

Memorandum

Development Project on the Site of the Former Philosophy College

MEMORANDUM

Submitted by Susan Nish and John Nolan
Avenue du Docteur-Penfield,
Montreal, Quebec

We are presenting this memorandum concerning the development project on the site of the former Philosophy College. We are enthusiastic Montrealers, and we have been living and enjoying living, adjacent to this property for the past seven years. We hear cardinals, chickadees, finches and robins in the tall leafy trees outside our windows. Every day we see young people playing sports, people going for strolls, walking their dogs or simply wandering the property. We've seen a fox run across the property in winter. It is truly a gem and we feel very strongly that it should remain so. Constructing 325 residential units in townhouses and on up to 9 storey buildings with over 600 underground parking spaces, is not the way to maintain this gem that is supposedly a protected part of Mount Royal Park.

Mount Royal Park came into being because something awful happened. A landowner on the slopes of the mountain clear-cut the trees from his large tract of land. There was a huge hue and cry and out of that came a plan by the city fathers, to create a park on Mount Royal for people to come to, to get fresh air. The thinking was that the wealthy people had country places to go and breathe fresh air --there was a lot of pollution back then -- but the average person had no place to go. That concern created our cherished Mount Royal, which opened in 1874. It has taken a great deal of effort to preserve and protect it from development as the available green space in Montreal has gradually disappeared.

In a city as developed as Montreal, creating new green space is almost impossible. Montreal already lags behind other large Canadian cities in hectares of green space per 1,000 people. On a ranking of green space in 22 of Canada's largest cities, Montreal placed 20th. Even the island of Montreal as a whole lacks sufficient green space. Total green space on the island is only 3.3% of the area, well below the minimum provincial and international standard of 8%. This project as planned is not about creating more green space, but rather eliminating what little we already have.

Memorandum

A number of years ago, ferme des noyers land passed remarkably easily into the hands of a private developer and a staggeringly dense pocket of homes were built on this formerly beautiful wooded land. This land was within the boundaries of Mount Royal.

For over 100 years the Sulpician Fathers held the property of the former Philosophical College and used it for religious and educational purposes. Then they leased it to Marianopolis College also for educational purposes. Being zoned for these purposes they have not paid property taxes. The burden of these unpaid taxes has been born by the citizens. It has not been treated like other private properties. This reflects our society's determination that its use serves the society as a whole.

While the Sulpician Fathers have the legal right to now sell the property and receive fair market value, that value should be determined within the same zoning restrictions that have absolved the Fathers from paying property taxes. To change the zoning restrictions from that of public institutions to allow its use for residential purposes, immediately restricts its affordability for educational purposes. Marianopolis College was prevented from adding another floor of classes on the roof of the gymnasium and from expanding their cafeteria because of zoning restrictions. Perhaps we would not be having this meeting today had they been allowed even these minor changes to accommodate their needs.

The project proposed for the site of the former Philosophy College is far too dense, takes up far too much of the open green spaces and restricts pedestrian views of the city. We want to stop this project as planned from happening.

We believe that if it cannot be used for educational purposes or to serve some other community need, the best idea is to allow the renovation of the present Philosophical College into high-end condominiums and maintain the present sports facility and soccer field as a community resource.