

1500 rue Ottawa – Les bassins du Nouveau Havre

Memorandum submitted to OCPM for Public Consultation on 10 March 2009

We are actually powerfully influenced by our surroundings, our immediate context, and the personalities of those around us....In the end, Tipping Points are a reaffirmation of the potential for change and the power of intelligent action.

— *Malcolm Gladwell, The Tipping Point*

Introduction :

My name is Judith Bauer. Attracted by the unique character, rich history, and superb location I purchased a home and moved to the area in 2004. Since that time I have seen a number of megaprojects proposed and was one of the founders and acted as both chair and secretary for the citizens group, the Committee for the Sustainable Redevelopment of Griffintown (**CSRG**), which formed in reaction to the project proposed by Devimco. I remain a member of CSRG, am a member of the Chambre Immobilière Griffinoise, and am founder of the Griffintown Horse Palace Foundation. I love Montreal and believe there are better ways to redevelop this key area of our city than with megaprojects. The purpose of this memorandum is to introduce a vision for a different approach to redevelopment of the Griffintown area and the entire southwest borough.

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Why :

Only rarely in the history of a city are there moments when it is possible to re-examine its values and redraw its image in a powerful and public way. This is such a moment.

In light of proposed redevelopment plans for Griffintown, the old Canada Post building, the Old Port, and the Bonaventure expressway in the south-central heart of Montreal, we have a unique opportunity to look at what can and should be saved from Montreal's historic past, and for what purposes — how best to use our legacy to shape the character and enhance the future of our city.

What :

I would like to propose the establishment of a "cultural corridor" extending along the east-west axis of this southern section of our city. The aim is to adapt and valorize existing sites of architectural and historic significance for the purposes of everything from community cultural events to private galleries, economuseums, arts cafés, owner-operated restaurants, an art school, artists' studios, a Centre for the Encouragement of Tolerance between Peoples, a Maison de Culture, and a potential new home for a satellite of the National Gallery and/or the Musée d'Art Contemporain de Montréal.

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The concept includes a calèche taxi and/or shuttle that could run the length of the corridor. Other transportation expansions proposed for the sector include the Société du Havre's bus station and expanded bus corridor for the south shore commuters, a tramline, and a possible rail hub.

Where :

The current presentation focuses on Griffintown and reestablishing its link with Old Montreal.

Based on feedback from presentations and discussions with the Regroupement économique et social du Sud-Ouest (**RESO**), le Société du Havre de Montréal, Canada Lands Company Limited, the Committee for the Sustainable Redevelopment of Griffintown (**CSRG**), le Chambre Immobilière Griffinoise, museum and art directors, architects, urbanists, and neighbours, the proposal will be expanded. One elaboration will be to include the Maison Saint-Gabriel, stables, and other sites of interest in Point-Saint-Charles. A second expansion will be to extend the carriage route alongside the Lachine Canal westward to Atwater Market, Centre Saint-Ambroise and beyond, utilizing the old rail bed for the purpose. Sites of interest in both areas of expansion will be identified and included within the proposed corridor. Potential sites will also be identified and the owners, tenants, neighbours, and others who know and use them will be asked for ideas as how best to valorize them to fit within the arts and heritage corridor.

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How :

My Cultural Corridor proposal is not a definite plan but rather a concept, a collection of ideas dreamed up by Montrealers who love their city and want to see something special happen here. The aim is to initiate a conversation and encourage all who wish to participate in creating a vision of what this important area of the city could become as it redevelops. By redefining in our minds what this sector of our city is and could be, we can create a new reality. It does not require megaprojects to make change. If one property owner or one small developer chooses to build upon or redevelop a site for a cultural or heritage purpose, then we have one more such site in the district. If another does so, we have two, and so on and so on. If the idea of the southern sector of our city as an arts and heritage corridor takes hold then tourism will become an economic engine for the area and more developers, business people and artists will be encouraged to relocate here and bring their own dreams to add to a collective vision. As well, existing property owners may then choose to redevelop their own properties and businesses within such a context.

Some sites already in existence include a number of small galleries, music venues, and the Darling Foundry (<http://www.fonderiedarling.org/>), a visual arts centre at the eastern end of Ottawa Street. In addition, the Société du Havre's plan (<http://www.havremontreal.qc.ca/fr/index.htm>) to convert the Bonaventure into a boulevard includes an emphasis on visual art and the director of the project, Pierre Malo, told me they plan to put out a call for international bids for a monumental artwork to be installed at the bottom of the new boulevard, their vision is a spectacular gateway welcoming visitors to our city.

Some Key Sites

The Griffintown Historical and Cultural Centre Southeast corner of Ottawa and de la Montagne streets.

The Griffintown Horse Palace (<http://citynoise.org/article/7707>) is an ensemble of buildings that includes a mid-19th century brick house, an old inn for travelers, and stables that have been in continuous use since the 1850s. Planning began on a Griffintown Horse Palace Foundation two years ago.

The Griffintown Horse Palace was put on the market two weeks ago and the Foundation is in the process of finalizing the board of directors and is waiting for the revised version of the charter in order to incorporate as a charity.

The Foundation's mission is twofold: primarily it is to preserve the buildings and function of the Horse Palace and secondarily to establish a cultural, community, and historical centre whose purposes could include, but need not be limited to:

a) an historical and educational museum with exhibits and activities focusing on the history of Griffintown, the Irish diaspora, the industrial revolution and the urban horse.

b) a cultural and community centre providing space for members of the community to hold workshops, concerts and other events.

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An ideal site for this multifunctional historical, cultural, and community centre is at the southeast corner of Ottawa and de la Montagne on the site currently occupied by the former Carrosserie Royale building.

With the main entrance on de la Montagne, the centre could thus face the park where the foundations of Ste-Ann Church are preserved. This would create a link between the Horse Palace, the Centre, and this park whose church was once the heart of the community and which remains an attraction for residents past and present, tourists, and Montrealers interested in the history of our city. Another excellent site for this centre would be the New City Gas complex situated between Ottawa and Wellington streets to the North and South and Dalhousie and Ann to the East and West.

The New City Gas complex

141 Ann St; 950 Ottawa St; 956 Ottawa St.

At the turn of the 20th century, New City Gas became the flame that lit Montreal's industrial revolution. Modern Montreal literally began at New City Gas.

Well-situated, the complex is close to downtown, Old Montreal, and the Lachine Canal and was constructed between 1859 and 1961 to provide Montreal with gas for lighting street lamps.

In 1901, the New City Gas Company of Montreal fused with Royal Electric Co. to become Montreal Light, Heat, & Power Consolidated. It is worth noting that William Molson was instrumental in the beginnings of this company whose launch saw Montreal go from 5 watts of power

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to 100 watts overnight, surely a pivotal point for the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution in Canada.

William Molson adjusted himself to the new capitalist structures. He saw that a leading entrepreneur would no longer be a technician, who personally owned the means of production and administered an undertaking. It would from then on be too vast for individual or family ownership. Its large number of employees, and the complexity of the problems involved in organizing the work of factory and office, would no longer permit an entrepreneur to see to all the details of its daily running. The law would then adapt itself to the new economic structures and the joint-stock, limited-liability company would appear.

In 1847 William's name appears along with that of his brother Thomas among the first group of shareholders of the New City Gas Company.

There are three buildings of interest. One is the Gazometer building at [141, rue Ann](#), with its cathedral style, stone buttresses and curving brick wall, constructed by architect John Ostell. In 2008, we invited then Executive Director of the Musée d'Art Contemporain de Montréal, Marc Mayer, to tour the buildings. He responded very positively to the beauty, light, size and flexibility of the interior space of this site. Given that the MACM has not yet finalized its expansion plans, and that the city of Montreal plans to develop the area around Place des Arts (which includes the MACM's current home) as a *performing* arts Mecca in Montreal, the timing seems perfect to propose New City Gas as a potential new site for the MACM, which has the space to exhibit its growing permanent collection as well as hold independent shows.

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The second building, [950, rue Ottawa](#) also appears to have floors that were added later and so could have large spaces for art installations as well.

It is very attractive and is closer to Ottawa Street so has added potential for spectacular views of the city... (see Devimco's image in the accompanying PowerPoint.. note the windows replacing the brick at the front.... Parts of this buildings wall and foundations are thought to be from a seventeenth century fort. The railway leading into Central Station goes right past this building...right past... so it is in a position to be noticed and attract visitors.

The third building, [956, rue Ottawa](#), is a more recent, early-twentieth century factory. It is a big, solid and fine building that could easily be adapted to a future use, such as artist studios, gallery space or an art school, just to suggest a few.

In addition to its historical and architectural significance, the NCG has a recent history of supporting and showcasing contemporary and local artists both by renting out studios and in the gallery, Art en Majuscule which occupied part of the site until 2005.

1500, rue Ottawa

This site, the subject of these consultations, is currently occupied by the former Canada Post building. This very large single-story building is in excellent condition and already equipped with solar panels. It is clad in blue metal siding which could be easily replaced with red brick

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so as to fit with the architectural heritage of the Lachine Canal. The idea put forth that demolition of this building would be done in a ***sustainable*** manner seems entirely contrary to all definitions of sustainability that I have encountered. Rather than waste money demolishing the building and constructing anew it would make much more cents to repurpose it.

To date, the best suggestion for repurposing the building is that for an International centre for the encouragement of tolerance between peoples (please see the memorandum submitted by Harvey Lev for details). Another suggestion put forth by Mr. Lev is that it be adapted as housing for seniors. Other possible uses for this building would be a Maison de la Culture, an athletics centre, or a multifunctional historical, cultural, and community centre. And I am certain that if some thought and creativity is brought to bear many other possible uses could be found.

Another feature of this site is the expansive green space adjacent to and surrounding the building. This area is contiguous to the Federal linear park along the Lachine Canal (http://www.pc.gc.ca/lhn-nhs/qc/canallachine/index_E.asp), a National Historic Site which celebrates Canada's industrial heritage and has attracted millions of cyclists and pedestrians. The green space at 1500 Ottawa has become an extension of this park and is used by pedestrians, snowshoers, cross-country skiers, dogs and their people, families who picnic and play together, and local youth who have set up a basketball hoop in the former parking area. Given that 25,000 residents left Montreal in the past year and there is an abundance of vacant land and underutilised sites in and around the area, it seems not only a waste

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but a travesty that one of the few green spaces we have should be lost to a megaproject.

The CLC proposal also includes plans to excavate and repurpose the former basins that remain beneath this site. Although this sounds like a very nice idea and has value from a heritage standpoint, it is certain to be costly and involved and there are probably other more fruitful ways those monies could be spent. In addition, the Peel basin was excavated and restored a number of years ago and still remains unused. This is unfortunate as it seems ideally situated for some kind of open air market in conjunction with the large city-owned building across from the basin.

Finally, I object to the plan to construct several 20-story buildings. This neighbourhood has always been low-rise and the construction of such towers would obscure the skyline, block views, and utterly change the area's historical character.

Calèches et Traîneaux Lucky Luc

<http://www.calechsluckyLuc.com/francais.htm>

Situé au 1810, rue Bassin, près du canal et de l'ancienne propriété de Postes Canada (dont la Société immobilière du Canada vise maintenant à mettre au point), ils ont une grande propriété avec un parc de plus de 50 véhicules. Mais la propriété est peu attrayante et en mauvais état. Alors, ce que nous voudrions suggérer, c'est que les bâtiments existants être remplacés par des écuries modernes et d'un enclos où, quand ils ne travaillent pas, les chevaux peuvent sortir, à la fois pour un peu de liberté et comme une attrait touristique. Et, si

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cette idée était réalisée, je ne doute pas qu'elle allait devenir une attraction car nous savons que les touristes et même les Montréalais aiment très bien les calèches et les chevaux en ville.

La route des calèches et conclusion

The sites mentioned in this document run from Lucky Luke's to 1500 Ottawa to the Horse Palace to New City Gas but the accompanying Powerpoint also continues to existing sites so as to show how such an approach to this area would reestablish a link between two historically significant areas and expand the attraction for both tourists and locals. So from NCG we cross the Bonaventure to reach the Darling Foundry and from there it extends into Old Montreal to the Centre D'histoire, Point a Callière and DHC ART, as well as to all the other stuff radiating out into Old Montreal.. historical sites, galleries, etc.

The thing which ultimately binds this all together is the calèches. In Old Montreal there are locations where you can get a calèche, just like a taxi stand. The route the calèches follow to get to and from the old city goes along rue Ottawa and back along rue William. Lucky Luke's has over 50 vehicles and some are traineau which could accomodate many passengers. The idea is to establish a calèche taxi/shuttle along the corridor with stands at the Horse Palce and Lucky Luke's. The calèche route could also extend along the canal as far as the Centre St-Ambroise (<http://www.myspace.com/centrestambroise>) or further.

Also, there is interest in extending the calèche route into Point-St-Charles where there are several stables as well as the historical

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museum Maison Saint-Gabriel (<http://www.maisonsaint-gabriel.qc.ca/en/index.html>).

Imagine the tourism brochures... travel Montreal's Historical and Cultural corridor by horse-drawn carriage (maybe even sell day passes) !! And having the horses in a paddock by the canal (across from redpath sugar and adjacent to the archeological site at des seigneurs) would really draw people too... many love to see animals in the city.

The beauty of it all is that no one part is required... it is the concept as a whole that matters. With or without one or all of the proposed megaprojects there is room for such a vision. And better yet, within the vision there is not only room for mega but also for micro. This is our city. We are citizens, business people, property owners, artists, musicians, mothers, fathers, and students and we can choose to dream and create a city we want to live in. It is not necessary to leave it all to corporations and governments to dream and do for us.

So why not !?!

Instead of settling for the same old same old of more condos, shopping malls and franchises, let's insist on keeping Montreal a city with a cultural, heritage and tourism focus !!

Imaginez les dépliants touristiques:

Venez Voyagez en calèches..

Voir le Corridor culturel de Montréal !!



Imagine the tourism brochures :

**Come travel
by horse drawn carriages..**

See Montreal's Cultural Corridor !!

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ideas
vis à vis the poetics
of space
within
spaces
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inner
outer
macro
corners of intimate
immensity inside
inspirations
and exhalations
of a quiet spacious mind
outside interiors
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infinitely variable
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the here

and the now.