

# TRANSFORMATION OF THE TURCOT YARDS

10 things to know about  
the new nature-park project

August 2018

Montréal 



# NEW NATURE-PARK IN THE TURCOT YARDS



Ville de Montréal. (2018). Design vision for a new nature-park in the Saint-Jacques Escarpment Ecoterritory.



## INTRODUCTION

# A NEW NATURE-PARK ON THE SITE OF THE FORMER TURCOT RAIL YARDS

The Ville de Montréal will develop a completely new nature-park in the heart of the city, in the space freed up by reconstruction of the Turcot interchange. Located in the Saint-Jacques Escarpment Ecoterritory, this major park will cover almost 30 hectares along 2 km. This unique ecosystem offers a variety of landscapes – woods, wetland, prairie – and will allow for the creation of a new green gateway to the city, one which will be iconic for the metropolis.

This green space will help improve the biodiversity of the Saint-Jacques Escarpment sector and will offer users special contact with nature.

A north-south link (also known as the dalle-parc) is proposed to extend the park above Autoroute 20 and the railways, opening an additional corridor for pedestrians and cyclists between the new park and the Lachine Canal. This outstanding facility will restore links between the Sud-Ouest and Côte-des-Neiges–Notre-Dame-de-Grâce boroughs and encourage active transportation.

Since this major park is to belong to citizens, the municipal administration seeks to learn their aspirations with regard to the project. The Office de consultation publique de Montréal will start the consultative process well ahead of the project's realization. Subsequently, various participatory activities will be deployed throughout the project development process.

The Ville de Montréal would like to take strong action for the environment and the quality of life of its citizens, by creating a park that is truly theirs and that responds to their needs.



## THE MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT VISION

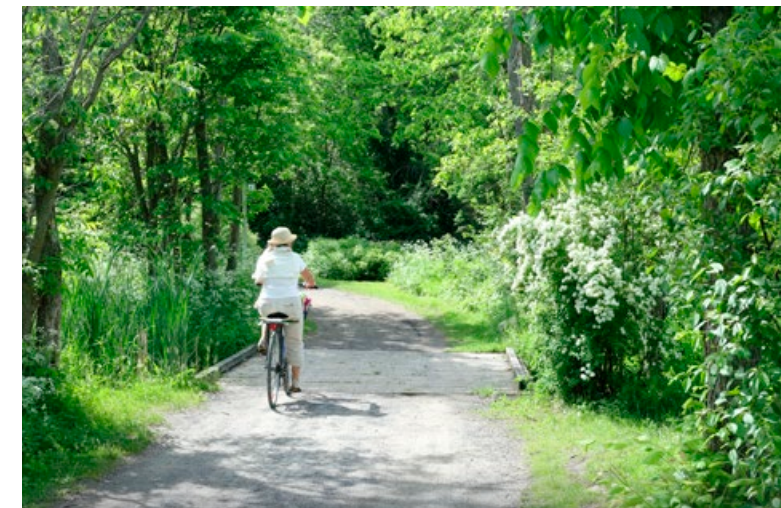
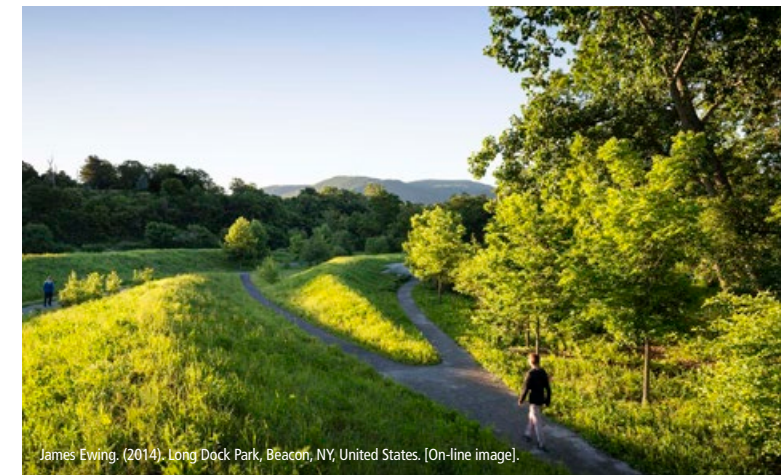
# 1

The transfer of the autoroute northward, to the site of the former Turcot yard, will free up a vast space between rue Notre-Dame and the new highway.

This newly vacant space offers a rare opportunity to create a new green space. The major park project will provide numerous social, economic and environmental benefits and will significantly improve quality of life for Montrealers. It will fulfill the following objectives:

- Increase the extent of protected areas in the urban setting, in compliance with the municipal policy on the protection and enhancement of natural spaces (Politique de protection et de mise en valeur des milieux naturels)
- Improve Montréal's park and green space network, essential for citizen well-being
- Establish infrastructure to provide safe and enjoyable active transportation opportunities, which will improve access to the Saint-Jacques Escarpment and the Lachine Canal
- Create a distinctive entranceway to the city
- Encourage revitalization of the districts around the new park, in a sector targeted by an economic development strategy

This new major park will embody Montréal's innovative spirit and will represent its concrete commitment to the quality of life of its citizens, protection of natural sites and the development of its neighbourhoods.





# A NEW GREEN SPACE FOR BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE

# 2

The Saint-Jacques Escarpment Ecoterritory is located in the heart of a sector with a great deal of asphalt and is currently inaccessible to the public.

The creation of a nature-park, complete with walking trails and a bicycle path, will provide opportunities for socializing and physical activity, and offer numerous other benefits.

### Improve the quality of the environment

With the new park, a natural ecosystem will be born. Benefits will include:

- Increasing biodiversity
- Improving air quality
- Improving rain water management
- Creating new tree canopy
- Reducing the heat island effect

### Develop the bicycle network

The bicycle path proposed in the new park will improve the municipal bicycle network. In addition, it will help meet the growing needs of Montréal cyclists, whose number jumped 57% between 2008 and 2015 (source: Vélo-Québec). The proposed dalle-parc will add to other municipal initiatives to improve the quality of active transportation and allocate more space to this mode, which helps public health and the environment.

### Enhance the sector

A neighbour to the Lachine Canal, this new major park will become an attractive space for Montrealers and a feature of the sector, which is currently undergoing transformation.



Alexandre Cv. (2016). Cyclists at the Pointe-aux-Prairies nature-park.



Alexandre Cv. (2016). Ile-de-la-Visitation nature-park.



# THE SAINT-JACQUES ESCARPMENT ECOTERRITORY: AN AREA TO PROTECT

# 3

The Saint-Jacques Escarpment is a significant landscape on the island of Montréal. Located between Mount Royal and the Lachine Rapids, it covers more than 20 hectares and is a strategic stopover for migratory birds and a habitat for the brown snake.

The Escarpment is one of ten natural spaces of interest—or ecoterritories—identified in the 2004 Politique de protection et de mise en valeur des milieux naturels de l'agglomération de Montréal. The objective of this Policy is to protect natural areas in an urban setting.

Ecoterritories include existing protected areas and natural spaces to be protected and enhanced. These extensive spaces contribute to biodiversity: they are home to a variety of animal and plant species, some of whose status is precarious.

They offer the potential for conservation projects and invite citizens to become closer to nature. For these reasons, the Saint-Jacques Escarpment Ecoterritory will be the site of conservation and design initiatives in order to:

- Protect ground cover to prevent erosion problems
- Diversify animal habitats, especially for the brown snake
- Revegetate the base of the Escarpment and offer vista points of the park
- Connect the site to surrounding districts with walking trails and bicycle paths
- Develop and implement a protection and enhancement plan for the Escarpment, in collaboration with the boroughs involved



Ville de Montréal. (2018). Boundaries of the Saint-Jacques Escarpment Ecoterritory and the new nature-park.

These actions will protect the Saint-Jacques Escarpment ecosystems, while also helping to integrate this green space into adjacent sectors.



# THE SAINT-JACQUES ESCARPMENT: A UNIQUE SITE

# 4

The Saint-Jacques Escarpment is one of the most prominent geographic elements in the city, as distinctive as Mont-Royal. While the name “falaise Saint-Jacques”, is not official, it has been used for decades. It probably became common in the 1960s, when chemin Upper Lachine became rue Saint-Jacques and the Décarie autoroute was constructed. The district along the ridge of the Escarpment presents a varied building profile, comprised of large-scale retail buildings, vast parking lots, as well as smaller stores and residential buildings.



Air Imex Ltée. (2018). Turcot projet work status, May 2018.

The current topography of the Escarpment is the result of a long history of unregulated dumping. The accumulation of this construction debris and other rocky material, thrown from the top of the Escarpment, gradually changed its natural appearance, enlarging its base from 20 to 100 metres in certain places. Today, the Escarpment rises 30 metres and has a very abrupt slope, its incline about 40 degrees.



Ville de Montréal. (n.d.). Bois de la falaise Saint-Jacques.

During the 1980s, Montréal planted trees and bushes to consolidate the ground, naturalize the Escarpment and limit soil erosion; currently the ground is more stable. Nowadays, Escarpment vegetation offers a refuge for migratory birds and is the habitat of the brown snake, a species that is likely to be designated threatened or vulnerable by the gouvernement du Québec.



Maxim Larivée. (2008). Brown snake.

# A DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR CONCRETE INITIATIVES

# 5

In 2014, the Service des grands parcs, du verdissement et du Mont-Royal created a development plan for the Saint-Jacques Escarpment, which contained the following initiatives:

### The district north of the Escarpment

- Create an attractive entrance on rue Saint-Jacques and a pedestrian trail to lead down to the green corridor at the bottom of the Escarpment
- Create new vista points or new entranceways at the top of the Escarpment
- Revegetate the top of the Escarpment

### Saint-Jacques Escarpment and lower greenway

- Landscape the Escarpment to stabilize the soil, improve biodiversity and protect fauna
- Open up certain areas to offer vista points on the park
- Create a north-south passageway to cross the autoroute and railway tracks and provide access to the old railway yard and the Lachine Canal National Historic Site
- Create a greenway below the Escarpment, as provided for in the Turcot project by the ministère des Transports, de la Mobilité durable et de l'Électrification des transports

### New gateway to the city

- Create a new, green entrance to the city, which will cross the Saint-Jacques Escarpment Ecoterritory, and mark this entrance by an impressive work of art or design
- Use excess soil generated by the Turcot project work to create, adjacent to the autoroute, land art, i.e., large pieces created by shaping the landscape and nature
- Develop vista points and panoramas offered by the autoroute

### Turcot yards and adjacent industrial sectors

- Enhance the newly opened up land
- Create a landscape design that evokes the lac à la Loutre and rivière Saint-Pierre previously located there
- Transform rue Notre-Dame to make it more attractive and add active transportation and transit
- Create an attractive park accessway from the Lachine Canal



# THE TURCOT PROJECT: ACTIONS INTEGRATED IN THE ECOTERRITORY

# 6

At the time it opened, the Turcot interchange was considered one of the most complex engineering projects in North America. After more than 50 years, the ministère des Transports, de la Mobilité durable et de l'Électrification des transports has begun its reconstruction, as part of the Turcot project.

Following the definitive pre-project, tabled in 2012, the autoroute and railways have been moved to the north

### Greening the autoroute corridor

In the Ministry's vision, the Saint-Jacques Escarpment is at the heart of the main entrance way to the city. Consequently, its actions are designed to enhance the spaces crossed, by highlighting those elements that define their identity and which have shaped the history of the city.

The very linear corridor of Autoroute 20 offers little of interest. To improve the landscape, the Ministry will plant vegetation to reduce the visibility of the railway lines to the north and to form a buffer zone between the expressway and the future nature-park.

### A greenway at the foot of the Escarpment

Creation of a greenway, with a minimum surface area of 9.7 hectares, will enhance the natural environment of the Escarpment and will encourage biodiversity, by creating new animal habitats. This greenway will include:

- Different types of natural settings
- A multipurpose trail for walking running, cycling, etc.
- Two small plazas at the ends of the greenway will welcome visitors and mark the entrances

The designs proposed by the Ministry will create a visual distinction between the park and the autoroute zones, enhance the significant landscape elements, and encourage quality of life, safety and the visual interest of the routes.

Once the Turcot project is finished, the Ville de Montréal will complete the work and transform rue Notre-Dame Ouest into an urban boulevard, with the financial support of the gouvernement du Québec. The redesign of rue Notre-Dame, through elements that will improve the urban quality of the setting and encourage active transportation and transit will provide structure to the transformation of the sector.



Ville de Montréal. (n.d.). Design illustrating the Turcot Project, before and after the work.

# A NATURAL LINK WITH THE LACHINE CANAL

# 7

The new greenspace will connect the Saint-Jacques Escarpment to the Lachine Canal. Having declined after the opening of the Saint Lawrence Seaway in the 1960s, the districts around the Canal have more recently gained a second life, through real estate development projects which have attracted residents, companies and workers. The banks of the Canal have been transformed and are now veritable neighbourhoods.

In 1997, Parks Canada announced creation of the Lachine Canal National Historic Site, an ambitious revitalization project to enhance the historical and recreational potential of the Canal. Since then, the Canal has been open to recreational boating and has become a major tourist attraction that stimulates economic activity. The Canal multipurpose trail is part of this national park. Created in 1977, it is one of the oldest and most popular in the Montréal region.

The area around the Canal played a key role in Montréal's development. Many historical industrial elements remain, including the LaSalle Coke crane, located in the Saint-Jacques Escarpment Ecoterritory sector.

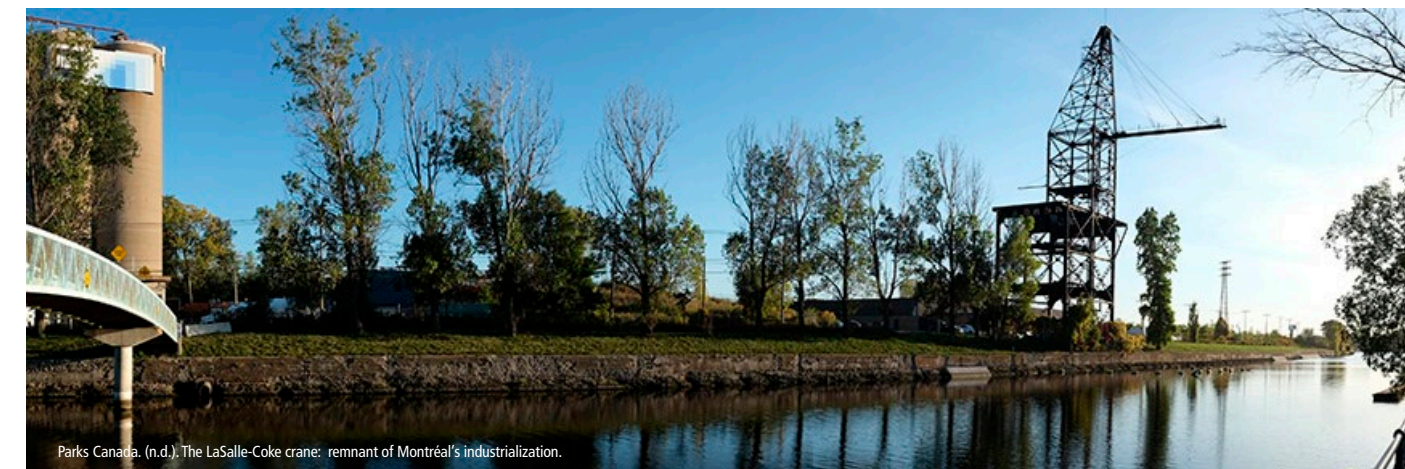


Jonathan Lapalme. (n.d.). Lachine Canal Canada National Historic Site bicycle path.

Constructed between 1914 and 1916, the crane was used to unload coal to supply the Montreal Light and Power Company plant.

It represents one of the last industrial monuments from the period of commercial navigation along the Lachine Canal, and is one of the world's last remaining cranes of this kind.

Due to the linkages that the Escarpment park will create with the Canal, citizens will be able to reclaim these historic sites.



Parks Canada. (n.d.). The LaSalle-Coke crane: remnant of Montréal's industrialization.



# NATURE-PARK AND THE DALLE-PARC, AT THE HEART OF THE METROPOLIS

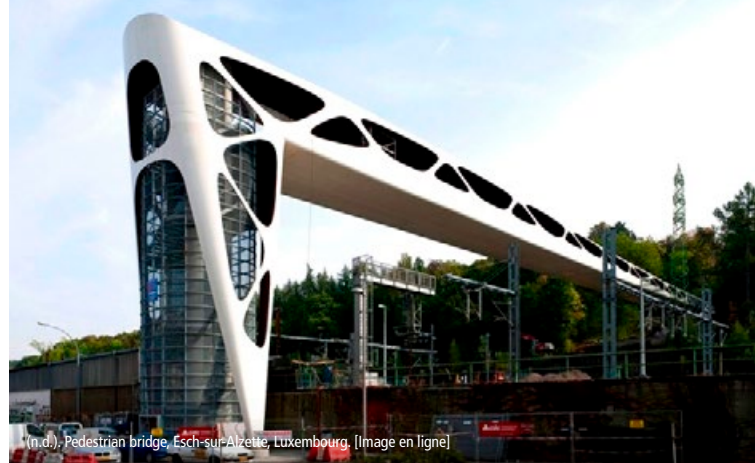
# 8

The Saint-Jacques Escarpment Nature-Park will create a completely new natural space in the city. The design of the nature-park will include a woods, a wetland and a prairie. It will support different natural ecosystems which will encompass almost 75% of its area.

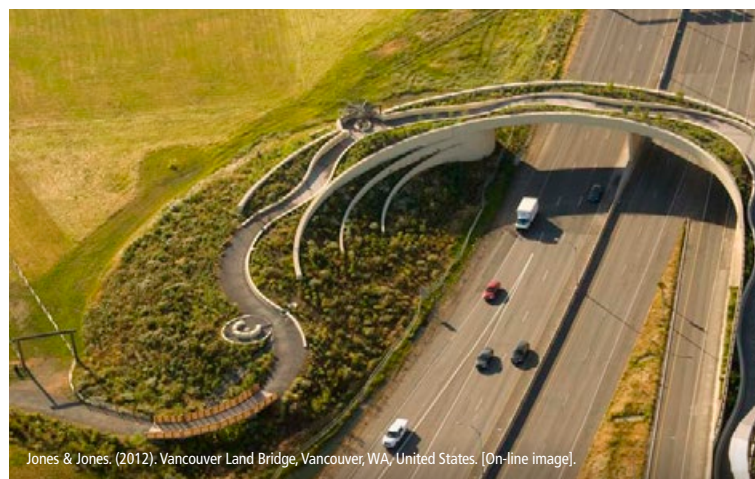
A network of paths will invite pedestrians, runners, cyclists and skiers to immerse themselves in nature. An interpretive tour to present the site's natural, industrial and historic heritage may also be added to the paths, highlighting, for example, the former rivière Saint-Pierre, the former Lac à la Loutre and the Lachine Canal.

At the centre of the nature-park, the proposed dalle-parc will straddle the autoroute and railways, and create a link between the top of the Escarpment, the lower green corridor, the park, the municipal bicycle network and the multipurpose trail of the Lachine Canal National Historic Site. This iconic infrastructure will restore links between the Sud-Ouest and Côte-des-Neiges-Notre-Dame-de-Grâce boroughs and will provide a north-south connector for pedestrians and cyclists. It will respond to growing travel needs of residents and workers.

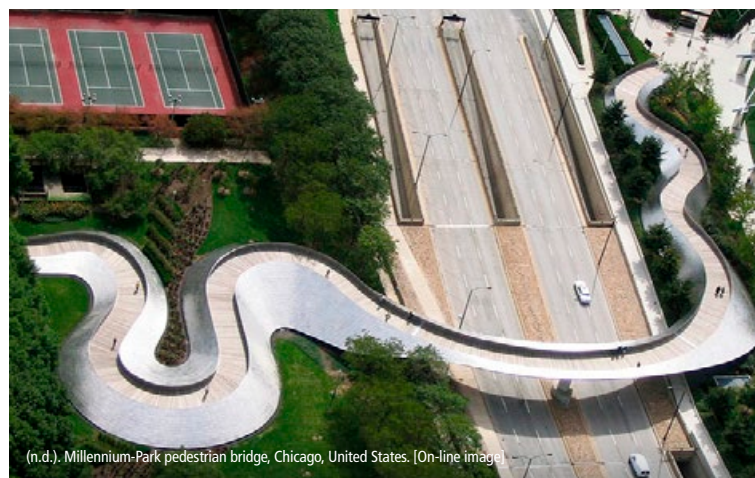
This major facility will become an iconic symbol of the entrance to the city; it will be a highlight of the landscape of the metropolis. These elements will offer a unique and memorable experience for all citizens and visitors.



(n.d.). Pedestrian bridge, Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg. [Image en ligne]



Jones & Jones. (2012). Vancouver Land Bridge, Vancouver, WA, United States. [On-line image].



(n.d.). Millennium-Park pedestrian bridge, Chicago, United States. [On-line image]

# A SYMBOLIC LANDSCAPE, GATEWAY TO THE CITY

# 9

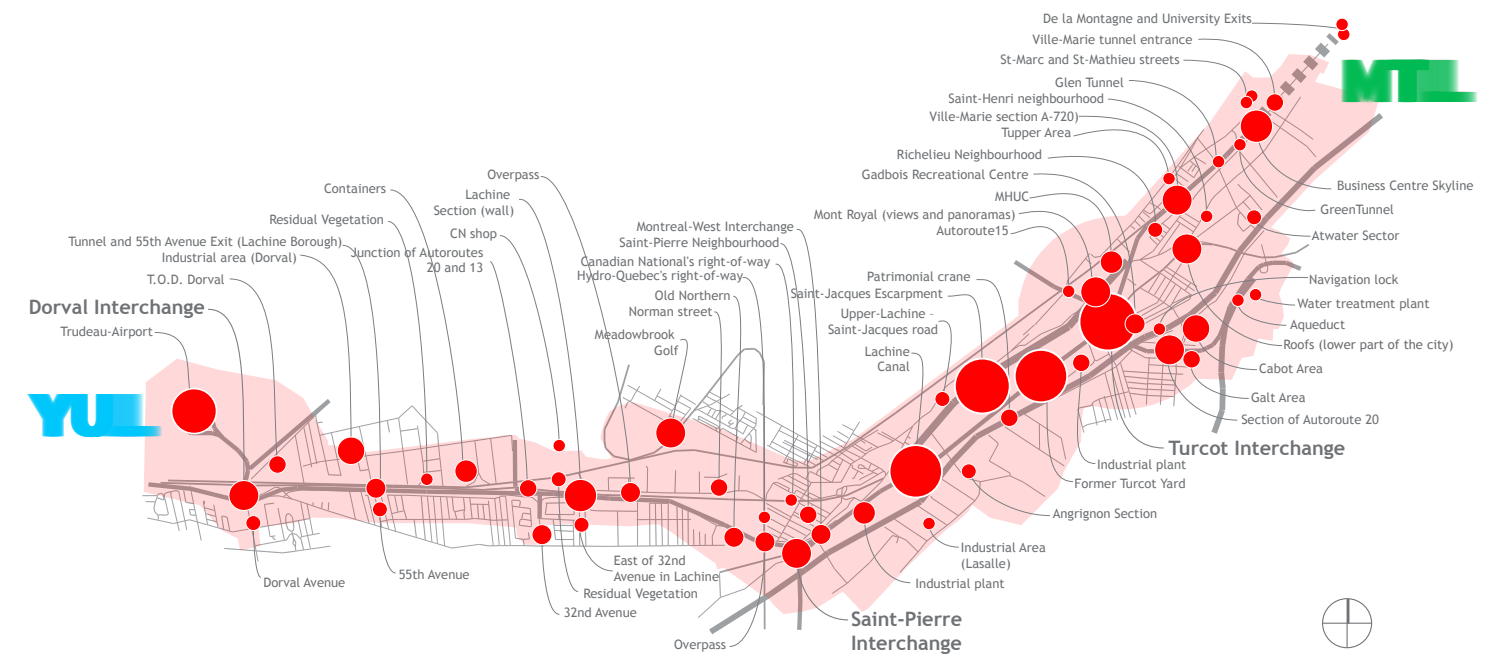
The Saint-Jacques Escarpment Ecoterritory is part of the western entrance path for the city, connecting Montréal's airport to its downtown.

In 2011, le ministère des Transports, de la Mobilité durable et de l'Électrification des transports mandated the Université de Montréal's Chaire en paysage et environnement to create an international ideas competition, one of whose goals was to develop different visions for this entrance path to Montréal.

A dozen universities worldwide participated in the project, building their vision around three avenues of reflection:

- An evolving, iconic landscape project for the metropolis
- A scenario of unfolding experiences
- A co-operative sustainable development process

The competition's award-winning projects highlighted the importance of the Saint-Jacques Escarpment and the Lachine Canal, two strong features of the landscape of the city entrance way. They also underlined the impressive potential for transforming the former Turcot railway yard.



(2011) Excerpted from YUL-MTL by-law: Landscapes in movement, International design competition \_ Design Montréal

# ANOTHER STEP TOWARD REVITALIZATION OF THE TURCOT-LACHINE-EST SECTOR

# 10

Redevelopment of the area around the Saint-Jacques Escarpment will be the first gesture to revitalize the Turcot-Lachine-Est sector, which will be the subject of several design and development projects in the coming years.

As designated by the Schéma d'aménagement et de développement de l'agglomération de Montréal, the Turcot-Lachine-Est sector is bordered by the Atwater Tunnel on the east, the Lachine locks on the west, the Saint-Jacques Escarpment on the north and the rue Saint-Patrick on the south. It overlaps areas in the Sud-Ouest, LaSalle and Lachine boroughs. Over the years the sector has become a strategic location for industrial companies, given its development around major transportation infrastructure. Construction of the Lachine Canal, expansion of the railway network and opening of autoroutes A20 and A-15 have shaped and divided the area. Transportation corridors became barriers that were difficult for pedestrians and cyclists to cross.

The Saint-Jacques Escarpment is located where the Sud-Ouest borough, on the south, meets the Côte-des-Neiges-Notre-Dame-de-Grâce borough to the north. This means the new park will be at the crossroads of several districts, connecting them together and inviting citizens to reclaim the sector.

## FOUR NODES IN TRANSFORMATION

The four nodes of the Turcot-Lachine-Est sector will soon be transformed due to major autoroute projects and current planning efforts.

- **Saint-Henri Ouest-Émard-Côte-Saint-Paul**  
Located in this Sud-Ouest borough, this node is the home of the Gadbois recreational complex. Its districts are greatly affected by the interchange reconstruction work. That is why the borough adopted an urban, economic and social development plan, following a public consultation held in 2016.  
  
Implementation of this plan, which includes a variety of actions, will be funded in part by the ministère des Transports, de la Mobilité et de l'Électrification des transports.
- **Former Turcot Yards and its surroundings**  
The railway yard situated along Autoroute 20 has been dismantled and the site will become available after completion of the Turcot project work and the shifting of the highway and railway corridors. This is where the new major park project will be located. Nearby, rue Notre-Dame Ouest will be redesigned as an urban boulevard.
- **Saint-Pierre Interchange**  
In a few years, this node will be the scene of a major infrastructure project, namely the total or partial reconstruction or repair of the interchange. These projects will have major repercussions on the neighbouring sectors.
- **Lachine-Est**  
Once the site of flourishing industry, this node will soon change its use and become a new neighbourhood. Several underused or abandoned industrial complexes remain, presenting high risks of soil contamination.



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