

Future of Parc Jean-Drapeau Proposal

Submitted to the Montréal Office of Public Consultation (OCPM)
October 3, 2018

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Introduction

More than 50 years ago, American polymath [Buckminster Fuller](#) anticipated the need for integrative approaches to “sustainable development.” He developed numerous experiential approaches to address the interconnected challenges facing humanity, the most ambitious of which was his original proposal for the Expo ‘67 US Pavilion.

Expo ‘67 was a landmark event in Canadian history that established Montreal internationally as a leader in science, innovation, architecture and fashion. The iconic geodesic dome that housed the U.S. pavilion became a symbol of the exposition, a bold demonstration and expression of human possibility and potential. Today, the structure still embodies and inspires some of the original spirit and sense of wonder that visitors to the exposition felt.

The [Buckminster Fuller Institute](#) (BFI) is honored to submit this brief document for the public consultation concerning the future of Parc Jean-Drapeau. From 2014-2016, BFI collaborated with and presented to a number of Montreal-based organizations about possible futures of the US Pavilion structure, as reflected in the *Geoscope: Scenario for the recognition of the Buckminster Fuller geodesic dome in Montreal* proposal presented to the OCPM by the Society for Arts and Technologies.

This brief reiterates our support for the direction outlined in the Geoscope proposal. It also emphasizes our encouragement and support for any organizations working to include the values of integrity, transparency, collaboration, enchantment, innovation embodied by the US Pavilion within Parc Jean-Drapeau’s strategic planning process.

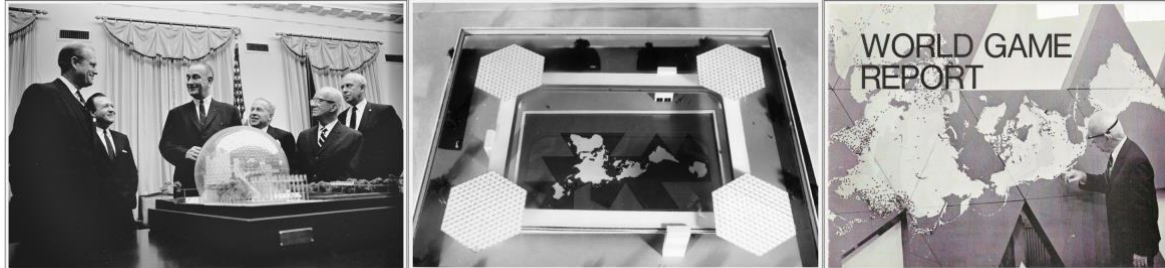


Image credits: LBJ Presidential Library, Southern Illinois University Libraries, Daniel Gildesgame and Herbert Matter

The Vision: A Center for Planetary Innovation

In addition to its iconic dome structure, the US Pavilion was originally proposed by Fuller to be an immersive environment enabling visitors to better understand Spaceship Earth's interconnected systems. He proposed interactive exhibits to dynamically visualize satellite imagery, scientific data, and animated scenarios of global resources, behaviors, trends and vital needs. He envisioned it as a global gathering place for playing the "World Game" - instead of war games - in which computing and display technologies would be used to integrate knowledge across disciplines and design a world that works for 100% of humanity. Fuller encouraged collaborations between designers, scientists, artists, citizens, policy makers and other players willing to engage in the development of collaborative strategies, and synergistic ecologies to create a world where all can project into the future with confidence.

Today, this innovative vision is remarkably aligned with Montreal's leadership and aspiration in the fields of design, sustainable development, innovation, and technology. Significant investments have already been made by the Canadian government in the Biosphere environment museum, renovating the US Pavilion structure and internal buildings. It is well-positioned to now be expanded into a center for planetary innovation, research, and education to reinvent the spirit of Expo 67 for the 21st century.

Drawing on the expertise and high calibre of educational institutions, scientific talent, and interdisciplinary innovators present in Montreal, this center has the potential of becoming an international hub of innovation that will attract attention, researchers and visitors from around the world. This can be accomplished by hosting labs, workshops, exhibits, conferences, and installations supporting the sustainable development goals of Parc Jean-Drapeau, the City of Montreal, and the global community.

This center of planetary innovation would provide a place to explore ideas and processes across disciplines: design, science, art, technology, engineering, and the humanities. It would aim to create innovative thinking tools and processes to help people to more effectively understand and transform complex, interconnected systems. Integrating immersive environments, interactive

data visualization and co-design techniques to facilitate collaborations across sectors, disciplines and institutions. Instead of examining problems of isolation, it would explore networks, relations and exchanges between the embedded systems at different scales, in order to reveal the hidden logic of effective intervention strategies. We see this is a critical shift in approach, from a problem-driven to process-driven paradigm.

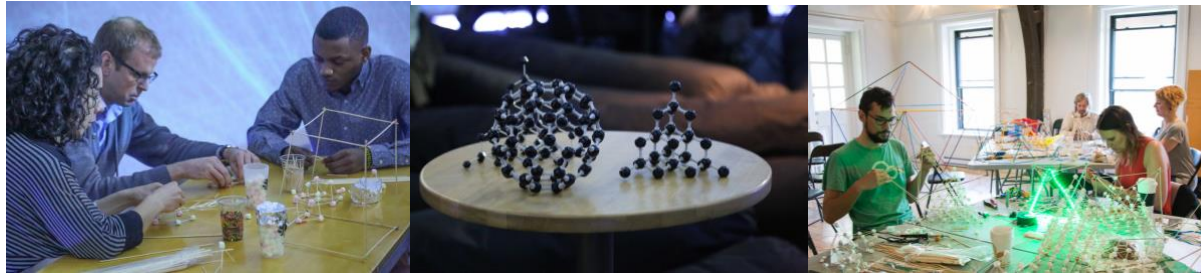


Image credits: Kurt Przybilla

Labs and Workshops: Cooperating with Nature

Fuller designed the Expo '67 dome using the principles of his [synergetic geometry](#), and to this day the geodesic dome is the only structure known that grows stronger as it grows larger. The structure is a demonstration of “doing more with less” through design, enclosing the maximum amount of space with a minimal amount of materials.

BFI and its partners have developed a number of labs and workshops that could be developed for regular presentation at the Montreal Dome. In 2016, we assisted with the development of a Geometry of Thinking workshop at the SAT for McGill University’s Innovation Week (see images above). We also collaborated with the US Embassy and Montreal-based entrepreneur, innovation, and technology organizations to co-design and host the 3-day [Buckython](#) digital arts hackathon.

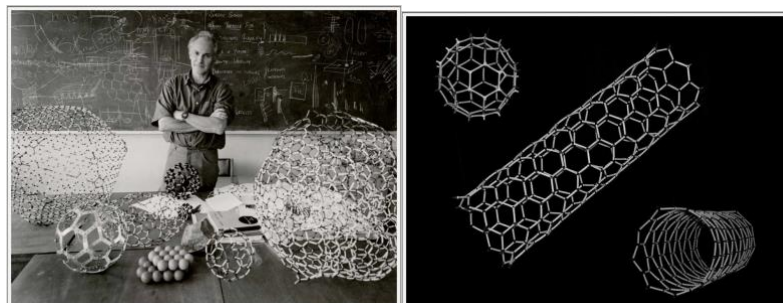


Image credits: Anne-Katrin Prukiss, TheFutureOfThings.com

Exhibits and Conferences: Design + Science

The Expo '67 dome is an ideal environment for hosting exhibits and conferences about the types of sustainable innovations that BFI has identified through its [Buckminster Fuller Challenge](#). These projects demonstrate the radical benefits of integrating design and science, showing how humanity can become a beneficial keystone species by applying nature's regenerative principles to existential challenges currently facing humanity. Exhibits and conferences could be focused on these and similar initiatives developing sustainable innovations such as circular manufacturing, green architecture, clean energy, and ecological regeneration.

Furthermore, these principles are embodied within the structural integrity of the Expo '67. While this icon has served as a source of visual inspiration for many, few know that it actually inspired a Nobel-prize winning discovery. Chemist Harry Kroto credits his visit to the US pavilion during Expo '67 with an insight that won his team the Nobel prize for their discovery of Carbon 60 (for details, see Kroto's essay [An Arts Project Uncovering an Important Scientific Advance](#)). The discovery was named the [buckminsterfullerene](#) in honor of Fuller, and in 2012 NASA discovered massive quantities of "buckyballs" in outer space flowing out of [exploding stars](#). The buckminsterfullerene remains one of the strongest molecules known and is the foundation of [nanotechnology](#). This remarkable history provides ample material for exhibits and conferences to inspire a new generation to explore and discover the inspiring principles of Fuller's synergetic geometry.

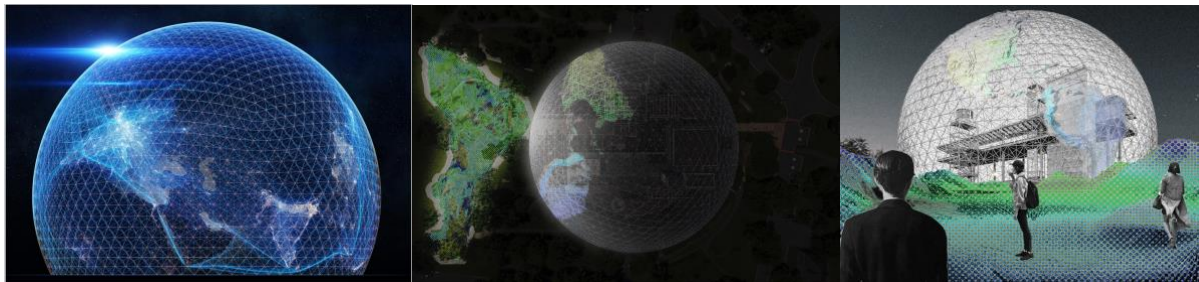


Image credits: Globaia / Felix Pharand-Deschênes, Jonathon Keats / wHY

Installations: Art + Technology

Fuller developed many of his concepts and designs in collaboration with artists and architects, including the US Pavilion and Geoscope. Artists have long been attracted to the Expo 67 dome, including the original artistic intervention of [Robert Duchesnay](#) that served as a catalyst for its preservation. Today, it is well-suited to become an exhibit space of international renown, in which artists and technologies from around the world would be invited to explore the dome and surrounding environments as a canvas. BFI has received proposals from artists interested in this possibility, such as Jonathon Keats' [Metroscope](#) proposal inspired by Fuller's original Geoscope vision.



Image credits: Bruce Hamilton, The North Face

Potential Sponsorships

BFI has also formed a partnership with [The North Face](#), with whom Fuller worked in the 1970s to design their iconic dome tents. The North Face has expressed interest in sponsoring the development of exhibits, installations, and other programming at the Montreal Dome. As a company, their communications and marketing are primarily focused on the theme of both physical and imaginative exploration, and they believe the Montreal Dome exemplifies the exploratory spirit. If this is determined to be of interest, we will work with them to explore the possibilities.

BFI also has strategic relationships with other Fortune 500 companies and foundations, so additional sponsorships for specific exhibits and installations may be possible.

Conclusion

The Buckminster Fuller Institute encourages connecting the spirit and sustainable development goals of Parc Jean-Drapeau's strategic plan to the history and future of the Expo '67 US Pavilion, arguably the most famous architectural icon of Montreal. Transforming the facility into a world-class center of planetary innovation would inspire a new generation through the integration of research, creation and education.

We are deeply grateful for this opportunity to present these ideas to the OCPM. We commend the SPD's open and transparent process for submitting ideas for the future of the Parc.



About BFI

The Buckminster Fuller Institute (www.bfi.org) is dedicated to accelerating the identification, development, and deployment of strategies which radically advance human well being and the health, resilience, and regeneration of Earth's ecosystems. BFI offers innovative programs that provide comprehensive and anticipatory perspectives on the interconnected challenges and opportunities facing humanity, engage leading thinkers and practitioners demonstrating whole systems strategies addressing complex problems.

Authors/Contact

Dr. David McConville, BFI Board Chair
Kurt Przybilla, BFI Senior Advisor

contact@bfi.org