

# Wanklyn Project Brief

This is a poor project and should be extensively revised or rejected.

- 1) It is bad for area residents
- 2) It is bad for LaSalle and Montreal
- 3) Imposing it on citizens is bad for democracy
- 3) It is not what we need to do with this space and opportunity

This project is the first onslaught of a vision by the borough of high-rise high-density development in this enclave <sup>i</sup>.

The Wanklyn Project, first phase of the larger Quartier de la gare Lasalle development was first proposed three years ago. At that time, it was deemed by the citizens to be too tall (9 stories), to have too many units (750) and not enough or too expensive parking (which would have overcrowded the nearby streets). Increased traffic was another worry. There was also concern about increased taxes, both to pay for infrastructure costs and as a result of increased valuation of surrounding properties. The whole nature of the community would have changed from 1,2 and 3 story houses, town houses and apartment buildings to a Griffintown<sup>ii</sup>, or a Quartier Angrignon-style forest of high rises, much like Toronto around the 401. These were the chief reasons the project was resoundingly rejected when first proposed.

Now the project is back and it is **worse** than before!

1. It is bad for residents:

We are very cut off from the rest of Montreal by the river, the railway, highway 138, and the canal. Residents already have traffic congestion problems. The developer had a traffic study done by the engineering firm CIMA+ and it states that traffic would not be affected.

It is hard to describe all the problems of this traffic study in a short brief.

It was done for the developer, by a firm whose founder and ex-president admitted at the Charbonneau Commission to engaging in collusion. I believe that no study done by this firm should be taken at face value.

The figures used in this study were collected at the wrong time of day and on the wrong day. It concluded that the traffic at the most important intersections was already rated F and so adding hundreds of cars would make no difference. Self evidently wrong!

I have a degree in engineering, and in biology, have worked many years in research, and can recognize “scientific” nonsense. This study put me in mind of the old Mark Twain quote about “lies, damned lies, and statistics!” The laughter at the information hearing when the developer’s representative said there would be no impact on traffic showed that I’m not the only one who didn’t believe it. (In a similar vein, perhaps the Commissioners know of reports by “Tobacco Doctors” who found “no evidence that smoking was bad for human health”.) People who drive these streets know that someone just not paying attention to the light is a problem. Adding 500 to a 1000 more cars is going to cause even worse congestion in an area the promoter admits has chronically congested intersections.

The borough’s assurance that the newcomers will use public transit is also the fertilizer of politics. From the Commissioners’ own experience that night of the information hearings (no one from the Commission, the borough, or the Promoter used anything other than a car to get to the hearing), public transit is not practical to and from this enclave.

Virtually no one will use public transit. It takes over an hour to get downtown by bus and metro, whereas a car gets you there in 15 minutes (the borough’s own literature states this fact). Currently the site of the proposed development is actually closer to the highway entrance than to the train station. The reality is this is a Car Oriented Development (or C.O.D.) not the T.O.D. of the borough’s dreams.

Moving the train station for these commuters is another combination of Fantasy for the borough and Nightmare for residents. C.P., not the borough nor the A.M.T., control the track and the stations. There is supposed to be a new station in Lachine a few hundred meters down the track from the current station (on the far side of the canal). A newly moved station for the Wanklyn project would be even closer to this new station, which would mean the train stopping twice in a very short distance. It is unlikely CP will move the current station.

Also if the station were moved, most of the current residents who use the train would have a longer trek to the new station. This is an example of things being done for the promoter’s sales pitch, to the detriment of current citizens.

Besides all the above, studies have shown that T.O.D.s don’t work. <sup>iii</sup>

Another example of everything being done for the promoter and investor at the expense of current citizens, is the proposed moving of the current bus station to a place more convenient for ‘future residents’. It would mean a longer walk for all current users who live south of Airlie street.

The low number of parking spots in this development (fewer than the LaSalle usual minimum, as it is a so-called T.O.D.), will mean the streets nearby will be flooded with parked cars, like around Angrignon, perhaps forcing expensive restricted parking in the area, a negative for current dwellers.

## 2. It is bad for LaSalle and Montreal:

This project is the start of something like the Griffintown development, where poor planning has prevailed to the detriment of life in the area. Though the borough doesn't advertise it, this is the first of a giant development "vision" of 2000 plus units in this cut off area...more like a nightmare! It is very attractive to developers to build their towers amongst neighbors of lesser height, so they can advertise the views...not so nice to be in the destroyed neighborhood.

The problems of these types of high rises are manifold. A certain height of building can contribute to alienation and social problems, like in Toronto. Don't fall for those fancy promotional paintings of laughing children and women with a tower peeking over the trees in the foreground, contrasted with the Town's urbanists' photos of barren lots, streets empty of everything...deliberately made to look like photos of sewers vs. heaven...

## 3. Imposing it on citizens is bad for democracy:

Essentially the same project was massively rejected in a referendum the first time around. The borough would have us believe that this is a "new" project...well perhaps the paint color is new!

The current incarnation of this project is 8 ½ stories compared to 9 before, 786 compared to 750, same look with the road in the center, even fewer parking spots for new residents (which translates to MORE problems for current citizens). All the same problems and reasons why the project was rejected in the first place!

The borough has had the developer put a window dressing on of "low cost housing", to get this project passed as if it were for the public good. A few units allow this reclassification as well as some "affordable" units, perhaps affordable for the well off. This is really a way to circumvent the public's rejection of the project.

As far as lower cost housing goes, gentrification of the area for this type of project and others to follow will push out the residents of current lower cost units, causing a net drop in accessibility!

When asked about a traffic study for this "new" project the borough said it had already been done, referring to the "old" project, inadvertently admitting that the project is one and the same! It is the same project! Or at absolute best has all the same problems as the project rejected by the citizens.

To get around the rejection of the initial project in the register for a referendum in 2012 the borough has invoked Article 89 of the city charter...now the OCPM Commission can only make recommendations, and the city council decides...the actual decision is out of the hands of people most affected, the reason for having the possibility of a referendum in the first place. This skirting of the citizens' input may be strictly legal but it is a travesty of the spirit behind the law.

Don't let the Commission be used to thwart protection in law for those affected. If this works for the borough, the future will see this mechanism invoked for every unpopular project. LaSalle has already announced that all large projects will be referred to downtown city hall under article 89. The OCPM could risk becoming a rubber stamp for developers' and politicians' use!

### 3. The project is Not What We Need:

Perhaps a mega density mega-ville is a politician's dream, but for most people a job, a safe and nice area to live and raise kids in is what is wanted. We don't need super dense expensive housing. Better to have places to work, like what was in this space years ago. It would be better to have a creative use of this space, perhaps a farmers' market like Atwater or Jean - Talon market. Or perhaps use this as a real green space...not a tiny "park" trapped in the development, which no one will know about or be likely to use.

We still have lots of condos for sale in Montreal and LaSalle, we don't need this project.

### Conclusion:

The population is not against reasonable development. Witness the current project going up at the site of the old Patella factory on Stirling Street. People looked at it, saw that the developer was respecting the current community, as it is 3 stories high, a mix of housing, parking provided with each unit etc. Result: NO OPPOSITION! And to top it off, the Wanklyn promoter told us that the units are selling like hotcakes! Presto: a solution staring the developer in the face!

If this were a reasonable project, meeting the norms of the community, it would not be opposed. If the social housing aspect were more than window dressing, and didn't cause stress on local lower cost housing, it would be applauded. If this project were not the leading edge of a wave of mega towers looming over a closed enclave, it would not provoke the intense opposition that it has.

For all these reasons and more I don't want this project. Almost no one here wants this project; it is being parachuted in by people who don't live in the area, (who probably wouldn't want the changes in their own area).

Would you want these changes where you live?

Changes to the detriment of the local population, imposed on the local citizens, after they expressed opposition, using tactics intended for different use, to force a development few want and no one needs. Please recommend this project go back to the drawing board to take into account the citizens' needs.

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<sup>i</sup> Direction de l'aménagement urbain et des services aux entreprises de LaSalle <<Projets futures sur le territoire LaSallois >> mai 2015, disponible sur le site de l'OCPM.

<sup>ii</sup> Aubin, Henry. "City's approach to Griffin town shameful" Montreal Gazette, February 23, 2012.

<sup>iii</sup> Cox, Wendell. "Urban 'sprawl' gets a bad rap", Montreal Gazette, June 1, 2012.