What is being made in Montreal today?
Made in Montreal www.madeinmontreal.org, a manufacturing business directory, began in 2010 as an independent, student-led research initiative based at McGill’s School of Urban Planning seeking to map the manufacturing sector in Montreal and explore its contributions to the local economy. The research team incorporated and has become an award winning business services start-up to support local manufacturing in Montreal, and has presented their work at a number of conferences since 2011.

Initial work:
Three students, each of them pursuing different but related research topics, reached deep into Montreal’s manufacturing community to uncover a wealth of information on that sector’s organization, distribution, priorities and relationships with supporting institutions. Our research has shown that:
- Montreal’s local manufacturers produce a highly diverse range of products, some of which are industry icons sharing in and shaping Montreal’s identity (MO851 leather goods; Molson; Bilboquet Ice Cream, Bombardier...)
- Many Montreal manufacturing businesses are small (50 employees or less) and are not well known
- While manufacturing employs thousands of Montreal workers, local economic development policy does not prioritize manufacturing, and larger firms receive the bulk of available support
- People are making things everywhere in this city: from St-Henri warehouses to Westmount basements; supporting this community represents a new direction and opportunity for private sector, local economic development (LED) planning.

At the center of this business model are our ambitions to increase opportunities for interaction between three community components: local manufacturing businesses; the consuming public; and local labour. Improving the economic potential of local manufacturers, informing the public about the benefits of ‘buying local goods’, and improving the availability of jobs for the local workforce are the main goals of our LED initiative. In the process of building this community-based business, we have also extensively researched the contemporary situation of manufacturing in urban centres, how they are positioned in local economies and how they are integrated into the urban fabric.

Key results to date:
The website and directory has been launched, we have conducted market research, and we have identified some priority service needs for the manufacturing community. We are now in the process of expanding our network, and are actively searching out and contacting new businesses. Response rates have been positive, with nearly a 100% positive response from businesses we have contacted directly. Moreover, the creation of this Montreal manufacturing business directory is well-timed, as a number of other cities such as San Francisco and New York City have recently launched similar initiatives.

We have presented our action-research, situating urban manufacturing as an integral component of the resilient North American city at a number of conferences, including: Urban Affairs Association conference in New Orleans (2011), the American Planners Association Conference in Boston 2011, the Eco-City World Summit in Montreal, August 2011, the 2012 Urban Affairs Association conference in Pittsburg, and this year’s impromptu Planner’s Network gathering at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. Please visit the website for more details.