

**Milton-Parc Citizens Committee Supports the
Citizens of Cote des Neiges
Brief presented to the public hearings on the Namur-Jean- Talon Project on
housing convened by the OCPM**

December 14, 2009

Thank you for this opportunity to present the views of the citizens of Milton-Parc

First a word of history,

The Milton-Parc Citizens Committee was started in 1968 for the purpose of protecting our neighbourhood from the wholesale demolition of our houses, (most of which had heritage value), from the construction of a completely new urban landscape, and from the complete change of the demographic composition of the neighbourhood.

Twenty years later, after sit-ins, demonstrations, petitions, presentations of alternatives and the arrest of 52 citizens, we succeeded in saving two-thirds of the neighbourhood; establishing 22 co-ops and non-profit housing corporations, renovating all the housing within those two-thirds, and enabling all residents who wished to, to remain. We continue to live in our renovated homes at modest rents, and manage autonomously our own co-ops, and the land trust on which they sit. We represent a proud legacy.

The Milton-Parc cooperative project is a benefit not only to its residents, but to the city as a whole. It has kept a large part of the downtown east and west of the project (population 12,000) as a stable, safe, vibrant, demographically mixed and livable area. This area, which is the southern part of "Le Plateau", is an urban success, in part, because of the input and the demand to be heard, of the original and the current residents.

It is in that spirit that we present our brief, supporting the efforts of the Citizens of Cote des Neiges in their demands to have a say in what happens to their neighbourhood.

Any new urban plan in any part of a city has to do much more than make money for developers; it has to preserve history, maintain a demographic mix, encourage a vibrant street life, offer a mix of services; in other words, become a neighbourhood, safe, stable and livable. The residents who live in the area, that is in Cote des Neiges, have a great deal to offer in ensuring the success of this development.

Let me elaborate on one of these points; on the need for a demographic mix in any neighbourhood, old and new. I don't need to recall for anyone here the crying need for more social housing; and we support the organizations here who are calling for 20% of new units to be subsidized.(this 20% is a public policy in Vancouver).

No one item does more to stabilize the living conditions of any family than to have secure decent housing at costs the family can afford. This is particularly true for families on low income who find it very difficult to secure social housing. Think of the results. Such housing allows children to grow up in one home and one neighbourhood: same school, same friends, same group of adults who know them well; this results of which are to produce secure adults, who form strong bonds and attachments, who know what it means to be responsible for ones behavior because the members of a community pay attention to each other.

Secure housing pushes adults to take care of their homes because they will be there for a long time. And this housing gives residents the security and the time to become citizens, to be involved with their neighbors in the public life around them.

But it's not only low income people who benefit from Social Housing. WE ALL DO.

Think of the neighbourhoods that are the most stable in Montreal, where community organizations have roots and provide leadership: Milton-Parc, Mile End, N.D.G, Westmount, Pointe St-Charles, Verdun. These neighbourhoods support an income mix added in part by the presence of social housing which helps contribute to stability; there is little moving in and out and thus these are safe places for everyone to live.

Let me give you an example of Milton-Parc where I live.

Montreal is a safe, vibrant and comfortable city; and a major reason is that scattered everywhere in the city are residential neighbourhoods; large areas where people live, work nearby, shop and recreate often within walking or cycling distance.

The Milton-Parc community located right next to downtown is one of these neighbourhoods. And who benefits? We do, to be sure; but so does every citizen in the greater Montreal area.

Who are these citizens? Those from the West Island who come downtown to dine and walk safely through the neighbourhood to and from their parked cars or from the Metro; those of University level who wander everywhere at all hours (sometimes annoyingly!) and who feel safe; those teenagers who pour in and out of Kola Noté and #80 bus and whose parents know they don't have to worry; those seniors who freely visit each other in their homes or in the mall of La Cité.

This neighbourhood is culturally, socially, and economically vibrant and it is safe- and we all benefit. It is demographically mixed; subsidized housing adjacent to expensive condos, owners and renters, new immigrants and old timers, children and elderly, middle class, working class and poor. The mix makes our neighbourhood safe.

Why is this so?

Various populations of residents present a variety of lifestyles. Some people go the cottage on the week-end, others have no choice but to stay in town; some sit out on their front steps, some are always inside or doing a BBQ in the back. The presence of

residents socializing and watching their children on the street all summer makes the neighbourhood safe for everyone.

That's why I repeat again the position of the Milton-Parc Citizens Committee that a demographic mix -- that is a variety of different residents -- makes a strong, safe, secure neighbourhood that benefits everyone who lives there; and our strong recommendations are that this principle be guaranteed with 20% of all units as subsidized social housing.

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President

Lucia Kowaluk is a member of five boards of directors which are social housing osbls and coops, and is also on the board of directors of the Institut de politique alternatives de Montreal.