

2.1

2.1

High-quality, diversified and complete living environments

One of Montréal's fundamental attributes is the quality of its living environments. Its 27 boroughs are characterized by a quality of life that is unusually high for a large metropolis. The City has developed a series of objectives and actions aimed at sustaining **high-quality, diversified and complete living environments**.

In this respect, an integrated approach that addresses the various components of living environments is required. A residential environment should include not only a variety of housing units of sufficient quality and quantity to meet the requirements of various types of households, but it should also provide a range of public services and facilities such as stores, schools, libraries, sports and recreational facilities and green spaces. The residential environment should also be well served by public transportation and benefit from adequate access to the various employment areas. Finally, the residential environment should be healthy and safe.

The Plan sets forth two objectives relative to living environments:

1 Improve the quality of existing living environments.

2 Encourage the construction of 60,000 to 75,000 housing units between 2004 and 2014.

HABITER MONTRÉAL : THE MUNICIPAL HOUSING STRATEGY

The City's intervention in housing is to implement a strategy based on three areas of focus: a balanced residential supply, improved housing conditions and living environments and residential development. Municipal interventions will target City-wide concerns rather than borough-level issues.

Housing : Converging actions

Montréal derives its social and demographic balance, as well as a competitive economic advantage, from the quality and diversity of housing it offers. In order to improve its housing supply, the City is implementing a housing strategy to support and complement the market and act in accordance with the principles of sustainable development. The strategy seeks to:

- Manage growth in the long term, by combining housing construction with the conservation of existing housing units in order to consolidate the urbanized area of the City and take full advantage of existing infrastructure;
- Maintain an inclusive society, where social diversity within the City, the boroughs and individual development projects creates a viable community that is able to support a range of services.

1. Providing a balanced residential supply

Access to the rental housing market poses challenges for certain types of households, including those with low incomes, newcomers and large families. Current price levels and the evolving housing supply are also making it increasingly difficult for low-income households to buy their first home. In response to these problems, the City is deploying a strategy for affordable housing, which includes subsidies and programs designed to ease access to property ownership as well as incentives and regulatory measures to ensure social diversity within major real estate projects. When dealing with a more vulnerable clientele, such as seniors losing their autonomy, the homeless and troubled youth, these measures will create an environment conducive to personal development in addition to offering affordable housing, by providing support services and links to health and social services.

2. Improving housing conditions and living environments

The condition of the housing stock has a direct effect on the municipal tax base and the overall quality of life. Although most of Montréal's housing stock is in good condition, it requires close observation and measures to encourage the improvement of its state of repair as well as to correct deterioration that affects specific areas or types of buildings, including the older segments of the social housing stock. Social changes have also created the need to adapt residential spaces to meet a variety of situations: home support for the elderly, the growth in home offices, student housing, rooming houses, etc. The strategy also covers actions within integrated revitalization projects.

3. Promoting residential development

In order to achieve the objective of building 60,000 to 75,000 housing units between 2004 and 2014, the strategy identifies a number of incentives in addition to those mentioned before, such as facilitating and supporting new residential development and attracting the attention of potential investors or buyers. Requalifying some large urban sites will require measures to help recycle non-residential buildings, soil remediation programs and the relocation of businesses or activities.

Acting in partnership

The strategy will call upon the close collaboration of many stakeholders working in both the public and private domains, particularly the Société d'habitation du Québec in the case of joint funding of programs, paramunicipal organizations (Office municipal d'habitation de Montréal, Société d'habitation et de développement de Montréal), the Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal and various government social services and health organizations along with the private and community sectors. These partnerships, which will ensure that issues are considered from an intersectorial perspective, constitute the basis for a diversified approach that is aimed at meeting the entire spectrum of housing challenges in Montréal.

objective

Improve the quality of existing living environments

Living environments in Montréal are generally of high quality, diversified and complete. As they are almost entirely built up, most of these environments do not require major interventions. However, the City has identified a number of actions pertaining to the maintenance and improvement of their quality.

In order to set guidelines for the interventions aimed at increasing the quality of existing and future living environments, the City proposes a series of criteria which are described in the Montréal Living Environments Charter.

The City's actions will revolve around the following themes:

- Urban revitalization;
- The maintenance and adaptation of the building stock;
- The development of public and private green spaces;
- The consolidation of commercial streets, strips and centres;
- The improvement of public services and facilities.

In addition to these interventions, actions relating to other themes such as public transit and employment areas are presented in Objectives 3, 8 and 9 respectively.

Many residential neighbourhoods are subject to nuisances that reduce the quality of life of their residents. For example, the peace and quiet of residents can be disrupted by heavy traffic on local roads. Objective 18 outlines the different methods that the City intends to use to minimize the impacts of such nuisances.

THE MONTRÉAL LIVING ENVIRONMENTS CHARTER

The Master Plan identifies ten criteria for evaluating the quality of Montréal's living environments:

1. **A varied range of housing units**, covering a range of types and prices, that meet the profile and specific needs of Montréal households, in order to promote social harmony;
2. **High-quality architecture** that serves to improve the built heritage and enrich the urban landscape as well as enhance the identity of boroughs;
3. **A healthy and ecologically-sound habitat**, linking air quality with energy efficiency;
4. **Comfortable, safe and universally accessible public spaces** that promote pedestrian and bicycle travel and include vegetation;
5. **A quality living and urban environment** that ensures the safety, well-being and tranquility of residents and promotes individual development and social harmony;
6. **Public spaces and parks** that help to enrich the quality of the urban environment, provide access to green and natural spaces and meet the needs of all age groups, by encouraging the practice of sports, relaxation and outdoor activities;
7. **Real estate projects incorporating natural features of interest** in order to protect and enhance them and to enrich the living environments;
8. **Neighbourhood stores, services and public facilities** that meet local needs and are accessible on foot;
9. **An emphasis on public transportation** supported by adequate service, ease of access and sufficient density and diversity of uses in the vicinity of the major points of entry to the public transportation network;
10. **Diversified employment** that is harmoniously integrated into living environments.

MONTRÉAL, A HEALTHY CITY

The Healthy City concept comes from a worldwide movement whose goal is to improve the quality of life for those living in urban regions. Put forward by the World Health Organization, the concept calls upon citizens, administrators, elected officials, community groups and government agencies to collaborate on the creation of local strategies aimed at improving individual and public health by attacking problems directly.

The concept integrates ongoing efforts and draws on new ideas to make a direct connection between health and quality of life. Its objectives translate into a series of actions dealing with education, employment, urban spaces and community and social programs, such as those which combat food insecurity: community gardens, co-ops, purchasing groups, community kitchens, meals-on-wheels services and school lunches.

The Ville de Montréal subscribes to the Healthy City concept and favours the implementation of concrete measures which positively influence health, such as the improvement of housing conditions, increased access to affordable housing and the development of facilities and parks that will encourage physical activity and support wellness in all of its forms.

While the City intends to act throughout its territory, socio-economic data gathered from the 2001 Statistics Canada Census and through an analysis of the built environment permit the designation of certain areas as priorities in terms of revitalization efforts (see Map 2.1.1).

In these areas, interventions will be guided by an integrated approach that will simultaneously address the built environment and the services offered to the local population. This strategy calls for cooperation between multiple stakeholders in addition to the Ville de Montréal, such as school boards, community groups, public health workers and the business community along with the general population.

This strategy functions in the spirit of the Healthy Cities movement, which acknowledges the ensemble of factors that determine community and individual health while drawing on strategies that span different sectors.

**INTEGRATED URBAN REVITALIZATION STRATEGY**

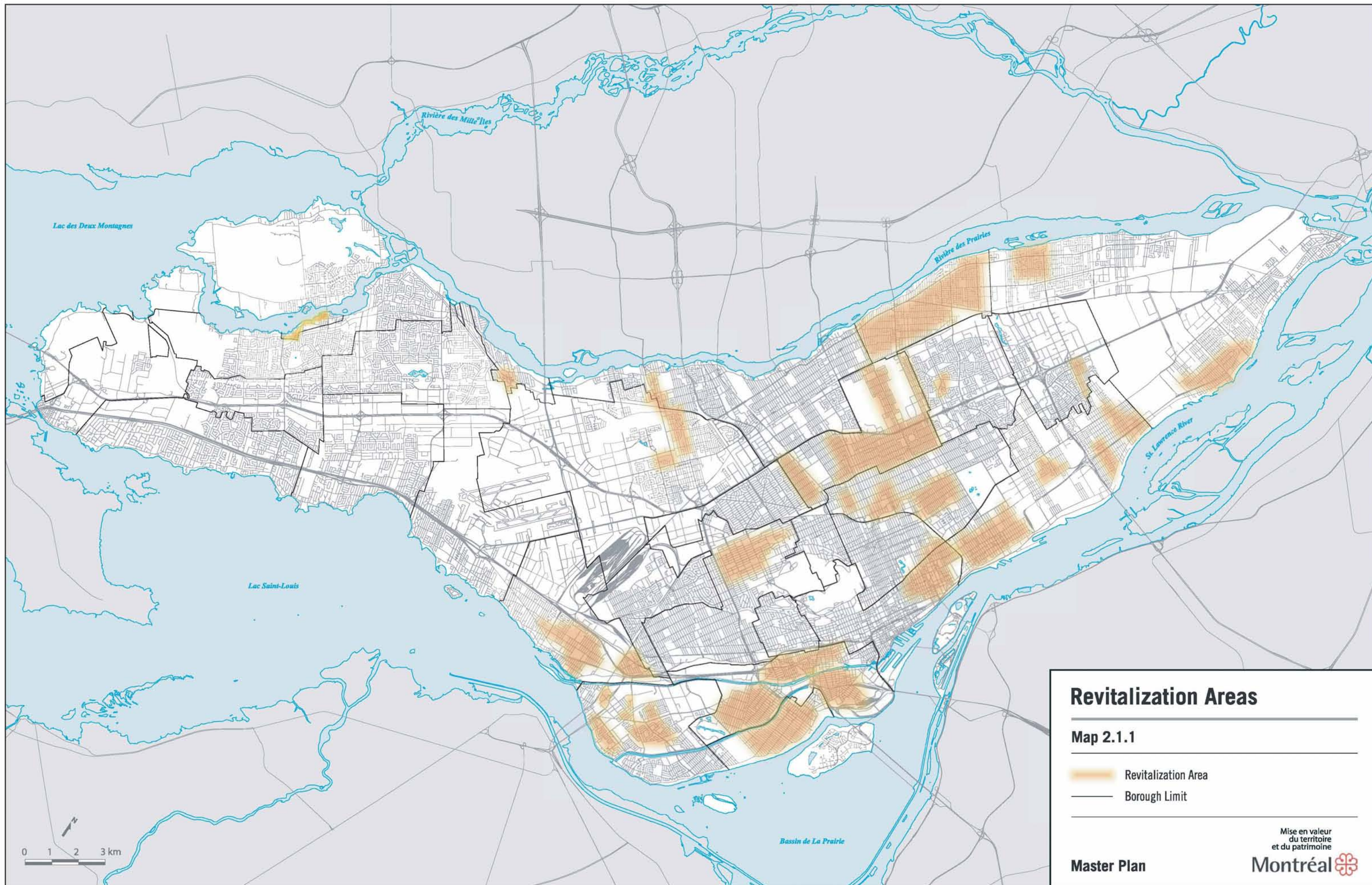
The Integrated Urban Revitalization Strategy, a result of consensus reached at the June 2002 Montréal Summit, aims to improve the quality of life in areas to be revitalized. To do so, action is required on several elements of the physical and built environment, such as housing, community facilities and urban design as well as social and economic factors. An integrated multi-sectoral approach will make long-term improvement in the physical and socio-economic conditions of the targeted areas.

Drawing inspiration from similar programs implemented in Europe and the United States, the Strategy's interventions target the full range of factors that contribute to the quality of life in areas to be revitalized. The strategy is characterized primarily by:

- The adoption of a global, concerted vision of the situation in the areas concerned;
- The will to take integrated action across a large number of domains (housing, physical environment, health, employment, culture, education, recreation and environment);
- The concentration, coordination and adaptation of public, private and community actions;
- The implication of the affected population in the planning, implementation and follow-through of actions;
- The intention to act on those factors that cause poverty, in a framework of sustainable change.

The Integrated Urban Revitalization Strategy was tested in pilot projects which began in June of 2003. The subsequent evaluation of these projects will allow for any necessary adjustments before their implementation in revitalization areas based on plans developed by the boroughs. These plans will be elaborated for a ten-year timeframe and then revised periodically. Many details have yet to be determined, including the method for establishing selection criteria, the characteristics of the project launch, the types of mechanisms to put in place, the specific objectives to be sought and the evaluation of outcomes.

Finally, the implementation of the strategy will require solid financial backing and partnership, especially with the Government of Québec. In this respect, the renewal of the *Renouveau Urbain* program will likely be a valuable tool for implementing this strategy.



Revitalization Areas

Map 2.1.1

- Revitalization Area
- Borough Limit

Master Plan

Mise en valeur
du territoire
et du patrimoine

Montréal

action 1.1

Ensure proper maintenance of residential buildings and the adaptation of the housing stock

The condition of housing has significant impacts on the quality of life and health of individuals. Largely built before 1960, Montréal's housing supply is in relatively good condition. A continuous and integrated effort must therefore be made to prevent its deterioration and improve its quality.

Moreover, the changing needs of City residents will require the adaptation of the housing stock. The aging of the population, changes in the structure of families and even the growing trend of working at home all place different demands on the housing supply. The City intends therefore to support the adaptation of the housing stock to these new realities.

Implementation measures

- Support, particularly with the help of renovation programs and by the application of the housing code and regulations on maintenance and sanitation, the proper maintenance of residential buildings and the adaptation of the housing stock.
- Study the possibility of modifying the zoning code in certain areas to respond to the needs of residents working at home, especially live-work spaces for artists.



FINANCIAL AID PROGRAMS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF RESIDENCES

The Ville de Montréal, in partnership with the Société d'habitation du Québec (SHQ) and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), offers owners and builders many programs targeted at the improvement and maintenance of residential buildings. In certain cases, the application of the program is limited to areas designated for revitalization or already undergoing improvement.

Rénovation Québec

The program is classified by the following types of work:

- Major Residential Renovation
Offers help to owners of obsolete buildings. Funds are available for major renovations, including a total overhaul of the building or, in certain cases, demolition and reconstruction.
- Minor Residential Renovation
Offers help to owners for the renovation or the replacement of certain components of buildings that include rental units.
- Demolition of Accessory Buildings
Offers help to owners of residential buildings for the demolition of accessory buildings that are dangerous or irreparable, in order to reduce fire hazards and to improve the environment of backyards and alleys.
- Stabilization of Foundations
Offers help to owner-occupants to repair the foundations of their property when damaged as a result of soil instability.
- Safety Improvements
Offers help to owners of high-rise residential buildings and rental buildings with more than eight units, to meet minimum fire safety standards and security measures.

Help for Owners of Buildings Damaged by Pyrite

Offers help to owners of residential or mixed-use buildings that have experienced problems related to pyrite oxidation.

Adaptation of Buildings for Handicapped Persons

Offers help to owners to improve the accessibility and functionality of the dwelling of a handicapped person.

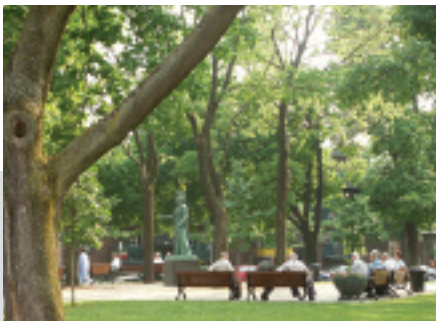
Adaptation of Buildings for Independent Seniors

Offers help to low-income persons aged 65 and older to support minor adaptations to their house or apartment.



action 1.2

Design public and private green spaces that enrich living environments



Montrealers benefit from a large number of parks, public spaces and green spaces that favour contact with natural features and provide access to sports, recreation and outdoor activities. When properly designed, they help enrich the quality of urban life. In order to ensure an adequate distribution of these spaces across the City, the Ville de Montréal intends to increase both the quality and quantity of its public and private green spaces.

As fundamental characteristics of living environments, green spaces and abundant trees help ensure the comfort and well-being of residents. To this effect, Objective 11 of the Plan underlines the importance of preserving and improving Montréal's green network and presents options to implement a greening strategy in Montréal's neighbourhoods.

Visual and physical access to a waterway is also a fundamental characteristic of many of Montréal's living environments. In many places, the water quality has improved enough that it can now be used for recreational purposes. Therefore, in order to enrich these living environments as well as enhance the value of Montréal's shorelines, the Plan affirms the importance of developing public access to riverbanks for swimming when water quality permits.

In addition, it is important to ensure that the location, number, quantity and quality of parks and other public spaces meet people's varied and changing needs. Objective 14 of the Plan describes a number of design principles that emphasize pedestrian needs, among other things.

Implementation measures

- Give parks, squares and other green spaces a structuring role in the organization and planning of living environments.
- Conserve and enhance natural features in residential projects (see Objective 16).
- Ensure the greening of residential areas, by promoting tree planting, notably in the front yards of private properties, in accordance with the Politique de l'arbre (Tree Policy, see Objective 11).
- Develop partnerships between the Ville de Montréal and the school boards to work towards the greening of schoolyards and the design of new school-parks (see Objective 11).
- Develop public riverbanks to enable swimming when water quality permits and put in place boating facilities in areas, such as docks and boat launch ramps, where none exist (see Objective 11).

action 1.3

Promote the consolidation of the City's most dynamic commercial streets, strips and centres

In order for a living environment to be complete, balanced retail services are required to meet residents' needs. The Ville de Montréal therefore intends to make it a priority to maintain and consolidate the commercial activity of the City's most dynamic commercial streets, strips and centres, as presented in Map 2.1.2. This map also illustrates the Centre, including streets where continuity in street-level commercial space is required by the Plan. Areas devoted principally to business and commerce are also noted (see Objectives 5 and 8).

In recent decades, retail activity has undergone structural transformation. In particular, the development of superstores has had repercussions on the distribution and composition of retail facilities. In response to changing consumer patterns, local demographics and market restructuring, some commercial streets are attracting new types of stores and services and adapting by specializing.

The evolving nature of retail entails a rethinking of the supply of commercial properties on streets. The concentration of activity along the most dynamic stretches is desirable in order to ensure commercial vitality and a quality urban environment, especially for pedestrians.

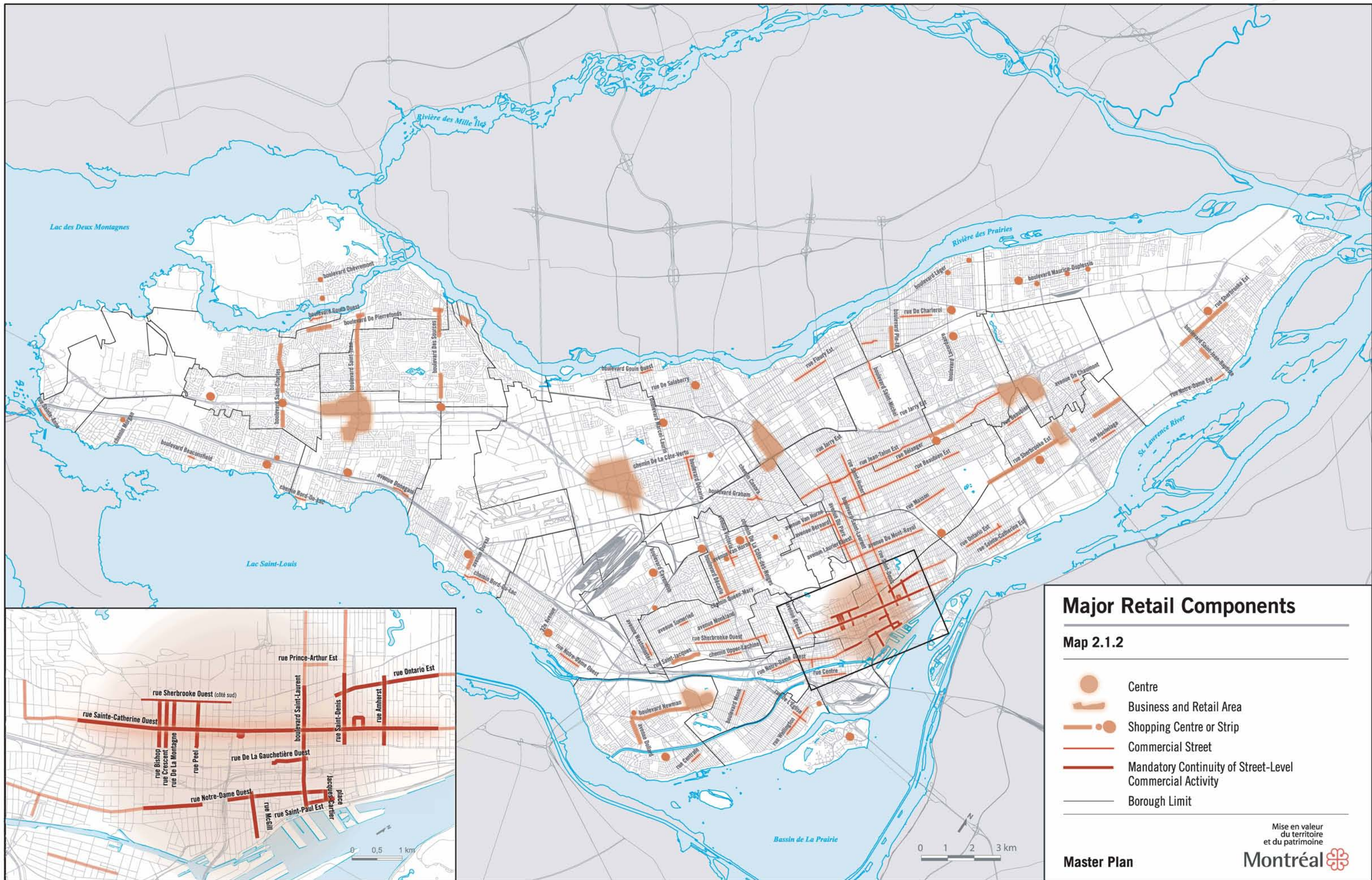
In many living environments, retail services are mainly provided by medium- to large-sized establishments located on major roadways or in automobile-oriented shopping centres. In order to improve the contribution of this type of business to the urban fabric and ensure universal accessibility, Objective 12 emphasizes the importance of implementing a regulatory framework that provides for the review of medium- and large-sized retail projects.

Montréal's large public markets and its local stores work together to enrich its living environments and offer its residents quality products. Public markets must be designed to offer a safe environment and a pleasant shopping experience but also to respect the peace and quiet of their neighbours.

Implementation measures

- Initiate or reinforce appropriate regulatory measures in order to maintain and consolidate commercial activity along streets, strips and in shopping centres, which are identified in Map 2.1.2.
- Consolidate the principal commercial streets of the Centre, identified in Map 2.1.2, where the continuity of street-level commercial space is required.
- Develop and implement action programs in cooperation with retailer associations and other local stakeholders.
- Ensure that the treatment of commercial streets, strips and centres serves to increase the interactions between businesses, public spaces and other activities (see Objective 12).
- Favour the development of local public markets well integrated with their surroundings.





Major Retail Components

Map 2.1.2

-  Centre
-  Business and Retail Area
-  Shopping Centre or Strip
-  Commercial Street
-  Mandatory Continuity of Street-Level Commercial Activity
-  Borough Limit

Mise en valeur du territoire et du patrimoine

Master Plan Montréal 

action 1.4

Improve community services by maintaining or establishing local public or institutional facilities in living environments

Montréal's living environments include a wealth of community facilities: elementary and secondary schools, places of worship, libraries, community gardens, cultural centres, sports and community centres and health and long-term care institutions.

Local public or institutional facilities are closely tied to their environment by history or vocation. They contribute to neighbourhood community life and cultural development, reinforce residents' sense of belonging and encourage participation in sports, recreation and outdoor living. A balanced distribution of these facilities, easily accessible on foot and able to respond to a diverse population, contributes greatly to the quality of Montréal's existing living environments.

Recognizing the importance of these public and institutional facilities, the City intends to support their continued presence, or the establishment of new facilities, while first exploring the potential of existing buildings.

In addition, to serve all its boroughs the City is preparing a Politique de développement culturel (Cultural Development Policy) for adoption in the fall of 2004 that focuses on facilitating public access to arts and culture and improving cultural facilities (see Objective 5).

Implementation measures

- Adapt public facilities to the needs of the City's residents, particularly to ensure universal access.
- Ensure that the City's public and institutional facilities respond to the diverse needs of its population.
- Give priority to the reuse of abandoned institutional buildings for public or institutional purposes.
- Develop and implement the Schéma directeur de développement des équipements de loisirs de Montréal (Montréal Recreational Facilities Development Plan).
- Develop and implement the Politique de développement culturel (Cultural Development Policy), slated for adoption in fall of 2004 (see Objective 5).



MONTRÉAL RECREATIONAL FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The City has undertaken the preparation of a Schéma directeur de développement des équipements de loisirs de Montréal (Montréal Recreational Facilities Development Plan), which is scheduled to be adopted in the fall of 2006. This plan will include a Recreational Facilities Development Plan for each borough.

The Plan will include four major items:

- A quantitative inventory;
- A qualitative inventory;
- Projections based on demographic trends;
- Recommendations pertaining to investment priorities, based on future needs.



objective

Encourage the construction of 60,000 to 75,000 housing units between 2004 and 2014

Guided by the principles of sustainable development, the City intends to promote the consolidation of development within its territory while fully respecting existing urban and architectural characteristics.

This is a major challenge, because residential growth over the past few decades has mainly taken place on the outskirts of Montréal. In fact, Montréal, which accounts for approximately 53% of the population of the metropolitan area (CMA), attracted an average of only 27% of new households between 1991 and 2001.

It is estimated that the number of households in the Montréal CMA will increase by 150,000 during the 2004-2014 period. The City sets an ambitious but realistic objective of supporting the construction of 60,000 to 75,000 new housing units, which would accommodate 40% to 50% of these 150,000 new households. Between 1984 and 2003, Montréal's share of the region's total new housing construction varied between 22% and 34%. In light of this, the City will have to make major efforts in order to achieve its new objective.

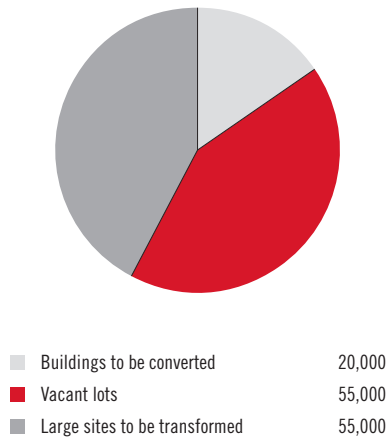
Montréal's territory holds the potential for an estimated 130,000 new dwellings, located in vacant lots, sites to be transformed, or in non-residential buildings which can be converted. Vacant lots cover a total area of 13 km², for a potential 55,000 new dwellings. Sites suitable for residential redevelopment would permit the construction of another 55,000 dwellings. Finally, buildings currently used for industrial, commercial or institutional purposes represent the potential for some 20,000 new dwellings, located in areas already well served by public infrastructure and often in proximity to public transit.

A large portion of this potential growth, approximately 15,000 housing units, is located in Montréal's Centre, well served with transportation infrastructure, stores and facilities as well as excellent public transit (see Objective 6). The West Island and the north-central portion of the City also account for a large share of the residential potential.

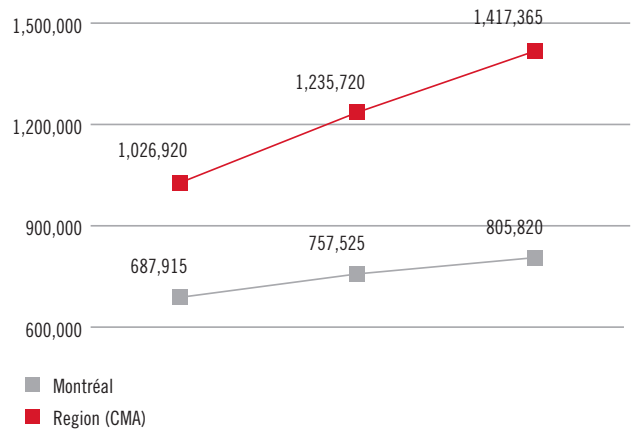
The City intends to support the construction of a variety of housing units, relying on programs for the financial support of new construction. These units will meet the changing profiles and needs of Montréal households, taking into account the aging population, among other considerations. Other objectives are to provide:

- Housing units of different sizes and types in order to meet the needs of various household compositions;
- Rental housing, as well as condominium or single property ownership;
- Price diversity.

GRAPHIC 2.1.1 POTENTIAL FOR NEW DWELLINGS IN MONTRÉAL



GRAPHIC 2.1.2 TRENDS IN HOUSEHOLD NUMBERS IN MONTRÉAL AND THE REGION (CMA) 1981-2001



HOUSING CONSTRUCTION SUBSIDY PROGRAMS

The Ville de Montréal, in partnership with other levels of government, offers the following programs to owners, builders, developers and community and civic groups in the interest of encouraging the construction of new dwellings:

Rénovation Québec

- **Housing creation program**
Supports the creation of housing, including a certain portion that must be affordable for low- and moderate-income households. More precisely, it is aimed at eliminating non-residential buildings that are nuisances to, or otherwise incompatible with, their residential surroundings and replacing them with residences. The program also targets the creation of new housing on vacant lots in designated areas.
- **First time home buyers program**
Facilitates first time home buying and encourages developers to produce affordable housing by providing assistance to purchasers and to tenants who already occupy a rental building with two to five apartments. In addition to direct assistance, this program will have the effect of encouraging developers to build such projects by stimulating the demand for them.

Logement abordable Québec – Private-sector program

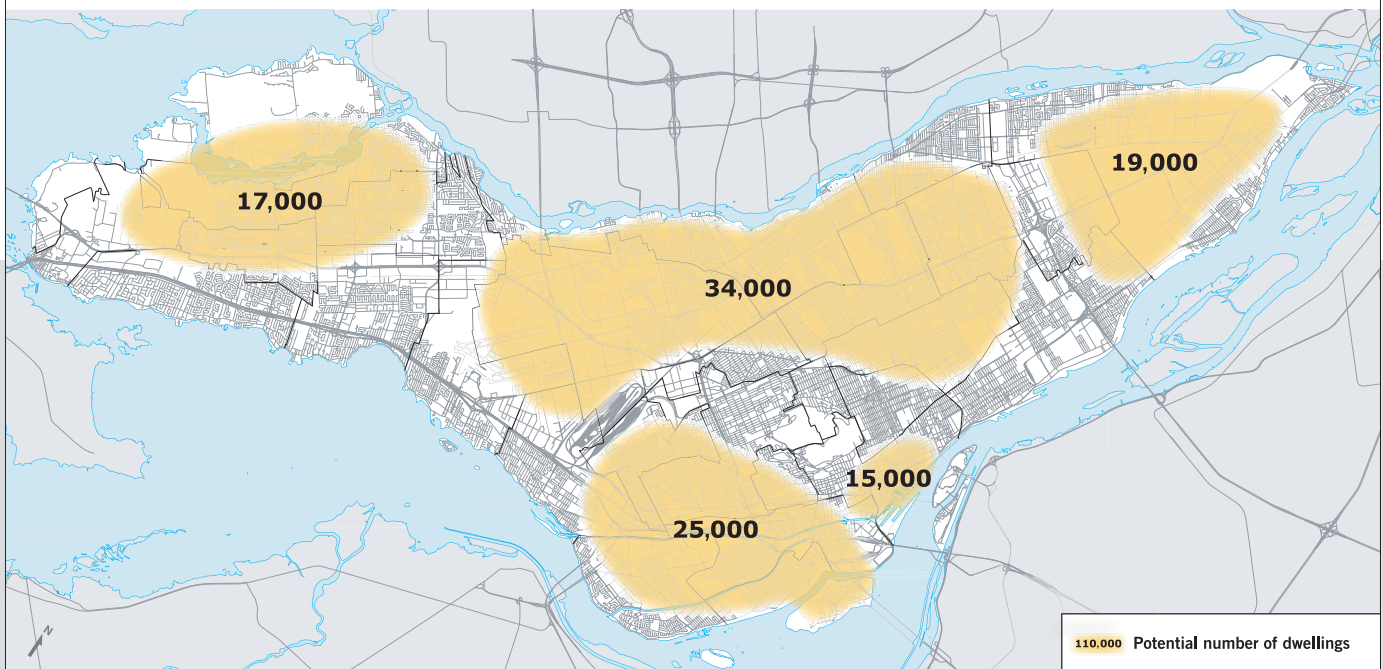
Encourages the private-sector construction of new rental units across the City that are affordable to low- and moderate-income households by the private sector. This program supports the transformation of non-residential buildings into residential buildings as well as the construction of new residential buildings. In exchange for the financial assistance provided by the program, the owner agrees to respect certain conditions, particularly measures to keep rents low.

Opération Solidarité 5 000 logements:

Targets the construction of 5,000 new social and community housing units for low- or moderate-income households (single persons, families, including seniors losing their independence and special-needs clients). The projects will be carried out by cooperatives, non-profit organizations and the Office municipal d'habitation de Montréal, with technical resource groups available to assist non-profits and cooperatives. The operation is buttressed by the following programs:

- **Accès-logis Québec**
Finances development project costs (building acquisition, construction, etc.). Half of the housing units built will be earmarked for households that are eligible for the Rent Supplement Program.
- **Logement abordable Québec – Social and community program**
Finances development project costs. Three quarters of the housing units built will be for low-income households that meet the eligibility criteria for low-income housing.

ILLUSTRATION 2.1.1 RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL



AFFORDABLE HOUSING

A dwelling is considered affordable when a low- or moderate-income household is able to afford to own or rent it without having to devote more than 30% of its income to rental or ownership payments.

Affected households

A low-income household is defined as one that earns less than 80% of the median income of the Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal (CMM) and therefore has trouble finding rental housing appropriate for its budget.

A moderate-income household is defined as one that earns between 80% and 120% of the median income of the CMM and therefore has trouble purchasing a residence in Montréal.

Social housing

Social housing units are reserved for low-income households who meet the criteria set by relevant government programs, such as AccèsLogis, Logement Abordable Québec's social housing program. Social housing is thus a subset of affordable housing.

The Ville de Montréal has set a target that 30% of all new residential construction be affordable for low- or moderate-income households. This is an essential aspect of sustainable development in Montréal. Ensuring the presence of affordable housing responds to the current and future needs of Montréal's households while preserving the competitiveness and economic vitality of the City. In the context of a highly active residential property market and despite vigorous intervention by the Ville de Montréal, the private-sector construction of affordable housing – much of it small units that are inappropriate for families – has been insufficient and unequally distributed across the City. Without active intervention, the situation may worsen in the coming years.

To achieve its goal of 60,000 to 75,000 new affordable housing units, the Ville de Montréal will have to make significant efforts. Nonetheless, the success of these efforts relies in part on a number of things which are beyond the City's control.

Therefore, the City must be able to count on:

- the continued vitality of the residential construction industry, which is itself determined by economic conditions such as interest and employment rates;
- the availability of sites, made possible by the financial participation of governments in the repurposing of large sites and the rehabilitation of contaminated tracts.

Finally, the continued capacity of the Ville de Montréal, with help from the CMM, to support the production of affordable housing is dependent on continued and predictable funding from government programs.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING STRATEGY

The promotion of social mixture and diversity is based on both social values and economic considerations. For instance, employees of businesses and institutions must be able to find housing at a price compatible with their income within a reasonable distance of their workplace. It is therefore important that a portion of new housing developments be affordable for low- or moderate-income households (as rented, owned or cooperatively managed housing).

In order to meet this objective, the Ville de Montréal will develop an affordable housing inclusion strategy to reinforce and complement existing programs. Builders will be encouraged to produce housing units at a lower cost than those typical of the local market, by using good-quality but more economical urban design and architectural elements while meeting the financial viability requirements of projects and construction schedules. Owners of large governmental and institutional sites are also invited to consider this strategy when selling or developing their lands. This affordable housing production strategy may include subsidies that are tied to clients' income level.

The strategy will identify specific quantitative and qualitative objectives. It will also use a range of instruments, some that already exist and others that are to be developed:

- Development requirements applicable to City-owned properties offered for sale;
- Optimization of housing subsidy programs, notably in the interest of social diversity in large housing developments;
- Priority criteria for selecting projects which will receive public investments (contaminated site cleanup funds, etc.);
- Adaptation of some planning by-laws, especially to facilitate the construction of a wide range of dwellings and to minimize the requirements that have a strong impact on their affordability, such as those related to parking;
- Direct intervention by para-municipal corporations.

action 2.1

Stimulate housing construction on suitable vacant land

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

The City will ensure that new construction projects will take into account environmental concerns, including:

- The development of new living environments that meet the conservation and development objectives of ecoterritories (see Objective 16);
- Sound runoff management, including retention ponds or other catchment works (see Objectives 16 and 17);
- The implementation of mitigation measures in new residential projects that are located in the vicinity of new sources of nuisances (see Objective 18).

Vacant areas adjacent to existent living environments, which already benefit from public transit and a range of other municipal services, are best suited for new residential construction. Generally speaking, areas bordered by expressways or other nuisances do not make good candidates for residential development. However, if housing is built in such areas, certain mitigation measures can be taken, such as building a berm, planting trees or erecting a wall.

Much of the potential for residential construction is found in large vacant lots, which require comprehensive planning and subdivision. This is the case for such areas as the eastern and western portion of the Island of Montréal, as well as those on Île des Soeurs and Île Bizard. Some are located within designated ecoterritories, which require special attention in order to protect and enhance their natural heritage.

In addition to these large vacant lots, smaller lots throughout Montréal also have potential residential use. Special care will be required in order to ensure that new buildings on these sites fit harmoniously into the existing fabric.

Implementation measures

- Plan the large areas to be built using regulatory tools such as Special Planning Programs (SPP) and Comprehensive Development Programs (CDP) in order to shape their development.
- Introduce programs to support the construction of a wide range of housing units on vacant lots appropriate for residential purposes.
- Set up a financial aid program to promote the densification of activities in the vicinity of metro stations, commuter train stations and public transportation corridors (see Objective 3).



action 2.2

Support the conversion to residential purposes of areas and buildings now fulfilling other roles

Montréal's territory includes several areas and buildings to be transformed, currently dedicated to non-residential purposes and largely underused. These areas permit an interesting opportunity to develop highly diversified living environments.

These areas and buildings come under four main categories: industrial areas, commercial areas, large institutional properties and non-residential buildings.

Industrial areas

Large underused industrial areas, such as the Outremont railyard, will be redeveloped for residential or mixed uses, including housing, retail activities and employment areas. Some of these areas will require detailed planning, including:

- The areas adjacent to the CP tracks, notably the Outremont railyard (see 4.2);
- Lachine Canal (see 4.8);
- Griffintown (see 4.8.1);
- East Lachine (see 4.8.2).

Commercial areas

Despite the retail boom and renewal that has been observed in certain areas of Montréal, the vacancy rate of some local shopping streets is high, some sections are deteriorated and first-generation shopping centres are declining. Several of these underused retail spaces have the potential to be redeveloped and densified for residential purposes. Others constitute an opportunity to intensify land use by introducing housing as a complement to retail activity.

The conversion of some of these sites is already underway (such as Schevchenko Boulevard and the Cavalier de LaSalle shopping centre in the Borough of LaSalle).

Large institutional properties

Throughout Montréal, there are large institutional properties that could be converted, in whole or in part, to residential purposes. These institutions sit on large lots with few buildings and often present high-quality architecture and landscapes. The Louis-H.-La Fontaine project is an example of such conversion of a portion of a site to residential purposes. The architectural integrity of the buildings and the property is being maintained, while a new, quality living environment is being developed.



Non-residential buildings

The creation of housing units in abandoned or obsolete non-residential buildings has been underway in the central boroughs of the City for a number of years. This represents a significant percentage of the residential construction potential.

The construction of housing units in buildings and areas to be transformed will be encouraged, to the extent that they:

- Benefit from direct access to the public transportation network;
- Are located in the vicinity of existing services, public facilities and stores;
- Are far enough from nuisances or incompatible areas, or at the very least, permit the implementation of mitigation measures;
- Do not present contamination levels that are above acceptable standards for residential use.

Implementation measures

- Support the conversion of sites and buildings that can be designated for residential development, using existing or new programs. As part of this, endeavour to increase the supply of housing affordable for low- and moderate-income households wherever possible.
- In accordance with an integrated development concept, carry out mixed-use projects that include housing, retail and employment in order to successfully incorporate them with the urban fabric of neighbouring residential areas (see Objective 9).
- Adapt by-laws to encourage the conversion of institutional sites and buildings, while preserving the integrity of their heritage and landscape (see Objective 15).
- Establish a contaminated site rehabilitation program in areas to be transformed for residential purposes (see Objective 17).
- Take mitigation measures when warranted by surrounding nuisances (see Objective 19).

SOIL REHABILITATION

In many areas, real estate development is significantly hampered by soil contamination. Many sites are awaiting redevelopment due to a lack of in-depth knowledge of contamination levels and, at a later stage, effective, fast and cost-effective rehabilitation methods (see Objective 17).



