

Mémoire sur le projet particulier d'urbanisme dans Saint-Raymond et aux abords du CUSM

Prepared by Melanie Stuy

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Supported by the following residents of St. Raymond's - Jessie Evans, Yvette Salina, Maxime Denoncourt, Sharon Sweeney (resident of N.D.G.)

1. Upper Lachine Tunnel

First and foremost, I want to express that I am against the Upper Lachine Tunnel being closed. The neighbourhood of St. Raymond's is already isolated by the train tracks and access to the neighbourhood has long been defined by a problematic, isolated tunnels. Closing Upper Lachine will add another isolated, empty tunnel to a neighbourhood that already suffers from limited accessibility. It was recommended in the OCPM in 2005 that the Upper Lachine Tunnel remain open and this recommendation was clearly not followed by the city planners. Also, the city claims that this decision was made five years ago in consultation with the public. I think that there was a problem with this consultation process, as many citizens didn't know about it. It must not have been properly promoted and citizen participation was clearly not encouraged enough.

If the city insists on closing the tunnel, perhaps they could consider keeping one lane open in each direction for buses and emergency vehicles as people are concerned about their access and the time that will be added to their trip to the Vendome Metro Station.

The other issue regarding the closing of the Upper Lachine Tunnel is the issue of safety. If the tunnel is closed a very large dead zone will be left stretching from Decarie and Upper Lachine all the way to Addington and Upper Lachine. No one lives in this area, there are no residences or businesses and if the tunnel is closed there will be very little traffic. The city plans to keep the tunnel open to pedestrians and cyclists and create "a unique space" on the St. Raymond side of the tunnel. I believe this space could be animated during the day, but a space this large and this empty is going to be very difficult to animate at night. I think this raises a huge issue of security for pedestrians, especially women, teenagers and children about how safety in this area will be guaranteed after dark. The issue of safety and security is not just in regard to negotiating an empty tunnel, but the dead space that will continue for several blocks after the tunnel on Upper Lachine.

As bad an idea as I believe closing the tunnel is for our community, I have nevertheless tried to come up with ideas to animate the 'unique space' that will be created after the tunnel is closed. I think that in order to animate this space during the day, in the evening, in summer and in winter, whatever is created there will have to have more than one purpose and be able to attract a diverse group of people. See this link - a public space should have 10 reasons for people to be there: <http://www.pps.org/reference/the-power-of-10/>. I have had many conversations and brainstorming sessions with people

in community groups and other residents about what could go in that space. Here are the suggestions of things I would like to see in that space:

A community food centre including a community restaurant, green house, offices, meeting rooms and a community kitchen for community organizations working in food security (see Concepte Cuisine Sante submitted by Sonya Girard) The restaurant could be open late and look out over a skating rink in winter and in summer a space that could function as an outdoor amphitheatre for performances and also as a space for outdoor dancing. Hot chocolate could be sold in winter and ice cream could be sold in summer. People working at the hospital could bike to the restaurant for lunch. The unique nature of this project would attract people from other parts of NDG to come to St. Raymond's. This project would also address needs in the community for affordable community space. Perhaps this community space could include an art hive, a small library and a gallery space. Perhaps a long with a skating rink, amphitheatre and space for outdoor dancing, the space could be brightened by adding lights e.g. a light park to brighten up the space. Perhaps the possibility of a solar powered light park could be explored. This amphitheatre/skating rink/dance space could also be used for a farmer's market on Saturday's, outdoor yoga classes, tai chi, hip hop dance classes for kids, outdoor story time, storytelling, a day for neighbourhood artists to come and do some live painting and exhibit their work - the possibilities of how to animate such a space could be endless. This community space, including a community restaurant, greenhouse and arthive could be run as a social economy project and could employ people in the neighbourhood, including students and youth. At least some combination of these suggestions should be included in the space as they all address important community needs and would make a space that is problematic and hard to animate, dynamic, creative and attractive.

Models already exist for a community food centre and greenhouse in Toronto. See the following link: <http://www.thestop.org>.

Models also already exist for arthives - See <http://www.mcconnellfoundation.ca/en/programs/granting-database/grant/la-ruche-dart>.

Another interesting possibility for an art hive is that it could partner with the hospital and/or other institutions - schools etc. providing pop up art hives - materials are brought in from the main art hive to these institutions. This could be especially interesting for patients with limited mobility.

The Fraser Hickson has just recently launched a mini library project that could provide books for a small library.

Also see Sonya Girard's submission - Concepte Cuisine Sante

Finally perhaps some community generated and created mosaic murals could encourage people to use the Upper Lachine tunnel and come and visit this community space and the neighbourhood of St. Raymond's.

Mosaic Mural Examples: <http://www.philadelphiamagicgardens.org/>

Perhaps the artist who created these murals in Philadelphia could be invited to come and help us create our own community mural here.

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Here also are some links to a giant puppet show put on by the Cheap Art Collective at the Action Communiterre harvest party last year. Again with support, these type of community events could take place more frequently and shown in an amphitheatre space.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ojbKnm049SI>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7hyVea0_al

One of the unique aspects of these puppet shows is that it is easy for community members to participate.



Here also is an example of a really interesting water park in Chicago:

The face is a projection and the expression changes as does the flow of the water. This could be another use for the space in summer.



Example of a light park.

And what about some pianos for public use as was done on the plateau?

2. Decreasing the isolation of St. Raymond's, attracting people to the neighbourhood and revitalizing Upper Lachine.

I thought a lot about how to attract visitors to the neighbourhood and how to revitalize Upper Lachine. We have a very unique neighbourhood with a 'village' feeling that could be developed more. We have a strong Italian community, a strong artistic community and also a diverse multicultural community of immigrants. I think with all these different groups there is a great deal of potential that needs to be brought out and celebrated.

Some older Italian people in the neighbourhood have often told me about how in the past there used to be a street fair on Upper Lachine and the whole street was shut down for a day. Maybe this street fair could be brought back but with a more multicultural spirit that would allow the diverse groups in the neighbourhood to share their culture and traditions.

Maybe this event could be combined with arts week NDG, giving neighbourhood artists, musician, and youth space to share their creative expression.

Again, the neighbourhood needs community space and if a community restaurant/ archive/library-neighbourhood gallery couldn't be built near the Upper Lachine Tunnel, there are certainly enough empty store fronts on Upper Lachine that could become a home to at least some combination of these elements. This building has been sitting empty for about two years and would make a great space for a community cafe with an archive/gallery space/ small library. It's location close to the park is ideal. Perhaps the city could look into purchasing a building and helping the community to develop it. I think there are people in the community who are capable and ready to lead such a project with some guidance and support.

I think to attract more visitors and potential residents to St. Raymond's, the neighbourhood has to offer something unique and different from other neighbourhoods.



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I think another way to revitalize Upper Lachine would be to allow some of the neighbourhood restaurants to create outdoor/sidewalk terraces so that people could eat and sit outside. This would make the street more lively and friendly.

Another way to brighten the street would be to paint telephone poles and plant flowers around the base of them. Maybe this type of activity could be done in partnership with Action Communiterre or EcoQuartier and with the participation of the kids at the Community Centre. Here are some examples of painted telephone poles that I saw in a neighbourhood in Victoria B.C.



Contests could even be organized for best designs. This would brighten up the street and maybe even attract people to the neighbourhood - a neighbourhood art tour could be organized as part of Artsweek NDG.



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Outdoor Pizza Ovens

This idea already exists in Dufferin Grove Park in Toronto.

Three times a week at lunch time families can come and make their own pizza in outdoor pizza ovens using fresh natural ingredients from community/collective gardens. The cost is \$3 per pizza. I think there is a fairly unused area in St. Georges Pierre Park behind the older kids' playground that already has picnic tables installed and is nice and shady. It would be a perfect spot for an activity like this in summer and I'm sure with the new waterpark, an activity like this would attract families.

Link for Dufferin Grove Park website:

<http://dufferinpark.ca/home/wiki/wiki.php>



Dufferin Grove Park also has a campfire pit. This fire pit can be rented out for group events but a permit from the fire department is needed. Outdoor cooking classes for kids are also offered. I think this could be an interesting experience for inner city kids who don't have the opportunity to go camping. There could also be storytelling nights that could be organized around a campfire.



Dufferin Grove Park also boasts a community built Cobb refreshment stand and the traditional skating shed in the park is used in the summer to house a puppet theatre that organizes outdoor shows.



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Garden of Thyme - A collective garden that is one of Action Communiterre's network of gardens. This garden was created for families with young children and is an important community space that must be preserved. The garden is on CSDM property and there is talk that the annex St. Raymond will be rebuilt and reopened in the future. I feel it is important for the garden to be incorporated into the new design for the school. Action Communiterre is currently working on developing and getting funding to create a series of garden workshops for schools. I think that the garden could be easily incorporated into the school and that would create all kinds of possibilities for integrating school and gardening activities and the garden could still be kept open for collective gardening sessions for the community. Also since the school is going to be rebuilt, why not incorporate a greenhouse into the plan. Action Communiterre has needed a greenhouse for a long time and there are again many possibilities for integrating greenhouse activities with school curriculum. Other neighbourhood schools could also visit and participate in activities there.

Last year, in cooperation with Arts Week NDG, the Garden of Thyme organized an outdoor gallery. Moms in the garden took photos of their kids in the gardening all through the summer. Photos were chosen through a collective voting process and hung in the garden for the day.



Kids also created art projects that were hung in the Melrose tunnel to brighten it up and to welcome people from above the tracks to our neighbourhood. This event attracted 90 people to the garden and to the neighbourhood. It was organized by two neighbourhood moms with very little support or resources. It would be great if this could become an annual event. I also think the potential of using the Melrose Tunnel as a space to exhibit neighbourhood art could be explored. I also think a neighbourhood school would be good for the community, as long as the garden is preserved.



3. Improving Connections with the rest of NDG

One thing that definitely emerged in the discussions about St. Raymond's was the need to improve the connections with the rest of NDG. e.g. The Melrose Tunnel and Girouard. Other people are submitting briefs with ideas on how to improve the tunnel so I won't cover that in too much detail. I just want to be clear that I also feel the tunnel needs to be improved and support the suggestions made by others. I would just like the possibility of creating an underground gallery space to be explored. As for Girouard Street - I think it should be kept two ways, especially if Upper Lachine is going to be closed so the people of St. Raymond's can have one access to the upper part of NDG. I also think the speed limit on the street needs to be lowered, as it is a residential street and it especially should be lowered in front of NDG school. As the hospital will be bringing more traffic into our neighbourhood, it is imperative that measures be taken to protect pedestrians, residents and children. Please also see the memoir of Maxime Denoncourt.

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4. Pedestrian/Bike Bridge

We were also very disappointed to hear that the city has decided not to install a bike bridge over the Decarie/DeMaisonneuve intersection. The presentation that the city gave and the reasons why they were against it were not satisfactory. I had the impression they were just blowing it off without having really given it serious consideration. According to the current plan, all the bikes will be going in front of Vendome metro, where buses, cars, pedestrians etc will all be using the same space. There is much less traffic behind the metro especially since pedestrians and transit users will be accessing the hospital by underground tunnels. We were told that there isn't space there and the problem is there are several shareholders - the ATM, STCUM and the MUHC and I think also CP and none of them want to make compromises about the space that would allow this bike path to be built. This is very disappointing and not very forward thinking. The self interest of these organizations, and their refusal to compromise and negotiate, is at the expense of the safety of citizens. I am including a picture of a pedestrian bridge in China, where citizens are literally lifted right out of the traffic to show that such solutions are possible. I also found it interesting that none of the drawings presented by the city had any cars in them. These drawings are more than misleading as the hospital is projected to bring 7000 more cars per day to the area.



5. Affordable Community Space

The eviction of the NDG Food Depot is, to me, one of the first signs of the gentrification we can expect to see as a result of the hospital. There is already a crisis of affordable, accessible community space in the borough. Action Communiterre is paying a high rent, and I'm sure other community groups are suffering as well. The community groups in NDG do incredible, important work on shoestring budgets. Their impact on the quality of life in the neighbourhood is immeasurable. Something needs to be done now to ensure affordable space so that these groups can continue to carry out their missions. Whether it is a community food centre, community restaurant, office spaces, meeting rooms, a greenhouse, a multicultural art space or some combination of these things, it is of the utmost importance that this need is addressed - in consultation with the organizations themselves and with the space coalition at the NDG Community Council.

6. Densification of St. Ray's

In order to support a school and the revitalization of Upper Lachine, and as another impact of the hospital it seems inevitable that St. Raymond's will have to densify. What kind of densification do we want? I would not like St. Raymond's to become the next condo land. I think if densification takes place, it should respect the unique character and social needs of the neighbourhood, and should be done in consultation with residents. There was also talk about building housing on the Falaise St. Jacques and changing the zoning code. I think this could be an improvement for St. Jacques in the long run, making it less industrial but I think that access to and views of the falaise should be preserved and this should not be developed as a wall of housing. I also want to say that any new developments in St. Raymond's should be better designed, of better quality and more attractive than the condos built on Upper Lachine and the electric wires should be buried under the ground, according to what I believe is code. They should also include underground parking to allow adequate green space for gardens and space for children to play. Again, consultation with residents is essential to ensure that new developments follow proper standards, since as this development on Upper Lachine demonstrates, we can't trust the city to enforce them.

7. The Falaise St. Jacques

I think access to the Falaise could be improved. I realize the the Falaise is delicate and there is risk of erosion so any potential uses for the space would have to have minimal impact. I am wondering if it would be possible to have some walking trails in summer and cross country ski trails in winter. Since it is a microclimate, perhaps some nature trails with signs that point out it's unique features could be created. I am also wondering about the possibility of an edible forest being created on a part of it. Here is a link for a similar project in Seattle: <http://www.takepart.com/article/2012/02/21/its-not-fairytale-seattle-build-nations-first-food-forest> . I think an edible forest would be a unique project that would again attract people to the neighbourhood and perhaps even draw

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ecotourists. Maybe ecotourism is something that could be developed as a social economy project in NDG in cooperation with Action Communiterre and its collective gardens and also with the community gardens. Other urban agriculture projects such as an edible forest and greenhouse could be included in this initiative.

8. The Consultation Process

On the whole I thought the consultation process was a worthwhile experience, but I saw some problems. Citizen participation at the OCPM was limited by several factors. I was one of the only residents that participated in the work group. Work sessions were held during hours when most people have to work. I was lucky to have a flexible schedule. Also, the entire process probably took about 60 hours of my volunteer time. Many of the other people participating in the work group were paid. I also had questions about the groups that were represented and the groups that weren't. I felt some community groups should have been included and wonder if the time commitment was also restrictive for some of those groups. I am also concerned about the next steps. What is going to happen to all these ideas and suggestions that have been collected? Is there going to be follow up and continued consultation? Are the ideas and suggestions of citizens going to be appropriated by paid city or elected officials or is there going to be continued consultation and credit and respect given to citizens for their work? Many decisions affecting St. Raymond's had already been made before the consultation. People were told that consultations on these decisions had already taken place, yet public knowledge of these consultations seemed to be lacking. I think the city has to improve their consultation processes and do more to promote them and encourage citizens to participate. Even this consultation was promoted more by citizens and community groups than by the city. It is my sincere hope that this consultation process will be continued, that the recommendations will be followed and that we will see some positive results.