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POINTE-CLAIRE VILLAGE DIAGNOSIS

VILLAGE FORUM HELD ON NOVEMBER 30, 2013

DISCUSSION SUMMARY



convercité
L'agence de valorisation urbaine



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INTRODUCTION

As part of its assignment to produce a diagnosis for Pointe-Claire Village, Convergence hosted a half-day discussion forum open to all the citizens of the City on November 30, 2013.

The forum objectives were to:

- Share the preliminary diagnosis in order to foster a shared understanding of the situation
- Give everyone an opportunity to participate
- Validate the planning issues
- Discuss collective priorities of action. With regard to this final objective, the forum's aim was to promote reflection about a variety of actions to consider and the choices that would eventually be required.

Sixty-seven people attended the forum. Six elected representatives, three Planning Department officials and a planning consultant were present to listen and provide information, where needed.

Mayor Morris Trudeau opened and closed the forum. Convergence staff made a brief presentation to explain the seven preliminary issues formulated to date as well as the findings from which they stemmed.

The preliminary issues were stated as follows:

- A. Understanding heritage as a landscape, enhancing it and improving the Village's appearance
- B. Improving mobility conditions for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists
- C. Fostering a harmonious coexistence between commercial and residential functions while encouraging their development
- D. Ensuring the integration and complementarity of the Pointe-Claire peninsula, Alexandre-Bourgeau Park and the Village
- E. Foreseeing possible future occupancies of heritage buildings such as the windmill, the convent and other heritage immovables
- F. Maintaining and developing community equipment
- G. Establishing a strong relationship between the City and the Village community

The participants then formed breakout groups for a work session of an hour and a half, using their own [Participant's Workbook](#).

Each group had to evaluate the list of issues. (Does this list cover every issue? Is there a specific problem that has been omitted?)

Each group also had to discuss three predetermined issues in greater detail so that all the issues from A to F would be evaluated as much as possible by the same number of groups. All the groups were to discuss Issue G.

The groups had to answer the questions below for each issue that they were supposed to discuss:

- Is the list of findings correct and complete? If not, what changes should be made?
- If the City was only able to undertake three projects for Issues A, B and C, or two projects for Issues D, E and F, and one project for Issue G over the next three years, which of these avenues would you recommend? (You may choose an intervention that is not included in the list.)

Each table was moderated by a Convergence employee who was responsible for ensuring that all the participants had a chance to speak. Moderators also had to take notes during their group's discussions and provide the group's answers to the questions asked. Citizens chosen by the members of their group had the privilege of reporting at the plenary on the possible avenues of intervention prioritized by their group.

The aim of this document is to synthesize the work of all the focus groups and draw some conclusions.

1 DIAGNOSIS AND ISSUES

Not all the workshops seem to have focused on the list of issues. However, the participants made a number of constructive comments that may lead to an improved diagnosis and wording of the issues.

First, in relation to the diagnosis, one group identified several paradoxes:

- The Village is the very heart of the community but it does not give the impression of being the “center”.
- The commercial function is essential but the City does not seem to want to promote it.
- The mixed functions are necessary but cause friction.
- Community clubs contribute to vitality but are not well known.

From the outset, there was a consensus around the table on one finding: The Village is a jewel that stands out in Pointe-Claire and the West Island, and its enhancement would allow the City to generate additional income.

Another group agreed that the Village had tremendous heritage and recreational potential that should be developed in future years.

The following comments were made about the issues:

- The issues should be based on facts. One group mentioned that they seemed to be based more on perceptions.
- The issue of economic vitality and the relationship between business and the Village’s vitality was not clear.
- The issue of providing adequate municipal services and infrastructures to keep existing residents was not considered.
- Specify that tourism development should not undermine the preservation of the Village’s character.
- Reformulate Issue D to read “Ensuring the integration and complementarity of Lake Saint-Louis, the Pointe-Claire peninsula, Alexandre-Bourgeau Park and the Village”.
- There was no issue concerning sustainable development, and yet the Village must be revitalized from this perspective.

Lastly, concerning the identification of priorities in a future specific planning program:

- The choice of intervention priorities should be based on a vision. It is easier to agree on priorities when there is a shared vision.
- Perhaps success in revitalizing the Village does not depend so much on identifying specific problems, but quite simply on the municipality’s ability and resolve to complete the projects and follow through, as required.

2 UNDERSTANDING HERITAGE AS A LANDSCAPE, ENHANCING IT AND IMPROVING THE VILLAGE'S APPEARANCE

2.1 FINDINGS

The participants who examined this issue suggested additions to and nuances in the findings proposed in the [Participant's Workbook](#) (p. 3).

- The Village is a mish-mash. There is no unifying theme to make it a warm and consistent environment.
- Sidewalks are not properly cleared of snow because of the utility poles cluttering them. As a result, people walk in the street, which is dangerous.
- Not everyone is of the opinion that the utility poles and wires detract from the Village's appearance; it would therefore not be worthwhile to bury the overhead wires because of the high cost involved.
- The Village is a heat island and there is no municipal strategy to expand the canopy.

2.2 PRIORITY AVENUES OF INTERVENTION

Among the avenues of intervention suggested in the [Participant's Workbook](#) (p. 4), the three focus groups that worked on this issue would recommend that the City prioritize undertaking the following projects in the next three years:

- First, enhance the shoreline in front of the church. The three groups made this recommendation and all of them suggested that this be part of a larger project. However, for one group, the project would include a waterfront path that would extend from Edgewater Park to Antoine-Pilon Park; while for another group, the shoreline and all of Alexandre-Bourgeau Park had to be redeveloped, and for the third group, the shoreline and the areas surrounding the church, including the old cemetery, had to be redone.
- Refurbishment of the sidewalks along Lakeshore Road and on the peninsula was recommended by two groups; however, one group would like to have the wires buried while the other did not.
- Creation of a heritage site for the Village and setting up an advisory committee on heritage were discussed by the three groups, one of which pointed out that these two actions went hand in hand.
- Lastly, one group considered that one of the three priorities had to be the improvement of traffic signs and other signage.

3 IMPROVING MOBILITY CONDITIONS FOR PEDESTRIANS, CYCLISTS AND MOTORISTS

3.1 FINDINGS

The participants who examined this issue suggested additions to and nuances in the findings proposed in the [Participant's Workbook](#) (p. 5).

- Cycling in the Village is probably no more dangerous than elsewhere (no consensus).
- An interruption in the Route verte bikeway is not necessarily a problem (no consensus).
- Access to the school is a problem.
- There was opposition to the idea of renaming Cartier Avenue. Participants preferred to add signs about “Historic Pointe-Claire Village” or the windmill.
- Managing the numerous public and private parking spaces is a problem.
- The pedestrian median refuge at the Cartier/Salisbury intersection is confusing to motorists, and it is feared that it could cause accidents.

3.2 PRIORITY AVENUES OF INTERVENTION

The four focus groups that worked on this issue would recommend that the City prioritize undertaking the following projects in the next three years:

- Three groups recommended that the City of Pointe-Claire reorganize Cartier Avenue's streetscape in the next three years.
- Three groups suggested that the City tackle the parking problem by conducting a study on the parking occupancy rate and that it adopt an overall vision for action that would include traffic and parking regulations.
- In relation to the previous point, one group considered it important to optimize traffic patterns; however, its members did not agree on the solutions; another group suggested that Vélo-Québec be asked to study bike traffic.
- Two groups proposed refurbishing the sidewalks, and one of them thought that overhead wires should be buried at the same time.
- A group liked the idea of making the Lakeshore Road a [shared space](#) ([zone de rencontre](#) in French).
- Lastly, a group liked the idea of renaming Cartier Avenue as Village Avenue in order to publicize the Village on A-20, and then using the name of “Cartier” to designate another place in the Village.

Other possible avenues of intervention or partial solutions were mentioned:

- Plan all the interventions as part of an overall plan to enhance the landscape and the signage that would be designed to attract people to the Village.

- Consider the possibility of allowing businesses at the Cartier entrance to use part of the public right-of-way for business activities in order to liven it up.
- Indicate to performance cyclists that they should go along Cartier Avenue if they did not intend to stop in the Village.
- Integrate cycling into all aspects of Village life (mobility, leisure activities, transportation of goods, local deliveries, municipal maintenance, etc.).

4 FOSTERING A HARMONIOUS COEXISTENCE BETWEEN COMMERCIAL AND RESIDENTIAL FUNCTIONS WHILE ENCOURAGING THEIR DEVELOPMENT

4.1 FINDINGS

A group of participants added the following to the findings listed in the [Participant's Workbook](#) (p. 7):

- Residential, commercial, recreational and tourism functions need to coexist so that the Village can continue to be a *vibrant village (village vivant)*. This means that residents cannot expect to enjoy the peace and quiet of a uniformly residential sector, but also that merchants need to try to limit the nuisances (inconveniences) associated with their activities.

4.2 PRIORITY AVENUES OF INTERVENTION

Among the avenues of intervention suggested in the [Participant's Workbook](#) (p. 8), the three focus groups that worked on this issue would recommend that the City prioritize undertaking the following projects in the next three years:

- Unanimously, the City should foster the creation of a commercial development corporation (CDC).
- All the groups recommended that the City allow new restaurants and bed & breakfasts as a conditional use.
- One group thought that the City should also allow new establishments serving alcohol, such as micro-breweries and bistros to make the Village more dynamic and more attractive.
- Favouring residential uses on Lakeshore Road cross streets was a priority for one group.
- Lastly, a group suggested a comprehensive plan for the Cartier/Lakeshore/de Lourdes/Lanthier block, but without moving the Curling Club and lawn bowling green.

Other possible avenues of intervention or partial solutions were mentioned:

- The Village's territory should be marked through distinctive public space design and signage to recall that it is a Village sector with mixed-use activities.
- The Village should act as an incubator for new businesses (hub of creativity or place where innovation happens).
- Use of Village's branding and special municipal measures, including tax measures to encourage setting up new businesses.
- A website should be created to centralize useful information for businesses in the Village (business hours, special activities and promotions).
- Include both Pointe-Claire Village and Valois Village merchants in the same CDC.
- Beautify Cartier Avenue as well as Lakeshore Road.

5 ENSURING THE INTEGRATION AND COMPLEMENTARITY OF THE POINTE-CLAIRE PENINSULA, ALEXANDRE-BOURGEAU PARK AND THE VILLAGE

5.1 FINDINGS

To complete the information in the list of findings for this issue according to the [Participant's Workbook](#) (p. 9), one group mentioned that the parking lot near the Cartier boat launch is very heavily used by pleasure boaters and picnickers on weekends in good weather. If it is reduced in size and the parking spots relocated closer to the Village, compensating measures should be considered (lighted trail, bicycles to transport items between car and boat, restrooms near the dock, etc.).

5.2 PRIORITY AVENUES OF INTERVENTION

Among the avenues of intervention suggested in the [Participant's Workbook](#) (p. 10), the three focus groups that worked on this issue would recommend that the City prioritize undertaking the following projects in the next three years:

- Create an integrated Village-peninsula-park circuit for pedestrians and cyclists (two groups).
- Install signage and identify the Cartier/Lakeshore intersection as an orientating location towards the various attractions (two groups). At one table, creating a public space at this intersection was a necessary part of this project.
- Consider revamping Alexandre-Bourgeau Park to consolidate the Village's important recreational vocation and sustain moderate tourism development (one group). One group instead pointed out that it was important to bear in mind, during this period, the objective of making the park a major attraction.

Another possible solution was mentioned:

- Two winter uses of the lake to be considered were ice boat races and a skating trail between the peninsula and the canoe club.

6 FORESEEING POSSIBLE FUTURE OCCUPANCIES OF HERITAGE BUILDINGS SUCH AS THE WINDMILL, THE CONVENT AND OTHER HERITAGE IMMOVABLES

6.1 FINDINGS

The participants who examined this issue suggested additions to or nuances in the findings listed in the [Participant's Workbook](#) (p. 11):

- Current access to the windmill (through Mr. Arseneault's guided tours) is good, but is not publicized enough.
- The windmill is not well maintained.
- Restoring a site must take the potential market into consideration (for instance, the market for touring a windmill).

6.2 PRIORITY AVENUES OF INTERVENTION

Among the avenues of intervention suggested in the [Participant's Workbook](#) (p. 12), the three focus groups that worked on this issue would recommend that the City prioritize undertaking the following projects in the next three years:

- Unanimously, the drafting of an integrated municipal strategy on heritage interpretation and promotion of the Village as a destination.
- City recognition of several heritage buildings to preserve the sense of a voyage back in time and enhance their protection against transformation or demolition (two groups). One group thought that Metro Garage should not be one of the buildings included.
- Acquisition by the City of Antoine-Pilon House for heritage interpretation (one group).
- A task force and studies to identify potential socially acceptable uses for the convent. In this regard, one group would opt first for a multipurpose location.
- Maintain public access to the convent and the windmill (one group).

7 MAINTAINING AND DEVELOPING COMMUNITY EQUIPMENT

7.1 FINDINGS

The participants who examined this issue suggested additions to or nuances in the findings listed in the [Participant's Workbook](#) (p. 13).

- The clubs are not well known and do not give an impression of openness.
- The clubs contribute to the Village's vitality.
- The absence of an appropriate meeting place for the community is deplorable.
- There was no reason to relocate the Curling Club or lawn bowling green to make way for building new homes and businesses. This equipment attracts people to the Village and enhances its attractiveness. It is essential to keep sports equipment in the Village.
- The petanque court and its benches and picnic tables, beside the swimming pool, are reserved for members of the petanque club, which is not considered normal for this type of equipment.

7.2 PRIORITY AVENUES OF INTERVENTION

Among the avenues of intervention suggested in the [Participant's Workbook](#) (p. 14), the three focus groups that worked on this issue would recommend that the City prioritize undertaking the following projects in the next three years:

- Unanimously, equip the Village with an up-to-standards and universally accessible community centre; for one group, this meant building a new community centre (three groups).
- Concerning the possible avenues of intervention relating to policies, the three groups seemed to consider them interrelated with the result that the recommendation would be to recognize, in the Planning Program, the importance of the recreational function as a component of the Village (1 group), to evaluate any proposal regarding the relocation of a community or recreational facility with its stakeholders and to take into account the social and economic impact on the Village (2 groups) and encourage the relocation of recreational equipment within the Village (2 groups).

Other possible avenues of intervention were also discussed:

- Create a public area bordered by buildings with visitor services (tourist information, restrooms, etc.) on the vacant lot at the corner of Cartier/Lakeshore. Hold activities there year-round.
- Keep Centre Noël-Legault and make more use of it.

8 ESTABLISHING A STRONG RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CITY AND THE VILLAGE COMMUNITY

8.1 FINDINGS

The participants suggested additions to or nuances in the findings listed in the [Participant's Workbook](#) (p. 15), as it is felt that:"

- Until now, elected officials have not shown any resolve to make the Village a success.
- The municipal employees applying the by-laws seem to be people who prevent projects from being carried out rather than creative agents of development who help find solutions.
- Project approval procedures, especially procedures involving the Planning Advisory Committee, are overly long and difficult.
- The City is not good at receiving information from citizens and responding to it.
- The City pays more attention to "Pointe-Claire North" (around A-40), which brings in more tax money, and neglects the Village.
- If the City invests, the private sector will follow.

8.2 PRIORITY AVENUES OF INTERVENTION

All nine focus groups worked on this issue. Among the avenues of interventions suggested in the [Participant's Workbook](#) (p. 16), they recommend that the City prioritize undertaking the following projects in the next three years:

- Municipal employee and specific budget devoted to the Village and its social and economic vitality (4 groups). One group specified that this involved incorporating urban planning benchmarks for the Village and having the municipal employee offer professional support to people from the Village who had projects.
- Establish a multi-sectorial roundtable (4 groups). One group added that for ideas from the roundtable to become a reality, a municipal employee and specific budget devoted to the Village and its social and economic vitality would also be necessary. Another group suggested that the multi-sectorial roundtable be composed of two subcommittees: a business development committee and a heritage committee.
- Create a Commercial Development Corporation (1 group).
- Hold council or other meetings in the Village on matters concerning the Village (1 group).
- Improve relationships in the spirit of what had been done at the forum.

Other possible avenues of intervention were also discussed:

- Improve the City's communications, in particular regarding the sharing of information about municipal projects and initiatives, as well as about municipal by-laws.
- Set up a committee to analyze projects for the Village.

9 GENERAL COMMENTS ON THE ACTIVITY

One participant felt that the Participant's Workbook should have been distributed in advance of the activity. This possibility was considered but rejected by the project team in order to avoid having some participants arrive more prepared for the activity than others, as the purpose of the activity was to have the largest number of people participating on an equal footing. In addition, the content of the Workbook was developed with the aim of sparking discussion and getting an idea of how the population would react to certain things, and not to have a detailed analysis of the findings and possible avenues of intervention.

Only one complaint was made concerning the composition of a workshop, and the moderator confirmed that it was hard to manage the discussion in this group. The organizers apologize, but as the groups were formed on a random basis¹ and the persons who formed them did not, with a few exceptions, know the people who were registered, it must be concluded that this unfortunate situation was due to chance.

Most of the participants seem to have enjoyed the activity, and some people even took the initiative of organizing a group afterwards to continue with the reflection.

¹Except to ensure that moderators less fluent in English would be heading up a French-speaking table.

CONCLUSION

The excellent turnout for the Village Forum on November 30, 2013 shows that the community is actively behind the City's resolve to reinvigorate Pointe-Claire Village.

The main points from the discussion were as follows:

1. To improve relations between the City of Pointe-Claire and the Village community, two possible solutions could be implemented at the same time: establishing a roundtable and appointing a municipal employee devoted to the revitalization of the Village and the resulting private sector projects.
2. To ensure commercial development in the Village, several groups suggested creating a Commercial Development Corporation (CDC) with the support of the municipality.
3. The City's interventions had to be based on a shared vision, taken from a sustainable development perspective and as part of an overall plan.
4. The urban planning choices made must be supported by a rational assessment of the situation and a knowledge of what has been done elsewhere, not just based on perceptions. At the same time, citizens' perceptions should not be neglected, since citizens are often the experts on their milieu. Consequently, when City makes choices, it should explain the reasons for choosing one solution over another.
5. To benefit as much as possible from the potential for heritage development, participants recommended setting up a heritage site and forming a heritage committee in the short term. It is also recommended that Council adopt an integrated municipal strategy for heritage interpretation and promoting the Village as a destination that will guide its subsequent decisions and actions.
6. Redevelopment of Cartier Avenue, creating a public space at the intersection of Cartier and Lakeshore, and creating a multipurpose waterfront path between Edgewater Park and St-Joachim Street or Antoine-Pilon Park are three projects that were favourably received.
7. There was a consensus concerning the importance of the Village's recreational vocation, maintaining and improving existing recreational equipment, and developing this vocation for the surrounding community and for visitors. Equipping the Village with a universally accessible community centre was a priority.
8. Concern was felt about municipal tax increases, although it did not colour the discussion at every table. Some preferred to see overhead wiring on an improved network of utility poles rather than pay the cost of burying it. In the short term, sidewalks would be repaired rather than review the entire organization of Lakeshore Road. Alexandre-Bourgeau Park would be gradually redeveloped as a major attraction, starting with the building of a footpath and bike path. Having the municipality purchase buildings would be acceptable as long as it was for projects that would eventually be self-financing. There was also a certain amount of skepticism about the potential to generate visitor traffic at the windmill, and as a result, participants wanted to see the City's contribution to restoring it to be proportionate to the expected visitor traffic. Finally, participants hoped to see the City explore the possibility of special taxation for the Village.

9. There was considerable openness to amending urban planning by-laws to authorize restaurants and B&Bs, under certain conditions, in the near future, to make this Village business niche more dynamic and generate positive spin-offs for other business.
10. There is an urgent need to review parking regulations on commercial lots and plan the supply of parking.

To complete its diagnosis of the Village, Convergence intends to re-read all the comments and suggestions from Forum participants reported in the previous pages, and it suggests that everyone joining together to work on revitalizing the Village in the years ahead do likewise, because they contain a wealth of information and very interesting ideas. They must also realize that expectations are high, and much hard work and sometimes difficult decisions lie ahead.