



Montréal as Desired by Children



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Children, the future of our community.



Yvan Gauthier,
President and Chief Executive Officer

As part of the celebrations of the 375th anniversary of Montreal and Canada's 150th anniversary, the Foundation of Greater Montreal (FGM) has chosen to present a special edition of the Vital Signs report, entirely devoted to children. In doing so, we wanted to engage young people in a big discussion to identify the issues that matter most to them. Their contribution to

our work was so inspiring that we decided to organize a forum that focuses on children's voices and their importance in the community.

At the same time, in the summer of 2017, we supported the initiative The City We Want from the Montréal Urban Ecology Centre (MUEC). The Centre's team met the citizens of Montréal's 19 boroughs as part of the 375th Anniversary "Grande Tournée". They took the opportunity to collect citizens' wishes for their city, starting with those of the children. We were so inspired by what they had to say that we decided to present the results of this Montreal tour in this report which we hope will motivate you as much as us.

You will find in the document the wishes expressed by nearly 150 young Montrealers for a city in their own image, grouped into ten major themes: public spaces, infrastructure, transportation, beautification and greening, democracy, integration, shopping, cleanliness, activities, and arts. Some ideas are full of lucidity while others amaze by their originality. Certainly, our children have their city at heart. Good reading!

INTRODUCTION

When we think about 2017, Montréal's 375th and Canada's 150th celebrations come immediately to mind, since there was one outstanding event after another throughout the year. Every Saturday over the summer of 2017, the Montréal Urban Ecology Centre (MUEC) joined the Grande Tournée, part of Montréal's 375th anniversary celebrations, to ask citizens one simple question: What are your wishes for Montréal?

Many Montrealers, including children, participated, allowing us to gather nearly 900 aspirations for the Ville de Montréal and its 19 boroughs. Given

the very interesting data

that was collected,

the Foundation of

Greater Montréal

(FGM) partnered

with the MUEC

to produce a

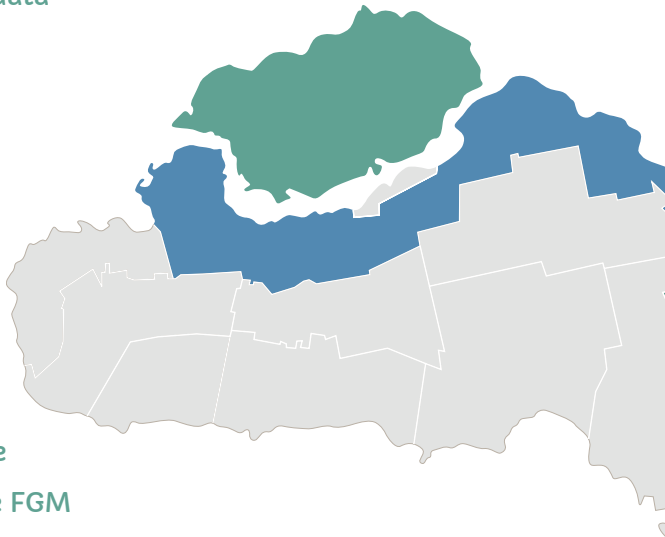
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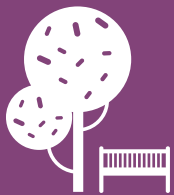
Desired by Children,

which follows on the

Vital Signs report the FGM

published earlier this year.





Public space development



Whether they're at school, at home or with friends, children are always on the lookout for opportunities to have fun. Urban public space development can have a significant impact on how easy it is for kids to access places that meet their needs. We can see by their wishes that current spaces are not always adapted to their reality. We also want to note that young Montrealers often address issues—homelessness, for example—with sensitivity and are able to offer tangible solutions.

Make the city safer and more accessible

Children often have the impression that the city wasn't designed with them in mind and that the main roads are not safe. They want to construct a city that's safer for its most vulnerable users, which includes them. For instance, they suggest that sidewalks not automatically be made of cement, that new pedestrian streets be developed and that traffic signals at intersections be improved.

More places to meet up

The message is clear: we need more parks, throughout the city, and they should be better designed. Young people want more common areas and suggest in particular new beaches and more places for concerts and shows across the island. They also want more variety and more originality in their playgrounds, and they want these playgrounds located closer to schools, which are their main living environment. An example of their openness and sensitivity to all Montrealers is that they imagine areas created especially for the homeless.

Tangible, original proposals to improve public places

The children propose, for instance, installing more swings, for people of all ages, and inflatable structures in parks. They also want more tennis courts, soccer fields and basketball courts, showing their appetite for physical activity! They want a city that's welcoming for all animals and they want more dog parks. And why not have farms in parks throughout the city?

Infrastructure



Lack of physical activity among youth is often cited as a significant public health problem. Yet, what we heard from young Montrealers is that they have a great desire to be more active. They offered several suggestions to make it easier to play their favourite sports everywhere in Montréal and proposed several ambitious infrastructure projects.

Municipal pools: A focal point

Kids want more pools, with more diving boards and slides, and they want the pools to be heated. They would like more indoor pools built so they can swim year-round.

Sports, sports and more sports!

Sports rank very high among priorities for Montréal's next generation. We see this in the number of suggestions to create new facilities for soccer, tennis, football, baseball, and more, and in their wish for athletic activities to be organized by the city, especially during summer vacation.

Making parks about kids

Kids have inspiring ideas to transform parks into unequaled play areas. They want more water fountains and wading pools, and they want them to be accessible over a greater part of the year. They also want more imaginative play structures, they want to improve the skate parks, and they want parkour areas. The key point that comes across in all these wishes is that young people want more areas designed especially for them.

Transportation-related issues are a big priority for youth!

Transportation



Sharing the road better

Young people use active and public transportation frequently, and they feel that the road isn't always shared equitably, and especially with the most vulnerable users. They want a city with less traffic. Some even proposed that cars be banned downtown (!) as they are in some European cities. They also believe it would be helpful to implement speed-reduction measures (like speed bumps and better traffic signals) and to increase the number of crossing guards and pedestrian streets.

Let's hear it for active and public transportation!

Young people want a massive development of the bicycle path system (especially along the water), they want to build new metro stations and they want to increase the public transit offering. They also want it to be easier to get around on foot, as pedestrians are often the most overlooked road users.

Our favourite futuristic idea: one young person proposed that Montréal embrace flying bikes!





Embellishing and greening

Kids dream of a greener, more colourful city that would make room for urban agriculture. More than anything, they want to roll-up their sleeves and help create these new green spaces.

A greener, prettier city

Green and colourful: that sums up how kids want their city. They want more green spaces, more flowers of every colour growing on street corners (curb extensions), more green alleyways, measures to protect nature, and parks and bicycle paths along the water. They would also like the parks to be more colourful, with flower gardens.

Making way for urban farms

Young Montrealers have a green thumb! Among their wishes is to organize gardening parties “where we could play in the dirt and grow all kinds of fruits and vegetables.” They also want composting in schools and gardens they can take care of.





Democracy



Kids are engaged citizens with clear opinions on myriad topics involved in municipal democracy.

Listening to young people's voice

Children want to be heard. They want a city that better reflects their needs. And they want us to take their ideas into account in the development of projects that affect them. They think there should be more harmony and mutual help in the city.

More spaces for pets

Kids generally tend to be in favour of being more inclusive of animals. For instance, they call for the creation of new places reserved for animals, such as dog parks.



Integration

Having a city that's inclusive of everyone, regardless of origin, age or gender, is close to young Montrealers' hearts. That's certainly food for thought for all of us.

A city that includes everyone

Welcome to Montréal! The kids suggest organizing athletic activities to integrate new arrived Montrealers and fundraising for sick or needy children. They also want to reduce racism and discrimination throughout the city. What could be better than that?

Nobody stays hungry

Children would like there to be more food banks and places that take in Montréal's homeless people. They also want every child to get enough to eat every day.



Businesses



Though the vast majority of young people don't have jobs, they still have their own unique view of the economy, as we can see from these proposals, some of which were very inventive.

Local businesses

In line with their ideas about making the city more pedestrian friendly and their passion for urban farming, young Montrealers dream of having more businesses “close to home” and of new public and/or organic markets. They would also like for prices in general to be lower—a very admirable goal, indeed!

Here's to being original!

They want treats and they want them now! Kids drool at the thought of new ice cream stores, food trucks, candy stands and even kiosks selling multi-coloured (!) sausages. For sure, they love innovation!

Cleanliness



Kids want to live in a city that's attractive and welcoming. And that requires a minimum level of cleanliness.

More respect

They especially believe everyone should do their part. They feel citizens should be more respectful of their city. Some even suggested that there should be fines for people who leave trash lying around. They believe the situation would be improved by better cleaning the streets.

Less pollution

Some of the ideas kids brought up to reduce the amount of pollution in the city include prohibiting cars downtown, encouraging the purchase of electric vehicles, decreasing the amount of traffic and creating new green spaces.



Activities



Kids are keen to have more activities devised just for them to do with their friends, with their families, at school or on the street corner. The sheer diversity of proposals shows that their priority is chiefly to have opportunities for groups to gather to share the passions that unite us.

Thirst for learning

The desire to learn is contagious among the city's children! They dream of workshops introducing them to, for instance, cooking, circus arts, gymnastics, soccer and fishing.

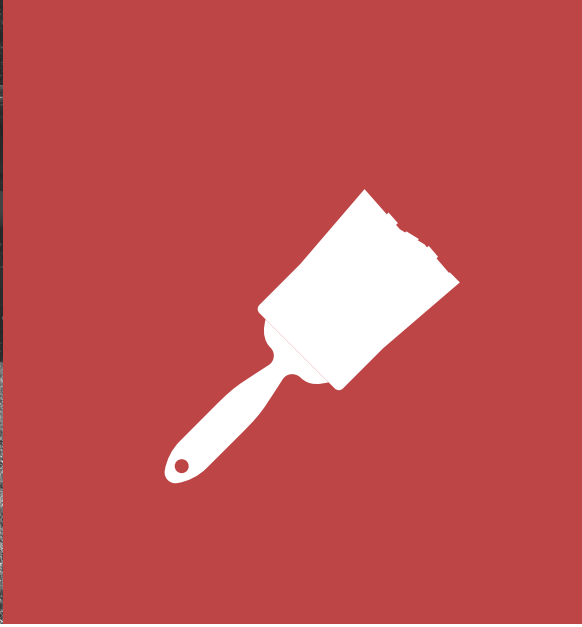
Shows for the whole family

Kids feel there aren't enough activities for them and their parents. Or maybe they just want even more! They want more family, outdoor, video game, soccer, gymnastics and circus events, for instance.

Fostering community spirit

They first and foremost want to see more activities in their neighbourhoods: parties in the alleyways, carnivals, festivals outside the city centre, games in local parks, etc.

Some also floated the idea that ice cream be distributed to kids every day for free.



The arts

Given their wishes, we can deduce that many young Montrealers love arts and crafts, performing and the circus arts.

Love of reading and art

Children proposed that a bookmobile travel from neighbourhood to neighbourhood in summer—an inspired idea! They would also like more free outdoor movies. And they wish that an arts and craft centre for kids and a dinosaur museum could be built.

The performing arts take centre stage

They like to read and draw, but they are also fans of the performing arts. Young Montrealers want more carnivals and free performances, and they would like outdoor theatres to be built throughout the city.

Thinking big: A few kids suggested that Montréal get a monument like the Statue of Liberty. You can't say they're short on ambition!





This report shows that many young Montrealers are engaged citizens with very relevant ideas to share on ways of improving Montréal, on topics as varied as democracy and greening. We also noticed that they feel the city wasn't designed with their needs in mind. The popularity of themes like public space development, transportation, infrastructure and activities is an indication of this feeling of being overlooked

These reflections show us that it's possible to do better, that it's possible to change some small things and have a great impact on the lives of many Montrealers, and that we have to rethink our city in terms of the entire population's needs, regardless of age, gender or origin. But most of all, these ideas show us that the future of our cities is in good hands—those of inspiring kids whose heads are abuzz with ideas.

If you want to dig deeper into these issues, we encourage you to read the Vital Signs report published by the FGM.

The Foundation of Greater Montréal offers innovative solutions to philanthropists and organizations of all kinds, helping them by creating and managing endowment funds so they can have the most durable and positive impact possible on their community. Founded in 1999, the fgm is a decisive link between the donors and non-profits, as well as ensuring each donation will work in the long term.

This initiative is made possible by the Community Fund for Canada's 150th, a collaboration between the Foundation of Greater Montréal, the Government of Canada, and extraordinary leaders from coast to coast to coast.



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