

Directional Statement, The Ville de Montréal Heritage Policy

“Memory is vital to creativity: that holds true for individuals and for peoples, who find in their heritage — natural and cultural, tangible and intangible — the key to their identity and the source of their inspiration.”

— UNESCO

Note: This text is a translation of the summary version of the full *Énoncé d'orientation* in French. Both the summary and full versions may be viewed at www.ville.montreal.qc.ca/patrimoine.

Following the Montréal Summit in 2002, the city committed to mapping out and implementing a heritage policy. That commitment was reaffirmed in October 2003 when Montréal played host to the 8th World Conference of Historical Cities and adopted the Montréal Declaration at the close of the event. Against this backdrop, the Executive Committee appointed an advisory group to produce an *Énoncé d'orientation* (Directional Statement) as a guide for the city's development of a heritage policy, to be submitted for public consultation before adoption by City Council.

This summary version lists the key elements of the full *Énoncé d'orientation pour la politique du patrimoine de la Ville de Montréal* and contains its unabridged recommendations. The *Énoncé* was presented by Gretta Chambers, journalist, Chancellor Emerita of McGill University and Chair of the Advisory Group, to Francine Sénécal, Vice-President of the Ville de Montréal Executive Committee, Responsible for Culture and Heritage.

The *Énoncé* is a broad policy statement that aims to make heritage a lever for the Island's cultural, social and economic development, and to ensure that concern for heritage issues becomes an indispensable component of all the city's major endeavours.

Three principles guided the Advisory Group in its work :

- Promote the preservation, presentation and interpretation of Montréal's heritage, in its multiple forms, from a perspective of sustainable development and inclusiveness;
- Make these forms of heritage accessible to citizens as well as visitors to the city;
- Pass on these forms of heritage to future generations.

The directions suggested by the Advisory Group are grouped according to the five main facets of heritage action: development, awareness, ownership, preservation and management. To these are added several current issues of primary importance.

1. What is heritage?

First of all, the concept of heritage itself must be defined: far from being “frozen,” this concept has become considerably enriched over time.

Heritage is above all the testimonial of a community, its origins and its achievements. It is a unifying force that binds that community together and helps give it support in a constantly changing world.

A number of types of heritage must now be added to the notion of built heritage (which is both ancient and modern and also includes public spaces; e.g., streets, parks, subway stations, street furniture). These include natural, archeological, industrial, scientific, technical, maritime and riverside heritage—not to mention so-called intangible heritage, which asserts the living, human dimension of heritage, and is an aspect that must not be ignored.

The Advisory Group chose to use the following definition, put forward by the *Conseil du patrimoine de Montréal*:

“Heritage means any asset or group of assets, natural or cultural, tangible or intangible, that a community recognizes for its value as witness to history and memory, while emphasizing the need to safeguard and protect it, make it their own, develop it and disseminate it.” (Free translation)

Natural heritage includes :

- Natural settings of physical, biological and hydrographic origin;
- Geological and physiographic formations, and strictly delimited zones that are endangered species habitats;
- Strictly delimited natural sites or zones.

Tangible cultural heritage includes :

- Moveable heritage: artistic creations, works of popular culture, archives, private and public collections, ethnological items, street furniture, commemorative or funerary monuments;
- Built heritage: groupings of isolated or joined constructions; archeological elements or structures; sites: works of humans or combinations of works of humans and of nature, called cultural landscapes; industrial heritage.

Intangible cultural heritage includes:

- The practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and know-how that communities and groups acknowledge as being part of their cultural heritage;
- Toponymy: place-naming operations.

2. Montréal, Heritage City

There is no doubt that, by its history and geographical location, Montréal is distinctive among North American cities.

The city was founded in First Nations territory at the exact spot where upriver navigation of the St. Lawrence became impossible. Beginning in 1850, and for close to a century, it was the major industrial centre in Canada. Today it is a vital centre of *La Francophonie* and remains an important economic, scientific and intellectual hub.

Montréal is also one of the rare North American metropolises to still bear tangible signs of the 17th and 18th centuries. The city as a whole reflects the influence of three major civilizations: French, British and American.

Although great strides have been taken to preserve heritage in Montréal, that heritage remains under constant threat from, among other things, demolition, questionable urban planning, the forces of nature, ignorance and neglect. Apathy also plays a role.

What is needed for the effective defence of heritage in Montréal, after the fashion of that conducted in other great metropolises of the world, is for the city to show exemplary leadership, and for the right combination of enforcement and incentive measures to be deployed.

THE GROUP RECOMMENDS that, as part of its heritage policy, the Ville de Montréal demonstrate exemplary leadership in all aspects of the preservation and presentation of its natural and cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible; i.e., those aspects related to development, awareness, ownership, preservation and management.

3. Development

An object, a place or an element of knowledge is not part of heritage in and of itself; it becomes so via the meaning ascribed to it.

The process of heritage development is neither a uniform nor a linear one. It is a dynamic process of public debate and opposition of points of view; an approach whereby society is able to state what it views to be the essential aspects of its heritage.

Because the process is so dynamic, the interactions involved so complex, and the resulting decisions so often irreversible, it is absolutely essential for a city such as Montréal to remain committed to the highest possible degree of transparency and accountability when it comes to heritage. We must also emphasize most strongly the role of its most important independent advisory organization, the *Conseil du patrimoine de Montréal*.

Public perception of heritage and its importance, management, and acquired expertise all vary from one borough of Metropolitan Montréal to the next. For this reason, the city must ensure that heritage values are recognized throughout its territory. It should also reactivate and standardize procedures for the listing of buildings and creation of heritage sites indicated in the *Cultural Property Act*.

THE GROUP RECOMMENDS that the Ville de Montréal :

- Seek support from the vital forces of its population, the many public- and private-sector players with a stake in natural and cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, and the expert opinions of its many cultural, university and other institutions in promoting the value of heritage, in all its forms and expressions;
- Ensure, across its entire territory and in every borough, an understanding and a shared acknowledgement of the essential values and positive impacts of heritage, and see to it that these goals are made part of its urban plan and related bylaws, and of all of its programs;
- Store in a central database all studies and research on heritage and related fields commissioned by it or its organizations, include in that database work of the same type conducted by the other two levels of government, by universities and by other institutions, and enter into all partnerships necessary for achieving this.

4. Awareness

For heritage to be properly presented, respected and preserved, it must be uppermost in people's minds.

Fully meeting the challenge of heritage awareness means reaching those citizens who rarely, if ever, visit museums, heritage sites, and the like – including young people and new Montrealers. It also means extending the proper support to the 100 or so community and other groups devoted to heritage presentation.

Any awareness-raising initiative must be grounded in a clear, organized and synergistic vision of the city's actions.

THE GROUP RECOMMENDS that the Ville de Montréal :

- Entrust a larger part of the responsibility for disseminating knowledge of heritage in all its forms, and the stakes involved, to neighbourhood libraries, *Maisons de la culture*, museum institutions, recreational facilities and other such venues;
- Develop, by working closely with heritage stakeholders in Montréal, awareness-raising strategies whereby they can share the responsibility for the various components of the city's heritage so as to strengthen the sense of shared community identity within the new metropolitan structure, set up a directional and resource centre for developing these strategies, and rely in large part on new technologies in doing so;
- Lend the proper support to the institutions, organizations and players involved in raising awareness of natural and cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible;
- Provide a more sustained response to the needs for stability and operability among the community groups involved in the heritage issue.

5. Ownership

A focus on ownership means subscribing to the fundamental value that is respecting the will of citizens as part of a participative approach to urban planning, and acknowledging the collective role of citizens and the groups they form to make their voices heard. Their perception of heritage must be a determining factor governing any action in this area.

Being mindful of ownership also means ensuring equilibrium between private and public interests by, among other things, ensuring the physical and economical accessibility of certain sites.

THE GROUP RECOMMENDS that the Ville de Montréal :

- Acknowledge that public ownership is a fundamental basis for the recognition and preservation of heritage in all its forms;
- Be receptive to any desire for ownership on the part of individuals or groups;
- Provide encouragement and assistance in heritage management and presentation, pursuant to a shared vision, to individuals, communities, and heritage stakeholders in both the public and private sectors;
- Create conditions that will ensure that encouragement and assistance will be sufficient at the level of the boroughs as well as of central services, and ensure fluid communication and collaboration among all municipal players involved;
- Emphasize the public character and the transparency of the decision-making process in matters related to heritage, both directly and indirectly, and ensure that sufficient independent experts are included among the advisory groups empowered to provide counsel in these matters.

6. Preservation

There are five distinct areas of preservation activity :

- Built heritage, archeology, landscapes, sites, public art;
- Collections of artifacts (e.g., paintings, sculpture, photographs, pieces of equipment, means of transportation, advertising materials);
- Documents and archives;
- Intangible heritage; and
- The full range of measures taken to protect heritage against damage and degradation.

The key to conservation of heritage wealth (e.g., buildings and other constructions, works of public art), working landscapes (e.g., cemeteries) and other sites is not to “freeze them in time,” but to apply the proper urban development strategies. Success here depends on four types of stakeholders:

- The private sector;
- Public and parapublic bodies;

- Community associations as awareness-raisers, facilitators and originators of group initiatives; and
- Educational institutions, for knowledge development and training.

The new Urban Plan, which will cover the entire Island of Montréal, will be a major tool for the city in making heritage a lever for social, cultural and economic development.

Museums are the frontline players in the preservation and presentation of artifacts. The city's support of these institutions must be revisited, and refocused according to clear objectives. For its part, the city itself should develop its own collection of artworks. As concerns archives, which are the repository of collective and individual memory, far too few owners of cultural documents are aware that they can entrust their preservation to an archival service. Lastly, inventories should be compiled to ensure the survival of so-called intangible heritage, rooted in tradition and transmitted either orally or by imitation, and which takes on multiple forms, especially in a city characterized by cultural diversity (Montréal is home to some 80 ethnocultural communities).

THE GROUP RECOMMENDS that the Ville de Montréal :

- Assert, and enshrine as part of its guiding principles, its willingness to fashion heritage wealth into a lever for social, cultural and economic development, and to ensure that heritage is a factor that is automatically considered in the full range of decision making;
- Be increasingly mindful, in its planning, regulatory and other procedures, of the preservation and presentation of heritage in all its forms;
- Ensure that its Urban Plan, as well as its complementary documentation, which by their very essence are an indispensable communications tool, give pride of place to heritage preservation and presentation as the favoured levers for urban development, renewal, development and redevelopment planning and action across its entire territory;
- Acknowledge the need to develop, in dynamic and appropriate fashion, its municipal collection of archives and works of art, consolidate its inventories, and ensure their safety;
- Recognize the central role played by Montréal's museums, clarify municipal museological objectives with them, and specify the extent of the role it intends to play in development of the museum network; and further acknowledge the specific nature and needs of museum institutions that come more directly under the city's authority;
- Facilitate constitution of a network of Montréal archival centres and enhance public access to heritage wealth in these centres by encouraging the digitization of collections and creating specialized information technology sites;
- Ensure the survival of intangible heritage by encouraging Montrealers to make it their own in the widest possible sense, and to this end deploy strategies founded on assessment of the potential for interpretation activities or cultural events and their significance for Montréal audiences.

7. Managing heritage

To be meaningful, heritage management must be firmly rooted in, and form an integral part of, a holistic approach to city management. It must also be expressed on two levels: that of obligation, i.e., the making of bylaws and other types of formal regulation; and that of joint action and persuasion, which includes all facets of heritage awareness, dissemination and ownership, assistance to citizens, and networking with heritage stakeholders as well as partnerships of various kinds that the city may enter into as part of its heritage preservation mission.

There are various stakeholders at different levels who have a voice in heritage management in Montréal:

Municipal level : The city can act directly on built heritage through urban planning and enactment of bylaws, via dissemination and awareness-raising operations, through its support of community groups, and by demonstrating exemplary management of its own heritage assets (e.g., municipal buildings, parks and public squares, various collections), which are in varying states of preservation and are not consistently subject to maintenance programs;

Provincial level : The provincial government legally designates cultural assets as having protected status;

Federal level : The federal government is responsible for designating historic sites and monuments;

Private-sector level : Partnerships with private interests are vital to the completion of major projects;

International level : The city could lend an international dimension to its heritage initiatives by lobbying for inclusion of certain landmarks on the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

At its own organizational level, the city must take steps to ensure that all of the actions deployed by its various departments are complementary; e.g., by setting up a mechanism for coordinating each of its major heritage initiatives.

THE GROUP RECOMMENDS that the Ville de Montréal :

- Adopt a holistic, exemplary approach to the management of heritage in all its forms, encompassing enactment of bylaws and joint efforts among boroughs and organizations, as well as persuasive initiatives;
- Plan for a mechanism to govern synergy of its heritage policies and actions, both within its central departments and between those departments and the boroughs, with said mechanism being under the direct stewardship of the highest internal administrative authority;
- Show leadership to ensure that, as part of a global, collaborative approach, the higher levels of government join with its own administration in dynamically contributing to heritage preservation, management and presentation across the city's entire territory;
- Aim to develop effective partnerships with higher levels of government and private-sector players in fulfilling (by various means including subsidies, tax incentives, projects, etc.), its objectives in the management of heritage in all its forms.
- Take steps to ensure that boroughs, municipal departments and paramunicipal organizations apply the same approaches and standards to heritage management and preservation.

- Promote occupation of heritage buildings under municipal authority by its own departments or by cultural and community organizations, taking steps to ensure that these buildings' heritage value is safeguarded, that they are properly maintained, and that the public has access to them.

8. Issues specific to Montréal

We must not lose sight of a number of issues specific to Montréal in mapping out a heritage policy for the city.

Natural heritage

In 2002, protected green spaces in Montréal amounted to just 1,614 hectares, or a little over 3 % of its territory. That figure extends only to natural settings recognized as being of heritage or historical value, or having a unique character. The current situation is serious because urban development is unceasing. With each passing year, some 70 to 75 hectares of wooded areas on the Island simply disappear.

Religious heritage

The significance and the architectural value of Montréal's churches, temples and synagogues are well established. There are more than 500 places of worship on the Island, and preserving and maintaining them poses serious problems. Meanwhile, institutions belonging to religious orders — convents, monasteries and mother-houses bearing witness to an entire aspect of Montréal's history — are feeling the effects of dwindling financial resources. Lastly, the landscape heritage value of cemeteries is increasingly being recognized; they are also sacred sites of considerable symbolic and commemorative import. The city must place religious heritage high on its list of key issues.

Old Montréal

Old Montréal is, beyond all shadow of a doubt, a cornerstone of the city's heritage. The significant efforts made in recent decades have been successful in ensuring its preservation, its restoration and its vitality. Old Montréal is now a heritage neighbourhood in good condition under high surveillance, but remains fragile because demands on it are great. The city must continue to pay close attention to its historical borough.

Mount Royal

The heart of the city, Mount Royal is a unique setting distinguished by various types of heritage. The Government of Québec has begun the process of recognizing it as a historical and natural borough, covering a territory corresponding to that of the existing *Historic Site of Mount Royal*, plus the Westmount and Outremont summits — meaning it will be shared among five Ville de Montréal boroughs. The city needs to intervene along three major axes. First, it must coordinate actions affecting built and natural heritage in the five boroughs involved. Second, it must address issues related to the presence of major institutions on the Mountain's slopes. Last, it must help in the harmonization of the Québec government's management practices, as they apply to the various provincial ministries that own property on Mount Royal.

The Lachine Canal

This site is recognized both as a major navigable waterway and as the cradle of Canadian industrialization. The majority of the sites of heritage interest located directly along the Canal are in private hands. Currently, development in this territory is proceeding at a frantic pace,

accompanied by irreversible actions that are obliterating meaningful testimonials to the area's history. Construction of residential complexes has occasionally led to privatization of land along the Canal that runs counter to public-domain restoration efforts. There is a striking lack of formal mechanisms for consultation among the boroughs traversed by the Canal.

The city must view heritage development and presentation along the Lachine Canal and in the communities that took part in its construction and industrial expansion as a major metropolitan issue. It should also study the possibility of decreeing a *Lachine Canal Historic Site*.

Industrial heritage

The notion of industrial heritage encompasses all testimonials to the industrial age related to production of consumer goods as well as to the impact of those activities on the city's human and architectural character.

De-industrialization and the pressure exerted in recent decades on the major industrial complexes in the majority of Western countries reveal the urgency of preserving structures that bear witness to the industrial period, before they disappear completely. Montréal now has large numbers of so-called brownfields, on the sites of abandoned industrial complexes. These sites are much sought-after by real estate developers; the same phenomenon exists in the case of industrial buildings incorporated into various city neighbourhoods.

The city would do well to adopt a plan of action and the necessary mechanisms to ensure the protection of significant sites bearing witness to the industrial era.

20th-century heritage

Montréal's image as a modern, avant-garde metropolis is reflected in its downtown core and "underground city." The city's identity is in part defined by structures and complexes emblematic of the 20th century, such as the Université de Montréal campus, the Botanical Garden, the cross atop Mount Royal, the Jacques-Cartier Bridge, Place Ville Marie, the Stock Exchange Tower, the Métro, underground Montréal, Expo 67, Habitat 67 and the 1976 Olympic Games facilities. Many of these were the creations of internationally renowned architects, and at the same time many Montréal architects became key figures of modern architecture during the 20th century.

Discourse on 20th-century heritage is still in its infancy, around the world as well as in Québec and the rest of Canada. Although in many cases there is still no widespread perception that 20th-century constructions (especially the more recent examples) constitute heritage, attitudes are evolving. The Ville de Montréal's Urban Plan has already been modified to include more recent examples of built heritage, with specific buildings and areas targeted. As well, many of the city's properties consist of 20th-century structures or works. The exemplary management of these properties is in itself a significant response to the challenges involved in the preservation, presentation and accessibility of a significant part of that heritage.