We draw your attention to the following objective as articulated in the Economic Development Strategy of the City of Montreal, referenced on page 37 of the PPU draft report.

### **ACCROÎTRE LE POUVOIR D'ATTRACTION DU CENTRE-VILLE COMME DESTINATION D'AFFAIRES.**

In the context of this objective, in section 3.3.1, the PPU draft report attempts to address the market realities of the St. Catherine Street merchants and property owners with the following observation:

**SUR LE PLAN ÉCONOMIQUE, LES PROPRIÉTAIRES ET COMMERÇANTS DE LA RUE SAINTE-CATHERINE OUEST DEVRONT MISER TANT SUR LE GRAND MARCHÉ DES CONSOMMATEURS DU SECTEUR CENTRE-OUEST DE MONTRÉAL QUE SUR LE MARCHÉ SECTORIEL DES ÉTUDIANTS ET TRAVAILLEURS HABITANT LE QUARTIER.**

We do not believe that the last statement accurately reflects the trade areas from which these merchants must draw their clientele. There are over one million (1MM) square feet of commercial retail space on St. Catherine Street in the sector bounded by Atwater and Bishop. This does not include Plaza Alexis Nihon. This critical mass is equivalent to a super-regional shopping centre.

As defined by the International Council of Shopping Centres, the Urban Land Institute and other industry organizations, retail agglomerations of this size require a minimum population of 300,000 persons in their primary, secondary and tertiary trade areas. The retail businesses in our neighbourhood cannot survive on the local market alone. They must draw clients from a wider geographical area.

A significant portion of the area's retail clientele travel to the area by private vehicle. Consumer surveys indicate that, notwithstanding future improvements in public transit, these customers will continue to use private vehicles and, furthermore, they will cease frequenting local businesses if such use is curtailed.

The current financial penalties and private vehicle disincentives as enacted by the city, such as reduced on-street parking, parking fee increases and the new parking tax, have had a direct negative impact on downtown retail businesses. The private vehicle is currently viewed as an environmental liability which is the principal reason for the promotion of active and collective transit modes. However, changes in vehicle propulsion systems and size may render this argument redundant in the near future. Shopping centres and urban malls are currently planning for the introduction of electrical charging stations, revised stall sizes and vehicle swap facilities in anticipation of coming changes in consumer behaviour.

### **We urge the borough to exercise caution in implementing policies to dissuade consumers from using their private vehicles.**

We believe that downtown vehicular traffic must be controlled; its speed must be slowed and its access and thoroughfare volumes be planned in accordance with street vocations. However, encouraging active and collective travel options does not require, by axiom, the creation of disincentives for private vehicle use. The private vehicle must form part of the transportation options available to downtown customers for the foreseeable future.

The downtown core has been losing market share to the suburbs for the past thirty years. It cannot continue to do so indefinitely. The commercial sector pays the largest portion of municipal realty taxes. Loss of market share diminishes profitability and business value which in turn reduces realty tax revenue to the city. This results in a transfer of the tax burden to the residential sector. Neighbourhood residents must understand that a healthy commercial sector represents a direct financial benefit to area home owners and renters.

Establishing equilibrium between the commercial and residential sectors appears to be the key issue in this entire exercise. While the neighbourhood boasts an impressive stock of late nineteenth and early twentieth century residences, St. Catherine Street between Atwater and Guy has been a retail and entertainment hub for well over 100 years.

As example, the first Forum building was constructed in 1908. It featured multiple ice and roller skating rinks, as well as food concessions and retail stores. The first Forum hosted concerts and gala events and was the entertainment centre for Montrealers for the first two decades of the twentieth century. The building was demolished and replaced by the arena building in 1924. The second Forum continued its entertainment vocation for the next seven decades until its closing in 1996.

The Forum has undergone three major expansions, 1949, 1968 and 2001. Currently, the Forum welcomes over 6 million visitors annually which are more than twice the annual number hosted by the Forum during the Canadiens tenancy. Unlike its previous iterations, the current Forum is an open building with significant common areas accessible to public use 20 hours per day.

During its most recent renovation and expansion, notwithstanding its longstanding acquired rights, the Forum agreed to major concessions to its development and operating plans to accommodate the city's new planning initiatives and the concerns of its residential neighbours. Furthermore, it agreed to the city's request that it delay its construction schedule to permit the building to be used for the first major Hollywood film to be produced entirely in Montreal, a project with a reported one hundred and eighty million dollar (\$180 MM) spin-off value to the Montreal economy. This decision was ultimately financially ruinous for the Forum ownership group.

Since its re-opening in 2001, the Forum has exercised extreme patience in dealing with the 'immobilisme' which has gripped the city and profoundly affected our local neighbourhood. The derelict Seville site has been a bane to Forum customers and tenants for the better part of the past decade. We applaud the project launch and look forward to its timely completion.

In an effort to contribute to the improvement of the neighbourhood, the Forum has committed significant financial and human resources to the support of various community initiatives and groups. Last year, at the request of our neighbours, we spearheaded opposition to the Mega-Bar development as proposed. Many believed that this project which would have had a very negative impact on the both the commercial diversity and vitality of St. Catherine Street, and the quality of life of area residents. The Forum Entertainment Centre represents a private investment of more than one hundred and thirty million dollars (\$130MM) in this neighbourhood. This investment was predicated on the city's stated commitment to protect and enhance the retail component of St. Catherine Street and to apply its rules and regulations in an equitable, proportionate, and transparent manner.

**Development dollars will not come to this city if the perception persists in some quarters that the rules of the game do not apply to everyone equally.**

We must reverse the decline of St. Catherine Street which started in the late 1970s with the exodus of anglophone businesses and was further exacerbated by the recession of the early 1990s. It is an urban legend that the decline of St. Catherine Street west of Guy was caused by the departure of the Canadiens in 1996. The retail vacancies and businesses closures which have plagued the strip, in fact, started at the beginning of the decade.

**It is essential that the PPU clearly define the destination vocation and commercial character of St. Catherine Street to ensure that commercial diversity be encouraged. New projects should be well-integrated into the commercial fabric, and be designed to minimize disruptive impact on the adjacent residential neighbourhoods.**

The city must foster the commercial development of the St. Catherine Street. It must invest in and improve the maintenance of the public domain areas under its control. It must protect the local residential neighbourhoods while maintaining access to and enhancing the destination vocation of the area's principal commercial artery.

St. Catherine is one of the great retail streets of the world. The area west of Guy cannot be included in this definition. We must make it so. Therein lies our challenge.

Merci beaucoup pour le temps que vous nous avez accordé.

**OFFICE DE CONSULTATION PUBLIQUE DE MONTRÉAL**

**MÉMOIRE 2**

**PPU QUARTIER DES GRANDS JARDINS**

**Par : André Jude, Vice Président & Directeur général**

**Ashkenazy Acquisition Corporation**

**Avril 2011**

Il nous fait plaisir de vous présenter nos commentaires et recommandations en regard du Programme Particulier d'urbanisme (PPU) préparé par l'arrondissement Ville-Marie.

En premier lieu, il est important de souligner que nous appuyons l'initiative de l'arrondissement et est généralement en accord avec les orientations du PPU. Cependant, nous sommes d'avis que certaines mesures importantes auraient dû être prises en compte, afin d'assurer la mise en œuvre du PPU et la requalification du secteur concerné.

### **Contexte**

Après les années 1970s, le secteur s'est profondément transformé (fermetures de restaurants et de magasins, abandon de bâtiments, etc.). Nous avons tenté en reconvertissant notre immeuble, le Forum, de freiner le processus de détérioration qui s'était engagé dans notre secteur depuis plusieurs années. C'est pourquoi, nous applaudissons les efforts de l'arrondissement de redonner au quartier son dynamisme d'antan.

### **Square Cabot**

Le PPU consacre beaucoup d'efforts à la revitalisation du Square Cabot. Nous saluons cette initiative. Cependant, il est impératif de garder à l'esprit que le Square Cabot doit demeurer un site non construit servant à la détente et aux loisirs des résidents et des visiteurs. Il ne faut pas que ce parc continue d'être un endroit isolé, non accessible et sans vocation déterminée. Il faut absolument tirer avantage du PPU pour favoriser l'interaction entre le Square Cabot et les bâtiments qui l'entourent.

### **Nouvelle image à la rue Ste-Catherine**

Nous sommes étonnés du traitement qui a été accordé dans le PPU à la rue Sainte-Catherine. Il nous semble que son traitement est similaire au reste de cette rue alors que le secteur de la rue Sainte-Catherine inclus dans le PPU se distingue de ce que l'on perçoit plus à l'est de ce dernier. Le tissu urbain que l'on retrouve dans le secteur à l'étude est constitué de bâtiments résidentiels, ainsi que institutionnels, commerciaux et des bureaux. De ce fait, l'organisation de la rue Sainte-Catherine devrait être à l'image du quartier. Il nous semble qu'elle aurait dû être conçue de façon à éliminer

l'image actuelle en favorisant notamment la mixité des usages et de plus forte densité. Aussi, les bâtiments face à la rue Sainte-Catherine devraient être conçus à répondre aux besoins commerciaux.

En autres mots, la grande majorité des vieilles résidences situées sur la rue St. Catherine ne pourront pas être conservés ou recyclés. Ils ne pourraient pas être adaptés aux besoins des commerces de détail sans transformation majeure qui éliminerait pour toutes fins pratiques la valeur architecturale. Ils sont mal adaptés à répondre aux besoins des acheteurs de propriétés résidentiels en raison de la localisation, configuration du site, coût de transformation, et/ou valeur de l'immeuble.

De plus, nous croyons que le zonage devrait permettre des logements aux étages supérieurs des bâtiments sur le tronçon entre les rues Lambert-Closse et Guy tout en favorisant une augmentation de la densité à mesure que l'on s'approche de cette dernière tout en conservant la vocation commerciale de la. Il est impératif que les commerces présents sur cette rue desservent les besoins des résidents et profitent de la présence des institutions et des commerces de premier plan déjà installés dans le quartier.

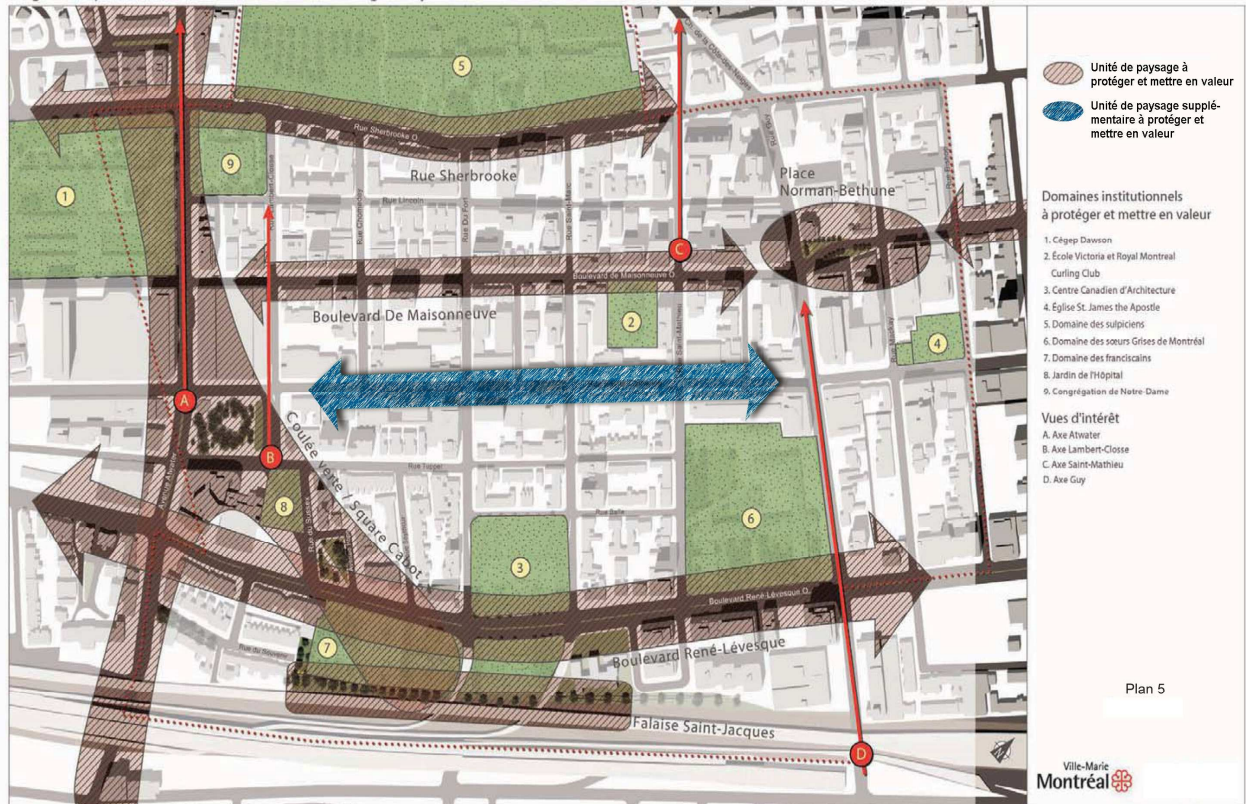
Mais la superficie totale des commerces de détail de ce secteur, qui dépasse un million pieds carrés, exige que ces entreprises attirent leur clientèle d'un bassin géographique beaucoup plus grande que ce quartier, même si sa population est triplée par la densification prévue. Les besoins des commerces recherchés ne sont satisfaits par les bâtiments actuels. Il est illusoire de penser que la revitalisation commerciale de la rue Sainte-Catherine pourrait être réalisée en conservant les vieux bâtiments résidentiels actuels. La majorité de ces résidences ont déjà perdu leur valeur architecturale et ne pourraient pas être reconstitués.

Les mesures à envisager doivent permettre de renouveler l'image de la rue Sainte-Catherine. Celle-ci doit devenir le moteur et le levier dans la revitalisation du quartier. De plus, sa localisation stratégique à proximité du noyau du centre-ville, la présence d'institutions d'éducation et de deux stations de métro contribueront à attirer de nouvelles familles, des étudiants, des professionnels, des parents esseulés et même des banlieusards désirant profiter d'un quartier renouvelé, offrant tous les services nécessaires à une bonne qualité de vie. Si de surcroît, la rue

Sainte-Catherine bénéficiait d'aménagements paysagers similaires à ceux que la ville propose pour les autres artères du quartier, son image serait encore plus attractive pour la population.

## Plan 1

Programme particulier d'urbanisme du Quartier des grands jardins



En conclusion, le PPU représente une opportunité de réhabiliter notre quartier pourvu que les actions mises de l'avant représentent les volontés de ceux qui l'habitent et qu'elles soient viables d'un point de vue économique.

Nous remercions les commissaires pour le temps qu'ils nous ont accordé et espérons que nos commentaires enrichiront la réflexion.