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L'Office de consultation publique de Montréal

Cours Mont-Royal
1550, rue Metcalfe – Bureau 1414
Montréal (Québec)
H3A 1X6

**Re : Modifications au Plan d'urbanisme visant les hauteurs et les densités
permises sur l'Îlot Sainte-Catherine Ouest et dans le secteur avoisinant**

We, Amcor Holdings Inc. ("Amcors" or "9170-1649 Québec Inc."), are the owner of the properties located between 1915-1933 Ste-Catherine Street West, at the NE corner of Towers.

We are stunned by the City's seemingly arbitrary decision to lower the density of our property, without ever consulting with us. It appears that this is merely an underhanded manoeuvre in exchange for the increased density for Mr. Sergakis' project, to sell the project to the public by saying that the City will offset the impact by reducing the density elsewhere. This is an odious and reprehensible approach to urban planning and unfairly penalizes many individuals and property owners. It is very strange that the City did not make any effort to advise us about the current process, as it directly strips us of the rights we possess on our property. In fact, we were only informed of any public hearings one week ago, after talking to one of our neighbors. The City was less than transparent and forthcoming about this process.

Context: Our property, as well as many others along Ste-Catherine, needs an incentive to improve the built form and renovate. The reduction of our development potential will have the opposite effect and many properties in need of repair and requalification will deteriorate.

1915-1933 Ste-Catherine ouest



One of the most important defining characteristics of Montreal’s Urban Master Plan, adopted in 2004, was the residential densification of the downtown core as a critical strategy in containing urban sprawl. Benefitting from existing infrastructure and availability of public transit, it is important to offer a diversity of quality residential opportunities for people to live in the central area. This reduces the pressure for urbanisation to spread outward, which challenges environmental sustainability due to the need for the construction of additional roads and infrastructure.

This objective was inherent in the PPU – “Quartier des grands jardins” adopted for the sector in 2011. Here are some of the highlights:

- En proposant la densification d’une partie de l’artère et la construction de logements aux étages supérieurs, et en annonçant une série d’interventions pour revitaliser la rue Sainte-Catherine Ouest, le PPU appuie la relance immobilière de cet axe stratégique.
- Augmenter le nombre de propriétaires résidents en privilégiant une densification résidentielle des sites à redévelopper
- Soutenir le développement d’une offre diversifiée de logements afin de répondre aux besoins des jeunes familles, des étudiants, des personnes âgées et des clientèles marginalisées
- Des actions concrètes pour stimuler le dynamisme commercial de l’artère ainsi que l’accroissement de la population résidente au centre-ville.
- Le maintien d’une population résidente stable dans le quartier représente donc un enjeu important.

We question the logic in now lowering the allowable heights along Ste-Catherine from 25m to 16m and density from 6 to 3 other than our political suspicions, mentioned above. In fact, we believe that an increase to 45m along the Ste-Catherine corridor towards Guy would be fundamentally beneficial to the development and consolidation of the downtown core. The heads of lots on Ste-Catherine are in dire need of improvement and ideally suited to respond to residential densification and

consolidation. In addition to the corner at Towers, these include corner lots on Saint-Marc, Saint-Matthieu and Pierce.

The site on Towers offers the ideal opportunity to crystallize the objectives inherent in the PPU “Quartier des grands jardins” and the Urban Plan. It is our intention to realize a comprehensive mixed-use redevelopment which would greatly improve the site. Maintaining a quality commercial frontage on the lower floors at the scale of the pedestrian, the project would set back to accommodate residential levels above. The existing buildings on the site are well over 100 years old and in less than desirable condition. The ability to benefit from an additional height up to 45m would be a major impetus in driving a project forward.

Patrimonial character: In the City’s presentation, a photo of our building is included in a section called a patrimonial ensemble of interest. Our buildings were initially built in 1885 and were renovated about 50 years later. Although from a distance, the buildings may appear to possess a charming Victorian character or a European style, a view from much closer illustrates that the architecture is not really Victorian at all but with replica Victorian details applied to the façade, with materials such as corrugated metal and stucco (See figures 1 and 2 below).

Figure 1 – Extract from the City’s presentation

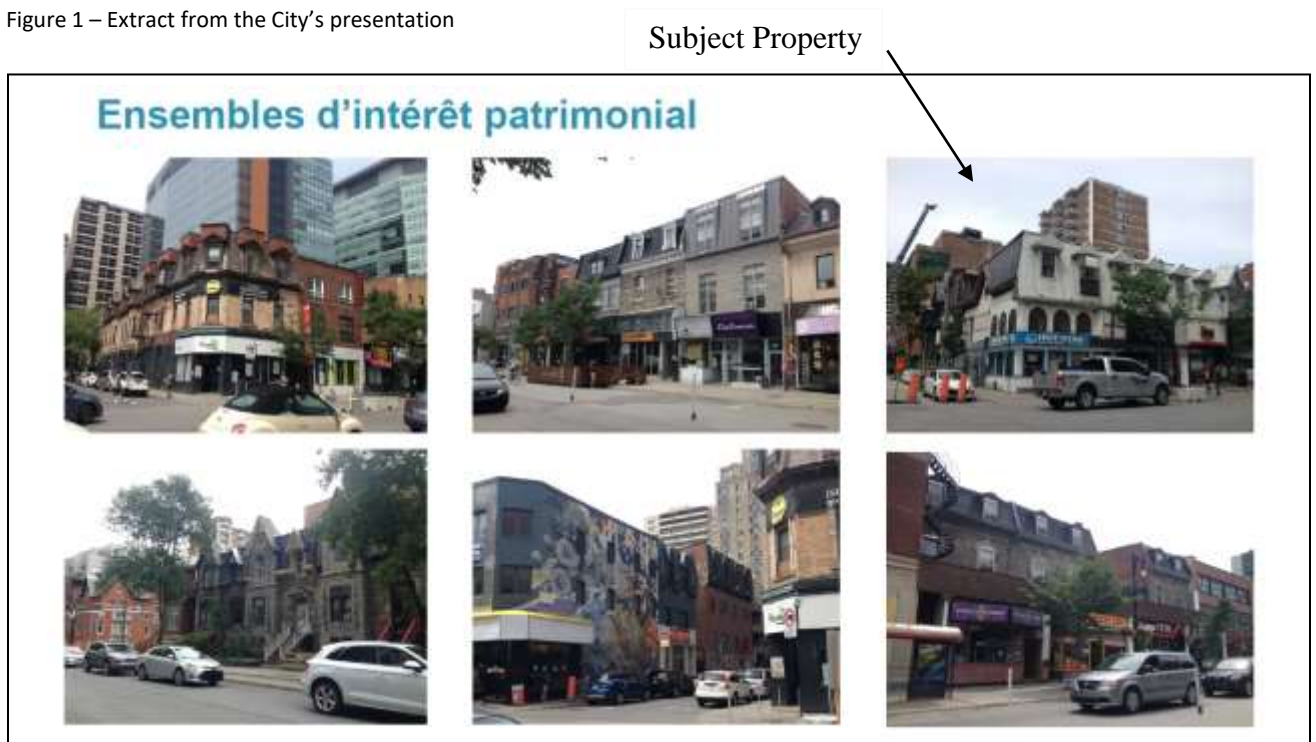


Figure 2 – The property at Ste-Catherine and Towers



The structural integrity of the existing buildings at the corner of Towers is in bad condition. Furthermore, most of the quality Victorian architecture in the sector is further up or down the streets running perpendicular to Ste-Catherine, such as Saint-Marc, Saint-Matthieu or Pierce. There are several beautiful Victorian row houses that are also prevalent west of the site. The heads of lots that front on Ste-Catherine do not possess the same architectural character. Many of these street corners represent an ideal opportunity for densification and the consolidation and improvement of the built form. The properties east of Towers should be included in a densification initiative that would greatly improve the corners and this sector of Ste-Catherine.

Height and scale: The City's proposition to suddenly reduce height and density along Ste-Catherine, east of St-Marc, seems arbitrary. Immediately to the east, at the corner of Saint-Marc and Sainte-Catherine, is already an existing 14 storey high-rise residential building (see figure 3 below). The prominence of the looming buildings of the Concordia campus at Guy also dominate the horizon (see figure 4). As it relates to height and density, the existing eclectic mix of low rise and high-rise buildings to the east and west of Towers does not seem to follow any set urban planning pattern.

One of the major objectives of the PPU – “Quartier des grands jardins” was to encourage current property owners to improve their properties with the possible redevelopment and densification of residential use. By now reducing their potential for redevelopment the City risks having most of the run-down properties between St-Marc and Guy remain in their current state, despite their obvious need to be improved. Incentives for property owners are important in encouraging the private sector to accomplish the City’s own goals and results in a win-win scenario.

Fig 3 – The SW corner of St-Marc / Ste-Catherine



Fig 4 – The corner properties at Pierce / Ste Catherine



Fig 5 – The corner properties at St Marc and Ste-Catherine



Fig 6 – The properties at St-Matthieu and Ste-Catherine



Residential densification in the downtown core is a fundamental urban planning objective in containing urban sprawl. Increasing the allowable density in the urban plan can be an important measure in giving an incentive to property owners to redevelop and improve their properties. This will result in cleaning up and improving the commercial frontage along Ste-Catherine and adding a wide diversity of new housing above the street level, which may also result in a greater availability of affordable housing. This strategy coalesces perfectly within the over-arching objectives of Montreal's Urban Master Plan adopted by City Council in 2004.

The City will still always retain the opportunity through a "Projet Particulier" (PPCMOI) to ensure control of the qualitative aspects of any project and its conformity with objectives that respect for example, the patrimonial character of the neighborhood, sustainable development, urban integration, human scale at ground level, the need for social and affordable housing, etc.

Montreal's Urban Master Plan's principal objectives can be summarized as follows: « de faire de Montréal une ville encore plus conviviale et dynamique en freinant l'étalement

urbain, de consolider le tissu urbain existant et d'encourager le transfert des habitudes des Montréalais vers le transport en commun. Voici trois des pierres angulaires du plan destinées à favoriser l'atteinte de ses objectifs :

- La croissance considérable de l'offre résidentielle sur l'île
- La consolidation et la densification du cadre bâti, principalement vers le centre
- Le développement durable.

« Dans la région métropolitaine, on prévoit, entre 2004 et 2014, une augmentation de 150 000 ménages. Le développement escompté étant modeste, il faudra d'autant plus veiller à ne pas l'étaler et à consolider le tissu urbain existant, en renforçant notamment les liens entre les divers secteurs d'activités urbaines. Dans l'esprit du développement durable, cela contribuera à mieux rentabiliser les infrastructures et à mieux couvrir les coûts afférents d'entretien et de réhabilitation. » ... page 5 (Plan d'urbanisme de Montréal)

Favoriser la construction de 60 000 à 75 000 logements entre 2004 et 2014

« Le défi est de taille puisqu'au cours des dernières décennies, la croissance résidentielle a favorisé le développement des secteurs périphériques de Montréal. La Ville se fixe l'objectif ambitieux, mais réaliste, de soutenir la construction de 60 000 à 75 000 nouveaux logements. Elle accueillera ainsi 40% à 50% de ces 150 000 nouveaux ménages (dans la région métropolitaine), alors que la part des logements mis en chantier sur le territoire de la Ville de Montréal entre 1994 et 2003 a varié de 22% à 34%. **Pour atteindre son objectif, la Ville devra donc consacrer d'importants efforts.** » ... page 25 (Plan d'urbanisme de Montréal)

« Par ailleurs, des défis importants doivent être relevés en matière d'aménagement et de consolidation du territoire. Sur une superficie totale de 500 km², 26 km² sont encore vacants à Montréal. Quelque 11 km² de terrains vacants sont disséminés dans les secteurs établis. Les secteurs à construire, destinés à des fins d'habitation ou de lieux d'emplois, représentent également une superficie de 11 km². **Il s'agit en fait de soutenir la reconstruction de la ville sur elle-même.** » ... page 6 (Plan d'urbanisme de Montréal)

Accroître le dynamisme résidentiel vers le Centre

« Le Centre de Montréal est caractérisé par une importante population résidente qui lui procure une animation bénéficiant aussi de la présence des occupants des hôtels et des résidences étudiantes. Le Centre recèle toujours un important potentiel de développement immobilier, sous la forme de terrains vacants, sous-utilisés ou occupés par des stationnements qui se prêteraient à la construction d'environ 15 000 logements. Il présente l'avantage d'un environnement où les rues, les infrastructures d'égout et d'aqueduc et les réseaux de transport collectif sont déjà en place. **La consolidation de la fonction résidentielle au Centre contribuera ainsi au développement durable de Montréal.** » ... page 79 (Plan d'urbanisme de Montréal)

To allow Montreal's own Urban Master Plan and development vision to flourish, the City must abandon the aspect of this proposition that lowers the height and density along Ste-Catherine, which will severely limit the development potential and necessary beautification and consolidation of this portion of the downtown core.

Cordially,



Jairo Sukster
Per: Amcor Holdings Inc.