



**Chambre de commerce
du Montréal métropolitain**
Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal

March 12, 2008

Ms. Jacqueline Montpetit
Mayor of the South-West Borough
City of Montreal
815 Bel-Air Street, 1st floor
Montreal, Quebec H4C 2K4

Dear Ms. Montpetit:

The Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal was interested to learn of plans to revitalize Griffintown and is pleased to transmit its comments regarding this initiative of importance for Montreal.

The Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal has some 7,000 members. Its primary mission is to represent the interests of the business community of Greater Montreal and to provide individuals, merchants, and local businesses of all sizes with a variety of specialized services to help them achieve their full potential in terms of innovation, productivity and competitiveness. The Board of Trade is Quebec's leading private economic development organization.

First of all, the Board of Trade sees this project at the downtown gateway as a unique opportunity to redevelop an unstructured area that should have been enhanced long ago. It also wishes to acknowledge the excellent groundwork laid for this project that contains a certain number of elements inspired by comments from residents and experts which were gathered during preliminary consultation periods. This, combined with the major economic spin-offs of the private investment of \$1.3 billion that is likely to be made, is why the **Board of Trade supports the project proposed by Devimco and strongly wishes it to be carried out.**

This very favourable opinion is however accompanied by specific conditions for the successful achievement of this project. Griffintown is an exceptional area in Montreal and it is important for its urban revitalization to be an undeniable success. For the Board of Trade, the project will therefore have to meet **the highest criteria for excellence** as regards:

- **its quality;**
- **its positive spin-offs;**
- **its innovations.**

It is within this context and with a view to assuming its role as an involved, responsible economic player that the Board of Trade submits its expectations and conditions for success to the developer and other stakeholders involved in this project.

For an exemplary quality project

The key criterion for excellence of any urban development project is quality. The reason for this is simple: the construction of a building and the redevelopment of part of the city mark the landscape for many, many years to come. This quality requirement is of even greater importance owing to the impressive size of the Griffintown project. It is therefore essential for the Board of Trade that the project be of exemplary quality, especially as regards the quality of the living environment and the quality of the design and architecture.

Quality of the living environment

In the opinion of the Board of Trade, one of the key elements of true sustainable development lies in the densification of already urbanized areas. Over the last few years, the regions surrounding Montreal have undergone substantial development compared to what has been seen within the territory of the City of Montreal. This is particularly true because land in Montreal is more expensive and often requires significant investments in decontamination. Also, the surrounding regions were developed to the detriment of Montreal, since many families moved from the City to these regions. In fact, the City of Montreal established certain initiatives designed to keep families on the island, namely by facilitating access to property on its territory.

The Board of Trade believes that the Griffintown project, as presented by the developers, should be capable of consolidating the presence of families on the Island of Montreal, since it focuses on a **mix of functions and on a mix of dwellings that will be built**. In general, the Board of Trade supports this initiative that decreases the need to expand the metropolitan region at the margin of the suburbs where urban infrastructures are non-existent and proximity services are scarce. With 65% of the project's land area devoted to residential housing, the 3,900 dwelling units will enable young families, students and couples as well as singles and seniors to move to the area and enjoy the proximity of retailers and downtown attractions.

To reach its residential objectives, it is essential for the future Griffintown district to offer its residents a high-quality living environment capable of providing an attractive urban alternative to what exists elsewhere in the surrounding regions.

The **creation and enhancement of green spaces** are also key to the quality of the living environment and the Board of Trade is pleased to see that the developer has made these an important part of its project. For the Board of Trade, the existing areas to be revitalized near the Lachine Canal and the new areas to be built, such as a large public space, are all important factors for the project's success. In this respect, it has been mentioned by different stakeholders during preliminary consultations that the project would benefit from creating close links with the surrounding infrastructures, and particularly with the Lachine Canal. The Board of Trade sees this as an opportunity to promote evening and weekend events and to organize winter activities so as to generate activity throughout the week and year-round.

With a view to offering a sustainable quality of life, it is also expected for proper resources to be dedicated to maintaining these green spaces. As is the case in the Quartier international de Montréal, particular attention should be paid to the planting of vegetation, namely in selecting the plants, and in planting and maintaining them, in order for the green spaces to be abundant and of high-quality, so they may last a very long time.

The **preservation and rehabilitation of heritage features** in the area are other elements key to the quality of the living environment. The history and heritage of Griffintown are elements that make it a unique district, that set it apart from others, and that give it an added value. The Board of Trade acknowledges the developer's willingness to pay special attention to heritage preservation in its project and expects it to pursue, together with the experts recognized in this field in Montreal, the efforts to

enable Griffintown to include among the project's successes the enhancement of the different heritage aspects, namely the architecture, the urban fabric and the blue and green spaces.

Quality of the design and architecture

The quality of the design and architecture is closely related to the quality of the living environment. In both cases, Griffintown should be a distinctive, flagship project. Montreal cannot afford to have, right at its downtown entrance, just any type of urban development that lacks signature and scope.

Architecturally speaking, the Board of Trade believes it will be essential to ensure a close follow-up as regards the consistency of various project elements and to maximize spin-offs for the City. In this regard, the Board of Trade suggests that, following the example of the project to redevelop the former Viger station and hotel, a monitoring committee consisting of external experts be established. This type of committee would ensure the consistency of the architectural signature and of the urban fabric, through the project's different implementation phases, namely because many contractors would be involved in the project. The Board of Trade believes that this is all the more significant in that some buildings are historic and of heritage interest.

As far as development is concerned, the Board of Trade believes it is particularly important for the project to harmoniously fit into the surrounding environment and for Montreal to be able to enjoy continuity in the urban fabric of the entire sector south-west of downtown. Similarly, the Board of Trade also gives much importance to the design quality of all urban furniture that will complete the area's development. The furniture should showcase the know-how of Montreal designers and bring added value to the project. Also, insofar as some urban furniture will be built by the developer, prior agreements should be made with the City to ensure proper quality maintenance in the future, and to establish the guidelines for the required financing.

2. For a project with numerous positive spin-offs

Economic spin-offs and fair profit

If the project for the revitalization of the Griffintown district is a defining element for the urban development of Montreal, the resulting economic spin-offs will also be defining. Private investments needed to carry out this project are estimated at \$1.3 billion, making it the largest private project Montreal has seen over the last few years. Added to this are the recurring revenues that the different levels of government will benefit from, namely from the sale of buildings and the economic activity generated by the project. For illustration purposes, the City of Montreal will draw no less than \$30 million in tax revenues, whereas it recovers only \$1.1 million at present. To this, of course, are added the indirect spin-offs resulting from participation in the project by various contractors and suppliers, as well as the newly created jobs. The Board of Trade believes that the Griffintown project will likely benefit the economy as a whole.

To reap these benefits, the project must of course be carried out. It is thus important to remember that such an investment from the private sector, unlike budgets from public bodies, entails specific investment conditions. Indeed, the financing package needed to carry out such a project implies a major mobilization of funds by investors, so each additional delay results in extra costs and makes the project a less appealing investment opportunity. For this reason, the Board of Trade is of the opinion that the City of Montreal should do everything in its power to reconcile the interests of all stakeholders, while being particularly attuned to the time constraints facing the developer.

For the Board of Trade, there is another condition to the project's success: the recognition that a private investment such as the one behind the Griffintown project is also subject to profitability requirements. These requirements are translated into constraints regarding approval timeframes, as well as the required

density and the mix of residential and commercial functions. Faced with the possibility of improving the urban fabric of an entire sector south-west of downtown, reviving an important central district, improving Montreal's tourist and recreational value, and promoting the economic development of the entire metropolis, it is in our collective interest to take action as soon as possible.

Complementarity of the commercial and cultural offer

One of the elements that has greatly attracted the attention of the Board of Trade since the initial outlines of the Griffintown project were first presented has been how its commercial component complements the businesses already established downtown. In this regard, the Board of Trade commends the developer for listening attentively and deciding to substantially reduce the commercial size of the project as well as the area occupied by the different businesses to be established there. For the Board of Trade, these changes are important to the project's success; in fact, in order for the commercial offering of Griffintown to be completely complementary to the current offering, businesses must first consult with their clientele that consists mainly of residents. It would also be a good idea to offer retail chains that differ from the ones found downtown.

Similarly, the Board of Trade wishes for the project's cultural block to complete the other cultural infrastructures within the Montreal area rather than to compete with them. The Board of Trade is of the opinion that it is absolutely relevant for the project to have a cultural dimension, especially in order to meet the needs of residents and to make it an area of choice for cultural dissemination, as well as a hub of activity for the district. In this regard, the Board of Trade believes that establishing a committee of experts and stakeholders is an excellent way to prevent possible pitfalls related to the addition of new cultural equipment in Montreal.

Local economic spin-offs for the South-West

Finally, it is the Board of Trade's opinion that the developer should follow the example set by the TOHU, in the Saint-Michel district, insofar as enabling current South-West residents to benefit from the new project and integrating the local workforce into the project. Populations in the South-West face socioeconomic challenges often similar to those in the Saint-Michel district; by paying particular attention to projects that create employment for local workers, developers could easily generate major economic spin-offs for these populations. The TOHU not only suggests that this approach can make a striking difference for individuals involved, but it also favours the establishment of positive links between the existing district and the new entrant.

3. For an innovative project

A project of such scope is not only an opportunity to develop a part of the city, it is also an opportunity to showcase the know-how of local builders. To take full advantage of this opportunity, the Board of Trade stresses the importance that the project should attribute to the more innovative elements.

Innovations in sustainable development

Sustainable development is part of the vision of the future Griffintown district's developer. Already, an interesting innovation is the announced co-operation of the École de Technologie Supérieure for the creation of a Sustainable Development Chair.

For the Board of Trade, this laudable ambition should also be seen on the field through real advancements. Among these, the Board of Trade believes that a large number of buildings erected should meet the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) sustainable development standards, or at least promote energy savings, reduce water consumption and avoid contributing to urban heat islands through the use of green roofs.

In keeping with this thought, the Board of Trade wishes for the developer to innovate by creating urban landscapes equipped with luminous installations that ensure the protection of the night sky and that limit light pollution, an increasingly popular trend within new urban developments.

Innovations in the “transportation cocktail”

Another area in which the project should be innovative is public transit. The Board of Trade believes that once the Griffintown district has been completed, it should become the district in Montreal with the highest modal share of clean and active transportation (public transportation, walking, biking, inline skating) is the highest. Because the heart of the area is located less than one kilometre from the nearest subway stations and one and a half kilometres from the central business district, Griffintown has outstanding potential in this area—potential that must be fully utilized. Already, the facilities at the Quartier International de Montréal have increased passenger traffic at three subway stations in the area by 13%, whereas the average increase is less than 2%. With the proper innovations in the “transportation cocktail” offered, Griffintown can become an outstanding example of urban mobility.

One of these innovations is of course the creation of a tramway link to Old Montreal and downtown. In this regard, the developer’s willingness to financially contribute to this tramway line is in itself a bold and most interesting step. From there, the project will have to be carried out in the relatively short future so that Griffintown residents, upon their arrival, can integrate this major public transit infrastructure to their lifestyles.

Conclusion

The Griffintown project is a unique opportunity to change Montreal’s image. The Board of Trade observes that, through consultations carried out before the first outlines of the project were presented, the developer has taken into account many of the concerns of residents and governments. Since this \$1.3 billion private-sector investment is of great importance to Montreal, every effort should be made to reconcile the interests of all stakeholders while taking into account the economic constraints facing the developer.

This project is one of the first in Montreal to reconcile common interests—from a private real estate developer wanting to make major development investments and from the City of Montreal—in the revitalization of an entire district located near downtown Montreal. Since quality attracts quality, the Board of Trade can only hope for its success. Not only will Montreal’s urban landscape be improved, but the City’s economy will be able to count on this project to foster others that are just as beneficial.

For this reason, the Board of Trade firmly wishes for all phases of the Griffintown project to be carried out, while respecting the following key conditions for success: quality, positive spin-offs and innovations. Due to the outstanding area it wishes to rehabilitate, it is the developer’s duty to create a project that will be just as exceptional.

Please be assured of the Board of Trade’s full co-operation in contributing to the development of the metropolis.

Isabelle Hudon
President and CEO