

Office de consultation publique de Montréal (OCPM)

Parc-Nature dans la cour Turcot

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On behalf of the Montreal Waterways Project

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The Montreal Waterways Project is a research group based at the Concordia Ethnography Lab that studies the changing relationship that Montrealers have to waterways. We've been following the plans that have circulated so far for the Turcot Nature Park, and participating in some of the OCPM-events, and we are very impressed so far with what we see. We have two related suggestions to make that we think would help to amplify the benefits of this timely project. The first is to think more broadly about the potential connectivity with other green spaces, and the second is to think increase the ambition of the water and drainage aspect of the park by daylighting a portion of the St-Pierre River.

1) Connectivity to other green spaces

We've been in conversation with the Friends of Meadowbrook, and Amis de la Falaise St-Jacques, and fully support the briefs that they are submitting. In particular, we hope that the Turcot project does not lose track of the Falaise itself. Even though we understand that it doesn't fall entirely within the Park's mandate, the Park will be a failure if the promises to clean up the Falaise and protect the entirety of the ecoterritory do not materialize.

The same is true of Meadowbrook. We understand that various infrastructures – the 20, several rail lines, and the falaise itself – make it hard to connect the Falaise and Park to Meadowbrook in Montreal West. But we urge the city to continue to think of these things as part of an overall strategy to improve greenspace and biodiversity in the west end. The eventual conversion of Meadowbrook golf course into a park will be a major boon especially to migrating birds.

2) Planning an eventual daylighting of the St-Pierre River

We were originally attracted to this project because of the water feature in the Parc-Nature, and we were pleased to see during consultation sessions and ateliers that this was one of the aspects of the project that attracted the most attention from participants. However, we see an opportunity in this park that isn't entirely being taken advantage of.

As we know, the Parc-Nature site used to be traversed by the St-Pierre river, widening to the size of a lake known alternately as Lac à l'outré and Lac St-Pierre. Between the building of the Canal in the 1820s, and the construction of the St-Pierre sewage collector, the lake dried up and the water flow was piped underground, where it currently continues to run under Notre Dame street along with sewage from the west end of the island and up the hill in Montreal West and Cote St. Luc.

Like many cities with old drainage systems confronting the potential for climate-change-related flooding, Montreal will, in the next few years, have to seriously rethink the way it manages wastewater, potentially bringing much more of it to the surface, or “daylighting” old rivers. Daylighting creates beautiful landscapes, but it also eases pressure on wastewater treatment and is the best way of mitigating pluvial flooding that is likely to increase in the coming years and decades. The water treatment plant is already overrun, and the city is looking for ways to decrease the amount of storm water making its way into the collector and interceptor system.

The lake slated for the Parc-Nature is a small-scale example of this, taking run-off from the site and letting it evaporate and infiltrate rather than go to the sewer. But an eventual daylighting of portions of the St-Pierre could vastly increase the potential of the park to serve this function, bringing back the flexible flood-mitigation system that this area once provided.

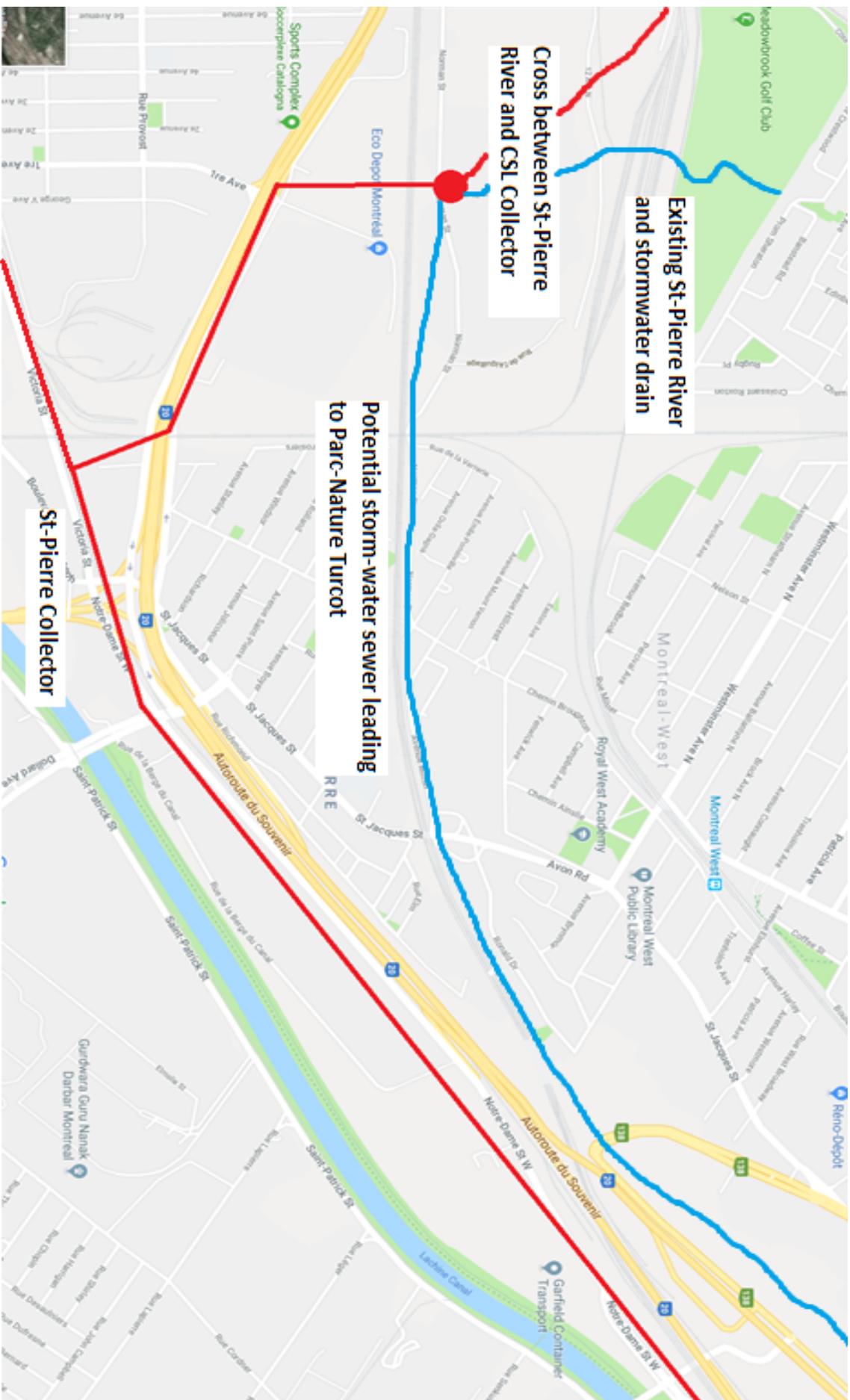
We understand that not all of this could fall into the mandate of the Parc-Nature Turcot, but if the park is designed appropriately, it could eventually be part of the larger process of recovering the hydraulic features of the landscape here. Here is what would be needed.

A) Separating the Cote Saint Luc Collector (CSLC) into two pipes

Currently, the St-Pierre river is still running above ground in Meadowbrook golf course. This is only possible because the collector system in that part of the city was built in the 1950s according to modern standards that keep the storm water and the sewage water separate. However, shortly after the golf course, the water flows directly into the Cote St Luc Collector, mixing storm water and sewage water together. Any daylighting downstream from this point would require an extra pipe to be built to keep these two flows separate. Since the cross connection happens around Norman Street, it would be possible to send the storm water through a completely separate pipe down Norman toward the Parc-Nature Turcot (see Map below). The new line would only be about 1km long, and the potential benefit to the city is enormous.

B) The Parc-Nature lake and river would need to be larger to accommodate more water

The lake feature in the Parc-Nature could now be much larger, including a stream that went from one end to the other, eventually going back into a storm drain at the east end of the park. A large feature like this would eliminate some of the need for new retention basins and for the occasional release of sewage overflows into the Canal and the Fleuve.



Map of current and potential track of the St-Pierre River