



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

April 2, 2009

Ms. Catherine Chauvin
Commission Chair
Office de consultation publique de Montréal
Cours Mont-Royal
1550 Metcalfe Street, Suite 1414
Montreal, Quebec H3A 1X6

Subject: **Opinion of the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal with respect to the public consultation on the Bassins du Nouveau Havre project**

Dear Ms. Chauvin:

The Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal was interested to learn of the project to redevelop the site of the former Canada Post sorting plant, and we hereby submit our comments regarding this initiative.

First of all, the Board of Trade wishes to acknowledge the excellent groundwork laid for this project with regard not only to its intrinsic qualities, but also to the relevance of the documents produced. The care taken to integrate the project within its environment – particularly with regard to heritage – is commendable.

In addition, the Board of Trade believes that guiding principles should be established for any development project to maximize its benefits to the metropolis, and these guiding principles should include high-quality sustainable urban development and wealth creation. The Board of Trade has also identified certain conditions that it believes could be decisive to the success of the Bassins du Nouveau Havre project.

1. Promoting wealth creation

The Bassins du Nouveau Havre project, on the banks of the Lachine Canal, has been made possible by the relocation, in recent years, of the activities of the Canada Post sorting plant. This land, with strong development potential and located near downtown Montréal, was purchased by the Canada Lands Company (CLC). This company, whose mandate is to redevelop surplus real properties owned by the federal government, has extensive experience with development issues in urban environments and the improvement of abandoned industrial zones. The creative and innovative project presented by the CLC will make it possible to finance the purchase of the land and its improvement as well as increase the vitality of an entire sector south of Montréal's downtown core.

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In its current form, the project could also stimulate development of the adjacent sector and promote the rapid expansion of the Griffintown project, now under way. Moreover, the implementation of the Bassins du Nouveau Havre project has been carried out in close collaboration with various neighbourhood stakeholders – a major factor in the success of projects in urban environments. In this regard, the Board of Trade wishes to highlight the importance placed by the developer on the coherent development of the project's multiple phases. This approach helps to ensure the high quality of the construction of the various built components and, above all, to increase the overall value of the project.

Dividing the project into various phases should enable the developer – as well as the various builders called upon to join the project – to minimize its vulnerability to economic cycles throughout the period in which it is carried out. Given that the uncertain economic situation now facing Montréal will greatly affect the start-up of projects of this type, the Board of Trade believes this approach to be both prudent and appropriate.

Moreover, considering the many economic spinoffs of a project of this scope, the Board of Trade enthusiastically welcomes this initiative – especially as it will help densify sectors near the downtown core and highlight existing urban infrastructures – such as the bike paths and recent improvements to the Lachine Canal.

Finally, the enhancement of infrastructures of the Lachine Canal makes this an extremely promising initiative. The large green and blue spaces to be created will improve the area's quality of life and place while creating a unique identity for the project.

2. High-quality sustainable urban development

The project to develop and enhance the Bassins du Nouveau Havre is part of a commendable effort to reconnect a large piece of land with its surrounding area.

This project will restore continuity to the urban fabric with other planned projects including the redevelopment of the Bonaventure expressway at the entrance to the city, the revitalization of Griffintown, and the redevelopment of the area surrounding the École de technologie supérieure. The Board of Trade believes that it is from this perspective – the urban requalification and rehabilitation of an entire sector of the city – that the project should be studied.

Built development

In addition to its location in a sector already equipped with major urban and transportation infrastructures – which promote the densification of urban areas – the project includes some constructions that will meet the sustainable urban development standards of *Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design* (LEED). This will add to the project's appeal.

The Board of Trade also believes that the density of the proposed buildings is fully justified considering the developer's profitability constraints and the size of the planned green and blue spaces.

The developer's desire to provide living space for families, young professionals, and low-income people requires a comprehensive approach to adequately serve the sector in terms of neighbourhood services for young children, teens, senior citizens, and workers. To this end, it is desirable to plan now to meet the needs of all populations expected to live and work in

the area. It is interesting to note, for example, that the developer has made provisions for young families by reserving the lower floors of buildings for them and creating direct access to inner courtyards and green and blue spaces.

The social mix proposed through the integration of various housing types is something not yet frequently seen in Montréal. The Board of Trade believes that such integration is desirable to create a dynamic and diversified urban neighbourhood. But such integration will not succeed without top-quality architecture for all housing types – social, affordable, middle class, and luxury – without exception.

It is also important to pay particular attention to the links established between the built framework to be constructed and that of existing residential and commercial buildings. If imposing buildings are constructed, there is a risk of repeating the mistake of creating an additional barrier between the sector being developed and its neighbours. While the project will make it possible to mend the sector's urban fabric, it is important to ensure that the architecture of the new buildings integrates as harmoniously as possible with the surrounding environment.

3. Conditions for success

While the Board of Trade believes this project will generate positive spinoffs for Montréal, it nevertheless identifies certain conditions for success that must be respected:

- The agreements between the developer and the builders must be transparent, and close ties must be established and maintained with those living nearby and community partners.
- The overall architecture must be creative and contemporary while harmonizing with the existing residential built environment.
- There must be a comprehensive offer of neighbourhood services to those living and working in the area to meet both short-term and future needs.

Conclusion

Insofar as this project is likely to generate significant economic spinoffs; is in line with a vision of sustainable urban development; will help rehabilitate an isolated area near the downtown core; incorporates a clearly expressed desire to enhance the area's heritage value; and appears to be consistent with other projects in the sector, the Board of Trade believes there is every reason to support and promote its accomplishment.

Finally, please be assured of the Board of Trade's full co-operation in contributing to the development of the metropolis.

Sincerely,

Michel Leblanc
President and CEO