

INTRODUCTION

As a Nuns Island resident of 20 years, and in particular living the last 10 years directly across from the existing primary school, I am in a position to attest to the impact of the proposed plan to the residents of the neighbouring areas.

After closely following this file for the last 2 years, while a second school is required, I am opposed to the construction of the school at the proposed location for the reasons that follow. Other areas of the island are better suited to such a project.

I- IRREPARABLE HARM TO QUALITY OF LIFE

The proposed project imposes the implementation of a school and all related activities into an established residential area. There will be NUMEROUS on-going consequences to neighbouring residents that will irreparably harm their quality of life.

1. Schoolyard Noise

- 7am-6pm, Monday to Friday
- Several hundred children playing, screaming, squealing
- Proposed plan has schoolyard within feet of backyards
- Proposed plan has schoolyard within yards of bedrooms
- Excessive noise levels
 - Direct impact on sleep schedule (schoolyard noise & school bells will dictate how late you can sleep)
 - Direct impact on usability of owners' windows and access to fresh air (excessive noise requires windows remain closed)
 - Direct impact on use of property (backyard no longer for relaxing)
 - Stress, anxiety, sleep deprivation, performance interference
 - Physical and psychological consequences
- Height of buildings and configuration will in addition lead to reverberation of noise (schoolyard should be situated away from residences, not towards them)

2. Institutional Annoyances

- Considerable garbage (attracts racoons and crows, scattered debris, excessive noise during removal, reduced aesthetics)
- School bells work even on holidays, again negatively impacting on sleep and quality of life
- Institutional deliveries (cafeteria, school supplies, courier, special events) using industrial vehicles contribute to excessive noise, parking and traffic disruptions
- No provisions made in proposed plan on how deliveries will be made, only inferring that all would take place through main entrance, which is unlikely; paved areas likely will be added to accommodate deliveries to gymnasium, renovation needs, etc.
- Snow removal ("debarcadère") – conducted during the night; excessive noise

- Mechanical system noise
- Industrial service trucks (HVAC, plumbing, electrical, landscaping) contribute to increased noise and parking/traffic disruptions

3. Annoyance due to affiliated activities outside of school hours

- Noise due to hitting of tennis balls against school wall
- Basketball noise weekends and evenings
- Increased activities due to gymnasium use during evenings and weekends leads to noise and parking issues
- Impromptu parties in schoolyard or near gymnasium (music, broken beer bottles, garbage, vandalism)

4. Infringement on private property

- Children taking shortcuts (cutting through private residences)
- Debris (packaged food/drink, papers), blown onto property
- Balls etc going over the schoolyard fence into backyards
- Vandalism, minor thefts

5. Lack of “Neighbourliness”-imbalance of power

- “Normal” residential neighbours have equal rights and responsibilities; issues can be dealt with directly and civilly with those involved (ex. barking dog, leaf blowers, forewarning of parties)
- A school is an “institutional” neighbour; issue resolution often requires significant bureaucracy (appointments with school principals, being deferred to the school board, being deferred to the Municipality, being deferred to the police, being deferred to public security) and considerable stonewalling and lack accountability for issue resolution
- The “normal” resident is in a constant David vs Goliath battle

6. Lack of Civility of “guests”

- Guests of “institutional” neighbours (parents) often believe that they have rights that supersede those of residents; a sense of entitlement and lack of civility (blocking driveways, double parking, speeding down streets, running through stop signs, honking horns, using automatic lock alarms) all because they are picking up or dropping off children
- No recourse or sense of responsibility by “institutional” neighbour (school) due to lack of civility of their guests (parents)
- The only recourse of “normal” residents, while of limited effect, is to evoke other institutions (police, public security) and endure stress all in the name of enjoying “normal” access and use of their property

7. Inadequate parking in project, requiring parking in residential neighbourhood

- Decreased resident parking

- Increased parking infractions (ie. double parking)
- Blocked driveways
- Impede snow removal
- Increased noise (moving vehicles, automatic lock horn)

8. Lack of influence of future modifications or expansions

- Once the school established, the local residents have absolutely no recourse over future expansions, as was the case of Elgar park which was subsequently destroyed as a result of 2 school expansions
- Neighbouring residents have no input, consideration or recourse over modifications made by the school

II- REDUCED PROPERTY VALUES

Location, location, location. Due to the decreased quality of life, the property and market value of residents adjacent to the proposed project will be negatively impacted. The impact is not negligible, situated at a minimum of 10% reduction in property value and even up to 20% reduction in property value (my personal experience). In addition, these properties are on the market significantly longer prior to sale, even at a reduced asking price.

III- ZONING CHANGE

Verdun maintains that there was a 1967 urban plan (Plan directeur 1967) identifying le parc de la Fontaine as “parc-école-pole”. (To my knowledge, this plan has never been communicated in the 20 years that I have lived on Nuns Island).

If this was indeed true, the city should have created adequate (Institutional) zoning at that point in time. The residential community involving the streets of Place du Soleil, Terry Fox, Berlioz, etc. where all built AFTER this urban plan. People purchased their property surrounding areas that were zoned “park” by Verdun. The residents paid a premium to be located near a park/green space.

Such a high impact change in zoning should occur PRIOR to the establishment of the residential neighbourhood, thereby allowing prospective buyers to make informed decisions. There is still opportunity for Verdun to do so in other areas of Nuns Island (Archambault, Central).

The residents of the parc de la Fontaine neighbourhood should not be held to pay the price for negligence and poor planning on behalf of Verdun and the School board. Other sites in yet to be developed areas are available for the school. Potential homebuyers can then decide if they wish to live in proximity or not.

CONCLUSION:

Living in close proximity to a primary school has a profound negative impact on quality of life and ability to enjoy one's property. Noise, institutional annoyances, private property infringements, lack of "neighbourliness" of institutional neighbours, lack of civility of "guests", parking issues all have a daily effect on those who live in the adjacent neighbourhood. Property values are also negatively impacted.

I chose my home across from a school fully cognisant of the negative issues associated with the location. The associated reduced market price made it affordable. But unlike me, the neighbours of Parc de la Fontaine did not choose to live across from a school and to suffer the multiple irritants that will impact their daily quality of life and enjoyment of their property.