

BRIEF

Tower 6 - Square Children

Brief submitted by George Sawchyn for the public consultation – Spring  
2022

May 26th 2022

It is important to recall the history and the context in which this consultation is being held. Indeed, since the previous social housing project, on the Children's site, could not be completed as desired by the community and the Borough, the community is faced with an agonizing choice.

First of all, the sale by the provincial government of a public site to private interests, at a cost less than the land value, represents a loss not only for Quebecers, but a huge disappointment for the neighbourhood which had mobilized to propose a project that would meet their needs, such as the Village Santé. This sale is all the more disappointing because the City had no development plan (EAP or EPCM) for this site, even though it knew that hospital services would be moved. The City's lack of planning, and the short time between the filing of the OCPM report in 2017 and the adoption of the bylaw, removed any negotiating ability from the City, which could have seen this as a way to mandatorily include community facilities, through binding agreements.

In 2017, following the OCPM's consultation for the redevelopment of the entire Montreal Children's Hospital site, Mayor Denis Coderre publicly announced that a social housing project for families would be built on Children's Square. A project that was not only necessary, but long hoped for by the community. However, we learned in 2019 that the developer High Rise Montreal wished to avail itself of the possibility of making a financial compensation, rather than realize the turnkey project of social housing.

In the context of an increasingly acute housing crisis, exacerbated by the pandemic, it seems indecent that more luxury condos are being built on a site that was sold at a loss by the provincial government. Not only did the elementary school project fail to materialize, but the Sanaaq Centre will cost taxpayers a fortune since the City does not own the space, but rents it, and at great expense. For years, the Peter-McGill neighbourhood has been developing according to the wishes of private developers, to the detriment of the community, which has been making the same demands for decades. The social housing project was at the heart of the social acceptability of the requalification, combined with the presence of the community center, where the two elements would have been in symbiosis.

Considering the inability of the developer and the City of Montreal to agree on the realization of the social housing project for families, which

was the central element of the social acceptability of the requalification project, **I recommend that the permitted building height be reduced from 20 to 4 storeys.** In addition, I also recommend that Bylaw 16-082 not allow another use than the one listed in the zoning bylaw, i.e. an **institutional use.**

However, I would support the implementation of a 20-storey tower **if, and only if,** the Borough can guarantee, through a transfer of land from the owner to the OMHM, or through the signature of a definitive and binding development agreement, that a **social housing project for families will be built on the site.**

Furthermore, considering that the Children's social housing project is the only one out of 145 projects between 2005 and 2021 that did not materialize, I also recommend **that a public inquiry be held to determine the reasons for this failure and to avoid a similar disaster.** If the City of Montreal has such a good success rate for its inclusion projects, why did this one not happen? We know that this case is currently before the courts, but we still believe that a timely investigation by the appropriate authorities is necessary.