

PROPOSAL FOR INCLUSION OF A GYMNASIUM IN THE COMMUNITY CENTRE OF THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL PROJECT

Terrence Regan – Resident

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Montréal Children's Hospital Redevelopment

The redevelopment of the Montreal Childrens Hospital site to include condominiums, apartments, housing for the elderly, some family based social housing, and a Community Centre will help promote the revitalization of an important and long neglected part of the development of the western part of Montréal's downtown area.

Recognition of the importance of creating specific physical structures in order to accommodate the physical and social needs of local residents is now being seen as an essential component relating to maintaining and enhancing the quality of life and the environment in a neighborhood or community.

Plans calling for the construction of a Community Centre within the Project is certainly welcome news and something that local residents have been fighting for during the past 30 years. However building a new community centre without a gymnasium is like is like building a new hospital without beds.

Currently there are ZERO public gymnasiums in the Peter McGill/Downtown Montréal area for the tens of thousands of residents and children to play group sports activities. The two public gyms in the area in Little Burgundy and the Centre des Loisirs Multi-ethnique in the Milton Park area on rue St. Urbain are filled to capacity (which further demonstrates the important need for these life-giving, life-enhancing facilities to be built). The YMCA on rue Stanley requires membership to participate in their activities and the YWCA gym and Pool closed over five years ago for specious reasons.

A public gymnasium will allow programming for Garderies, schools, and senior citizens during the day; fitness, yoga, dance courses at noon for the thousands of people who live and work in the area at noon-time; sports, dance, gymnastics courses for children after-school; and sports (badminton, basketball, volleyball, cosom hockey), yoga , Tai Chi, fitness courses etc. for adults in the evenings.

A gymnasium can also serve as a place for public meetings and performances, all of which contributes to a sense of community identity and fosters a feeling of neighborhood and belonging which is much needed in this densely populated area, which is about to become even more densely populated.

As someone who has managed a thriving community centre with from 300-500 participants per day, I can attest to the short-term and long-term individual and societal benefits which a gymnasium brings. This is especially true for the Nordic type environment that we live in, where it is very difficult to do many physical or sporting activities for seven months of the year!!

Public gymnasiums are seldom used by elite athletes, they are by far and away extensively utilized by children, and adults of a variety of ages to indulge in an assortment of sporting and physical activities which promotes short and long term health benefits for ALL participants. There are no other indoor organized physical activities for children, adults and seniors except those offered in gyms and dance/yoga studios, which are oftentimes lodged in community centres which also have gyms.

The true sense of working together to achieve a common collective objective is genuinely developed and fostered through participation in sport. More than almost any activity, sports gives a person a deeper insight into themselves and how they can contribute their individual physical and social abilities to achieving collective success, in the context of a meritocracy. These insights derived from all levels of participation in sports, not only at a high level, are a contributing factor to forming many successful men and women leaders in our society.

With one of the densest populations in all of Canada, the downtown Montréal area is in dire need of a public community centre to serve its multitude of social, physical, artistic and recreational needs – which also contains a gymnasium to encourage physical fitness and serve as a place where public meetings and artistic performances can be given.

The new Children's Hospital project will generate millions of dollars in tax revenue for the Ville de Montréal, which has financially supported and encouraged the construction, upkeep, and administration of other community centres throughout the island of Montréal. And the Ville Marie Borough is one of the richest, if not the richest borough in Montreal.

Billions of dollars is spent each year on health care and health care facilities, care for the infirmed and elderly, and services for people to integrate into society.

The new Children's Hospital project will give a chance to put a relatively small amount of much needed funds into constructing and maintaining a community centre with a gymnasium, which will serve as a positive preventative measure, so that downtown residents can maintain a healthy, physically, mentally, socially, and artistic life.