Maison Neuve:
a site development plan for 5252 de Maisonneuve

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Date: June 24, 2012

Context: With the arrival of the MUHC, the area immediately beside the Vendome Metro station will change radically. Current zoning permits construction up to 10 storeys. Tax incentives are in place to encourage industrial development in this part of NDG. In the context of a site-specific studio at McGill’s School of Urban Planning, we elected to reimagine Place Vendome, currently owned by Standard Life, at 5252 de Maisonneuve Ouest. This building is home to a variety of medically related uses, but is only four storeys high and does not optimally occupy the space. We propose to replace this building with two new buildings and we include pro-forma viability analysis demonstrating the project is economically feasible.

Proposal: Maison Neuve is a mixed-use development designed to serve the needs of both the local community and the future McGill University Health Centre at Glen Campus (MUHC). Affordability, accessibility, and opportunity are the driving principles of this project. Along with a commitment to providing adequate and affordable housing options targeting young families, couples, and retirees, the site development plan includes innovative green building design and adequate space for holistic health services, including a birthing centre (maison de naissance) and alternative therapies that complement MUHC medical services. We believe that a combination of these uses creates a synergistic environment that supports a healthy and sustainable lifestyle that caters to everyone.

Goals:
- Create a mixed-use development that provides a balance of residential, commercial, and office space that serves both local and regional needs;
- Provide adequate, affordable housing for diverse household types including young families, single parents, and retirees;
- Facilitate the use of active and public transportation by providing suitable infrastructure and amenities;
- Collaborate with the local community and MUHC throughout the design and development process;
- Ensure Universal Design standards are met throughout the buildings and adjacent to the development; and
- Commit to building high-quality, green buildings while ensuring the financial feasibility of the project.

Development Plan: The proposal calls for the immediate acquisition of the 5252 De Maisonneuve Ouest lot, the demolition of the existing Place Vendôme building, and the construction of two new buildings with permeable ground-floor commercial space along boulevards De Maisonneuve and Décarie. Minimal underground parking is provided for both buildings including parking for bicycles and Communauto cars in order to encourage sustainable transportation choices and minimize construction costs. The development meets regulations set by the NDG borough with an overall FAR of 6.0, ground cover of 77%, and a maximum of 10-storeys for each of the two buildings.

Building 1: A two-storey birthing centre is integrated into the east building, but functions as an autonomous facility with an entrance on De Maisonneuve. The upper storeys incorporate a mix of commercial, office, and research space designed to attract medical and health services complementary to the hospital such as massage therapists, physiotherapists, and medical research labs. The revenue generated from these leases help subsidize the affordable units in the second building.

Building 2: The mixed-use, mixed-income residential development follows the grade west toward Décarie, enabling street-level commercial uses along the reconfigured, pedestrian-friendly boulevard Décarie. The development provides a variety of housing choices to accommodate diverse household types, including small families, single parents, and retirees. Thirty percent of the 128 housing units are affordable rental units. Rent is determined by 30% of median household income by household type to ensure proper affordability. Fifteen percent are dedicated for low-income households, which are eligible for additional funding from AccessLogis. The other 15% are reserved for moderate-income households, which the market-rate units help subsidize.

The proposed project is financially feasible. With two buildings on the one site, we argue that it is possible to subdivide the property and sell the mixed-use medical office and research building to MUHC to operate and manage. The revenue from this sale would offset the housing costs, which would be transferred to a local community housing agency. It is recommended that action be taken as soon as possible to acquire the property and begin developing final site plans for the site in order to maximize the positive impact of this unique and innovative development project for the local community. In addition, construction should commence as soon as possible to enable complementary businesses and services to establish prior to the completion of the MUHC construction.

Figure 1: Elevation of Maison Neuve, looking south