



**Chambre de commerce
du Montréal métropolitain**

Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal

Making the City of Montreal's Master Plan a major development tool for the City

Brief of the Board of Trade Metropolitan Montreal
concerning the renewal of the City of Montreal's
Master Plan

Office de consultation publique de Montréal

June 2004

The Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal has some 7,000 members. Its mission is to represent the interests of the Greater Montreal business community and to offer a full range of specialized services to individuals, merchants and companies of all sizes so as to help them achieve their full potential in terms of innovation, productivity and creativity. The Board of Trade is the largest private organization in Quebec dedicated to economic development.

Introduction

We are pleased to respond to the City of Montreal's invitation to share our thoughts on the renewal of the City's Master Plan. We believe the issues of metropolitan land use planning and economic development are clearly tied, particularly at a time when the cities of the world are fiercely competing to attract and retain talent and investments.

In this context, we consider the Plan's renewal process, and especially, its future application to be of utmost importance. Indeed, a fleshed-out Master Plan that presents an inspiring vision for the City's future can become a powerful tool to mobilize and encourage cohesiveness among the players involved in Montreal's development, and to harmonize the initiatives and actions they will take over the next few years. Therefore, the Master Plan has the potential to become much more than a regulatory framework: it can – and should – become a major and powerful tool for the development of the metropolis. In this regard, it bears mentioning that the quality of the consultation documents submitted definitely lends credence to the City of Montreal's commitment to "make the Master Plan the municipal reference document for any action pertaining to urban development within the City."

To prepare this brief, the Board of Trade called on the expertise of its Urban Development Strategic analysis committee whose members analyzed the preliminary version of the Plan in spring 2004, at which time they met with City officials who were either involved in preparing the overall Plan or the chapter on the Ville-Marie borough. In the same spirit, the Board of Trade met with the political authorities responsible for Montreal's land use, urban planning and architecture.

Driven by a strong commitment to make a direct and responsible contribution to City Council's adoption of a Master Plan worthy of Montreal's immense potential, we are submitting this brief on the preliminary Master Plan to the Office de consultation publique de Montréal. This document is divided into two main sections: the first contains our comments on the city-wide issues presented in Part I of the Plan; the second outlines our concerns and recommendations with regards to implementing the vision set out in the Plan for the future of Montreal's Centre.

1. City-wide issues

We believe that economic development and the improvement of public spaces are issues that should first be addressed from a general perspective, one that takes into account the City's fundamentally metropolitan economic reality. It is also by taking a "big picture" approach that a truly inspiring and mobilizing vision of the City's future can take shape. In this regard, the Board of Trade welcomes the structure of the Master Plan, which from the outset demonstrates the need for such a perspective by dedicating Part 1 to "city-wide" issues.

The Board of Trade was also pleased to see that even though it is a planning and management tool for the Island of Montreal, the Master Plan mentions that this process is part of a broader development perspective that encompasses the Montreal Metropolitan Community (MMC). Indeed, in our view, in order to maximize their impact and spin-offs, the development initiatives deployed in the metropolitan region over the next ten years must be coherent. To this end, the planning exercises conducted in the boroughs, the City and the MMC must share the same broad objectives. As well, for as long as the Master Plan is in effect, the Board of Trade hopes that the people in charge of its application demonstrate the same sensitivity to metropolitan issues.

A. Planning goals

Generally speaking, the Board of Trade considers that the seven planning goals of the Master Plan adequately cover all the challenges the metropolis is facing.

More specifically, we are especially pleased to note that the **Centre** is part of the overall vision of the Plan (2.3: "A prestigious, convivial and inhabited Centre"). Given the Centre's strategic importance as an engine of economic development and the fact that it is a major asset of the City and its region, we commend the architects of the Plan for recognizing the Centre's importance – particularly since it is the only planning goal that pertains to a specific geographic location. We certainly hope that since this goal is included in the Plan, the Centre's development will remain a high priority throughout the Plan's application.

We also believe the goal pertaining to **employment areas** is important (2.4: "Dynamic, accessible and diversified employment areas"). The Board of Trade fully agrees with the recognition of the "increasing role that the quality of the urban setting plays in retaining and attracting businesses." In our view, the prestige of the Central Business District and accessibility to employment areas are particularly important considerations. Indeed these are the very elements we took into account when deciding which detailed planning areas should be prioritized.

We also agree with the goal promoting "**structuring, efficient transportation networks fully integrated into the urban fabric**" (2.2), as well as the search for better movement of passengers and freight in the City. Moreover, the Board of Trade is pleased to see that the Plan includes a goal for "**a healthy environment**" (2.7), more specifically, goals aimed at **rehabilitating contaminated sites** and brownfields. In this respect, setting up "financial or tax support programs for the development of unbuilt lots," particularly for Montreal's **Centre** and unstructured areas, is an approach that merits further consideration.

We also subscribe to the principle associated with goal 2.1 ("High quality, diversified and complete living environments"), that is, to promote the **variety of uses** (residential, commercial and office building) in certain areas of the City. This approach should deter the undesirable forms of "over-specialization" in some parts of the City, as has occurred in the downtown areas of a number of U.S. cities, where few citizens live or play and that literally turn into ghost towns after office hours. Achieving this goal would

increase the density of the urban framework and ensure a sustainable, harmonious development for the City.

The Board of Trade would like to emphasize the relevance of goal 2.5 – “**high-quality architecture and urban landscapes.**” Indeed, quality planning should be a precursor to implementing projects because, as a rule, it leads to durable investments, for example, in public infrastructures. Moreover, a city with quality infrastructures is, of course, a source of pride for citizens and city authorities, not to mention a magnet for attracting and retaining businesses and workers.

In this regard, the Board of Trade believes that partnerships like the one formed for the *Quartier International de Montréal* should be emulated. Such a formula encourages citizens and businesses in the immediate area to actively participate in the project. Indeed, enlisting the involvement of the area’s stakeholders is a good way of ensuring that quality projects are planned and implemented.

B. Detailed planning areas

The Board of Trade noted with great interest that the Plan includes 24 detailed metropolitan planning areas. While all 24 are important, we do consider it essential that these areas be **prioritized**. This would make it possible to develop an implementation plan based on time-dependent priorities and expected metropolitan spin-offs.

For this difficult exercise, we suggest two reference criteria to make it easier to determine priority interventions: their impact on the City’s **competitiveness** and their ability to **generate more wealth**.

On this basis, we believe nine areas are especially important and worthy of priority treatment; four pertain to the **visibility of the city**, three directly affect **the efficient movement of passengers and freight** and two correspond to **areas with a strong potential for redevelopment**.

Visibility of the City of Montreal

At a time when urban centres are increasingly and directly competing against each other to attract investments and talent, the concept of a city’s visibility and drawing power takes on previously unheard of importance. In this context, the places in the City that constitute its “international signature” must receive particular attention and their physical environment must be dynamic and of exceptional quality:

1. The **Central Business District** (Detailed planning area 4.10) should be at the top of the list because it is at the very heart of the City’s local and international identity. In this regard, one of Montreal’s undeniable attractions is its highly vibrant and lively **Centre**, which includes the Central Business District. This is largely due to the fact that many citizens live there. In this context, the prestige of the Central Business District should be enhanced by, for example, improving the quality of public facilities and ensuring the harmonious development of vacant land, as well as by reinforcing the mixed, complementary nature of functions in the Centre – residential, retail, commerce, cultural and artistic activities, and office buildings.
2. **Havre de Montréal** (Detailed planning area 4.15) is an area that offers numerous major urban redevelopment opportunities and shoreline, recreational and tourist activities within the geographic limits of the Havre as well as in the surrounding neighbourhoods. Moreover, the eventual economic spin-offs generated by the proposed projects should, to a large extent, increase the value of real estate in this area and thus help increase the City’s revenues.
3. The **Quartier des spectacles** (Detailed planning area 4.12) is a project that could enhance the cultural and artistic vitality of Montreal and its Centre and better position Montreal as a creative

cultural city – all driving forces of development. Moreover, bringing this project to fruition would open the door to redevelopment of this area, whose municipal infrastructures and buildings need major investments.

4. **Montreal-Trudeau International Airport surroundings** (Detailed planning area 4.1) – the main gateway to the City from the rest of the world – needs considerable redevelopment, especially Dorval circle, and the creation of rail access from the Centre. Such improvements would provide both international visitors and local business people with better access to this major transport infrastructure and give this area an image truly consistent with the definition of “a prestigious national and international gateway to Montreal.”

Efficient movement of passengers and freight

Metropolitan Montreal is the point of origin of 70% of Quebec’s exports. If this economic activity is to continue generating essential economic spin-offs for Montreal and Quebec, efficient movement of passengers and merchandise is essential. Aware of the many worthwhile projects that merit implementation in Montreal, the Board of Trade has identified three areas of particular importance

5. Rebuilding **Notre-Dame Street East** (Detailed planning area 4.21) would improve the mobility of workers travelling to the Centre, facilitate transportation to industrial sectors in Montreal east and revitalize certain sectors in that part of the city. The Board of Trade believes that this corridor, which is an extension of the Ville-Marie Expressway to the east, merits urgent and special attention as it is the only other major East-West road link on the island of Montreal besides the Metropolitan Expressway allowing merchandise transportation. This project should be all the more a priority given that it has been in the wings for far too many years and because Notre-Dame Street is a key artery for the Port of Montreal, a major economic driver for the City.
6. Rebuilding the **Décarie – Cavendish – Jean-Talon West area** (Detailed planning area 4.13), a highly promising economic sector, would greatly benefit from the completion of the road infrastructures in the area. In a context where the vocation of the land at the Montreal Hippodrome is expected to be redefined and work to connect Cavendish Boulevard is being planned, we think that easier access to neighbouring industrial neighbourhoods would speed up the industrial development of this area, as well as facilitate access to roads for the adjacent residential neighbourhoods.
7. The vicinity of **Crémazie Boulevard** (Detailed planning area 4.5), where the **Metropolitan Expressway** is located, is a major metropolitan roadway whose rebuilding merits careful reflection. In this regard, the Board of Trade was quite surprised and dismayed to see that the Plan focuses only on the work contemplated by the Ministère des Transports du Québec to repair Highway 40 and that the City shows no interest in modernizing this major artery like it is doing for Notre-Dame East.

Zones with strong redevelopment potential

The City has many zones with strong redevelopment potential. To maximize the impact of such a project, we think the City would do well to prioritize the following two zones where the proximity of transportation infrastructures makes the potential spin-offs of a redevelopment particularly interesting for the metropolitan region:

8. Promote the development of the **l’Acadie-Chabanel** (Detailed planning area 4.16) area, a zone with major economic potential that could quickly be stimulated by redeveloping municipal

infrastructures and access roads. This area is home to, among others, the *Cité de la mode*, a strategically important area for the Montreal and Quebec economy. Indeed, 587 companies and 11,350 jobs in the l'Acadie-Chabanel area depend on the fashion industry. At a time when this industry is undergoing major structural changes and where quality, creativity and added value are becoming key factors of competitiveness, improving accessibility to and enhancing the quality of the public realm are important initiatives to further.

9. Redevelop the **Glen and Turcot sites** (Detailed planning area 4.24), where large-scale development projects are particularly conducive, be they industrial, in the case of the Turcot site, or institutional – notably, the construction of the McGill University Hospital centre – in the case of the Glen site.

We believe that developing these sites would offer Montreal and Quebec businesses two locations with easy access to two major road systems and to Montreal-Trudeau Airport (Turcot site), and to the mass transit system for workers (Glen site).

Moreover, the future construction of the McGill Hospital University Centre on the Glen site would attract businesses and companies associated with this major institution, thereby facilitating the redevelopment of neighbouring areas isolated by existing highways and railroad tracks.

2. Translating urban vision into reality: A must for the Centre

The Board of Trade is pleased that the **Centre is so present** in the documents that make up the Master Plan. Indeed, part of an overall vision, the Centre is included in some of the detailed planning areas and in the chapter on the Ville-Marie borough. Its pervasive presence in these documents clearly shows that the authors recognize the vital role the Centre plays in Montreal's development and visibility.

In this context, the Board of Trade is of the view that the major issue is to ensure that **this original, dynamic and promising vision for the Centre is implemented**. We know that the Centre does not necessarily have all the tools it needs to ensure its optimal development and to face the issues that, in addition to being unique to it, are often more complex than elsewhere in the City. As such, paying particular attention to the Centre in the Master Plan is not enough; special resources and the corresponding means are also important to implement the Plan.

The Board of Trade recognizes that these concerns pertain to the City of Montreal's governance and organizational structure as well as to urban planning, as defined and applied in the Master Plan. In this regard, we believe that one of the best ways to translate the Plan's vision into action is to appoint an entity – often referred to as a “champion” – that will be responsible for implementing and following up on the proposed actions. (Indeed, this was one of the reasons the Board of Trade supported the municipal reorganization proposal in fall 2003 whereby a new downtown borough would have been created and the Mayor of Montreal would have been personally responsible for its governance.) As such, without suggesting that the City's organizational structure be changed to allow the emergence of such a champion for the Centre, we do believe that certain aspects of the Plan could be clarified. For example, from the point of view of urban planning, there should be no doubt as to the governance needs associated with the Plan's vision of the Centre, starting with a much clearer definition of the **sharing of responsibilities** between, primarily, the City's corporate services and those of the Ville-Marie borough.

In this regard, the fact that Parts 1 (goals and detailed planning areas) and II (chapter on the Ville-Marie borough) of the Plan contain sections on the Centre is definitely a potential source of confusion as to who should spearhead the projects proposed in the different sections of the Plan. In the first part, various projects regarding the Centre are found in planning goal 2.3 “A prestigious, convivial and inhabited Centre” and in the detailed planning areas (identified in chapter 4). It is stated that these areas must be subject to “a detailed planning exercise in the three years following adoption of the Master Plan.” The consultation documents pertaining to the Ville-Marie borough add yet another layer of information, sometimes with more details and clarification. For example, reiterating the city-wide detailed planning areas, the borough chapter also identifies a series of “local planning issues,” some of which are found *within* the city-wide issues (as is the case, among other things, of the “Centre Bell, Centre du commerce électronique” which is found in the “Central Business District” section).

In and of themselves, these various degrees of planning do not pose a problem but they nevertheless raise some questions as to how they should eventually be completed. As well, how can we be assured that the actions identified at the borough level during the consultations of March 2004 are consistent with the objectives set out in planning goal 2.3? And, above all, who is responsible for launching and coordinating the initiatives?

While the people responsible for the Plan may very well have the answers to these questions, such clarifications would be greatly appreciated and would make it easier for the lay person to follow the Plan's implementation.

Defining the Centre's **territorial boundaries** would also make it easier to follow the initiatives for this area. Here again, the Board of Trade is making this observation knowing full well the political importance of identifying exact boundaries for the Centre. Indeed, the Board of Trade submitted a brief to the

Commission spéciale du conseil on the territorial boundaries of the Downtown borough in October 2003, which is enclosed with this document. In our view, the ambiguity surrounding the Centre's boundaries does nothing for the Plan's stated objectives for this area. At the very least, we think the Master Plan should identify, among the actions arising from goal 2.5 pertaining to the Centre, the need to clarify its borders. As well, the Plan could also refer to the consultation held on the subject by the City in fall 2003 and suggest basic criteria that should be used when establishing the borders in the future, in much the same way as the authors of the Plan have defined the major principles that should guide land use planning and development in Montreal for the next ten years by setting out the seven broad orientations in Chapter 2.

Conclusion

By submitting this brief and its recommendations, the Board of Trade wanted to participate in the renewal process of the City of Montreal's Master Plan as well as help, at this preliminary stage, identify the initiatives most likely to have an impact on the City's development and competitiveness and generate more wealth for its citizens.

Given the fact that implementing and financing the projects contemplated in the Plan represent a major challenge, the Board of Trade cannot overemphasize the importance of targeting the issues and projects that are most important for the City as a whole. By prioritizing certain projects, the City will not only be in a better position to complete this initial series of projects, it will derive financial benefits, notably, in the form of greater property tax revenues that could then be reinvested in a second wave of projects, which in turn will help improve Montreal's urban fabric and drawing power.

To reiterate the words of the member responsible for urban and regional planning, Robert Libman, the revision of the Master Plan, despite the challenges it involves, is one of the easiest steps to complete towards sustainable and harmonious development for Montreal. The most difficult part is application and execution. As such, with a view to facilitating the next phase of the Plan, the Board of Trade has presented, in the second section of this brief, some recommendations with regards to the Centre and its governance.

These recommendations stem from the Board of Trade's firm conviction that a disciplined, diligent application of an inspiring and mobilizing vision of a city's planning can allow it to significantly speed up its progress and growth. In this regard, the *Montreal 2017 Symposium, A 375-Year old City of the World*, organized by the Board of Trade in May 2002, helped us to understand how the strict application of an urban development and enhancement strategy generated such positive spin-offs for cities like Lyon and Barcelona.

The Board of Trade is of the view that Montreal has nothing to envy these cities in terms of its ability to demonstrate ingenuity and creativity and set up high-quality urban complexes. The Quartier International is an eloquent example of this ability and the Master Plan leaves room for many others. However, Montreal can indeed learn something from these cities in terms of implementing and mobilizing the population to bring these visions to fruition.

Accordingly, the City and Montrealers can start by tirelessly pursuing the objective of breathing life into the urban dreams contemplated in the Master Plan, and in so doing allow it to become a major development tool for the City. And to achieve this objective, the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal would like to assure the City of Montreal of its full cooperation and unwavering support.

Appendix:

Brief of the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal
concerning the territorial boundaries of
the Downtown Borough and its Governance



Chambre de commerce
du Montréal métropolitain
Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal

Downtown Montreal: A major Metropolitan Development Issue

Brief of the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal concerning the territorial boundaries of the Downtown Borough and its Governance

Commission spéciale du conseil sur la délimitation territoriale de
l'arrondissement Centre-ville

Ville de Montréal

October 2003

A brief description of the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal

The Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal boasts some 7,000 members. Its primary mission is to represent the interests of the Greater Montreal business community and to play an active and responsible role in promoting the economic development of the urban agglomeration. Bolstered by its three specialized service branches (Info entreprises, the Electronic Commerce Institute and World Trade Centre Montréal) serving merchants and businesses of all sizes across Quebec, the Board of Trade is the largest private organization in Quebec dedicated to economic development.

Introduction

The Downtown Borough and its Governance: A Metropolitan Issue

As requested by the special commission of the council on the territorial boundary of the Downtown borough, the Board of Trade is submitting a brief in response to the three factors under consultation, i.e., the territorial boundary of the Downtown borough, the form of the new consultative committee and the role it should play, and work organization and management within the Downtown borough.

This intervention is aimed specifically at complementing the previously submitted brief to the Commission sur le développement économique et le Centre des affaires in which the Board of Trade highlighted, among other things, the need to pay close attention to downtown development. The organization also praised the commission's recent initiatives, which are clearly in line with a philosophy that acknowledges the unique characteristics of the downtown area and that seek to provide the borough with the most appropriate form of governance. As one of the most important economic centres of the region, downtown Montreal, its development and management therefore constitute major issues for the entire metropolitan region.

For the Board of Trade, the commission's consultation is a necessary step in the process to implement the municipal reorganization plan adopted by City Council in September. Indeed, creating a new borough for downtown Montreal is an initiative that could well promote its advancement, especially if it leads to a method of governance and management suited to its unique characteristics.

1. What should the territorial boundaries of the Downtown borough be?

For the Board of Trade, the downtown area conjures up the image the city projects to the outside world. As such, the Board of Trade believes the territorial boundaries of the downtown borough should comprise the elements that make Montreal what it is and that underpin its economic, cultural and tourism influence. With this in mind and without specifically identifying the boundaries, the Board of Trade believes that the following elements should be included within the boundaries of the Downtown borough given that they reflect the specific characteristics of the heart of Montreal:

- The business district, to where close to 500,000 people commute every day for work, study or entertainment;
- The major institutions of higher learning and research, namely, McGill, Concordia, UQAM and the École de technologie supérieure, as well as the main teaching hospitals, i.e., the institutions located on the south side of Mount Royal;
- The most important cultural institutions, whether in terms of dissemination (the major museums, main festival sites (jazz, film, Francolies and Just for Laughs) or production (the head offices of the major television networks: Société Radio-Canada, TVA and TQS);

- The main convergence points of the Montreal transport network, especially the bus terminal (Berri-UQAM metro) and Windsor and Central stations;
- Old Montreal (particularly the area around City Hall) and the Old Port, which are unquestionably part of Montreal's tourist draw.

The Board of Trade believes that another defining characteristic of downtown Montreal is that it is the location of choice for executing major urban development projects such as the Quartier International, which are expected to become an important part of Montreal's urban identity. In this vein, the Board of Trade thinks it is only logical for the boundaries of Downtown borough to encompass the territories covered by such major urban projects as the Quartier International, Quartier des spectacles and Société du Havre. Indeed, in the Board of Trade's opinion, these large-scale projects are essential to the vitality of the downtown area and stand a greater chance of being completed under a governance model that meets the specific needs of the downtown core.

2. What form should the consultative committee comprised of downtown Montreal's stakeholders take, and what role should it play?

As mentioned in the Board of Trade's Policy Statement, the downtown area is essential to metropolitan urban and economic development: "Downtown Montreal, as a choice location for business and culture and as the place that defines the City's international personality, merits special attention." In this context, the Board of Trade is in favour of creating a new Downtown borough whose authorities could take into account both local and metropolitan concerns. In this respect, the Board of Trade believes that enlisting the direct involvement of civil society in the governance of the downtown core by creating a consultative committee is an especially interesting idea. It goes without saying that as an organization dedicated to the economic development of the metropolitan region, the Board of Trade is particularly receptive to the creation of such a committee because even though many of its members are located in the downtown area, its metropolitan representativeness also makes it sensitive to the downtown area's overall economic and strategic aspect.

In connection with this desire to have a consultative committee that can take into account local and metropolitan issues surrounding the downtown area, the Board of Trade believes that, as part of its composition, this committee should have a representation of citizens' associations in the borough that as much as possible reflects its socio-economic characteristics. Moreover, the Board of Trade suggests that the Delegation Leaders' Forum of the Montreal Summit be involved in selecting the members of the consultative committee;

With respect to the matters the consultative committee should handle, the Board of Trade would especially like to see the committee act as a wellspring of ideas and as a support mechanism for the launch and completion of major core initiatives like the Quartier International, Quartier des spectacles and the redevelopment of the Havre de Montréal.

3. What work organization and management model should be used for the Downtown borough?

The Board of Trade would like to highlight various elements that should be taken into account in developing a management model for the Downtown borough. In this context, and with respect to the future methods of governance, the Board of Trade has identified two priorities for the Downtown borough: **delivery of neighbourhood services** and **the implementation of core projects to stimulate economic development**.

Delivery of neighbourhood services

For the Board of Trade, the delivery of quality neighbourhood services is essential to ensure that Montreal projects an international image befitting a major metropolis of the world. There is no question that this image is based on the downtown area where most tourists visit and where most of the major artistic, cultural and sports events are held. As well, given that downtown is bustling with activity day and night due to its residents, workers, tourists and other residents of the metropolitan area, its public spaces are highly sought after and used, indeed more so than any other location on the Island. For all these reasons, the downtown core is therefore one part of Montreal where neighbourhood and maintenance services must be a model of efficiency and flexibility.

In this context, maintenance and work schedules in the borough must be organized to ensure round-the-clock upkeep, with particular attention to the areas of downtown that make up its tourist and international identity.

Implementation of core projects to stimulate economic development

During the Montreal 2017 Symposium, organized by the Board of Trade in spring 2002, many panellists underscored the importance for major urban agglomerations of the world to rely on core projects to stimulate economic and urban development. For the Board of Trade, this is one approach that is particularly valid for downtown Montreal. In this regard, the organization and operation of the new borough should create an environment conducive to the emergence and support of major initiatives.

The creation of a borough council and a consultative committee representative of civil society could lay the groundwork for this environment. For the Board of Trade, it would be important for the borough governance to ensure coherence between the projects created in the downtown area and promote and inspire cohesion between those involved in their execution.

Lastly, the governance bodies as well as those mandated to provide neighbourhood services, must have access to the necessary financial resources. In this respect, the Board of Trade would like to stress the importance of developing quality projects, especially for downtown Montreal. Indeed, the city has a vibrant core that is unique in North America. The entire urban agglomeration cannot help but benefit from a dynamic downtown, and the Board of Trade believes that by giving the decision makers and the stakeholders involved in its development the most appropriate tools, the municipal reorganization and the governance of the downtown area will be a success.