

Summary of Background Document

PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON VACANT PREMISES ALONG COMMERCIAL THOROUGHFARES

Increases in the numbers of vacancies on commercial thoroughfares are a growing phenomenon in many large cities internationally, and Montréal is no exception. For this reason, the *Commission sur le développement économique et urbain et l'habitation* has been given a **mandate** to conduct a public consultation on the subject, and to that end has issued a background document / consultation guide.

The problem of vacant premises on commercial thoroughfares has **no single cause**; multiple factors are at play.

For example:

- Operating expenses (e.g., taxes, rent);
- Changing consumer behaviours;
- Reduced customer traffic because of public works projects;
- Lack of succession for retailers at the end of their career;
- Certain greedy, passive or idle property owners.



The **consequences** of vacant premises, meanwhile, range from deterioration of the overall image of the street, to a poorer commercial mix, to increased sense of insecurity or uncleanness.

Thus far, no one appears to have found any **miracle solution** that, by itself, could solve the problem. The Ville de Montréal and its boroughs, the commercial development corporations (sociétés de développement commercial, or SDCs), merchants, and owners of commercial buildings **can all contribute** to finding and implementing a realistic solution to the problem.

A range of possible solutions has been identified following a pre-consultation process and an analysis of practices by other municipalities. They can be summed up as follows:

- Regulation of commercial thoroughfares (e.g., corrections to the commercial mix, design improvements to public spaces);
- Improved information about retail business (e.g., a registry of vacant premises);
- Transitional occupancy;
- Networking among stakeholders to pair projects with available spaces;
- Penalizing owners for inoccupation (e.g., a tax on vacant premises).

The Commission is seeking **your insights** into the problem of vacancies on commercial thoroughfares, including on the following questions:

**IT'S TIME FOR YOU
TO HAVE YOUR SAY!**

The members of the Commission sur le développement économique et urbain et l'habitation are at your disposal.

1

Which initiatives implemented in other cities would likely help resolve the problem of vacant premises on Montréal's commercial thoroughfares?

2

Would a tax on vacant premises be an appropriate response to the vacancy problem? Why?

3

Would amendments to city and borough by-laws (e.g., as concerns occupancy certificates, sidewalk café permits, sign certificates, promotion permits) be likely to help resolve the vacancy problem?

4

Should the city revise commercial zoning, for example, to improve the mix of uses on commercial thoroughfares?

5

Would new financial assistance programs for merchants or owners be likely to help resolve the vacancy problem?

6

Are there other possible solutions you feel would be appropriate to help resolve the problem?