

On the new Turcot Nature Park

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About myself

I am a retired senior, almost 70 years old. I grew up and have lived in NDG all but 10 years of my life. I now live just south of Monkland village area. And about 1 km from the new park!

I am compelled to get outside and be physically active, preferably in green surroundings not too far away. I will usually walk up to 3 or 4 km instead of taking public transit. I go for a fast walk up the 250 or so stairs to Summit Park in Westmount once or twice a month to burn off excess energy. I do Nordic walking (walking with poles) twice a week for 1.5 hours with friends on Mount Royal; in the summer I cycle to and from the mountain for these sessions. I cross-country ski.

I am a bit of an environmentalist and nature lover. I am a member of Birds Protection Quebec, Sauvons La Falaise, and Les Amis de Meadowbrook.

I am a believer in active transport (walking and cycling), and in public transport. I do own a car, but I use it as infrequently as possible.

I think you can see where this brief is heading.

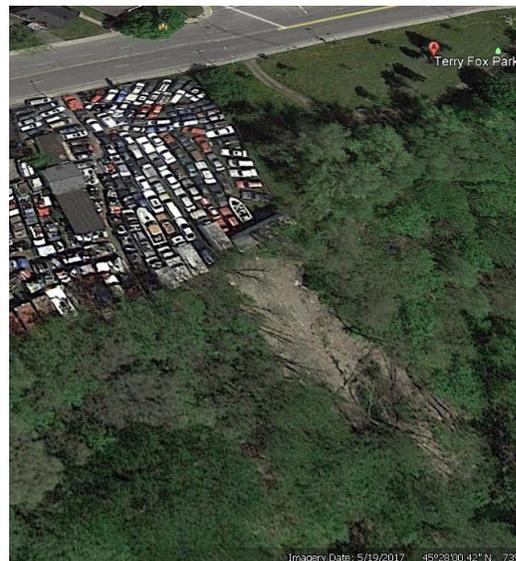
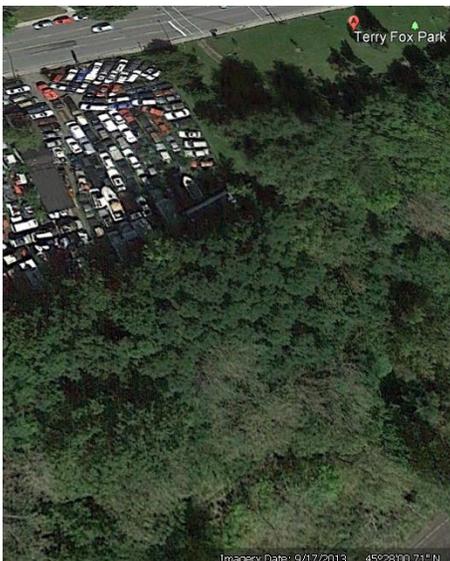
My experiences with the Turcot Nature Park area

- Adventure walk, about 1961. As I said, I grew up in NDG, near Grand Blvd. and Somerled. When I was about 12, a friend and I set out on an adventure walk heading south. Our goal was to see if we could get to the river and back in one afternoon. We eventually found ourselves at the top of the falaise, somewhere around Girourd. So we clambered down the side. I seem to remember it more of a very steep hill leading down to the rail yards below, with no or very few trees on it. We were yelled at by someone working in the train yard, and we found our way to a road heading south on the east side of the area.
- Landslide, 2017. In February, 2017, I made my second trip to the falaise. I joined a walk of the falaise led by Lisa Mintz of the group Sauvons La Falaise. There had been a huge downpour of rain the day before, and the weather had turned cold during the night. As Lisa explained, there had been a lot of changes to the falaise in the intervening 56 years – including landfill, tree plantings, and a trail along the length. Two of us left the main group to further explore the eastern portion of the trail that runs along the falaise, but we were blocked by the debris from a landslide the day before. The ground had

turned to mud, and all trees and plants had been uprooted.



The problem seemed to come from the used car dealership adjacent to the western edge of Terry Fox park on St. Jacques road, situated atop the landslide area. There was nothing on the property to absorb the water – only hard surfaces of asphalt, ice, and car bodies for the rain to bounce off of. And we could see that there was a collapse of part of the asphalt near the back fence, at the top of the falaise, which formed a funnel shape which must have allowed a lot of water to pour down the cliff the previous day. Google Earth shows the landslide location before (Sept. 2013) and after (May 2017).

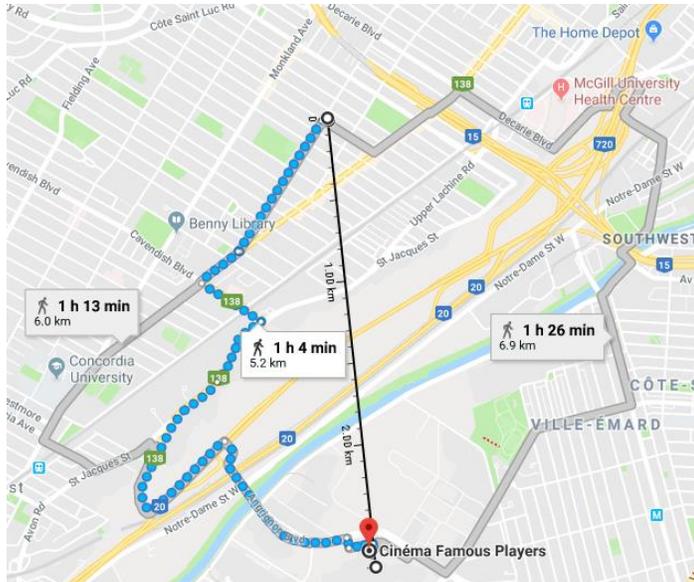


- Falaise cleanups, 2017 and 2018. These are cleanup campaigns organized by the city of Montreal and various local groups, in this case, Sauvons La Falaise, in the spring. The cleanup is done only near the falaise entry point near Cavendish, and only of lighter objects, but that alone keeps the volunteers busy. Unfortunately, these cleanups don't have much impact on the overall cleanliness of the falaise – it is filled with tires, plastic buckets, furniture etc., a lot obviously coming from the businesses at the top edge of the

faulaise. There is too much junk for the amateur volunteers to cope with in a day. And, since this year's cleanup is covering the same ground as last year's cleanup, it is clear that the junk keeps coming.



- Obstacle to LaSalle. On a number of occasions, I have looked online for an item I wanted to buy, and found that it was available in a store only 3 km from my home. I am thinking, I could walk or cycle there. Then I find that it is in LaSalle, where the travelling distance will be double the point-to-point distance, and the walk/cycle will pass through some uncomfortable roads. For example, suppose I wanted to see a film at the Cinema at Angrignon Mall. It is less than 3 km from my house. Here are some walking routes that Google Maps proposes.



All of these routes act as deterrents to travelling to LaSalle. I'm not going to do it. And this applies to most destinations south-east of my home on the other side of highway 20 – I won't go there by foot or bicycle. But the dalle-parc link opens up a lot of possible destinations...

What I will do at Turcot Park

- Brisk exercise – walking, cross-country skiing. Would it be possible to do a circular walk using both Bande Verte and Turcot Park? I am hoping there will be multiple places at which I can go between the Lachine Canal, Turcot Park, Bande Verte, and NDG roads.
- Use it to access LaSalle and other locations in the South-West Borough – shops, Lachine canal, Angrignon Park, waterfront, by foot or bicycle. And from the Lachine canal, I can go east to Atwater market, the old port, etc.
- Look at nature – birds, wildflowers, trees, enjoy the changing of the seasons
- Leisurely walks with friends, family

General thoughts

Dalle-Parc North-South link

I want to emphasize some basic points that I have not seen expressed.

This link will be quite long, at least 350 m, I reckon. It should be more than a park feature; it should be a vital link between NDG and South-West Borough. For people to use it, it must be useful and friendly.

- It is designed for pedestrians and cyclists, young and old, fit and infirm. It must be accessible by wheelchair, and easy enough for toddlers.

- The dalle parc has to connect NDG to the Bande Verte to the Turcot Park, and maybe even to the canal. It has to be tied in to existing bicycle/pedestrian paths, even in NDG, e.g. to the Maisonneuve bike path.
- It must be available in summer and in winter, in most weather conditions. There are many days of the year in which crossing a long, exposed elevated bridge will be uncomfortable – too hot, wet, windy, stormy, snowy. Could we consider some coverage such as trees, roof, or sides (wind breaks). It has to be cleared of snow in winter – or maybe have a heated surface or roof. And with climate change making our weather more extreme, it makes some protection from the elements more important.
- It must be attractive and safe, and feel safe. Kids will not be mowed over by speeding cyclists, or dawdlers by joggers. People will not be afraid to use it when they are alone, or at night. Attractive design invites users to come out for a walk or a bike ride. The section over the highways and train tracks has to reduce the sound of the traffic underneath, and have some other visual points of interest besides the roadway – maybe an extra wide pathway with planters/art etc would help. Should it have lighting and emergency call boxes?

Falaise St-Jacques

I understand that, at this time, the falaise is not being considered for inclusion in the park. This is a shame. Including the falaise in the park would surely improve its situation, and help reduce the amount of abuse it now suffers.

Conclusion

I'm excited about this project. I'm looking forward to seeing it develop into something wonderful for me, and all of Montreal, to enjoy. I've been waiting for it all my life – without knowing it! Bravo Montreal. And thanks.