

MÉMOIRE

**BY: NORMAN HEMSWORTH
BRITISH BLUE PRINT
1831 RUE STE CATHERINE OUEST
MONTRÉAL, QUÉBEC H3H 1M2**

RE : URBAN PLAN, QUARTIER DES GRANDS JARDINS

April 13th 2011

Dear Commissioners:

I am the owner of British Blueprint as well as the building located at 1831 Ste Catherine O. My family has owned and operated this business and building since 1942.

Having attended the information session of last week, I am quite disturbed with an element of the urban plan for our area, namely the creation of a “park” on the parking terrain fronting deMaisonneuve beside the former Victoria School. This “park” would also end on the lane which borders the rear exit of my building.

I am very concerned about the situation that will be created by this park, and the situation that the community will be left to deal with. As you have undoubtedly heard, this area has a big homeless problem, and many of these people seem to find refuge in the lane behind my building. I say “homeless” but I also mean to include the many drug addicts and alcoholics who roam the area. I am certain that this park will only make a more convenient rest area for these people, and that responsible residents of the neighbourhood will not feel welcome. I am certain of this because I have seen many parks in the area fall into such a state.

The police do not have the tools to deal with such problems. At the information session, when this issue of security was raised, someone from the city mentioned that the solution is one that must involve all citizens. This statement made me all the more worried that no one has really considered the impact that this park will have. Instead, once the problem arises we will be told that it is a problem for the entire community. I did not ask for this park, and neither I nor my employees do not wish to be recruited into its maintenance.

A few years ago I was approached by Eco-quartier about the idea of planting some perennials in the lane beside my building, and setting up some composting bins. At the time, I agreed but worried that once set in place, these efforts would not be maintained. After planting and setting up the bins and painting the walls clean of graffiti, Mayor Labonté called a press conference and everyone celebrated the venture with wine and cheese and media in the lane. I remember telling the people from Eco-quartier that community involvement requires much more than a photo shoot.

The walls were painted with graffiti the next day and, three years later the graffiti remains. Only myself and one neighbour make the effort to keep our buildings clear of graffiti. As for the perennials and bins, I have attached a couple of photos which show what has become of this greening initiative. Eco-quartier bickers with the borough as to who is responsible for the lane, and the residents and merchants get lost in the shuffle. The lane is tidied about 2-3 times a year and the amount of filth that is allowed to accumulate is completely disgusting. As a “solution” Eco-quartier has tried to involve merchants and residents in maintaining this commercial lane. Unsurprisingly, the general public seem uninterested in taking on garbage collection responsibilities. I think that they will be even less interested in patrolling an uninviting park.

I mention this story because I think it is a good prediction of what is going to happen in my backyard. I don't believe that the city will maintain and secure this park once it is built, and I am certain that the people of the neighbourhood will not be successfully recruited to take care of it either. So, once again, the residents and merchants will be left dealing with fallout from idea that is good, in theory, but which lacks a plan for its long-term success.

Unless these issues have been fully addressed by the city (and to date I see no reason to believe this), then I cannot support this park and I would encourage the commissioners to recommend against its creation.

Very truly yours

Norman Hemsworth

