

**Brief presented to the Commission Regarding
Le schéma d'aménagement et de développement
de l'agglomération de Montréal**

Presented by:

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**on behalf of the Coalition communautaire Milton-Parc
pour l'accès au logement et à la santé**

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SOME BACKGROUND

Hello, and thank you for this opportunity to make some proposals, which I believe, will improve our Milton-Parc neighborhood. My name is Lucia Kowaluk, I live in Milton-Parc and I've spent all my life trying to improve the living conditions of my fellow citizens. I was grateful this year (2014) to receive the recognition for this 'social justice' kind of work by being awarded the Order of Canada and l'Ordre national du Québec.

In the past 50 years I have worked to organize communities, I have worked with the homeless, mentally ill or not, I have organized housing projects such as the Milton-Parc co-ops and Benny Farm, I have had managerial positions at the University Settlement, the NDG Community Council, and the Urban Ecology Center. I teach part-time at the McGill School of Social Work. I am currently president of the Milton-Parc Citizens Committee, and I'm the founder of the Coalition Communautaire Milton-Parc pour l'accès au logement et à la santé, which I am representing here at these meetings. (For more details, refer to the annex).

I list these activities, not to call particular attention to myself, but to show to you of this commission that I know what I'm talking about when I present to you the proposals in this document. I speak to you today on behalf of the "Coalition Communautaire Milton-Parc pour l'accès au logement et à la santé", a coalition of 15 organizations which was founded in May 2013, to save the Hôtel-Dieu hospital from being sold to the private market. Our coalition is now a member of an even larger citywide coalition, founded in June 2014. "La Coalition Sauvons les 5 sites hospitaliers". Both of these coalitions have as members, organizations which themselves are coalitions. Indeed we represent several hundred organizations, all of which are working in one way or another to make our city as secure, healthy and caring as possible. I am proud to represent today our Milton-Parc Coalition.

OUR PROPOSAL

We propose to look at St. Urbain Street between Duluth and Milton as a mini-urban renewal project, east and west sides. Within that space we have two hospitals, which will soon be emptied of their original uses, a drug rehabilitation institute, a women's center, a community center, and three huge parking lots. Two blocks east and west on each side of St. Urbain we have two major commercial streets (Park Avenue and St. Laurent boulevard) which are dying, featuring "to rent" signs and boarded up rental spaces.

Hundreds of families and thousands of people could be living in the spaces freed up at the soon-to-be emptied hospitals or in new subsidized family housing on the parking lots. This area is serviced by six bus routes with convenient access to the metro. Thousands of people have money to spend on food, clothing, hardware, fast food places, and restaurants; nothing elegant, simply the needs of everyday life. These people include families with children, elderly folks, singles, homeless people, working people, retired people, people with clinical illnesses, lonely people, people with energy and talents; do we need to go on?

Shall we be specific? Here are some examples based on the work of the organizations, which are members of our coalition.

1. The Old Brewery Mission and Les Rue des femmes

These two organizations serve thousands of homeless people every year. Their current facilities are overflowing, especially in the winter months. While they give overnight shelter to many on a regular basis, their philosophy and their goal is that every person needs and wants a permanent home. Many of these people are unable to take proper care of themselves and proper care of their own dwelling; they need surveillance and help. The smaller pavilion of the chest hospital on the west side of St. Urbain is ideally suited to house these kinds of currently homeless persons. They would be cared for (as they are now) by the organizations involved. These organizations could also use parts of the newer pavilions of the Hotel Dieu - Le Royer and De Bullion.

2. The IRCM Research Center

The IRCM needs space and has already made public its desire to use the larger pavilion of the Chest Hospital, which is already attached to the IRCM building.

3. Social Housing

Among the homeless of all ages, and among the elderly of low income are hundreds of individuals who are very able to take care of themselves and their dwellings, but they cannot afford the rents, which take a half or more of their incomes. Their lives are solitary and lonely. The two newer pavilions of Hotel Dieu are laid out with small single rooms, each with a bathroom and a closet. The rooms are placed along a short corridor with access to a large friendly common room, and with access to a cafeteria. These rooms do not need renovation. With a low subsidized rent, leaving some income for extras, surrounded with similar folks who could become friends, a common dining room, and a common TV and game room, people's lives could improve immensely.

4. Recreation, Culture and Community Services

These services all need space in our neighborhood. Organizations like the Milton Park Recreation Association need more classroom space for their workshops: languages, exercise, dance classes and more. The Women's Center of Montréal needs more space for their activities: support groups for women suffering from conjugal violence; support groups for First Nations women away from their reserves and women looking for jobs, are only a few of the many services the Women's Center now offers, but with waiting lists due to lack of space.

Les Ateliers Créatifs groups budding artists in a collective organization which help them find studio space where they can work.

All these organizations can make excellent use of the hospital space.

5. Short-term health services like walk-in clinics and emergency services

The CSN makes a very solid case (much too long to repeat in this short proposal) for keeping a large part of the Hôtel-Dieu for these health services and our coalition agrees with them. We are the residents of Milton-Parc and we use these conveniently located first-line services on a daily basis. We have heard that the Ministry of Health wants these first-line services located at Notre Dame. This is very poor urban planning; too far for us to walk, more expensive taxi ride; but worse than that, can you imagine a traffic jam near the corner of Papineau and Sherbrooke? Cars, buses, ambulances, taxi, many looking for a parking spot? Never mind all the regular traffic on and off of the Jacques-Cartier Bridge.

Big mistake!

6. Other uses for the parking lots There are some valid needs for parking, but with improved bus service many cars can be left at home. The space can be used for family housing; four-story row housing, HLMs, self financed cooperatives, and subsidized OSBLs. We are all aware of the dire need in Montréal for family housing at rent that low and medium income families can afford, and thus stop the often spoken of "flight to the urban sprawl suburbs".

Several specific examples of the difficulties involved in creating such housing come from within our coalition. The Atelier habitation Montréal Inc., a GRT, helps groups of families become nonprofit corporations, apply for federal funds and find a piece of land within their neighborhoods where they are already rooted. The most difficult aspect of these three steps is finding the land. The AHM is currently working with several groups of families who are ready to go, but cannot find the land which is rooted in their neighborhoods and at prices they can afford.

Chambreclerc which manages single room housing designed for the homeless, most of whom are mentally ill, was ready with agreed-upon federal financing to build new construction along the same design as the previously built or renovated buildings it already managed. For three years the organization searched in vain for an

appropriate piece of land, and was forced to return the agreed-upon funding to the federal government. Fortunately there is a happy ending: Chambreclerc has become part of a consortium of other groups in renovating a wing of a former convent. However five years later some 50 to 100 homeless people are still on the street, waiting for their own warm and secure home.

7. Where will the money come from? People living in dwellings pay rent and taxes. Functioning organizations are successful at fundraising. Health and police services are lessened when troubled people are housed. People who shop pay taxes. People who feel secure and comfortable lessen the load on public services. Huge charitable foundations give or lend money for good causes. You noticed that I haven't yet mentioned governments? They are there but they are not the only source of financing.

The organizations in our Milton-Parc Coalition are well aware of all the needs we have just mentioned here; they deal with these needs as best they can every day. They are also very successful at fundraising and managing these funds to meet these needs on a daily basis. They can be trusted to work honestly and honorably with provincial and municipal representatives; they will share with the public sector the management and financial responsibilities. They're also very successful at serving the specific needs of the populations with which they work.

NOW WHAT DO WE PROPOSE? Specifically, we propose that the land on which the Hotel-Dieu and the Chest Hospital sit remain in the public domain, as a land trust. The land on which the Women's Center sits is already owned by a non-profit foundation. The Father Dowd convalescent hospital is already in the public domain. We propose that the land trust be managed cooperatively by all the organizations, which will use part of the property to serve the populations they care for; all the users will contribute financially for the parts that they use. This is the model of ownership and financing of the Milton-Parc housing cooperative project in which some of us live. It is a complex model, however, and cannot be thoroughly explained here. Perhaps a final model will be similar or somewhat different.

SO THIS BRINGS US TO OUR LAST RECOMMENDATION

We need a set of full public hearings on this "Schéma d'aménagement et de développement de l'agglomération de Montréal". And since the future use of the famous "Cinq hopitaux (dits) excédentaires" is also included in what happens to the land in Montréal's core, the public hearings would also include proposals and opinions on the hospitals. We urge you to hold more of these meetings.

IN CONCLUSION

Montréal's urban core is rare in North American cities, in that it is livable, safe, lively, well serviced and a pleasure to live in. We must keep it healthy, financially

solid and demographically mixed. This corridor of St. Urbain Street is a small beginning. We urge you to keep it and build on its already present resources.

ANNEX

In the past 50 years I have been the program director of University Settlement; one of the founders of SAVE Montréal and Heritage Montréal; one of the founders of the Milton-Parc housing cooperative project; the founder of the St. James Drop-in Center for homeless people; the founder of Chambreclerc housing for homeless and mentally ill people; coordinator of the NDG Community Council; a part of the group which saved the Benny Farm Veteran's Housing from destruction, and succeeded in reusing the housing for families and particularly needy individuals; the coordinator of the Montréal Urban Ecology Center. Now I am involved in trying to save the five "excenditaires" hospitals for new uses; and I am the president of the Milton-Parc Citizens Committee. I also teach part time at the McGill School of Social Work.