

November 26, 2003

Brief
presented to
L'Office de consultation publique de
Montréal(OCPM)
Concerning the Proposed Masterplan for
Benny Farm

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Recommendations:

1. Have private sector investment to create high-quality new affordable housing for a truly mixed population and to offer the community housing comparable with apartments/condos/townhouses that are being built in the city by demolishing more buildings.
2. Demolish the buildings and the surface parking on Lot 8.
3. Have underground parking for all residents on the site.

We have resided in front of the Benny Farm site for the past 23 years. We have been actively involved with the residents whose homes are bounded by Monkland Avenue on the South, Starnes on the North, Cavendish Boulevard on the East and Prince of Wales on the West for a total of 90 homes since May 2001.

We have written numerous letters and have had numerous meetings with Canada Lands as concerned homeowners on how the development of the Benny Farm site would impact our quality of life as well as the quality of life for future residents of the site. We don't believe this proposed plan addresses our concerns.

1.1 Affordable housing

We feel that the plan offered is an outmoded approach that depends exclusively on government subsidization without much regard for the importance of private-sector participation. The plan focuses simplistically on the construction of government subsidized “affordable housing” neglecting the importance of job availability and the need for market-rate housing to help drive commercial development. Developing affordable housing requires creatively combining a wide variety of sources including financial institutions, private sector and local, provincial and federal governments. Canada Lands never sought any private developers for this proposed plan. The Benny Farm site as proposed involves only government subsidies at the cost of taxpayers and is proposing all housing with a social component attached to it. This is not a true reflection of the community that needs high-quality and highly diverse affordable housing.

A more innovative approach would be to encourage the private sector to invest in affordable housing. This could be accomplished by getting donations from private entities in order to provide low-interest loans for new housing. Also city funds combined with funds from local business could create a pool of money available for low cost loans to developers. The city can then have new housing starts of new market rate condos or apartments. Private sector investment could significantly assist in solving problems and the government would not be faced with the high costs of maintaining buildings.

We do not feel that the plan is a true reflection of our community. One only has to look at the properties surrounding the site to see that what is proposed in front of our house on Monkland, the renovation of the 24 units, is not balanced with the small cottages across from it. These are not luxury homes, but simple affordable cottages owned and maintained by residents who have pride in their dwellings. We would like to look across from our homes and see similar housing. This is affordable housing in N.D.G. Affordability issues have been moving up the income scale to affect even middle class earners who would like to buy a small home in N.D.G.

A healthy and competitive city is the result of a balanced system of different residents. The Benny Farm site is not balanced in that all housing on the site has a social component. The N.D.G. Community is diverse with residents at different income levels. So why are we not keeping that same diversity on the site? Examples of affordable housing in our city are developments like Terrasses Windsor with a price range for a condo from \$117,000 to \$190,000. That would cost about \$ 510.36 to \$ 828.79 per month. This is affordable housing.

Our property taxes will be going up this year and we would like to see more affordable housing on the Benny Farm site in the same range as our houses. We accessed the city of Montreal web site (<http://www2.ville.montreal.qc.ca/>)” Extrait du rôle foncier”. The approximate value of the homes on Monkland Avenue across the Benny Farm site is \$188,000.

2.1

The buildings on the south side of Monkland Avenue from Benny Avenue to Prince of Wales on lots 1,2,7 and 15 have been allocated as new building units and lot 8 is allocated as renovated units. In order to have total architectural uniformity the plan should demolish the old buildings on lot number 8.

By removing the 24 surface parking on lot 8 and demolishing the buildings on lot 8 you would increase the amount of total units and have additional quality housing and underground parking.

The 24 units on lot 8 across from us on Monkland Avenue are to have modest sub-standard renovations for \$67,000 per unit. The booklet put out by Canada Lands, on September 22, 2003 states on pages 17 and 18 all the inadequate renovations. As a consequence of these poor renovations we want Canada Lands to be responsible for their decisions if our homes are devalued and we cannot sell them at the market -rate for similar housing.

3.1

All future residents on the site should have new quality housing and underground parking. In the Canada Lands Proposal this is not so. All buildings on Benny Ave. Lot 3 are new and have underground parking. Lot 4 on Cavendish adjacent to the Provigo and the six story structure for the veterans are new and have underground parking. On Prince of Wales Lot 7 and 12 is also designated new with underground parking. The residents on the eastern and western side of Cavendish Blvd. are not offered any inside parking like the remaining units on the whole site. The plan is inconsistent with basic civil engineering and architectural social planning.

We will be the residents most impacted by what is developed on this site. We believe you can have a social component on the site but feel there is not enough of a really mixed housing project that really reflects the immediate neighborhood. A proper balance would make this a jewel of a neighborhood.