

Memoire

Consultation Publique - Projet Autoroute Bonaventure

Présenté

À

l'Office de consultation publique de Montréal

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INTRODUCTION

I am a local artist with a studio on Ann Street between Ottawa and Wellington Streets in Griffintown as well as an owner of property which includes the New City Gas Complex located at Ottawa and Dalhousie Streets. We have been in Griffintown since 1963 and owned the New City Gas building for 25 years. We have every hope that the property will one day be re-purposed with the care and creativity its uniqueness warrants.

I spend much of my daily life in the Griffintown area. I appreciate the aesthetic of old neighbourhoods, and the potential for re-vitalization, re-purposing and the creativity that such actions can have on community vitality and the city at large.

There is a moral and fiduciary accountability incumbent on public, para-public bodies and institutions that intervene on behalf of the citizenry. Re-development is an opportunity for betterment. It is an opportunity to protect our history, and direct our future. Development should be guided by common sense, doing the best possible while not causing irrevocable damage. That which we do today will impact tomorrow. Let us do as little harm as possible.

I am not an urban planner, architect, nor property developer. My background is social policy and community service management.

I will leave the areas of expertise to be commented on by the experts.

I will not be presenting my brief publicly; still I hope that the commissioners will give it full consideration.

REFLECTIONS ON THE PROJECT

The first phase of the public consultation hearings held between Nov. 24 and December 3 were very informative however, many questions remained to be asked, many were never heard and the answers in many instances were shockingly lacking in substance or clarity given the scope and importance of this project on the entire city. Often this lack made it clear that there are fundamental problems with the concept. It is a difficult but important process. Moving forward I do believe the commissioners face a challenging task. In this project, contradictions abound.

In the proposed design great effort was made to accommodate two guiding principles:

- Create a project where land can be sold off to developers to generate needed funding
- To accomplish this, find a pathway to accommodate south shore commuter buses and ensure the bus routes not interfere with the saleability of the land
- Promote notions such as 'quartier', 'vivable', 'viable', 'convivial', 'durable', 'dimension humain'

Montreal faces a complexity of issues that must be addressed coherently. Fortunately there is little opposition, if any, to the removal of the Bonaventure.

THE ENTRANCEWAY TO THE CITY

A prestigious entryway to the city should harmonize with the fabric of the city and should have a "wow!" factor. On entering the city we have before us a grand view. The entry way should draw on the sense of prestige that we feel as we look up the hill. Similarly, the view down the hill should allow us to take in the largest vista possible, one that allows us to see as much as possible of the canal and the river areas.

The entire southern section of the downtown core to the south of Notre-Dame Street is part of this entranceway including Old Montreal, the Old Port, the Cite Multi Media, the Faubourg Recollet, along the Lachine canal to the Peel Basin through the heart of Griffintown and westward.

Urban planning authorities in major urban centres endeavour to showcase culture and heritage and promote the recycling of old industrial buildings as the centre-pieces of development and revitalization, places for cultural and community activity, a preservation of heritage. These centre-pieces trigger redevelopment and reinvestment in the surrounding areas creating economic vitality and enriching the city at large. Ultimately the recycling and revitalization of old industrial / port areas contributes to improving quality of life for the city at large, drawing residents back to the city core. They also serve artistic and cultural endeavours, become destination neighbourhoods, drawing local citizenry as well as tourism.

Hence they are healthy. We can look to cities in Europe, France, Germany, Britain, the Distillery District in Toronto, The old City in Quebec. In recent decades a lot has been accomplished to bring the area east of the Bonaventure and along the canal back to vibrant areas that Montrealers are proud of. For over 20 years run down areas of the city have been transforming into flourishing jewels of the city.

Moving forward, this should continue without obstruction and should be a de facto priority of urban planning projects particularly in historic neighbourhoods wherever possible. New buildings in this area should not obstruct the vista. Building heights should integrate with the surrounding area Harmony between old and new is essential.

It is my understanding that decisions regarding how the Bonaventure at the south side of the canal will join the north side of the canal have yet to be taken. I pose this question because if we don't know how these two segments of the Bonaventure will connect then we are missing information that could guide how we design the entry to the city and integrate the neighbourhoods running to the east and west. Will there continue to be roadway over the Peel basin? Is it possible this segment will be removed and replaced by smaller bridges to the east or west of the Peel basin or perhaps a tunnel under the canal? Each of the latter options could change the gateway to the city.

FINANCING ISSUES

One of the most shocking revelations came out on the 3rd night of the Public Consultation hearings. The removal of the Bonaventure and building of infrastructure is to be financed in large part, by the sale to real-estate developers of municipal owned land under the present expressway.

At present, real-estate market forces indicate that there is no market for the proposed type of real-estate development for the next 20-30 years. Therefore tax payer dollars will pay for the removal of the Bonaventure and the construction of the infrastructure in its entirety. The promoters hope to recoup some of the cost possibly decades down the road.... if ever. There is no guarantee that the funding proposed by the sale of land will ever be realized, nor that the 'l'lot' of the Quartier Bonaventure will ever be built. (Etude Langlais) (partie 3 L3580-3675

Are we about to sanction demolishing the Bonaventure and building a bus corridor incurring greater public debt than necessary all so that we can create a vacant space for the next few decades? Are we going to create a "wrong side of the track" and destroy hope for creative development and harmony in Griffintown for something that is not yet viable?

The promoters do not appear to be overly concerned with the budget required to build the Dalhousie Bus Corridor either. The bus corridor is to be funded through the AMT and financed by the Ministry of Transport and as such would not come from the City of Montreal budget. Perhaps the costs are not an issue for the SHM. **One way or another, the funding comes from taxpayer dollars. There is great concern over the waste of public funds. The citizens expect accountability not shell games. Gratuitous spending is not an option.**

KEEPING PACE WITH A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

The promoter has not kept pace with the changing environment. The SHM project was conceived while Devimco was working on the Griffintown project (note the images and maquettes on display). The Devimco project has since fallen apart, construction of South shore metro stations, SLR's, the AMT inter-modal terminus on Peel Street, the réaménagement of the Champlain Bridge have all been announced. Still the SHM plan has not changed in light of these developments.

Les Montrealais are facing a time of great transition in road-works, public transportation, and the emergence of better technologies in the art of moving people.

Is it possible that by the time the SHM Quartier Bonaventure is ready to be developed, the bus corridor will already be obsolete replaced by light-rail, tramways, and south shore metro services thereby eliminating the need for bus transportation into the city to a significant extent?. Is it possible that pollution from automobiles will be dramatically less in 10 or 20 years from now given the rush to produce hybrid and electric automobiles?

REFLECTIONS ON THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

In its' presentation, the SHM highlights adherence to the 'politique' of the 'Ville de Montreal Chartre de la famille', 'qualité de vie', 'processus de consultation', 'projet durable' and so on. Un Quartier viable et vivable, Un artère à dimension humaine. And yet, the promoters failed to integrate the Quartier Bonaventure with the surrounding area.

The principles of consultation and sustainable development must take on a true sense and not be an empty gesture for promotional purposes. One thing is clear they did not consult with the residents, businesses, or property owners of Griffintown .

It is surprising and sad that the promoters missed an opportunity to engage in a true consultation process. It would have saved time, money and created a better project. Fortunately a stronger Griffintown has emerged as a result. Meetings of neighbours have been

held every week for almost a year. Together, les Griffinois oppose the destruction of the fabric of the neighbourhood.

The promoters failed to do their homework. They failed to address the impact of an imaginary development project (the Quartier Bonaventure and the Dalhousie Bus Corridor) on real people. The residents of Griffintown should not be obliged to defend themselves against an interlocutor.

One would expect the consultation process to include an objective evaluation of the merits and deficits in its largest most inclusive form. This project should adhere to the highest standards of urban planning practice. What is desirable for one neighbourhood should not be to the detriment of another.

M. Rainville admitted that few, if any Impact studies conducted included Griffintown or were specific to Griffintown. One must ask why not? Could it be that the results would not serve the promoters, agenda?

A project of this size, scope and cost must be subject to unbiased scrutiny. The potential for collateral damage should have been evaluated and minimized. There should be no double-standards. Ideals of “vivable”, “convivial”, “viable”, et “durable” upheld for the not yet existent Quartier Bonaventure must be upheld for the Griffintown area where real people already live work and pass leisure time. The knowledge base to indicate that this is a “healthy” project is simply not there. Had the necessary work been done, the choices and recommendations made by the promoter would hopefully have been different.

Yes, Griffintown is in a state of change, but that change must not be thwarted due to oversight and less than ideal planning.

THE DALHOUSIE BUS CORRIDOR

One cannot speak about the Dalhousie Bus Corridor without acknowledging 3 important issues, emerging transportation modalities, the impact on The Lowney projects and the New City Gas Works.

As mentioned earlier, many new projects to improve public transportation for South shore commuters are in the works. Transportation planning should not take place piecemeal or in a vacuum. **Would the money designated to be spent on the temporary bus corridor be better allocated to other projects sooner with longer lasting results?**

What is the true cost of boring a tunnel in the elevated rail, and expropriating land and buildings that would be demolished to make way for the bus corridor? Could temporary non-invasive solutions be used in the interim?

Can we ask that new alternatives to the Dalhousie corridor be investigated by the AMT and its appropriate partners given that it is their mandate? **Do we really need the Dalhousie bus corridor? Will it be obsolete by the time it is built or shortly after?** If it is temporary and precarious, how can we justify spending 120 million dollars and more and putting the New City Gas Complex at risk? **Can we not find a far less expensive temporary solution that will allow us to put money into other emerging transportation modalities in the interim allowing us as a society to get started on those sooner, if the money can be made available?**

Common sense has the people of Griffintown concerned. **It is no secret that there is opposition to the bus corridor. A project that is detrimental to quality of life, health and safety is not acceptable. Neither is a project that negatively compromises heritage properties and the fabric of the area. Exhaustive urban planning studies are needed.**

NEW CITY GAS

I am one of the owners of the New City Gas so I will admit to a particular bias. A priori, we were not consulted.

The owners of the New City Gas have never seen any plans or images of what the SHM intends for the tunnel or for our buildings.

While artist renderings and simulation were shown during the public consultations, there was nothing on what Dalhousie to the south of Ottawa street would look like. There was no explanation of how the bus corridor would pass the 37 feet between the elevated rail and the New City Gas buildings, and perhaps more importantly what the New City Gas buildings would look after the interventions to create the tunnel

The images we did see marketing the arcade beneath the railway were very nice, but somehow unrealistic, featured wide open spaces and very few buses.

Rumour has it that a series of concrete reinforced columns will be required as supports for the elevated rail along the entire length of the building on the Dalhousie side, but these were not shown as part of the presentation.

It is very difficult to be supportive of a proposal that has little information but that poses a great deal of risk to something that warrants care and protection. Are we reacting to something

that has not been thought through? Is there a reason that there is so much missing information? Is it being kept somewhat secret for a reason? It is very difficult to be specific about concerns when we do not know what we need to be concerned about.

At the public question period, a series of related questions were put forward to which there were rather vague responses. M. Rainville indicated that they were not so far in the project. ***Il y a encore beaucoup a faire pour decider exactement comment sera realise le passage sous les voies ferrees*** (2145) (consultation publique premiere partie Vol. 4- 2130 -2225)

If in fact, exhaustive studies have not been conducted on the building of the tunnel and the New City Gas buildings how do they know that the Dalhousie corridor is the best solution?

Here are some of the concerns expressed. I assure you there are more.

Can M. Rainville' explain how the bus corridor is to be designed or constructed in relation to the NCG in clear terms? What is the strategy for carving out the bus corridor? How long will it take to build?

Will the bridge and the buildings become structurally dependent on each other? What precautions are required to preserve the NCG while the train tunnel is being built and the train continues to operate without interruption? Will our own business be disrupted? Can you show us what the tunnel / rail-bridge and NCG will look like? Will there be sidewalks? Will it be wide enough? Can we be sure that the New City Gas can tolerate the construction of the corridor both short and long term?

We can only see one of the NCG buildings from Dalhousie and Ottawa. What about the parts of the complex on the rest of the block? What will we see from the south side? How will this impact the building at 141 Ann Street

Who will be responsible during and after? Will the buildings be able to tolerate the construction project? If it goes ahead how long will it take to build? Who will pay for damages that arise during or after construction, or 2 years, 5 years 10 years down the road, if, the vibrations or pollution start causing all sorts of problems to the integrity of the buildings? Will the City, the Ministère de transport, the AMT, the SHM commit to paying for deteriorations to the NCG buildings long-term? or will they simply go away and leave us the problem?

The best M. Rainville could say was "vous allez devoir prendre des precautions lors de la construction afin de proteger le batiment. (2155) What is that supposed to mean? As the transcript shows, M. Rainville said they would work closely with us. Unfortunately the lack of consultation has caused me to have my doubts on that.

A study conducted by SNC Lavalin released Nov 2009 identifies the precariousness of constructing a tunnel adjacent to the New City Gas building and indicates increased cost as a result. The AMT estimate was \$119 million but was not all-inclusive. How much will the tunnel cost? How much are the 90,000 square feet of expropriations going to cost and how much is the rest of the demolition and construction going to cost? Is the police station to be moved because of the Dalhousie corridor and at what cost? And why is the SHM recommending we spend so much taxpayer money on a temporary solution when the same money could go to a long term solution

PRIMARY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **In the absence of due diligence, and given the enormous potential for collateral damage to Griffintown, this project should not be permitted to go forward as is.**
- **Eliminate the Dalhousie bus corridor. If we won't need it, we should not build it.**
- **The AMT and its partners are responsible for elaborating a comprehensive regional transportation plan. As the SHM has not exercised unbiased due diligence, in its analysis of off island transportation routing, and as it is not its area of expertise it should have no further role in this mandate**

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

- To the extent possible, expansive views should be maximized. The redevelopment of the area calls for a harmoniousness of scale and continuity. The height of buildings should be restricted to fit in to the landscape, making the area warm and welcoming for people at the ground level. We should not have high towers at this level of the city. Buildings should not be built right to the edge of the sidewalks unless the sidewalks are of an enlarged width.
- If the Bonaventure entry into the City of Montreal is to be a majestic entry into the city then care should be taken to create public spaces that can provide open vistas linking the city to the south side of the canal. In this instance, smaller bridges accommodating to human scale such as the Mill street and Wellington Street bridges might be effective, diminish traffic, accommodate cyclists, pedestrians, and other forms of light transportation.
- Decisions regarding the connection between the south side of the canal and the north side of the canal need to be taken before this project moves ahead. If we don't know how these two segments of the roadway into the city are going to connect we are missing information that guides planning and restricts options.
- A parkway type approach that could link with the south side of the canal would integrate well with an eventual routing that could extend as far as the Champlain bridge entrance. Grand parkways have worked very effectively in other cities providing for traffic flow at a comfortable pace with beautiful surroundings and the possibility of integrating foot and bicycle paths as well. They have been extremely effective in Gatineau and Ottawa, (i.e. Gatineau parkway, Colonel By Drive, Riverside parkway, Island Park Drive Urban planning authorities must ensure enhancement of historical neighbourhoods

- If temporary solutions are needed, look to the most cost effective and least invasive way of addressing the issue
- Examine alternative bus routes: Use the Duke / Nazareth Bonaventure corridor in the interim with a view to eliminating a dedicated bus corridor altogether Examine dividing the buses into several routes; use the Bonaventure corridor to arrive at the present AMT terminal, use Peel street to route traffic to the Peel Station inter-modal. Direct some of the buses to other metro stations. Wait to see what we really need.
- Examine a tunnel underneath the future streets of the Quartier Bonaventure (Duke/ Nazareth) creating a bypass that does not disturb Griffintown or the future Quartier Bonaventure at all. This would certainly improve the east /west street level liveability



Thank you for reading this submission