

**Memorandum of S. Ellis concerning the
Development and Modernization Project of Maison
Radio-Canada**

A Neighbour's Perspective.
-Visible or Invisible.

A Neighbour's Perspective.

-Visible or Invisible.

Introduction.

My name is Shawn Ellis; I am a current resident in the borough of Ste-Marie (Sainte-Marie-Saint-Jacques District) and reside on rue Panet with my partner, just north of blvd Rene-Levesque. Our living room and guest room windows overlook both the back of l'Eglise Pierre l'Apotre, the Tower and West side of the property of la Maison Radio Canada with a further view of le vieux Port de Montréal. The view from our Master Bedroom and back balcony is of le Pont Jacques Cartier and the Molson brewery. As well from our private roof top terrace there is a currently unobstructed 360' view of the city including the aforementioned Pont, Vieux Port and Molson Brewery, Mont Royal and its Cross and the Skyline of the Downtown centre. This was a very large part of the reason we selected the location and the condo we did and so interest in the proposed projects and the required zoning charges required are of utmost concern.

Interest in the project:

Obviously, the proposed project for the development and modernization of la Maison de Radio-Canada is of grave concern, not only for the deterioration of our selected city views, but further I feel we will incur poorer living conditions through the tenure of the proposed construction and a marked decrease in the resale potential of our condo due to the massive project and immensity of its structures.

Opinion:

I am not entirely opposed to the redevelopment of the site; however I have a great many preoccupations, brought on and reinforced by the information sessions during the public consultation, the way in which information was displayed, and the consistent fashion in which questions from the public were seldom if ever fully replied to. Not to mentioned almost unlimited floor time to those of the public that waxed poetic towards the project, and the indifferent to rude handling of those who asked questions or commented counter to the project. A lack of transparency, unbiased and neutrality lacked throughout the information sessions.

Herein I will outline along with multiple images as made accessible from the public consultation's documents, personal photographs and additional notes thus provided during the information sessions as well as my personal concerns, comments and suggestions.

Concerns:

- While it is understandable in a project as large the one proposed that some oversights are inevitable, one must also consider that if the project has been in the development stage as long as this one has been that the main models and images would be updated to the time of the public consultations, including all current buildings (with of course non-existent buildings being removed.) Specific buildings and developments that were started three+ years ago and completed over two years ago; especially those immediately across blvd Rene-Levesque (Les Terrasses Plessis Panet), from the proposed main pedestrian entrance “Place des images”. These are no where to be seen on the plethora of images provided, including, aerial photographs, streetscapes both actual and artist renderings, models, elevations and so on.

(red shows the missing buildings)

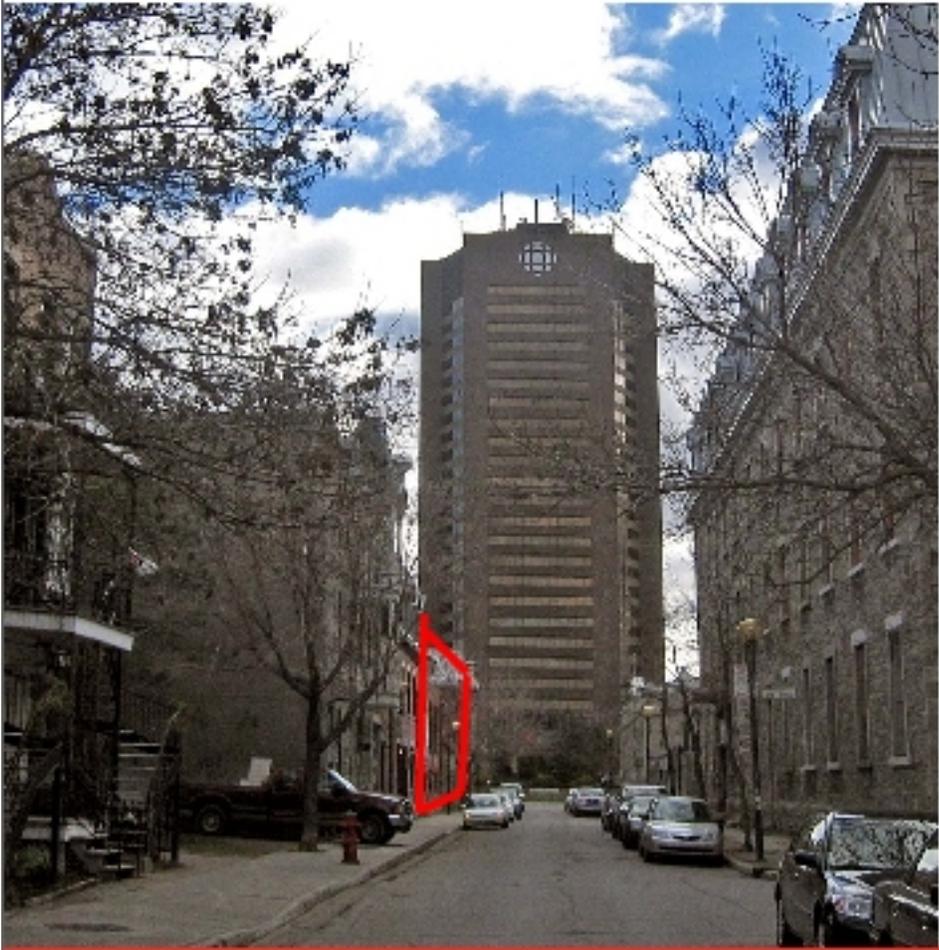




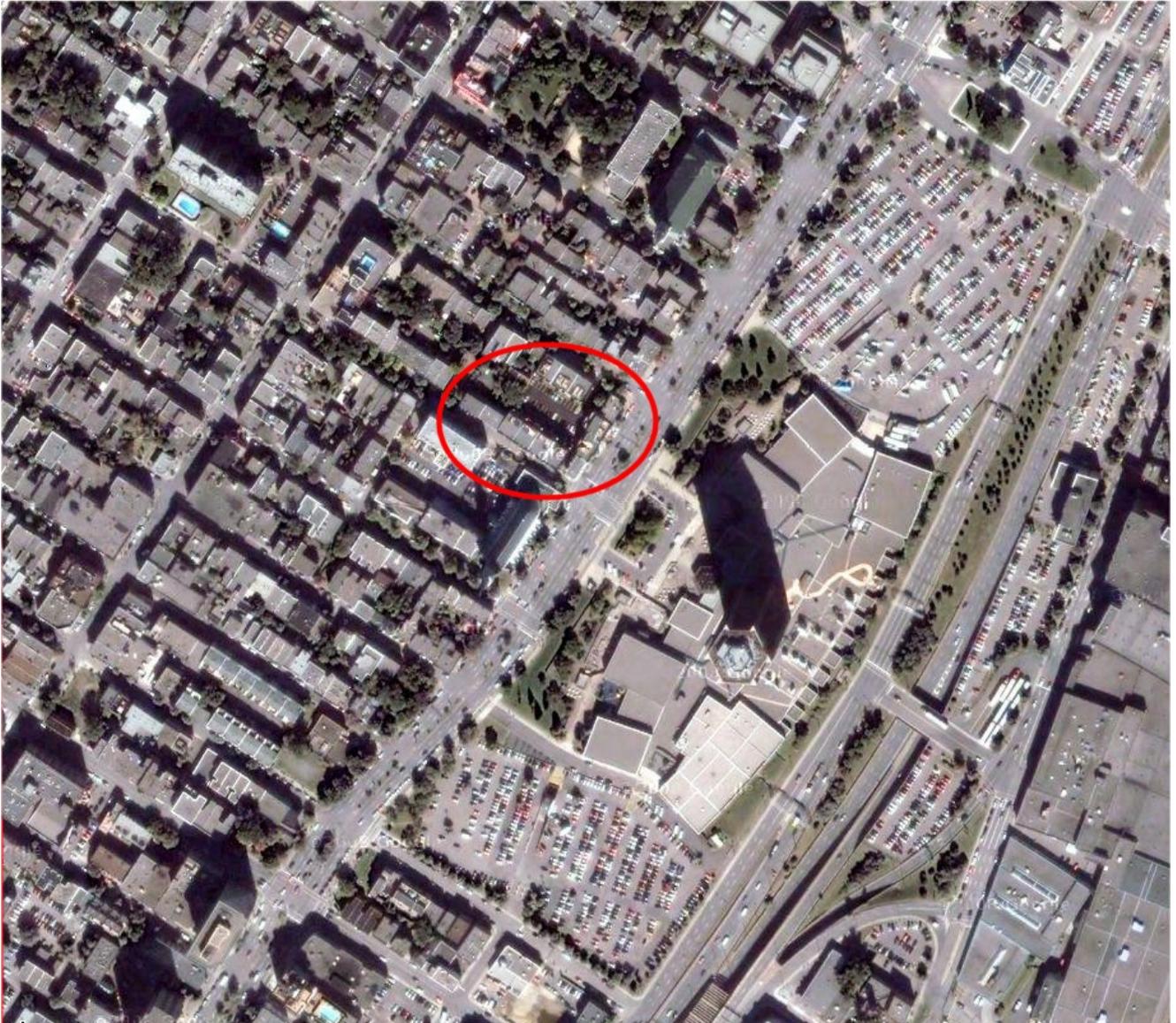


Most astonishingly of all, missing from a perspective view of rue Panet looking towards the Main CBC tower.

rue Panet



Such is the case even though within mere moments such up to date imagery is available from multiple sources, from publicly accessible sites such as Google Maps and MSN Live Maps:





In omitting a condominium complex of 72 units built in the most immediate proximity to the Radio-Canada site and being categorically omitted from any such visual reference leaves these residents completely alienated. In dismissing our mere existence you project the very clear perception that we do not matter. As tax paying, existing residents of this neighborhood it leaves a very immediate and poor taste in one's mouth.

Where then, is *our* place in the quarter?

We are then left invisible Neighbors.

- There is a noticeable lack of opaque, solid and unquestionably physical representations of the project in the proposed images and models. While I do understand, as was mentioned during one of the information meetings that final plans are not yet decided, there is cohesiveness to all images offered and they almost all offer the same translucent, almost invisible appearance, which leaves one feeling somehow cheated and deceived. It is impossible to believe that there are not well defined plans and for what the promoters wish to build. Not displaying clear images devalues the consultations and leaves more questions than it answers I am left feeling like I am trying to be convinced that the structure will be light, airy, almost as if there will not be any physical encroachment, that there won't really be ten or eleven blocks of towering construction on the south side of Rene Levesque.





I understand that in the larger scheme of things, and in comparison to buildings in the downtown core that ten-eleven stories is not a 'tower' however when that height is two to three and in some cases five times the height of buildings that currently exist in the neighborhood and will be facing the project on three of the four sides; (some buildings are only two stories, most three to five) that is oppressive, even from across a six lane boulevard. The overall effect is a feeling of intimidation.



When it goes on for eight city blocks it is unavoidable and monstrous in its massiveness. And will be visible from far further away than simply 'across the street'.

Here again, we have Invisible Neighbors.

- What is portrayed as light, open and practically transparent is in fact a wall of construction blocking off the residents from North of Rene-Levesque to that of the suggested new 'enclave'.



Even the suggestions of the multitudes of public and green spaces, so often referred to throughout the information sessions, are not really there for all of those already living in the area. They are all within the walls and confines of the buildings of the proposed complex, some appearing almost as private back gardens. This is not a welcoming view to someone looking from the north of Rene-Levesque. Yet again the perception that we do not matter, that we are not truly included in this development, not welcome.

Invisible Neighbors.

- Likewise the perspective images of the complex of buildings also show the previously mentioned invisibility to the new structures. It is impossible to believe that a ten-eleven story building could appear so transparent and yet, with rare exception –as pointed out earlier - this is what is provided. Images of the new construction fade into the sky, or fade into the background.

Certainly it is understandable to highlight certain elements in some images such as entrances to buildings or parking areas and this is acceptable, but there appears a concerted effort to ignore solid opaque images of the buildings. When they are visible the perspective is so skewed with no comparison available to the exact elevation with nearby existent buildings to make the image relevant and so these images are worthless to offer a clear idea of scale.

- Bird's eye views and aerial images while giving an overview of the project offer little in the use of visual comprehension of what the average person will see from street level, as not everyone crosses the Pont Jacques Cartier, when they live across, or down the street from the CBC lot.

As well, these bird's eye and aerial images offer little basis in reality when as has been mentioned previously, building construction two-three+ years ago are not included.





Vue en plan de la maquette de développement du site



Vue vers l'est de la maquette de développement du site



Again, Invisible Neighbor Syndrome.

With regards to perspective images taken from varied points of view around the proposed development site they are few and far between. There are a great many obvious perspectives that are missing from the so-called Visual Impact Study, such as Réne-Lévesque and Wolfe, or Réne-Lévesque and Papineau, or Réne-Lévesque and Champlain, or Réne-Lévesque and Panet, Even views from such varied locations as Ste-Catherine and Amherst, or de Maisonneuve and Champlain, or de Maisonneuve and Beaudry... There are countless other P.O.V.s all at street level - the view that most people will see these buildings after all - that **WILL** be affected if this project is allowed to proceed as is. I feel strongly that not enough has been done to address the visual impact to the area of town. It would be incredibly helpful, not only for those living directly across from the site but those throughout the district and for the sake of clarity that one could see in simulated images what the views will become (from Street level) how the skyline will change definitely and irreversibly.



Réne-Lévesque & Papineau



Réne-Lévesque & Champlain



Réne-Lévesque and Panet (1)



Réne-Lévesque and Panet (2)



Ste-Catherine Est & Amherst



de Maisonneuve & Champlain



de Maisonneuve & Beaudry



I therefore offer permission to any of my photographs in this Memorandum to be modified to show the true elevations of the project in clearly defined alterations to these street level images.

- In a study on Visual Impact there are only TWO images, both with the project barely visible as it's left transparent. How one can rationally expect to obtain a clear understanding of how the landscape will change when only offered an image of see-through buildings is completely irrational and at the same time deceptive. It is nice to see however that such priceless views (from Mont Royal) of the Pont Jacques-Cartier will be spared from the new site, of course this does not apply to those actually living in the area, who actually chose to live there.



Again these images of perspectives are completely unusable to the residents of the area as they are from Mont Royal and Ile Ste Helene and the Pont Jacques-Cartier. Where are such images from WITHIN the neighborhood?

- Strangely, there was frequent mention and referral to buildings either not facing or not visible from the Radio-Canada site. The buildings and their heights along René-Lévesque are anywhere from five to fifteen blocks away. It is therefore little wonder that those responsible for such comparisons and references didn't continue West to the downtown city core and include office towers of twenty+ stories to prop up their defense of the proposed ten-eleven story complex..

Not one building used to reinforce the plan to build the ten-eleven story structure are sourced from across the streets from the project. These buildings of course are all two, three, four and five story buildings. It does not seem at all ethical to reference buildings that do not encroach upon the development's site while at the same time ignoring and omitting those that do.



**Concept d'aménagement :
référence René-Lévesque et Saint-Hubert**



**The intersection in question
is five (5) blocks West
of proposed project.
Reference height of these
buildings is irrelevant.**

**Concept d'aménagement :
référence René-Lévesque et de l'Hôtel-de-Ville**



**The intersection in question
is eleven (11) blocks West
of proposed project.
Reference height of these
buildings is irrelevant.**

Concept d'aménagement : référence René-Lévesque et Clark



-The one building that is actually referenced to help defend the projects 10-11 story height is the Steeple of Saint-Pierre l'Apotre. This seems unfair as the steeple is only for housing the Bells and is not of any practical residential, business or office use.

Look to the buildings to left of the Church in this image, and then compare that to the proposed buildings on the right of the Church. Doesn't quite seem balanced and respectful of the area's architecture. Leaving us, still again, Invisible Neighbors.



- There was a lot of mention made of promoting energy efficient transportation alternatives, chief among them bicycles. Therefore a quoted amount space and parking for bicycles equivalent to 1200 bikes will be added. So too was there mention of including a couple of the new BIXI stands among this proposed space. I wonder what will become of the space for over half of the calendar year? Even BIXI organizers understand that Montréal is a city directly influenced by our northern climate and will only operate within a window from Mid-April to Mid November. It is not unreasonable to assume that a great deal of time was used in reaching this time frame based on meteorological studies not only snow, but of course cold and wind-chill that make for the most part, theriding of bicycles inefficient, if not a dangerous activity. So what will this very generous allotment of space be used for when there are no bikes to park? How will the other modes of transport (Bus, Metro and its limited access points of entry: Stations Beaudry and Papineau) be equipped with the added influx not only of the year round increase in ridership, but again another 'seasonal' increase?

Have there been studies on the noise caused by the increase in pedestrian traffic on the small residential side streets between the two Metro stations and the CBC project? Or are we again invisible residents?

-There is an oddly reminiscent structural similarity of this proposed development and that of a Fortress and Keep structure of the middle-ages.



I am not without my view on this as one of the Projects speakers even comments on the Fortress-like appearance of the southern facades already existent in the Low-rise Buildings on the lot. So how will tripling the height off the buildings on site not increase this comparison?

- Aside from the proposed height of the building, the other large questionable element is the vast amount of 'public green space', indeed they go hand in hand. It was often mentioned that the amount of green space was directly proportional to the desired height of the new buildings. That the more green space they included the higher they could build. It is therefore an honest, simply and direct question to ask: how much green space is really required by law in this new development? And were that the amount of space honored what would the overall profile of the project be? What would the height of the buildings be reduced to? Do not misunderstand my point here, I realize the need for green spaces in the urban centre, however when we live in a place where five-six+ months of the year we are subjected to cold, icy, snowy weather, the idea to devote such a large area to something that can only be used five-seven months a year seems a little inefficient and wasteful.

Recommendations:

For all the self edifying attempts made to compliment and keep the integrity of nearby properties in the neighborhood, to co-exist in harmony and not ignore what already is a relevant and thriving community, I see no real attempt made other than to maximize profits at the minimal accommodation or concern of anyone but those with wallets at CBC-Radio Canada and the City of Montréal.

It is therefore my most fervent opposition that I demand that any re-zoning of the site in question be denied.

Further I believe a more open consultation process be reconvened in the new year with members and groups of the community requested to be included at all levels of discussions, where new and varied projects can be reviewed including but not limited to low-rise buildings (five-six stories), less redundant and overly expansive green spaces (this is not a Park development after all, it is a supposed housing and business redevelopment), as well as what options are there to re-locate the CBC-Radio-Canada studios and offices completely to another location thereby freeing space for other occupation.

Clearly more thought, more consideration for those that live in the area and more than the bottom dollar need to be involved in this redevelopment.