THE INNOVATIVE APPROACH THAT LED TO THE MOUNT ROYAL PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT PLAN AND THE SIGNING OF THE MOUNT ROYAL HERITAGE PACT

Jean Laberge*, Françoise Caron**, Claude Dauphinais***

Abstract
The purpose of this paper is to explain the Concertation Table process and to present the Mount Royal Heritage Pact the Table came up with. It will first describe and explain how the table was created, then how it operated for three years and finally how the various institutions came to sign the Heritage Pact. The debates sorted out the conflicting interests of the various stakeholders. The institutions (universities, hospitals and religious communities) need to pursue and develop their specific missions while the ONGs are dedicated to the protection of natural and cultural heritage militate more in terms of limiting as much as possible any change in the landscape and in the natural ecosystem of the mountain. In the Table’s debates, the municipal representatives found themselves in a position of arbitrator of those two main general positions. Without the Table, the positions would have remained general in sort of a black or white understanding of the issues, while the discussions helped finding out what was negotiable and to reduce the different points of view into smaller and more specific problems. The process used for the Mount Royal Protection and Enhancement Plan proved to be efficient in gathering a large scope of stakeholders’ considerations. The decision-making has always been based on the Concertation Table's consensuses. The fact that the Concertation Table remains a permanent structure to monitor progress and re-adjust some aspects of the Plan, according to the evolution of the situation, is a guarantee of its continuous appropriateness.

Key words: Concertation table, participation, conservation conflicts

Introduction
Located in the heart of the island of Montreal, Mount Royal consists of three hills: the Cross hill (232 meters high), Outremont hill (211 meters) and Westmount hill (201 meters). At this height it should really be called a hill, but its meaning for the people of Montreal has made it a mountain. The area covered totals about 500 hectares.

Mount Royal has a tremendous symbolic value for Montrealers: it stands right in the middle of the city, provides a vivid background to the downtown silhouette and is the landmark of the city’s cultural landscape with its comforting greenery and outstanding

* Bureau du patrimoine, de la toponymie et de l'expertise, Ville de Montréal (Canada).
** Bureau du patrimoine, de la toponymie et de l'expertise, Ville de Montréal (Canada).
*** Bureau du patrimoine, de la toponymie et de l'expertise, Ville de Montréal (Canada).
buildings all around its perimeter (Mount Royal Cross, University of Montreal, Saint Joseph’s Oratory), and other large and small quality buildings.

It has also a strong historical value given that it was inhabited by the first nations before Jacques Cartier discovered the island and named the hill in 1535, and Paul Chomedey de Maisonneuve founded the small French colony of Ville-Marie, in 1642. After France defeat by the British Empire in 1760, Ville-Marie became Montreal.

The mountain slowly became the retreat of wealthy citizens and religious congregations who started building estates on and around it. In 1875, the City of Montreal expropriated the top parts of the mountain, created the Mount Royal Park and hired for its planning Frederick Law Olmsted, one of the most renowned landscape architects of the time, whose projects include Central Park in New York City and the U.S. Capitol Grounds in Washington D.C.

Today, Mount Royal retains its ecological values of providing a green space in a big and dense city, maintaining an important biodiversity and being the habitat of an important fauna, flora and geological system.

In the past, apart from the municipal territory of Mount Royal Park, the development of that area of the city was pretty much left to the good will of its owners. Since many of those where religious institutions, with community values and missions, it resulted in a relatively respectful preservation of the area’s main qualities.

But with the gradual shrinking of religious institutions and the increase of private ownership, the protection of this jewel became an issue to be addressed. To engulf wild development, the City created a Heritage Site, according to the Law on Cultural Properties in 1987 and put some norms and criterias to control the mountain’s development in the City’s 1994 Master Plan. Also, a first Mount Royal enhancement plan was drawn up in 1992.

In 2002, a Summit by the City of Montreal helped determine a series of objectives to pursue in order to protect the mountain. In 2004, the City created the Bureau du Mont-Royal and gave it the mandate to attain these objectives. In 2005, the Bureau established a Concertation Table with all stakeholders to map out the Mount Royal Protection and Enhancement Plan. On the provincial level, the Ministry of Culture and Communications decreed the Mount Royal Natural and Historic District on that same year.

The purpose of this paper is to explain the Concertation Table process and to present the Mount Royal Heritage Pact the Table came up with. It will first describe and explain how the table was created, then how it operated for three years and finally how the various institutions came to sign the Heritage Pact. Back in 2002, the newly elected mayor of the City of Montreal, Gérald Tremblay, held a summit with a large number of citizens and stakeholders to establish the City’s priorities until 2025. One of the subjects was Mount Royal. Following the Summit recommendations, the City created the Concertation Table of Mount Royal in 2004, and gave it the mandate to revise the 1992 Mount Royal enhancement plan. The City also created the Bureau du Mont-Royal to assist the Concertation Table in that revision.
1. The Concertation Table of Mount Royal

1.1 The composition of the Table

The Concertation Table was composed of representatives of the Municipality, institutions that own properties on the territory, and ONGs devoted to Natural and Cultural Heritage protection.

The Table met twice a year from 2005 until the end of 2007 to assess the values of Mount Royal, identify objectives and issues, and come to consensual solutions for protecting and enhancing the Mount Royal Historic and Natural District. It was an unprecedented step in consultation for the City of Montreal because it included many partners of diverse interests in a participation scheme at the beginning of the process.

The debates sorted out the conflicting interests of the various stakeholders. The institutions (universities, hospitals and religious communities) need to pursue and develop their specific missions while the ONGs are dedicated to the protection of natural and cultural heritage militate more in terms of limiting as much as possible any change in the landscape and in the natural ecosystem of the mountain. In the Table’s debates, the municipal representatives found themselves in a position of arbitrator of those two main general positions. Without the Table, the positions would have remained general in sort of a black or white understanding of the issues, while the discussions helped finding out what was negotiable and to reduce the different points of view into smaller and more specific problems.

1.2 The guiding principles and core values of the Concertation Table

As a discussion framework, the table first established common principles based on values that everybody agreed on. Those are sustainability, conservation, accessibility, and responsibility.

These guiding principles where elaborated with all the participants. Sustainability and responsibility and conservation where unanimously agreed. Accessibility was a harder principle to address. While the ONGs where fully convinced that the whole territory should be considered practically all public space, the institutions who own these pieces of land where understandably reluctant to let their right to restrict public access to their properties. At the end it was stated that the mountain was a series of properties of sufficient collective interest to allow the ONGs to influence their development.
All participants reserved some of their own understanding for later debates, but agreed to the four principles with the following definitions.

**Sustainability**

*To sustain the status and mechanisms preserving the Mount Royal Historic and Natural District as emblematic of Montreal is of the highest interest.*

Accordingly, all the interventions of public authorities, institutions, businesses, community groups and citizens must be based on the recognition and enhancement of the natural heritage, the landscape, the architectural, archaeological and artistic aspects, and the spirit of the place to ensure the sustainability of the protection of the mountain and its surroundings. These interventions must particularly disseminate the knowledge needed to promote the development of the site through appropriate actions by the private and public sectors.

**Conservation**

*To ensure the conservation of Mount Royal itself, including first and foremost the protected areas, for its natural and symbolic aspects as well as for the collective interest and emblematic figure of Montreal.*

In other words, conservation is the priority principle for any action concerning Mount Royal’s identity feature for the city, a quality that must unquestionably be preserved and protected, including ecosystems, views, landscapes, heritage buildings and archaeological sites.

**Accessibility**

*To ensure, for Montrealers and visitors, access to Mount Royal, in accordance with the nature of its various areas, as a collective and symbolic figure of Montreal.*

Accordingly, Mount Royal requires better integration with the city, public-friendly accommodations, respect for its natural, built and symbolic qualities, large visibility, and as a bearer of collective memory, access to the knowledge of all its assets.

**Responsibility**

*To recognize and accept collective and shared responsibility of public authorities, institutions, businesses, community groups and citizens, as users, owners or trustees, with respect to sustainability, conservation and accessibility of the Mount Royal Historic and Natural District.*

Which means that the planning and management of the Mount Royal Historic and Natural District should be based on the commitment of all actors to its harmonious and sustainable development as a collective and shared responsibility.

**1.3 The writing of the Plan**

In April 2007, the Mayor of Montreal challenged the institutions located on the mountain to make a voluntary commitment to protect Mount Royal on their specific properties and to sign a heritage pact. On the counterpart, the Mayor promised to give the Table the draft version of the Mount Royal Protection and Enhancement Plan at the beginning of 2008.
The Mayor gave its administration the mandate to write the Protection Plan and to hand it over to the Table. The City synthesized the Table's discussions by establishing the three main objectives of the Plan:

**Protecting and Enhancing Mount Royal:** The issues and concerns raised with regard to protecting and enhancing the mountain and the actions taken over the years clearly point to the importance of making its protection a priority, by refining initiatives for protecting features of interest and updating our view of its heritage, in particular by including the concept of landscape and recognizing its designation as an ecoterritory and a historic and natural district.

**Making the mountain an accessible and welcoming place:** One of the key aims of the 1992 Mount Royal enhancement plan was to improve the links between the city and the mountain. Work must go on to upgrade the access to the mountain and the roads that circle it so that all access points be more user-friendly, safe and inviting. In addition, the quality of services offered in Mount Royal Park must be improved to allow users to make the most of its attractions.

**Creating the appropriate conditions to protect and enhance Mount Royal:** To protect and enhance Mount Royal, it is important to inform people of the quality and diversity of its heritage features, and of the related issues, and to make all stakeholders aware of the need to protect and enhance these features and the importance of getting involved so that the necessary funding may be obtained.

### 1.4 The public consultation

A public consultation on the draft version of the Mount Royal protection and enhancement plan was held in March and April 2008 at the Office de consultation publique de Montréal (OCPM).

The consultation went on several evenings. According to the OCPM rules, the City first presented the Plan to the audience. This presentation was followed by a question period from the participants to the City and the OCPM.

Several memoirs were presented to the OCPM regarding the Plan. These memoirs had the effect of crystallizing two major positions, mentioned before, despite the promised consensuses agreed on the Table.

The City had the role to arbitrate the various concerns and to prepare a final version of the Plan which was publicized in April 2009.

### 2. The Mount Royal Heritage Pact (MRHP)
2.1 The Pact

The MRHP is a proposed commitment from institutional property owners within the district to protect and enhance the heritage features of their properties. This commitment, once agreed by the owners, would be translated into amendments to the City Master Plan or to the urban planning by-laws of the boroughs, or to contractual commitments, as applicable.

2.2 The signature of the Pact

On February 7, 2008, Mayor Tremblay, and the representatives of 14 institutions located on the mountain proceeded to the signing of the MRHP in the presence of Quebec’s Minister of Culture, Communications and Feminine Condition, Mrs. Christine St-Pierre.

Mount Royal Heritage Pact

Deeply committed to the heritage of Mount Royal, we affirm our determination to act in our properties in compliance with institutional guiding principles agreed at the Councertation Table of Mount Royal and the objectives of the Mount Royal Protection and Enhancement Plan.

Driven by this commitment, we agree to sign the Mount Royal Heritage Pact, and we engage with the City of Montreal in a common effort to preserve for present and future generations the property of collective interest and figure of Mount Royal.

We share with the City of Montreal its approach based on consultation, collaboration and voluntary commitments the will to better combine our respective contributions to the protection and enhancement of Mount Royal, while promoting the orderly development of the signatory institutions. It is this commitment that is central to our adherence to the pact.

In witness whereof, in the presence of the Minister of Culture, Communications and Feminine Condition, Christine St-Pierre, we appose our signatures to this.

In particular, planning and management of the Natural and Historic District of Mount Royal is based on the commitment of all actors to pursue its harmonious and sustainable development with a collective and shared responsibility.

Signatures and titles of 15 institutions representatives and of the Mayor of Montreal

Beyond signing the MRHP, all 15 institutions agreed on specific commitments regarding their own properties. Some of these commitments are the continuation of earlier engagements, like the extension of the delegation of the management of the Bois Saint-Jean-Baptiste from the Mount Royal Cemetery to the City of Montreal, some are protection
proposals, like the protection of wooded areas as zonas non aedificandi as on the properties of the Sulpician Priests, McGill University and Royal Victoria Hospital, and some are actual planting projects, like the renaturalization of gray areas in front of the Hôpital Hôtel-Dieu.

3. The Implementation of the Plan and of the Pact

3.1 The management co-ordination committee

The Concertation Table of Mount Royal, which participated in the process of mapping out the Protection and Enhancement Plan, will maintain its operation and follow-up of the implementation of the Plan. The Table meets regularly to monitor the achievements of the Plan, using indicators for assessing progress in protecting natural habitats, buildings, built features and landscapes, as well as expanding knowledge and developing the appropriate efforts to build awareness.

3.2 Promotion, publicity and building awareness

Property owners (cities, institutions and homeowners) should be encouraged to protect and enhance the significant features they own, and to make them known and accessible. Users should be properly informed and made aware of Mount Royal’s assets so that they can truly contribute to their protection and enhancement.

Ties with the school network must be reinforced so as to carry out educational and awareness initiatives that help schoolchildren appreciate the mountain's various heritage features. Tourists represent 13% of Mount Royal Park users. Making the mountain more prominent in the city travel promotion could easily increase their number.

3.3 Funding

Every stakeholder and owner, public or private, has to finance what is under its responsibility.

Leading corporate citizens (institutions, companies, etc) are invited to become financial partners and to invest in protecting and enhancing Mount Royal heritage and biodiversity.

Financial assistance programs exist to help reach certain protection and enhancement objectives:

- To preserve and enhance the heritage features of buildings;
- To improve the appearance of mechanical equipment and other rooftop structures;
- To remove visual irritants such as antennas;
- To improve landscaping;
- To restore natural habitats.

3.4 Inspection mechanisms

The City of Montreal, through its Bureau du Mont-Royal and boroughs inspectors, together with the Ministry of Culture, Communications and Feminine Condition are
responsible for controlling the adequacy of all interventions on the territory with the Plan and what was agreed on the issuance of permits.

Conclusion

The process used for the Mount Royal Protection and Enhancement Plan proved to be efficient in gathering a large scope of stakeholders’ considerations. The decision-making has always been based on the Concertation Table's consensuses. The fact that the Concertation Table remains a permanent structure to monitor progress and re-adjust some aspects of the Plan, according to the evolution of the situation, is a guarantee of its continuous appropriateness.

The day-to-day management structure established by the Plan, the objectives developed throughout its mapping out and the resources provided by the public administration with the collaboration of its partners are promising conditions in reaching a successful protection and enhancement of the mountain.

Since its publication, over a year ago, some problems tamed down the unanimous enthusiasm it brought. After the analysis of two first proposals for the development of institutions around Mount Royal, Mayor Gérald Tremblay made a declaration last May in which he clearly established that the City would not allow any new construction on the mountain anymore, changing the balance reached between the various stakeholders and lowering the credibility of the long process the Table went through.

Nevertheless, one can stipulate that the writing of the Mount Royal Protection and Enhancement Plan, with the involvement of all participants to the Concertation Table, with the strong media coverage it got, has created a momentum able to strengthen the chances for the mountain to perpetuate and remain in the heart of the city as well as in those of its citizens.

Bibliography

City of Montreal, Mount Royal Protection and Enhancement Plan, Montréal, 2009.

City of Montreal, Heritage Policy, Montréal, 2005.

Web site of the Table de concertation du mont Royal :

http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/portal/page?_pageid=1676,2442769&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL

Web site of the Office de consultation publique de Montréal, including all the documents presented during the public consultation in March-April 2008 :

http://www2.ville.montreal.qc.ca/ldvdm/jsp/ocpm/ocpm/jsp?laPage=projet24.jsp