

Memorandum Concerning the Redevelopment of the Namur – Jean-Talon West Area

I am writing as a long-time resident of Côte-des-Neiges who might buy a condo in the area under consideration. However, the triangular redevelopment area is isolated by substantial barriers from its neighbours on all sides: railway tracks on the South, the Decarie Expressway on the West, and, on the diagonal, by a large cemetery and a fence at the Town of Mont-Royal border. They are powerful separators and, personally, I do not wish to live in an isolated enclave.

I believe that powerful attractors are needed to draw commercial and residential development. No matter how carefully and creatively this area is zoned, it will not achieve the population density needed to create a vibrant self-sustaining community.

I have the following concerns:

- **Is the population density and usage mix right?** If we don't get it right, the streets may be deserted and dangerous at night. This is especially critical because of plans to reduce or eliminate the flow of traffic in the interior of the triangle. Imagine making the ten minute walk to the Namur Metro station on a cold and windy winter night. If there are shops open for business and lights shining from the windows of nearby residences, it could be a pleasant walk. But if we don't get it right, it could be an anxiety-filled journey.
- **How will you kick-start development?** Will years pass without new commercial enterprises coming to replace the existing automobile-centered businesses? Why should entrepreneurs take a chance developing this isolated area?
- **Will other sectors overshadow Namur – Jean-Talon before it really gets off the ground?** Blue Bonnets is a wide open space that's begging for development. Montreal is booming and development in that area is bound to take off soon. Will it draw the energy away from Namur – Jean-Talon, relegating it to poor cousin status?

There is a famous line from Ray Kinsella's novel *Field of Dreams*: If you build it, they will come. He didn't say "If you *plan* it, they will come." I suggest we commit to building the following infrastructure:

- **Extend the proposed Côte-des-Neiges tram line along Jean-Talon to the Namur Metro Station.** A study by the Consortium Genivar-Systra published in August of this year

makes a strong case for building a tram line along Côte-des-Neiges from Jean-Talon to connections downtown. The usage numbers they project make this a first class idea. However, there isn't much room at Jean-Talon for a terminal. We should extend the line a few blocks westward to the Namur Station, which would become an important transfer station that will draw people to the development area. There are four important hospitals along the proposed tram line. It would become the method of choice for thousands of people going to work or for medical appointments.

- **Build a large parking garage near the Namur Metro Station.** Huge numbers of drivers go through the Decarie Circle every day on their way downtown where they face congestion and parking hassles. Do them a favour and create an alternative for them by building a parking garage near the Namur Metro station and the tram line. The confluence of three transportation modes will be a powerful attractor for commerce and for new condo owners and apartment dwellers. The parking garage and the tram will also benefit the Blue Bonnets area when it is developed.
- **Make the area attractive.** Montreal's best neighbourhoods have a certain style, a certain flare that makes them instantly identifiable. However, redevelopment areas too often lack a distinctive character or they botch the job by adding incongruous elements to the sites. We should try to attract the best architects and designers in the world to design a few keynote buildings that would define the "look" of the area. Zoning rules could then assure the same materials and design principles are incorporated in other structures.

Côte-des-Neiges has been consistently short-changed by City Hall ever since it became a densely populated multi-ethnic borough. Under Drapeau and Dore, we came dead last and under Bourque things were not much better. That's changing now under Mayor Tremblay and Mayor Applebaum. For example, the improvements their team made to Côte-des-Neiges Rd and in Kent Park are blessings to our neighbourhood. Since the recent election, we have at least three elected officials in prominent positions at City Hall. We have the representation needed to get things moving. You've made an excellent beginning for the Namur – Jean-Talon redevelopment with your zoning proposal. I hope you'll seriously consider my concerns and suggestions as the project rolls forward.

Daniel Nonen, Montreal

Nov. 25, 2009