



National Association for Olmsted Parks Declaration on Mount Royal

Mount Royal is the treasured common patrimony of Montreal, the one truly iconic and emblematic feature of the city. The dominant conception of how it should be treated and used has been the plan for Mount Royal Park prepared in 1877 by the famous landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted.

Olmsted's concept for the park is one of his most significant achievements. The report that he wrote explaining that concept is among his finest statements of what a scenic park can provide for the residents of a city. He provided a rich description of how the charm of natural scenery, heightened by landscape art, could provide a unique, restorative experience for Montreal citizens for generations to come. He demonstrated how landscape architecture is an art form and described in detail the succession of landscape scenes that were to unfold along the main road of the park.

His concept of creating a series of landscape poems along a winding road that gradually ascends the mountain is still relevant today and should remain as the structuring element and guiding principle for the park and some areas adjacent to it.

Unlike many other large urban parks that Olmsted designed, Mount Royal has been spared major intrusions that are incompatible with their original plan such as expressways, zoos, golf courses, extensive athletic facilities and museums. Still, three transmission towers bestride the mountain heights and a massive parking lot has absorbed an important part of what Olmsted intended to be the largest open space of the park, the Glades. These intrusions should eventually be altered to be more in keeping with Olmsted's original intent.

Most visitors continue to enjoy the park as Olmsted planned for them to do over a century ago. This is due in part to increasing awareness by Montrealers of Olmsted's noticeable contribution to their city. They now perceive that the park is not simply a work of nature, but also a work of art and a valuable heritage to be preserved. The ongoing restoration and rehabilitation work in the park, largely inspired by Olmsted's vision, has recovered significant elements of his vision.

During the past hundred years the City of Montreal has expanded considerably the boundaries of its historic park, an unusual development in a prosperous urban center. The 1992 Plan for the Conservation and Restoration of Mount Royal proposed further enlarging Mount Royal Park and integrating it within a larger park and greenspace system in keeping with Olmsted's open space planning concepts and should be acted on. This commitment for the park and its surroundings was renewed and reinforced at the Summits in spring 2002 and is represented by the Mount Royal Charter.

Mount Royal Park is one of the most significant elements of the Olmsted Heritage in North America today.

The NAOP encourages the city of Montreal, its citizens and Les Amis de la Montagne, with the support of their governments, to continue to value and maintain this Olmsted masterpiece, ensuring its continued use and enjoyment for generations to come.

In keeping with the restoration and rehabilitation work that has been completed over the last decade, we support:

- respecting Olmsted's original design intentions and aesthetic principles when re-landscaping open space parkland and carrying out forestry work.
- seeking to integrate existing structures and constructed features into the Olmsted landscape
- improving public access to the mountain from adjacent areas, both urban and institutional.
- sharing with the public the knowledge acquired through research and hands-on experience as a vital part of developing a deeper understanding of this unique Olmsted legacy.

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