

“Lachine East” Project

To give you a little background, I have degrees in Marine Biology and Mechanical Engineering and enough courses for minors in physics, chemistry and geography. I worked for a number of years for Environment Canada, and Fisheries and Oceans, in Newfoundland in the area of pollution control, monitoring industry, sampling water, and doing bioassays. Later I worked out of the Arctic Biology Station in St. Anne de Bellevue (still for Environment Canada), doing whale research off Baffin Island and in the Gulf of the St. Lawrence. Later I switched to Engineering, so have a fairly science-oriented background.

I think our society is using a framework of development that is untenable, a framework of unlimited growth.

Unlimited growth, “sustainable growth”, continuous growth is a practical, biological, chemical, and physical impossibility. Growth is a temporary part of a greater curve. Somewhere, sometime things have to stop growing. This truth is the unrecognized elephant in the room of our society. Growth has to stop at some point.

However, we may have a choice about that point to our benefit, rather than let “nature” determine it.

What kind of a world do we want to live in?

I think that, somewhat like one encourages different wildlife by fostering different habitats, with projects like this we are encouraging an overcrowded world. Yes, this project is very small in terms of the world but its effect on our neighbourhood will be very large. It is a microcosm of all our choices.

I don't want a city crowded with high rise condos everywhere. I don't want another Vancouver, impossibly expensive to live in, a place for speculative investment, driving current dwellers out.

I don't want a Toronto, filled with high rises rising like mushrooms (a place for numbered companies, possibly some of which own property to launder money).

I don't want a city where the financial interests of the few are going to burden the many.

I don't want a city with impossible traffic, higher taxes, higher rents, a city which has lost its industrial past, a city forced to undergo a complete change of the neighbourhood, a city that has lost its manufacturing way of making a living. Look at Griffintown as an example of what not to do, low rise local communities gone, people forced out for economic reasons, poor planning for the impact of the new multitudes, gentrification.

I am even worried that perhaps this development will be built on toxic ground like Love Canal. (We will be assured by the "decontaminators" that it is clean, but given what has already happened with this project, this is little comfort. Current structures have no provision for checking whether ground is truly decontaminated).

We are told this is a TOD (so as to "reduce" the reliance on cars), when in fact there is NO way of moving people with current public transit in the order of how many will live here. The du Canal Station is temporary, and even if it weren't, NO more trains are possible because CP owns the line and wants to concentrate on freight because it is more profitable. I take the current train some of the time - it is crowded already, in bad weather unreliable, and only runs at times good for conventional office hours.

People will take their cars.

Even when real TODs exist, according to the PMAD the car reduction of a TOD is between 10 and 30 % of the number of cars owned by the dwellers vs when there is no public transit available. How many more cars will there be here from this development? (say 5000 x 1.25 parking spaces per residence = 6250 cars?) Imagine all those cars on the road trying to get onto the 20, trying to get out of the enclave here, fenced off by the river, the canal, the highways, and the railway. Traffic, as you know is already a problem.

We will have more air pollution, dust noise...problems parking...all this and even worse during the construction phase. During that time, even the safety of current residents may be compromised from more truck traffic.

The infrastructure to support these projects is another burden...especially if there are watertable problems, and possible cross contamination of sewers and storm drains, as I believe is the current case. The construction of this infrastructure will impose a considerable load on the current residents with no benefits to them.

It would be nice to have tertiary industry here, to support people.

I would be nice to have community space, gardens assuming we can clean up the soil. It would be nice to have a density more in keeping with the current borough densities, no matter what an arbitrary density plan says (a density plan unsupported by the facts on the ground.)

It would be ideal to have a more natural world, regenerating plant growth, opened waterways, a marsh, access to the water and not be a canal wall above it, to have the organisms that are native here in resurgence. It would be ideal to have a place where people can be in contact with nature in the city.

While there are many reasons to examine this project with a sceptical eye, as you have seen, this project also affects me personally. I live "next door" to this project, in LaSalle, close enough to likely see the looming towers. As both boroughs share the same river, roads, canal, and basic geography, both share the same restrictions, bottlenecks in traffic. I have relatives and activities in the West Island and beyond. As public transit to get there is unworkable, I have to take my car. Last summer there were three occasions when, after moving only a block in twenty minutes I gave up on going. I try and use my bike to get to work downtown as much as possible (partially because of poor public transit), but when I **have** to take the train I often have to stand all the way as no seats are available. This is without all the added population of this project.

I also believe that once towers appear here there will be a spread of them all around as they push current resident out, high taxes, prices, rents.

For all these reasons, I would like to see this project changed to one more in keeping with the local scale of structure.

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