

Dear Members of the Public Consultation Commission,

Dear Commissioners,

These additional paragraphs are of a more general nature and less to do with the La Baie site and project specifically. Perhaps it may inspire and influence the Commission's attitudes in future consultations, including those for conceptualising and planning new areas for development in Montreal such as that between the Victoria and Champlain Bridges.

I have shared my Intervention text of 19 May with some of my colleagues and friends. One answered that she didn't agree with all I said and that she thought it better to concentrate the skyscrapers of the city in downtown so as to not wreck other parts of the city as well.

This got me thinking and I thought I would submit these thoughts herewith.

Indeed, there is something to be said about concentrating the high-rise buildings in a certain area of the city; in the case of Montreal the zoning regulations have been to concentrate these along the Boulevards René Lévesque and De Maisonneuve. Especially along the latter, there were many empty lots available after Montréal suffered as did so many cities, from the spate of destruction in downtown of the beautiful townhouses and mansions during the 1960s and '70s, and the dominant and successful forces of wanting above all else, rapid automobile mobility and enabling highways – surface, elevated and sunken or underground – to cut through existing neighbourhoods. In Montreal, many of these gashes are thankfully being lowered and repaired.

In the history of the development of Montreal, the commercial and financial center moved Northward and upward, leaving Old Montreal more or less intact after downtown moved to the Saint-Jacques Street area, and this area was also spared when moving up the hill to the Golden Mile district around Sherbrooke Street. However, in the last century, being hemmed in by the mountain and instead of moving the downtown to another area, the forces that chose to destroy the existing in order to build the new. So much of Montreal's extraordinary urban design and especially its wealth of exquisite architecture from the decades before and after 1900 were altered or replaced. This has been the fate of many cities, not only Montreal.

I thought, since you the Commissioners were interested in the situation in the Netherlands, that I would tell you of the case of Amsterdam. The belt of Amsterdam's famous canals – the Herengracht, Keizergrach, and Prinsengracht - enclosed by the Singelgracht

<https://www.dutchamsterdam.nl/canals>) were awarded World Heritage List status in 2010 to celebrate the 400th anniversary of their construction (<https://www.iamsterdam.com/en/about-amsterdam/overview/history-and-society/canal-ring/unesco-world-heritage-list>). These canals, and the beautiful architecture and spaces along and around them have brought the city its greatest source of revenue - through its attractiveness and its cultural offerings - its tourist attraction reputation and trade.

It was not always like this. After a century of degradation by poverty and overcrowding, by the 1950s Amsterdam was a bit of a cesspit. Many of its buildings were in tatters, it was considered passé and hopelessly awkward for modern life, and it was a place where residents with money had already fled, leaving the poor, the squatters and druggies who couldn't pay taxes. The city of Amsterdam still lives with its reputation from those days as being a city of easy access to drugs and the red-light district. However, the city was not saved by the city urban planners whose vision was to bulldoze main traffic arteries through the city to make it accessible, and to cover over many canals to ensure through traffic. This paving over of the then ubiquitous city canals happened in many Dutch cities, including The Hague where the city center has few left in its heart. In Amsterdam, they managed to do this along one now main road, the Weesperstraat, which tore a gash through the edge of the medieval city.

This woke up the people of Amsterdam with a shock and the city was saved by its citizenry. A number of rich bankers and other city prominents, and activists worked together to buy up rundown rooming houses and on the verge of collapse buildings, and renovated them. They did not see the task as saving individual buildings but whole city blocks, and together started the movement to revive the city, known as Stadsherstel Amsterdam (<https://stadsherstel.nl/en/organisation/our-story/>). In the following decades, the Stadsherstel movement has saved many cities throughout the country, keeping the old city hearts vital and well restored and maintained.

Since then, great attention and care is given to save the individual character of the individual Dutch city centers. The modern Dutch cities are one with their typical share of high-rise buildings but these are concentrated in specific areas, sparing the older neighbourhoods and their characteristic urban design features and architectural detailing and styles. In Amsterdam, the modern developments were first on the edges of the old city, and in the past decades in a whole new area behind *Centraal Station*, an area which not long before was a no-go area of the city as far as safety is concerned. In The Hague the new developments occur around its *Centraal Station* and spanning the sunken *Utrechtsebaan*.

The Dutch cities are every bit modern cities, but they have found a way to respect the heritage of the urban planning and the urban feel of older eras by giving them space to survive. They concentrate the new buildings and developments at a respectful distance. They live and let live.