

My name is Chantal Thomas, and I am the Community Liaison Agent for the network of community organizations : Familles Centre-Ville, located in the Peter McGill district of Ville-Marie. I work with families with children 0-5 years-old by doing outreach, service referrals, and activity promotion. I also facilitate a parent group every Tuesday morning at the YWCA Montréal.

With the advent of the nice weather, the parents in my group requested that we go outside more, and so on Tuesday, May 10, we went to Hector-Toe-Blake park. There, we found three daycares, in addition to other families, trying to use the playground equipment. With the six families that I brought, I estimate that there were over 20 children under the age of 5 in the small enclosure. I am grateful that all of the adults present were respectful of one-another, otherwise it would have been impossible for the children to play while staying safe. The children we brought were all nervous about being in a large group, and were visibly more at ease once the daycares left. The parents, too, had to be very vigilant, and could not just relax and have fun with their kids. A larger space would reduce the crowding, and allow families to feel more comfortable.

While Percy-Walters Park and the Rutherford Reservoir are somewhat close to families living near McGill University, their location at the top of a steep incline make them nearly impossible to access for someone with stroller, or carrying a toddler. This leaves Julia-Drummond Park, which is not near the majority of families living in Peter McGill, and at the bottom of a steep incline that parents then need to climb back up to go home, or Hector-Toe-Blake Park, which, as detailed, is too small. There are no other playgrounds in the district, or open green spaces with infrastructure appropriate for children to run around in – something that is necessary for their healthy development. The contemplative park proposed by Prével for the Franciscan site is not suited to the children's needs.

I see about 100 families a month with children 0-5 years-old, and I know that there are many more I do not see. My experience a few weeks ago at Hector-Toe-Blake Park confirms that there is clearly a need for another playground and more green space for children 0-5 years-old. They should not have to be subjected to overcrowding when trying to be outside. The Franciscan site would be better used to provide more green space and a playground for the families of Peter McGill, rather than another condo building.