From dream to reality

When Vision 2025 was launched in May, it marked the completion of a first step for the Société du Havre de Montréal (SHM). The room in the Bonsecours Market was packed, with large numbers of media representatives, when the SHM unveiled its proposal for the future of the Harbourfront. Our vision was very well received, and this bodes well for the steps to come.

As Lucien Bouchard, Co-Chair of the Board of Directors, stated, “the Harbourfront gives Montrealers a realistic reason to start dreaming again.” The dream he was referring to is based on a daring plan, definitely, but one that is very concrete and has great support. By proposing to reunite the city with its river, the plan is sure to win the hearts of Montrealers, for whom the St. Lawrence, its banks and riverside neighbourhoods mean so much.

During its first mandate, the SHM rallied the main players from the business community, institutions and associations around a common vision of the future of the Harbourfront, a vision that is nothing if not dream-inspiring. By identifying the main development issues on the Harbourfront and emphasizing its immense development potential, the SHM sparked the interest of the decision makers and players concerned. Now, along with its partners, it must prepare to make this vision a reality. The SHM’s work is now entering a second phase, consisting of validating the key elements in its vision through more detailed studies, encouraging property development projects and following up on recommendations. Urban planners, architects, engineers and developers are all busy at their “drawing boards,” examining the different development possibilities.

This edition of the THE HARBOURFRONT looks at the work plan now underway for 2004-2005. It also reviews the main points in the proposal on the future of the Harbourfront, outlined in Vision 2025, and presents the Assessment of the Situation, the background report on which it is based.

Assessment of the Situation: A virtual tour of the Harbourfront

Assessment of the Situation, the background report on which Vision 2025 is based, is now accessible on the SHM Website. You can take a virtual tour of the Harbourfront! This abun-
dantly documented and illustrated Assessment of the Situation represents the fruit of all the work done during the SHM’s first mandate: site analyses, a review of existing studies, and consultations. It presents the old harbour’s history, describes the territory, traces its socio-economic profile, and identifies development issues, constraints and potential as discussed during the consultation process. It also includes descriptions of innovative urban repurposing projects else-
where, which inspired plans for the Montréal Harbourfront.

The study can be consulted in PDF format at www.havremontreal.qc.ca
What does Vision 2025 hold?

In its Vision 2025, the SHM outlined the main features of a co-ordinated development plan for the Harbourfront with a time horizon of about 20 years. The plan essentially suggests that the city be reunited with its river, by providing access to the banks and mending rips in the urban fabric. Recovering areas fragmented by the invasive expressways and rail lines or abandoned as a result of factory closures is an idea that holds tremendous development potential. The strategies suggested by the SHM take a sustainable development approach based on the urban habitat, a good social mix, traffic management, and enhancing natural and urban landscapes.

The most important aspect of this vision is certainly the suggestion that the Bonaventure Expressway in the Technoparc area be moved. This is a prerequisite to creating a greenbelt linking the Rapides de Lachine Park with Old Montréal. This link will open up a huge expanse of water, the Laprairie Basin, which is to be developed for boating activities. Another key aspect of the vision is converting the Bonaventure Expressway into an urban boulevard between Pierre-Dupuy Avenue and Notre-Dame Street. This would make it possible to develop the neighbouring properties and transform a no-man’s land into a dynamic living environment, while enhancing the main gateway to Montréal. In fact, the idea of covering over the Ville-Marie Expressway between the Palais des Congrès and Viger Square is in line with this objective of mending rips in the urban fabric to repair the urban habitat. These transformations would not only recover space that can be used for sustainable development, but would also improve the flow of people between the city and the river.

The Vision 2025 plan also calls for initiatives on the northern tip of Nuns’ Island, in Cité-du-Havre, around the Peel Basin, in the Old Port and Jean Drapeau Park, to provide greater access to the St. Lawrence. In addition, excavating former basins that have been filled in will give us an opportunity to salute our port and industrial heritage. As for the Peel Basin itself, the plan is to repurpose the area either through residential development or the establishment of major tourist facilities, such as an international trade fair centre or an entertainment centre with a casino.

Moreover, with a view to sustainable development, a solution must be found to the problem of traffic on the Harbourfront, a dilemma stemming from the inadequate public transit in the area. Introducing a tramway is one of the solutions under consideration. By making it easier for visitors to get around the Harbourfront, a tramway would foster the harmonious coexistence of urban functions, while making it possible to establish new major tourist facilities.

Finally, Vision 2025 also addresses the matter of funding, and looks at a number of partnership options. To achieve its ambitious plans, the SHM intends to make the most of the Harbourfront’s main assets in participation with its partners.
Not long after unveiling its Vision 2025, the SHM adopted its work plan for 2004-2005. It comprises three broad tasks: validate the feasibility of the major infrastructure projects highlighted in its Vision; encourage the launch of short-term real-estate projects; and co-ordinate the work of its partners in the fields of recreation/tourism, heritage, soil management and the movement of people and vehicles. This action plan calls for technical and financial collaboration with the partners involved in each project.

As regards the feasibility studies related to infrastructure projects, the study of the first phase of the implementation of a Harbourfront Tramway service will be completed in the next few weeks. The results of the studies on the redesign of the Bonaventure Expressway will be announced at the end of March 2005. The Jacques-Cartier and Champlain Bridges inc. has confirmed its involvement in the preliminary feasibility study on the section of the Bonaventure Expressway that is under federal jurisdiction, between the Wellington interchange (autoroute 15) and the Peel Basin, while the city of Montréal will finish the study it started some time ago on the future of that part of the Bonaventure Expressway that runs north of Peel Basin.

As for real-estate, the SHM must act as a catalyst in dealing with property owners, especially in the public sector, and with private-sector partners to encourage them to carry out projects in areas with strong short-term development potential. The targeted areas are the Canada Post property and the area around the Tate and Wellington basins, next to the Lachine Canal, the CN shops in Point St. Charles and the Cité-du-Havre.

Lastly, the SHM is preparing to set up four co-ordinating committees. The mandate of the first committee will be to define priorities in the recreational/tourism sector, proposing an action plan to ensure greater co-ordination between all the parties concerned and encourage year-round programming of activities. The heritage committee is to draw up an inventory of the main heritage features of the Harbourfront and prepare an action plan calling for a public and private-sector partnership to highlight the natural and urban

**Vision 2025 in figures**

Infrastructure costs are estimated at $750 million. Real-estate investment in the residential and commercial sectors and in major tourist facilities represents potential of over $7 billion.

The potential number of dwellings is estimated at 12,500 units, including social and affordable housing.

900,000 m² is available for commercial real-estate development, and an estimated 1,000,000 m² could be used for major tourist facilities.

Benefits in terms of property taxes would be on the order of $250 million per year.
heritage on the Harbourfront. The soil management committee, including representatives of the Québec and federal environment departments, the City of Montréal and the SHM, will draw up a contaminated soil inventory and propose a soil rehabilitation protocol. The last committee will look at a plan to manage movement so as to allow greater mobility and reduce problems relating to the coexistence of different functions on the Harbourfront.

Lastly, the SHM will ensure that all the recommendations in Vision 2025 are incorporated into the strategic plans of its many partners. It will evaluate the potential of proposals submitted to it following the publication of Vision 2025, advise its government partners of these proposals and assist developers, as required, in promoting suitable projects.

News from the Board

Francis Fox, Co-Chair of the Board of Directors

Francis Fox has been appointed Co-Chair of the Board of Directors, to replace Bernard Shapiro, who left in the spring to take a position as federal Ethics Commissioner in Ottawa. Thanks to Mr. Shapiro for his commitment and informed opinions. Welcome to Mr. Fox – we’re happy to have you aboard!

New members of the Board and the Executive Committee

The Board of Directors welcomed some new members at its meeting on June 15: Michelle d’Auray, Deputy Minister, Canada Economic Development, and François Hébert, Vice-President, Corporate Development, Canadian National, replacing Marc Lafrenière and Claude Mongeau, respectively; Alan Latourell, Executive Director, Parks Canada Agency, Marcel J. Caron, Executive Director, Société du parc des Êî, and Marc Tremblay, Assistant Director General, Service de la mise en valeur du territoire et du patrimoine, City of Montréal, taking over from Cameron Charlebois. The SHM thanks the outgoing members for their contribution and welcomes the new members.

At the November 12 meeting, the Board of the SHM welcomed more new members, bringing it from 25 to 30 directors. The new directors are: André Juneau, Deputy Minister, Infrastructure Canada, Michel Paquin, CEO, Institut de développement urbain du Québec, Christiane Barbe, Deputy Minister, ministère de la Culture et des Communications, Yves Provost, Assistant Director General, Service des infrastructures, transport et environnement, City of Montréal, and Céline Topp, Director, Direction du développement urbain, City of Montréal.

Benoit Labonté, President and CEO of the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal, has joined the Executive Committee. He was already a member of the Board. Francis Fox is also member of the Executive Committee.

The complete list of Board and Executive Committee members can be consulted on the SHM Website, at www.havremontreal.qc.ca.

Behind the scenes

The SHM depends on a small team headed up by Jacques Coté. It consists of two urban planners acting as project managers, one of them assigned to feasibility and impact studies for infrastructure projects, and the other to relations with partners for real-estate development projects. Pierre St-Cyr will take on this latter task, while Pierre Malo handles infrastructure projects. Executive Secretary Gisèle Delorme, Communications Co-ordinator Danielle Dionne and Analyst Annie Laurin are the other members of the team. Richard Arteau, who played a key role in researching and writing the Assessment of the Situation, has returned to the City’s Service de la mise en valeur du territoire et du patrimoine. We thank him for his valuable contribution.