

Mobilizing the Décarie: a 10-step program

by

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“Growth’ in an urban environment is a more complicated phenomenon than simple replacement of what existed before; growth requires a dialogue between past and present. It is a matter of evolution rather than erasure.”

Richard Sennett, 2007¹

“What is needed is a shift from the passivity in which we comply, with what is offered up everyday, to an active posture, not so much of resistance, but of a quest. If we observe the contemporary urban world attentively, we see new forms emerge, “microbe-like, singular and plural practices” that develop outside the rules and regulations that inform our current urban system.”

Mirko Zardini, 2008²

“The dilemma is that the technical and administrative machineries advocated and created to pursue these goals in the past have been based on what we now see as narrow scientific rationalism.”

Patsy Healey, 1996³

¹ Richard Sennett, ‘The Open City’, in *The Endless City the Urban Age Project* Eds Ricky Burdett and Deyan Sudjic (London Phaidon, 2007), 292

² Mirko Zardini, ‘Mirko Zardini and Giovanna Borasi *Actions What you can do with the city* (Montreal Canadian Centre for Architecture, 2008), 15

³ Patsy Healey, ‘Planning through debate the Communicative Turn in Planning Theory’ in *Readings in Planning theory* Eds Susan Fairstein and Scott Campbell (Cambridge, MA Blackwell, 1996), 234

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze the intricacies which lie between urban development and its planning structure, in order to inform a design approach. As vague as this may seem, these concerns become apparent with large-scale redevelopments such as infrastructural renewal. Highways are peculiar urban entities, since they affect every scale of city context – local, regional, national – as well as many different fields altogether: architecture, engineering, and urban planning. The potential for such a trans-disciplinary approach is found to be difficult, if not impossible, to attain in Montreal, not least given bureaucratic inertia. Based on this inability to collaborate towards a common vision, a new approach will be delineated for the Décarie Expressway in Montreal. Within this frame, the project becomes a *10-Step Program*, a speculation, an experiment, using *cross-programming* as a strategy to rework existing configurations into possible futures.

142 words



Figure 1 Construction of the Turcot Exchange (1966), (a) Alzeshim, s. h. c. I d. U. S. d. O. f. d.

Introduction

“Fundamentally, infrastructure networks are thus widely assumed to be integrators or urban spaces”⁴

While this definition aptly describes what these networks are *thought to be*, the reality often diverges. Infrastructure networks, — energy, water, transport, communications — distribute and connect resources and people across territories unevenly, and often regardless of urban space. Urban contexts are compelled to host and mediate series of different networks, weaved through the fabric in more or less coherent ways, at the expense of ‘technological determinism’. Moreover, infrastructure networks are often believed to be solely the ‘work of engineers’. Traditionally, they have also been seen as systems requiring “public regulation, so that they somehow ‘add cohesion’ to territory, often in the name of some ‘public interest’”⁵.

Today, infrastructure networks have become increasingly a source of conflicts in the ‘contemporary networked metropolis’, especially in relation to transportation. This thesis will critically re-examine some of the above mentioned pre-conceptions — ‘integration’, ‘public’ nature, ‘work of engineers’ — throughout the detailed analysis of Montreal’s transportation network, both historically and contemporarily.

The modernization of road networks in North America was carried out ubiquitously across territories in the 50’s and 60’s. Keynesian State planning, and the dominance of the automobile as main transportation mode, triggered large-scale infrastructural projects to be undertaken at the National scale. In Canada, the Trans-Canada highway project was commenced in 1950 while in the United States, under Eisenhower, the Interstate highway system was instigated in 1956. It was an era where the ‘collective project’ of modernity prevailed over issues at the local scale. Hence, many cities in North America saw their core assailed by expressways and high rises, gradually emptying the social life out of the city, relocating it in the periphery. The expanded networks allowed life to be sustained ‘equally’ in more distant locations.

Today, however, problems associated with massive ‘geographical relocations’ are widely asserted and the legacies of modern infrastructure are often seen as ‘sins’ of urban life. Across the World, urban expressways are nowadays being re-

⁴ Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin, *Splintering Urbanism*, (London: Routledge, 2001), 8.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

configured, re-appropriated, and sometimes even removed or hidden underground. Their presence perhaps 'symbolizes' increasing health and environmental concerns. Can it be said, however, that they are the cause *per se*? While it might heighten the image of a city to sink an expressway into the ground, will it tackle the core issues, the ones lying underneath the surface? In fact, infrastructure networks, as it will be developed throughout this thesis, are intersecting entities, revealing conflicts inherent within socio-political structures. They are involved in a much broader set of inquiries, and intrinsically linked within 'geometries of power'.

The first chapter of this thesis will focus on Montreal, describing how the city went through modernity in a 'singular' way. The second chapter will scan thoroughly the Decarie, for its assets and issues, physical state and social constitution. The third chapter brings into light the contemporary context of Montreal, and critically assesses its status in relation to the past, but also to the future. The focus is then drawn on the intricacies of urban development in Montreal, and the 'inhibiting agents' of infrastructural renewal, found within its inner structure. This section will set the stage for defining a new *approach* to urban planning, in the specific context of the Decarie Expressway in Montreal, ultimately resulting in a '10-step program' for 'mobilizing the Decarie'.

Chapter One: Montreal Modern, 1960

It is, indeed, neither City nor country...No longer can it be identified from the outside by its silhouette, clearly set off from the surrounding fields. No longer can it be comprehended from the inside as a system of clearly defined spaces of plazas and streets. It appears as chaos...⁶

- Hans Blumenfeld, c. 1961

The context which frames the emergence of the Decarie Expressway in Montreal is key to understanding many of its contemporary issues, and thus crucial in forming an argument toward its renewal. It becomes clear when analyzing history that such a drastic intervention would not have been built this way if it was not for the very specific socio-economical and cultural context of Montreal during the 1960s.

The 60's were a period of effervescent growth, not only in terms of demographics but in the extent of physical transformations. The city was at a turning point in history: it went from being a *city* to an *urban region*. While it is true that what was happening in Montreal was typical of post-war dynamics at work in all major Western cities,⁷ Montreal went through this modernization in a remarkably singular way. While many American cities emptied their downtown cores from 'neighborhood life', Montreal managed to keep its human and civic character. Four perspectives of analysis have been chosen to aptly cover the driving forces behind the upheavals of the 60's.

First, it is important to define the broader social, political and economical context of Quebec during the 60's. The modernization of the state apparatus in Quebec went hand in hand with the physical transformations taking place. The second part aims at describing the extent of these construction projects, the ambitions and the driving forces behind their rapid completion. The third section analyzes more specifically the dynamics of planning and governance at work during the creation of Montreal's modern infrastructure network; Keynesian state planning and the influential *Service d'Urbanisme*. The fourth and final section covers the era following the 60's transformations, a phase that saw the continuation of development but this time in an unregulated way, with a rise in criticism from the population. These later years also frame the emergence of many bureaucratic structures, still present today, such as the public consultation systems and the powerful unions, but also the administrative divisions and the increasing polarity

⁶ Hans Blumenfeld in Marsan, Jean-Claude. *Montréal en Évolution*. (Laval: Méridien, 1994), 310

⁷ André Lortie, *The 60s: Montreal Thinks Big*. (Montréal: CCA, 2004), 78

between Montreal and its suburban area – topics that will be discussed in the following chapters in relation to the contemporary issues of the Decarie.

.....

1.1 Quebec 1960: society, culture, politics

For the *Peuple Québécois*, the beginning of the 60's was an entry into modernity: it marked the end of a period of oppression from the controlling hand of the Church. After the death of Maurice Duplessis in 1959, and the rise of Jean Lesage and the *Parti Libéral*, a series of reforms were undertaken that would completely reshape the 'architecture of governance' in Québec. The changes were of such a transformative nature that the moment was soon called the *Quiet Revolution*.

With the slogans 'It's time for things to change' and "Masters in our own house', the *Lesage* administration indeed changed things drastically. The extent of the reforms was immense. The province was literally recreating its own system, taking control of every aspect of public life. The core of the reforms tackled the fields of education and health, arts and culture, and especially the economy through the transformation of major economical structures and the nationalization of major industries.

The government's new education system was to be accessible to everyone. Hence schools were created at the elementary and high school level, with their corresponding regional administrations. *CEGEP – Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel* – was introduced, motivated again by political desire to provide increased accessibility to post-secondary studies; consequently, the *Université du Québec*, with its many campuses, was founded. For Montreal, this meant a second French institution after *Université de Montréal*. Along with the 'wave of change', it was decided to renew completely the methods of education: moving away from the classical studies, Greek and Latin, towards 'modern' ways of teaching, based on science and a less rigid way of teaching.⁸ This was questioned by many at the time, and still is to this day.

At the levels of medicine and health, the new Welfare State instituted the introduction of public health insurance, unemployment benefits, and a collective pension fund. The Department of Cultural Affairs, created in 1961, funded the *Office du Film du Québec*, the *Musée d'Art Contemporain*, the *Bibliothèque Nationale du Québec*, the *Cinémathèque Québécoise*, and also grants programs to support artists. The major economic infrastructures established were the *Société*

⁸ André Lortie, *The 60s: Montreal Thinks Big*. (Montréal: CCA, 2004), 38.

Générale de Financement, a large financial body aimed at helping the development of Quebec companies and, perhaps most importantly, the nationalization of electricity with the formation of Hydro-Québec.

With these major changes, Québec became unequivocally a welfare state.⁹ As such, these reforms also gave rise to a ‘bureaucratic middle class’. The number of jobs created by the growing state apparatus, combined with a rise in power of the many unions, whether in public or private sectors, and the increased accessibility to education, made space for an important and influential middle class.

This climate of change and freedom was propitious to the rise of nationalism (or, *Néo-Nationalism*). The decade saw the emergence of the *Parti Québécois* in the political realm. It also bore witness to the formation of the *Front de libération du Québec* (FLQ), an extremist group fighting for *séparatisme*. French Canadians began to affirm themselves as a different entity from the rest of Canada, and this led to a series of changes as well, notably the creation of the *Mouvement Laïc de la Langue Française*, but on the other hand contributing also to the displacement to Toronto of many English Canadian families and businesses, transferring with them in part Montreal’s economy.

This context played a crucial role in the contemporaneous decision making processes concerning major transformative actions across Montreal (architecture, infrastructure, planning). This holistic ‘wave’ of renewal, imbued within Quebec’s socio-cultural upheavals, contributed greatly in shaping contemporary Montreal.

.....

1.2 Montreal master plans (and thinking big)

Before November 1960, Montreal, even though it was the metropolis of Canada, was still a province city. While skyscrapers were erected everywhere in the United States, the City with the hundred church towers was still sleeping.¹⁰

– Guy Legault, 2002

Montreal’s entry to the 1960s marks what urban historian Jean-Claude Marsan has described as ‘the catching up years.’¹¹ The late jump into modernity was not only a consequence of the socio-political changes underway, but concomitant to the economical repercussions of the Great Depression of 1929 and World War II. In these earlier difficult times, barely any major public construction had been undertaken – apart, notably – from religious institutions (which,

⁹ Ibid., 34.

¹⁰ Guy. R Legault, *La ville qu'on a bâtie* (Montréal : Éditions Liber, 2002), 23.

¹¹ Marsan, Jean-Claude. *Montréal En Évolution*. (Laval: Ed. Du Méridien, 1994), 256.

however, would be among the last to be built, the Church being on the brink of its declining influence). The only prominent building erected between 1930 and 1960 would be the main campus of the University of Montreal, designed by architect Claude Cormier.

Given this context, many of the project ideas developed prior to the 1960's had been simmering for quite a while, waiting for the opportunity to be realized. Proposals for urban expressways and the metro had been drawn long before. These early proposals counted for a portion of the important 1960 Montreal master plan. When comparing the first master plan of 1944 with the one of 1960, a major scale difference can be seen. While the first one, designed at the time in Paris by the urban planning consultant Jacques Gréber was modest, even reasonable, the one implemented afterwards was highly ambitious. Why was Montreal suddenly expanding its plans?

In fact, the projects that emerged from this period were planned envisioning a continuous demographic growth. Montreal's population had increased of 70% from 1941 to 1961, this boom leading to forecast that the metropolis would reach 7 million people in 2000¹². These inadequate predictions contributed to the overall 'irresponsible optimism' of that time, a term aptly coined by planning historian André Lortie. The 60's overall context transpired a feeling that everything could be done. It was 'the decade of unlimited possibility'¹³. The long depression that had preceded, combined with the momentum engendered by the surge in modernity throughout the City and the World, acted as triggers for, in Lortie's phrase, 'thinking big'.

The Masterplan

The 1960 Master plan for Montreal (fig. 3) was therefore a result of various forces exerted on Montreal, thus giving different rationales to the plan. Amid from pre-60's projects resurfacing, other exigencies had to be met. Montreal was pressured by the need to reconnect with its regional and national transportation network. On the other hand, Montreal had its own ambitious aspirations to make Montreal a so-called 'world city'. Consequently, the overall strategy developed by the City Planning department was a dual one: to promote the densification and consolidation of the downtown core, and to develop the periphery. The form chosen was that of a four-pointed star, two of them being mainly industrial, along the river (East and West) and the two others residential, (North and South). (fig.

¹² Marsan, Jean-Claude. *Montréal En Évolution*. (Laval: Ed. Du Méridien, 1994), 310.

¹³ André Lortie, *The 60s: Montreal Thinks Big*. (Montréal: CCA, 2004), 75

4.1) This plan would guide subsequently the major decisions, ranging from zoning regulations to highway planning.¹⁴

In terms of road infrastructure, the Federal Government's Trans-Canada Highway project (A-40), combined with the Provincial Government's expansion of its highway network (A-10, A-15, A-20), meant that Montreal's master plan needed to include the passing of highways in its urban fabric. At the time, there was no questioning the matter: it was deemed necessary and commonplace everywhere in North America. For Montreal, it was thought to relieve the increasing traffic on its existing arteries. This led to the construction of a series of expressways traversing the urban environment, most of them funded by Municipal-Provincial-Federal accords. The result was, however, an additional traffic load for Montreal, since the highways had a two-fold purpose: to absorb both city and non-city traffic. In total, the Provincial Government built, between 1958 and 1976, 400 km of expressways, in and around the island.¹⁵ Within Montreal's administrative boundaries, the Decarie, Ville-Marie, East-West (Trans-Canada), Bonaventure Expressways, but also the Champlain bridge and the Louis-Hippolyte Lafontaine tunnel.

In terms of built space, what the plan engendered was paradoxical in nature. The urban fabric was being emptied by the construction of expressways, and equally by their sprawling effect. Simultaneously, density and cohesion were enforced by the metro, but also in some specific parts of the town due to the establishment of a dense core, where institutions, businesses and transportation nodes were concentrated. In a way, the former urban morphology was being remodeled around the new transportation modes, this turning upside down the previous land-occupation logics and character of urban life. It triggered the disappearance of neighborhoods, in most cases in the downtown area, the creation of new ones in the periphery, and the re-consolidation of others.

The downtown core

The first building that gave the tone to the future Business District was Place Ville-Marie (fig. 7) , completed in 1962. The site had already been excavated as railway yards; hence it was perfect for a 'world class' complex. The project embodied a kind of 'mega-structure', with developed underground and multifunctional uses at different levels. In fact, it became the seed of Montreal's famed 'underground city', which would continue to spread through future constructions, aided by excavations for the Metro system.

¹⁴ Ibid., 89

¹⁵ Annick Germain and Damaris Rose, *Montréal: the Quest for a Metropolis*, (Toronto: Wiley, 2000), 98.

Among the main projects realized were the other ‘mega-complexes’ of Place Victoria, Place Bonaventure, (fig. 6) Place Alexis-Nihon, Place Dupuis and Complexe Desjardins. (It is inspired by those gigantic constructions, as well as the constructions of Expo 67, that Reyner Banham devoted a section to Montreal in his book *Megastructure: Urban Futures of the Recent Past*.) In concordance with the booming of Montreal, modernizing forces and flexible zoning, the private sector saw unprecedented opportunities to invest in Montreal. A series of new skyscrapers, mostly hotels and office buildings, were quickly erasing the traces of history in the center, and replacing it with modern structures, collectively working towards re-defining Montreal’s downtown core.

Expo 67

The announcement in 1962 that Montreal would host the International Exhibition of 1967, (fig. 5) commonly known as Expo 67, is worth mentioning for its significant effect on the plans already in progress. The late decision was due to the renunciation by Moscow, who had accepted hosting the world’s fair 1960. Thus, it became a serious challenge for Montreal to conceive, orchestrate, and build this event in five years. The Expo was, however, very dear to Montrealers, and especially for Mayor Jean Drapeau. The event symbolized a window to the world, an opportunity to show Montreal as a modern metropolis, a world city. The exhibition was also seen as a ‘pump-primer’¹⁶ for Montreal’s economic development.

What this announcement added to the existing turmoil of projects was another massive construction site to the list, thus increasing pressure on the other main infrastructural works to be done by the due date. Considering the amount of incoming visitors anticipated for those 6 months, the City of Montreal thought it mandatory to have the infrastructure ready to facilitate the flow of people.

.....

1.3 Space, bureaucracy, modernization

Although many cities in North America underwent a similar phase of modernization, it can be said that Montreal had a different *parcours*. Indeed, Montreal’s ‘singularity’ lies partly in the fact that it is both a ‘car-city’ and a ‘people-city’, thus it inherently possesses a ‘paradoxical dual dynamic of sprawl and centralization’.¹⁷ Manifested by the close cohabitation of both transportation modes, this large-scale phenomenon becomes evident even at specific intersecting

¹⁶ Expression used by Michael Sorkin. André Lortie, *The 60s: Montreal Thinks Big*. (Montréal: CCA, 2004), 149.

¹⁷ André Lortie, *The 60s: Montreal Thinks Big*. (Montréal: CCA, 2004), 89.

points, and in the most direct way. How many cities, for example, have metro stations with doors opening directly on expressways (e.g. Villa-Maria Metro Station)? What sort of decision-making process led to the concurrent implementation of such contradictory rationales? The following section draws attention to the specific opposing forces that were at work in shaping contemporary Montreal – that is, the power of the ‘collective enterprise’, and the local negotiation of those forces by Montreal’s *Service d’Urbanisme*.

The ‘modern integrated ideal’

The 60’s transformations were embodying, as most of the Western World was, the notions of a ‘collective project’. Keynesian governance was widely assumed to provide control over the chaotic city; hence major infrastructure projects were inserted within that ideology. Aside from influencing the government’s reforms and infrastructural strategies, this ‘centralized thinking’ grandly impacted urban planning as well. “Urban planning helped to define the ‘vision of the progressive force of modernity’ through its attempts to impose systematically an ‘abstract space’ upon the complex social and lived spaces of the industrial metropolis.”¹⁸

The equal distribution of goods and services throughout the territory in terms of infrastructure was a concept also found in the fundamental principles of the *Congrès internationaux d’architecture moderne* (CIAM). CIAM had advocated that the requirements of modern life – mobility, work, housing, and recreation – needed to be on an equal ground.¹⁹ The group’s *Athens Charter* had lasting impact on both urban planning and architecture, starting in the inter-war years but continuing well into the post-war decade. Examples of CIAM-inspired thinking can be seen in Montreal. As the architect Micheal Sorkin remarks, “The astonishing thing is that every single standard-issue piece of mid-century modernist strategizing happened here.”²⁰

Indeed, it can be seen in the radical nature of the expressways’ layouts, particularly the East-West expressway, whose path did not follow any specific urban logic than the one of crossing transversally the city. Architecturally, the projects of the Habitations Jeanne-Mance, and Cité Concordia, among others, are reminiscent of typical modernist projects promoted by CIAM. Yet, Montreal did not succumb fully to the forces of modernity, partly due to the growing citizens’

¹⁸ Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin, *Splintering Urbanism*, (London: Routledge, 2001), 49.

¹⁹ The four major categories defined by the CIAM. Le Corbusier, *The Athens Charter*, (New York: Grossman, 1973)

²⁰ André Lortie, *The 60s: Montreal Thinks Big*, (Montréal: CCA, 2004), 89.

protests of the early 1970s, which will be detailed in the next section, but also attributable to the exhaustive work of the *Service d'Urbanisme*.

The Service d'Urbanisme

The department was created in 1941, in response to a need to plan upcoming transformations. It was the first time in Montreal's history that such a type of organization existed. The team benefited from the knowledge of several renowned personalities such as the urban planner Hans Blumenfeld, and the firm Van Ginkel and Associates, both culturally of European origin. They also worked with professionals from the United States and Toronto. The composition of the team was hence diverse, and practiced an impeccable work of urban planning, considering the difficulty of the task.

Their work consisted basically in 'combating' with the radical plans of the province, country and municipality. Their role was really the one of a *mediator*, negotiating the transition between ideals and implementation, in the best possible ways for the future and the citizens. As Guy Legault, a former member of the *Service* describes in his book *La ville qu'on a bâtie*, it was a daily battle against the Minister to change aspects of the plan, often not showing initiatives of integration, but simply being the work of engineers. As he says, "This is often the frustration in the work of an Urban Planner: showing the evidence, but not succeeding in 'taming' its execution."²¹

In fact, they saw a series of proposals unfortunately blocked, and often 'spoke to deaf ears', especially when their recommendations were going against the executive committee's ideas. Notwithstanding, their presence revealed greatly influential on a series of projects, notably the metro, the highways Ville-Marie and Décarie, and for their project *Horizon 2000*, the famous socio-demographic study and master plan for the entire metropolitan area of Montreal.

The Metro

As briefly mentioned, the Metro was a project designed prior to the creation of the *Service d'Urbanisme*, hence it was difficult to modify its main layout, even though it made sense to re-assess its validity, considering it was drawn long before. The *Service d'Urbanisme* was thus influential when it came to the implementation of the project. As an example, they were behind the decision to have each station as an individual building, created by a different architect. This was planned to solve the snow issue, but also to promote development, the airspace of the metros being opened to developers. (fig. 8) Another influential

²¹ Guy. R Legault, *La ville qu'on a bâtie* (Montréal : Éditions Liber, 2002), 54. *translated by author*

recommendation was to shift the lines that were along main streets, such as Sainte-Catherine and Saint-Denis, of about 400m away, to spare the damage on the most used routes.

The highways

In the case of the East-West Expressway, the work had already started in some sections, making it difficult to rethink some of the aspects. As for the Décarie, the layout remained, but the SU managed to shift the Minister's decision to create a highway on ground level, for a depressed one (this will be discussed in a subsequent chapter on the Décarie itself). The Ville-Marie Expressway, built a little later, is the one that benefited the most from the input of the SU. Its layout was at first planned on the shore of the River, the project dating from 1948. (figs. 9,10,11) The proposal from the SU was to choose a route inside the shoreline, not to destroy it. Moreover, the site chosen was the path of a former river: the soil composition posing a difficulty to build, it had hardly attracted developers. These observations led to convince the Minister of the idea, but also the one to build the expressway underground when crossing the downtown core, to disallow a future disconnection between the downtown and its shoreline, something that happened in many cities at that time, notably Boston and Toronto (the former now having sunk its highway into the ground).

Horizon 2000

Horizon 2000, an ambitious urban study, was undertaken in 1962 under the direction of Claude Robillard, and ended in 1967. Under the new legislation, the plan addressed the entire urban region of Montreal. As such, it changed the scale and type of urban planning that had been done to date. The team undertook an exhaustive survey of the entire region, as well as demographic predictions, which would direct future planning decisions to be taken accordingly. The following excerpt describes the main strategy:

One of the main concerns was to constrain urban sprawl within a given perimeter. We were proposing to consolidate the density and concentrate housing around the exchange centers, in view of saving space. Mass transit would have become more accessible, therefore more affordable. By having the urban area on a limited area reduces the need for highways and other transportation means. Less consumed land protects historical and heritage sites against the erosion of a non constrained urbanization. The same goes with natural and agricultural reserves. Neighborhoods well structured would have induced a social

cohesion that today's suburban areas do not possess. That sums up what the Plan was.²²

The excerpt shows how *avant-gardiste* the plan was: the acknowledgement of the suburban area as part of the city, and the need to create 'exchange centers' are among today's discussed strategies. The issue of sprawl is still today unresolved and attempts to elaborate such a plan are increasingly complex.

Unfortunately, the response was deceptive after the ceremonious presentation at Montreal's Place des Arts in 1967, with over 1000 people, representatives from the whole urban region, citizens and influential personalities. The study was 'too academic' for the common individual.

The presentation, even if we did not want it scholarly, had an abstract character. Urban concepts familiar to urban planners were hardly digested by the most majority of the public. It was difficult for mayors of the suburban areas to understand what these proposals brought to their everyday life. Air and water pollution wasn't at their door yet.²³

In retrospect, it is clear that many of the refused proposals from the SU would have been greatly acclaimed today. The proposed layout for the Metro for example, as 3 lanes, organized much more in cohesion with the existing rail system, or the proposal of combining construction sites of metro and highway, or to give more quality to the treatment of bridges across highways, and so forth. Nonetheless, many successful projects emerged from this era: Place-Ville Marie, the Metro, Expo 67, avoiding an elevated expressway on the St-Laurent's shore, and many more. Perhaps there is a lesson to be learned from this history, on the importance of collective visions, collaboratively implemented by the joint actions of planners and decision-makers. As the following section and chapter will examine, such collaborative work was hardly found after this brief period, and is still scarce in today's context.

.....

1.4 Post 60's

The next few years will decide whether this is to become another homogenized North American City, or whether it is to retain its human scale. If the city is going to retain its human scale, we are going to have to stop tearing it apart.²⁴

- Melvin Charney, 1975

²² Ibid., 99. *translated by author*

²³ Ibid., 100. *translated by author*

²⁴ Melvin Charney, cited in Donna Gabeline, Dane Laken, and Gordon Pape, *Montreal at the Crossroads*, (Montreal: Harvest House, 1975), 12.

The 70's were a very different period than the 60's: it was a time of loose development, with the city adopting a passive attitude towards new construction. The common argument of mayor Jean Drapeau was that the changes were in the best interest of Montreal, since it was to become 'the first city of the 21st century'.²⁵ It was also a time of economic slow-down and demographic slump. Soon after the upheavals of the 60's, the phase that ensued could be considered one of recovery and adaptation – or, as Marsan defines it, of 're-appropriation'. Greater consciousness of urban transformation was taking place, with citizens suddenly responsive to how the city was changing – and reacting strongly to it.

Many of the speculative driving forces of the 60's rapidly started to become disillusioned. While Montreal was still for a very short time the major metropolis of Canada, by the 70's it lost its status to Toronto. Furthermore, the anticipated demographic growth never attained the predicted 7 million; in 2011, the greater Montréal is still halfway with 3.8 million. The drastic decline in birth rates was not planned; the 'baby-boomers' were a different generation, and the rejection of the Church unavoidably pointed in that direction.

Urban exodus

"By the time of the 1951 census, the City of Montreal's population topped the one million mark. But Montreal then still claimed 45% of the metropolitan area's total population; by 1961 it accounted for barely 22 percent". Whether this early trend was witnessing a fast-growing migration towards the suburban area, it did not seem to trigger initiatives to constrain the expansion. At the time, its negative effects weren't properly understood, as mentioned in the description of *Horizon 2000*. Rather, the government had been encouraging it, with a massive amount of expressways, but also by implementing a series of measures that reduced the cost of living in the periphery, such as assuring the land-servicing costs of private properties. The Federal Government was contributing too, offering low-mortgage rates for new houses.²⁶ The expressways acted as powerful vectors of expansion. In the 70's, the suburban exodus phenomena was now absorbed and more fully understood, along with its negative impacts. The percentage of people living in the suburban and urban areas was *ex aequo*, as it still is today, thus enhancing the polarization of people and lifestyles.

Erasing history

Post 60's, Montreal was seen as a target by developers, local and international. Hence what started in 1962 with Place Ville Marie continued to

²⁵ Jean Drapeau, cited in *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁶ Annick Germain and Damaris Rose, *Montréal: The Quest for a Metropolis*, (Toronto: Wiley, 2000), 98.

happen, but in less and less cohesive ways, with lower architectural quality and greater impact on the population and existing communities. Montreal was experiencing 'a period of runaway development': on one hand, the tearing down of historical buildings and replaced in most cases by 'concrete boxes' and 'featureless modern structures';²⁷ on the other hand, with the continued filling of the downtown core by high rises. Described below are a few of the most controversial events triggering the rise in citizens' protest movements in the 1970s.

The first event that really started it was the 'Saga of the Van Horne House'. This 1869 Mansion on Sherbrooke Street, (fig. 12) former home of Sir William Cornelius Van Horne, was bought by David Azrieli, a powerful developer seeking to build a high rise on that location.. James Mac Lellan, a young man living close by, went to court trying to save the house. It was the first event of this kind to happen in Montreal, and even though he lost, and the house was demolished in 1973, the event generated controversy and dragged a lot of public attention. A crowd gathered on the demolition day, some even sneaking inside to take pieces of the former house.²⁸

Another striking 'urban renewal' project was the one of Cité Concordia, a major complex, designed along the modernist principles of *The Athens Charter*, and replacing 225 grey-stone houses in the Milton-Park area. The intervention literally erased a part of the community living there, the new accommodations being too expensive for them to stay. (fig.14) Concordia Estates, the developers, had carefully and gradually bought 98% of the houses, thus leaving no choice to the residents but to evacuate. The citizens formed groups and protested, but it did not stop the project.

McGill University was also a major actor in the erasure of a part of Montreal's architectural heritage. Many of the old buildings on their site being expensive to refurbish were simply demolished. Among these was the famous Prince of Wales Terrace, built in 1859.

The excuse of 'modernity' was ideal for developers to justify the demolition of historical buildings. It even went as far as the demolition of major constructions dating of only 20 years, such as the Laurentian Hotel, built in 1948, at the corner of Dorchester and Peel.

²⁷ Donna Gabeline, Dane Laken, and Gordon Pape, *Montreal at the Crossroads*, (Montreal: Harvest House, 1975), 13

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 19-29.

A building like that amortizes itself over 25 or 30 years. Then, you can throw it away like a Dixie Cup. Let's face it, it is an ugly building. It was ugly by the standards of 1948, when it was built. It fulfills a need for low-cost rooms, true, but just watch. The way this city is going, in a few years the Sheraton Mount Royal will be the Laurentian of its time. By the year 2000, the Queen Elizabeth will be a fleabag. It's all part of the way society changes. We don't build things to last anymore. We're affluent and we can afford to keep throwing things away and replacing them with newer, bigger and better.²⁹

Montreal plus or minus ? Montréal: plus ou moins?

The accumulated frustrations of Montrealers, tired of seeing their city torn apart, reached a culminating point with the exhibition *Montreal: plus or minus? Montréal: plus ou moins?*, curated by the architect Melvin Charney, and mounted at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts in 1972. The exhibition was specifically tailored to focus on the social and cultural aspects of urban life, and how these are affected by the modern physical transformations. The phrase 'Montreal, it's us'³⁰, sums up the main theme of the exhibition, which is explored through various medias, from photographs to poems, graphic novels and even installations. (fig. 16) Melvin Charney attempted as well to grab the attention of governments, both municipal and provincial, sending them letters to contribute, their refusal being displayed as part of the exhibition.

The series of protests, combined with this exhibition, and critical articles and books, such as *Montreal at the Crossroads*, (fig. 15) written by three *The Montreal Gazette* journalists, made their effect ultimately on the government, and things started to improve gradually. The "saving of Crescent Street" was an example of a neighborhood spared from the developers by the city, who established laws to protect its character.

.....

Conclusion of chapter one

Of all the transformations 60's and post-60's, what is most striking is not only the deletion of history in term of built heritage, but of the existing communities, either displaced or fragmented, where the only remains lie in memory. The re-arrangement of space caused by the superimposition of a complex infrastructural system, along with its other ideals, literally led to an erasure

²⁹ Vincent Ponte, cited in Donna Gabeline, Dane Laken, and Gordon Pape, *Montreal at the Crossroads*, (Montreal: Harvest House, 1975), 123

³⁰ Melvin Charney, *Montreal plus or minus ? Montréal: plus ou moins?*, (Montreal: Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 1972), 19

socially, even more than *physically*, of some areas. The cultural patrimony, which lies within people, their houses and businesses, established for a long time in an area, are as much valuable *heritage* than the architectural one. There is no doubt about the reasons why the older neighborhoods of Montreal are the most popular to live in. The Mile-end, Plateau, Notre-Dame de Grace, are all neighborhoods which still have homeowners and businesses dating from the beginning of the century and a multi-ethnicity as old.

Facing today again issues of flow and mobility, will the same mistakes of deletion, of erasure, be repeated? How should we tackle our decaying infrastructure today? Is it fair to remove them again completely from history, even though they are now part of it? What about the modernist heritage, should those expressways be part of it? If yes, then how?

These are among the questions that are being tackled in this project. The identity of the Decarie Expressway, and what the boulevard-expressway symbolizes are explored at different levels within a series of proposed counter-projects. As an example, how can the 'drive-in' culture be expanded in ways that could enrich existing programs? The aspect of 'social deletion' is carefully considered by adopting a design approach that does not seek to apply 'modernist' tactics of abstraction onto the existing social context. The design strategy does not seek to displace but rather to add value punctually. These approaches will be explained more amply in the project chapter.

Moreover, the history revealed crucial to understanding the context and complexity of contemporary bureaucracy, since the 1960's marked the creation of most of today's structures of governance in Montreal and Quebec. The next section will introduce the Decarie Expressway in greater detail. It digs into its contemporary issues, socially and physically, and reaches back to what the Decarie was before 1967.

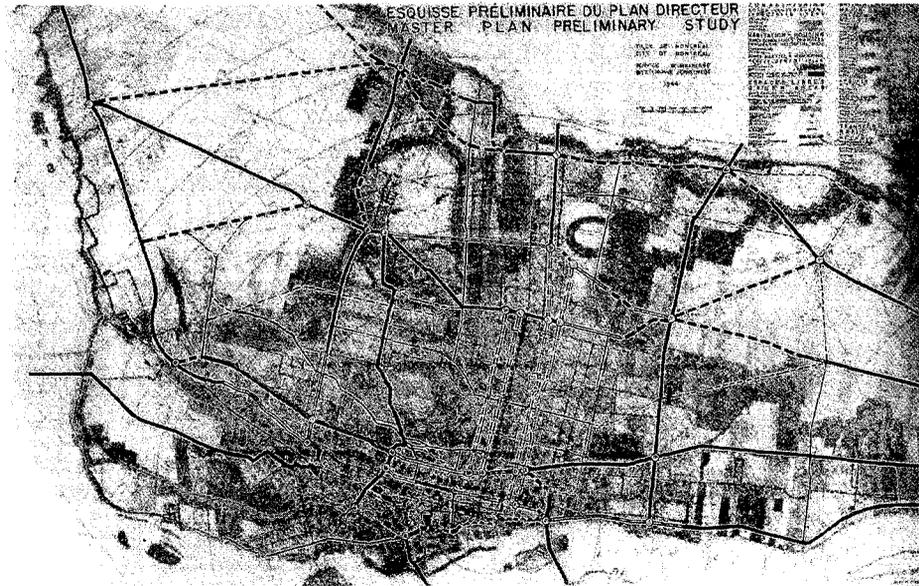


Figure 2 "Master plan, preliminary study", City Planning Department, (source: City of Montreal. *Planning for Montreal: Master plan preliminary Report* (1944), 48 Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal)

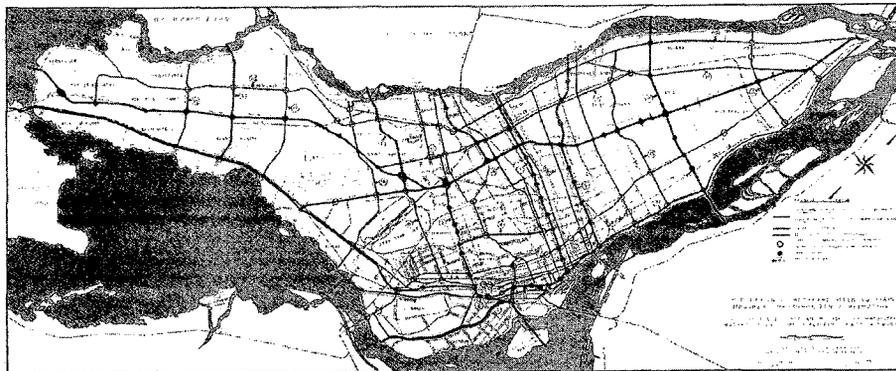
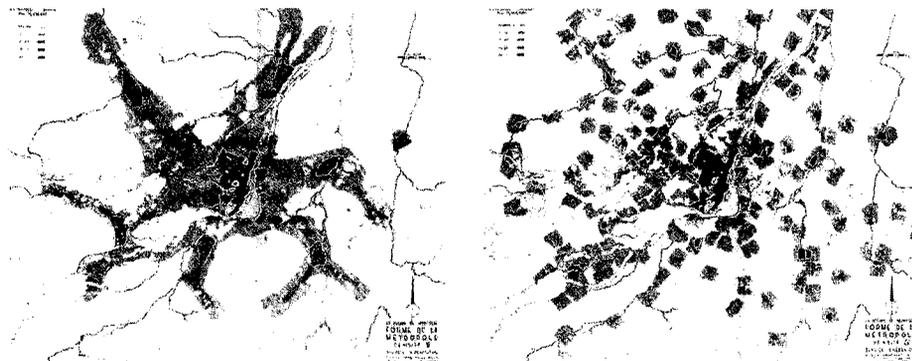


Figure 3 "Master plan, - metropolitan roads network" Lalonde, Girouard et Letendre engineers, (1961) (source: *Plan Directeur: notes à caractère métropolitain*, plan no.52. Canadian Centre for Architecture. Montreal)



Figures 4.1 and 4.2 "Star-shaped metropolis"(left) and "Galactic Metropolis"(right),hypothetical plan for the Montreal region with a population of 10 million inhabitants. City Planning Department, (1966), (source: City of Montreal. *Etude de la forme: Région de Montreal*. no 2, plan nos 20,22. Canadian Centre for Architecture. Montreal)

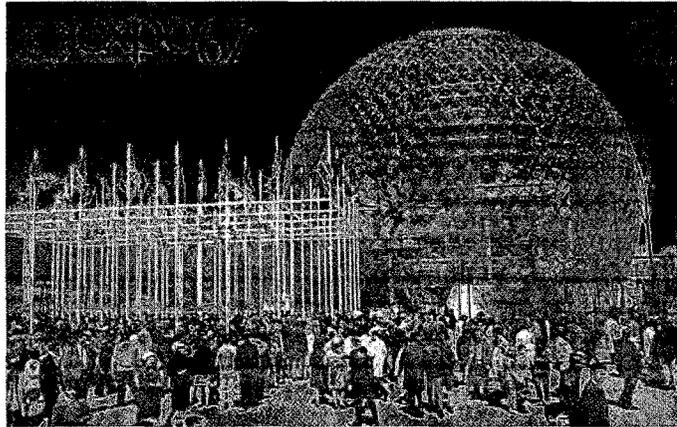


Figure 5 Postcard, International Exhibition 1967 (1967). (source: Centre d'histoire de Montréal)

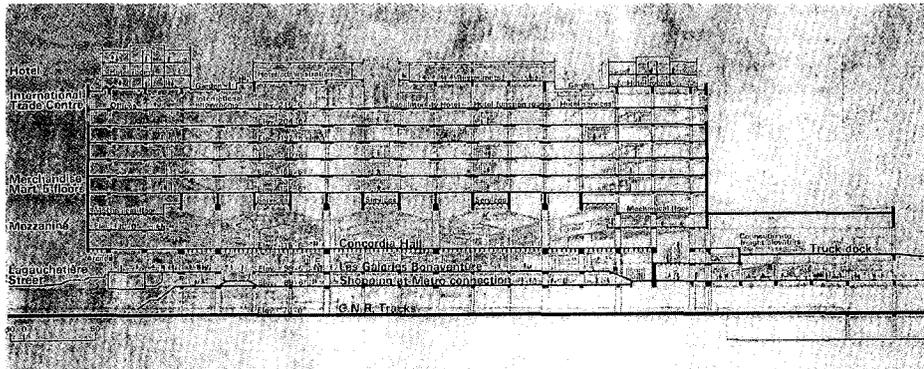


Figure 6 Place Bonaventure North-South Section looking east, (1966). Affleck, Desbarats, Dimakopoulos, Lebensold, Michaud, and Sise Architects, (source: Bibliothèque Nationale du Québec)

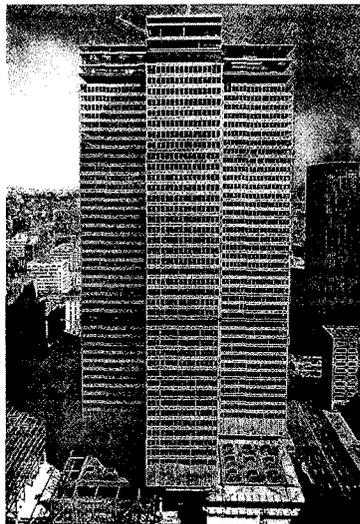


Figure 7 Place Ville-Marie, (1961) (source: Architecture. bâtiment, construction, octobre 1961)

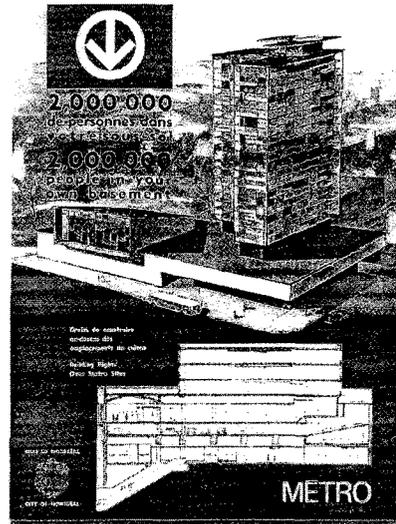


Figure 8 City of Montreal, *2,000,000 People in Your Own Basement*, (1965) (source: Ville de Montreal. Gestion de documents et archives)



Figure 12 Demolition of the Van Horne House (1973)
 (source photograph Allan Leishman Library and
 archives Canada)



Figure 13 Cite Concordia, presentation panel, (1962)
 (source Canadian Centre for Architecture Montreal
 fonds Mayerovitch and Berstein)



Figure 14 "Milton Park Citizens' committee march on City Hall, (1969)" (source Geris Bird
 The Gazette Library and Archives Canada)

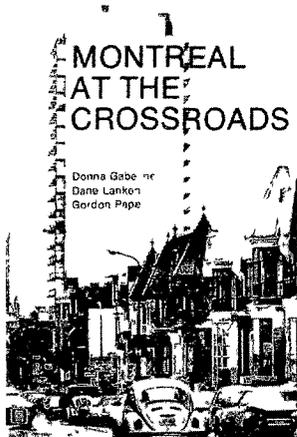


Figure 15 Cover of the book 'Montreal at the Crossroads' (1975)
 (source Donna Gabe, Dane Lankin, Gordon Page)



Figure 16 Non a l'autoroute, (1972)
 (source Charney, Montreal plus or
 minus 'Montreal plus ou moins')

Chapter Two: The Décarie Expressway

2.1 The Décarie B.E

“In its heyday, this stretch of Decarie was a bustling commercial area with a glittering nightlife. Those days are gone.”³¹

Indeed, *Decarie B.E. (Before Expressway)*³² had nothing to do with what it is today. In fact, not only were many of the buildings demolished, but the landscape, character and population changed drastically as well. In order to describe aptly what the Decarie was, it needs to be analyzed in three main areas, which are distinct in character. The stretch from Jean-Talon up North was referred to as ‘the strip’, and was mostly commercial, with low density. It was a popular broad boulevard with many drive-in restaurants, car dealerships and the Blue Bonnets’ Raceway. The middle part, between Jean-Talon and Villa-Maria was the Snowdon neighborhood’s commercial hub, the main intersection being at Queen-Mary, with a higher density and mixed-use buildings. Downward from Villa-Maria, it is a residential neighborhood. In fact, this latter part of the Decarie was not a boulevard prior to the expressway. A section of the residential neighborhood, including Minto Street in its entirety, was flattened to make space for the highway.

Snowdon

Snowdon itself was *Snowdon Junction* where the streetcars would turn around; those that came from downtown via Côte-des-Neiges and Queen Mary Road would turn on Decarie and return downtown. The 17 that came from Cartierville and Belmont Park also turned at the same place. I still have a recurring dream of crossing those tracks on my bike and getting my tires caught in the tracks.³³

The intersection Décarie/Queen Mary was a main transfer center for the Tramways, but it was also the commercial hub of Snowdon’s community. Many shops, restaurants, but also the Snowdon Theater, made up the core of social life.

I went to Snowdon when I was bored. I went to Snowdon to buy school supplies. I went to Snowdon to pick up something for dinner. I went to Snowdon to window shop. But most of all I went to Snowdon to say “Hi”. Those 50’s sure were exciting times.³⁴

It was in fact a very popular neighborhood of Montreal; many families were moving there from other parts of town; it had more open space, greenery and many

³¹ Claude Arpin, “The Death of the Strip”, *The Gazette*, July 11, 1993.

³² Marian Scott, Memories before B.E.- Before Expressway, *The Gazette*, August 27, 1992.

³³ Scott Conrod in: Bill Conrod, *Memories of Snowdon in the 50's*, (Ottawa: Algonquin Pub., 2006), 46.

³⁴ Maryjane Campbell, in *Ibid.*, 56.

exciting shops. In 1950, the price to live in Snowdon was higher than on Park Avenue, a major artery of Montreal and running north-south past Mount-Royal. Today this condition is completely reversed.

We were so happy to be moving to Decarie. Our apartment was a dream, inside and out, compared to where we came from—the dark and dank place at 5998 Park Avenue. Like many other Jews of Mile-end, we moved west the minute we could afford it.³⁵

The residents of Snowdon were mostly English, often Jewish, with some French Canadians. Nearly all of those people have today left the neighborhood. Indeed, as the historian Graeme Décarie says, “the key to the strip’s success was the nearby presence of a rising Anglophone and Jewish middle class that developed after World War II (...). But they eventually moved West, some to the West Island, some to Toronto”³⁶ Barely any of the stores that used to be there exist anymore; they all have been transformed, and even the Snowdon Theater is now a gymnasium. The only traces reminiscent of that community are some of the old buildings, where decorative architectural details can be perceived behind the many advertising panels.

The Strip

Also called “the cruising strip”³⁷, this part of the Decarie, above the railroad tracks, was mostly fields in the 30’s and 40’s, with only the Blue Bonnets Raceway. In the 50’s, it became a broad boulevard with the famous ‘big-box’ restaurants of that time. Many were landmarks in Montreal, until the 80’s when most of them had to shut their doors. Ruby Foo’s restaurant, Piazza Tomasso, La diligence, Miss Montreal (fig. 21) and Gibeau Orange Julep were among the most popular ones. There were also other businesses related to the car culture, such as garages, gas stations, and car dealerships. At that time, the ‘drive-in’ activity was a cultural one, those restaurants being social spaces (unlike today’s fast foods). The only one that somehow managed to survive, even through the tough years, is the Gibeau Orange Julep. In fact, the actual ‘orange’ is the second version, the first one was in the course of the expressway and in concrete, (fig.22) it was rebuilt after. The ‘orange’ is dear to Montrealers today; it represents traces of a bygone past, and is part of a *kitsch* architectural heritage. It has been adopted as a meeting spot by a very specific clientele, the one of car-lovers. Every Thursday during the summer, people across the region meet there to show off their classic cars and meet fellow enthusiasts in the radial parking of the Julep.

³⁵ Ellie Persner, in Bill Conrod, *Memories of Snowdon in the 50's*, (Ottawa: Algonquin Pub., 2006), 154.

³⁶ Claude Arpin, “The Death of the Strip”, *The Gazette*, July 11, 1993.

³⁷ Kristian Gravenor, “Bury the Decarie”, *Montreal Mirror*, April 3rd, 1999.

Surprisingly, when the Decarie Expressway project was announced, many of the owners on ‘the strip’ were excited by it. They believed it would bring more people, hence better business. Harold Cummings, owner of the Chevrolet dealership however regrets the Decarie, years after he shut off his dealership: “It meant that 100 000 cars were speeding by everyday alright, but 80 percent of them were traveling on the lower part.”³⁸ This is what harmed most of the businesses, “drivers didn’t get off the expressway, and the cruising strip died”³⁹ (figs. 17, 20). The reasons for the disappearance of those landmarks is not only due to the expressway, but also to a cultural shift, and mostly to the fact that the population has completely changed (see demographics, third section).

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2.2 The Decarie, 1961-1967

As mentioned previously, the construction of the Decarie expressway was completed in 1967, just in time for Expo 67. At the time, “The provincial roads department boasted that the expressway, the first in Quebec to be built below ground level, “made the 90 000 vehicles that will use it daily, literally “disappear”⁴⁰ In fact, during its conception the Decarie was “saved” from being worse by the *Service d’Urbanisme*, but the poor treatment of the bridges did not accomplish the “disappearance” promised.

The configuration of the Décarie had even greater difficulties. Once again, the consultant-engineers of the government were planning an elevated or ground level expressway. This would have created an insurmountable barrier in the continuum of the street grid and blocked East-West communications. The less damageable solution was the sunken model. It was a battle with the engineers, who were against that proposal. It is thanks to the intervention of Arthur Branchaud, the chief engineer of the Voirie, that the tense situation could be untangled.⁴¹

Government engineers completely refused to give any specific treatment to the edges, railings, and embankments. The only aesthetic quality they managed to improve was a choice of tiles for the interior of the tunnel, an element that is, however, in the favor of the automobilists. Perhaps the only less damageable quality the expressway possesses, is that its shape might be suitable for a future cover?

³⁸ Claude Arpin, “The Death of the Strip”, *The Montreal Gazette*, July 11, 1993.

³⁹ Kristian Gravenor, “Bury the Decarie”, *Montreal Mirror*, April 3rd, 1999.

⁴⁰ Marian Scott, Memories before B.E.- Before Expressway, *The Montreal Gazette*, August 27, 1992.

⁴¹ Guy. R Legault, *La ville qu’on a bâtie* (Montréal : Éditions Liber, 2002), 92. translated by author

2.3 The Decarie today

Road network

The Decarie expressway marks the end of the downtown core of Montreal to the West. It connects the North part of the highway 15 (towards the Laurentians) and the South part (towards Eastern Townships), as well as the highway 40 (the Trans-Canada Highway) at its northern tip , and Highway 20, at its south end. Highway 20 connects to the Ville-Marie expressway, leading to downtown. The Decarie culminates at either end, therefore, in major intersections called ‘exchanges’, with several levels of elevated structures to link the many different directions.

Flow

The Decarie was entitled the busiest expressway in the world in the year following its completion.⁴² While it was planned to handle the flow for a future metropolis of 7 million people, its configuration, with ‘T’ intersections at both ends, creates quasi-permanent nodes of congestion. It has three lanes on each side, plus 2 additional service lanes above ground on each side. The only differing section is the one from Villa-Maria South, where the Decarie Boulevard diverges into another street; hence there are no service lanes on the expressway’s edges.

Sound and pollution

The sound level varies on different parts of the highway. It is somewhat lower when the width is wide and there are embankments. When the expressway forms a U-shape, it is much louder to the above street. Overall, the sound is a health concern for the population. The pollution as well is alarming, especially since the artery is often congested with traffic. This degrades the life quality of both the automobilist and the resident.

Shape and materiality

Built entirely in concrete, only the railings and other display structures are in steel. There is no specific design for most of the Decarie: it is simply the *strictly-to-code* work of engineers. The only elements designed to improve the aesthetic, aside from the tunnel’s, is the presence of a brick wall, plants and light posts at

⁴² “Busiest Décarie to be quietest when barriers up for widening”, *The Montreal Gazette*, Jan 6, 1968, section 3, 21.

Queen Mary's intersection, and a fence at Sherbrooke on one side, all of which have been added recently.

The Decarie's shape varies depending on the areas it crosses; however, on average it is sunken 6-8 m in the ground, with a width of around 25-35 meters. With on- or off-ramps, the width can reach up to 50-60 meters. Two sections possess a different morphology: the first is close to the North boundary, where the Decarie is at ground level, and the other is the Tunnel under the Church Notre-Dame de Grâce.

Construction quality

It can be said that the Decarie's construction quality is poor. It is known that the Decarie was built quickly, and it is in fact dramatically aging. In 2000, all of the viaducts had to be redone – at the cost of \$76.6 million – after one of them fell on the A-15 North (killing a few people) and some concrete fell from one of the bridges close to Villa-Maria.⁴³

Status and development

Snowdon is a well-connected part of town, with 7 metro stations along the east edge of the Decarie. As opposed to the common assumption that areas nearby metro stations somehow become consolidated and denser through time, a few of the metro stations on Decarie (de la Savane and Namur especially) confirm the anti-thesis of that belief. In fact, the development of the former strip has a 'suburban character'. The only recent developments are shops in the *Smart Centre* next to the railroad tracks, office buildings close to Metro De La Savane and a senior home of high density corner Côte-St-Luc. The expressway also contributes to a lack of maintenance of the buildings bordering it.

Across the whole length, however, there is an impressive programmatic diversity. This unique condition, of a central location and flexible zoning, does trigger an interesting mixture of programs, and a variety of typologies. Industrial, commercial, recreational, residential, and cultural programs cohabit. The Décarie not being a highly frequented artery for leisure, many of the functions are specifically tailored to a community, or provide a unique service, whose economic model is obviously not based on the flow of passer-bys. For example, among the businesses are the dog kennel, the garage, the associations (ex: *Ligue des Noirs du Québec*), the *Institut Métaphysique*, the polish library, the *Church of God of Prophecy*, the Jewish catering service, *Russian souvenirs boutique*, *Udisco Hobbies Shop* and *Visual Planning, Standard Goldsmiths*, and so forth.

⁴³ Micheal Mainville, "Repairs to Decarie safe: engineers", *The Gazette*, June 22nd, 2000.

On another note, the neighboring areas of the Décarie – Hampstead, Westmount and Ville Mont-Royal – are municipalities that have refused to merge with Montreal. (These homogenous communities are spatially introverted, “turning their back” on the Decarie.) The administrative divisions could also explain partly the observed “lack of concern” of the Decarie, its position within administrative limits being somewhat ‘residual’, even in its borough, the neighborhoods of Côte-des-Neiges (CDN) and Notre-Dame de Grâce (NDG) being distinct from Snowdon as well.

Social constitution

The population of the borough CND-NDG is the only one in Montreal that has diminished (10,4%) between 1966 and 2006, the peak of the decline occurring in the 70’s.⁴⁴ In Snowdon today, one in two people is not born in Canada. It is also the area with the most rented apartments on the island, and the most temporary residents occupying the area. “One resident on five has moved in the previous year, and one on two in the previous 5 years.”⁴⁵ Also, one person in ten is a newly arrived immigrant, and the area hosts the most important bodies of populations from Romania, Philippines, China and It is in fact an ideal location for recent immigrants: it is on the metro system, and the cost of living is relatively low for a central location. This social context of *transition* creates a gradual erosion of the social bounds of Snowdon. The fact that half of the population doesn’t have any roots in Canada, less even in Snowdon, contributes to the lack of cohesion in the community. It engenders a low level of involvement in city matters. “A lot of people living in Snowdon just got here, they’re happy, and they don’t want to complain”⁴⁶ The other important demographic trend of Snowdon is its important senior population (15%), higher than the average in Montreal.⁴⁷ This can be seen clearly as it takes up a large amount of buildings on the edge of Decarie, most of them being high-rises.

Finally, one of the most crucial problems in the area is unfortunately crime and drugs. The buildings are often not taken care of since graffiti happens overnight as soon as they are repainted.⁴⁸ Indeed, the wide and empty gap created by the Decarie has become a sort of *no man’s land*, where there are very few pedestrians, especially at night, and it has become a prime location for gangs. Many shop owners deplore that situation, but they cannot do anything about it.

⁴⁴ Montréal en Statistiques, *Profil Socio-démographique: arrondissement NDG-CDN*, (Montreal: Ville de Montreal, 2009), 2

⁴⁵ Ibid., 2.

⁴⁶ Interviewed citizen, owner of UDisco Hobbies shop, *Survey*, (Montreal: Sophie Tremblay, 2009)

⁴⁷ Montréal en Statistiques, *Profil Socio-démographique: arrondissement NDG-CDN*, (Montreal: Ville de Montreal, 2009), 4

⁴⁸ Interviewed citizen working at a hairdresser on Decarie, *Survey*, (Montreal: Sophie Tremblay, 2009)

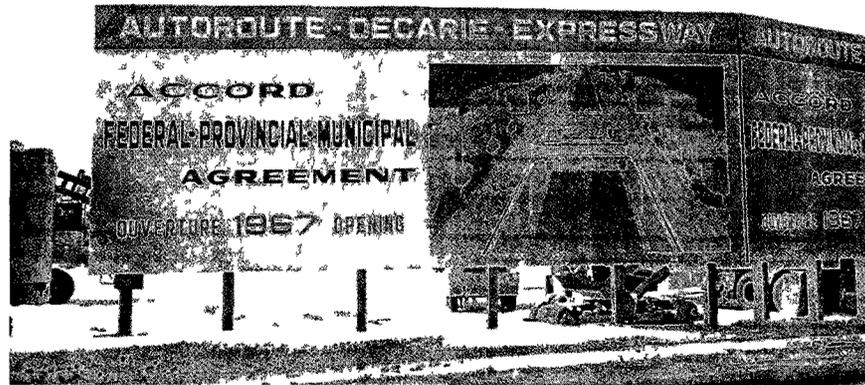


Figure 23 Advertising panel for Autoroute Décarie Adrien Hubert (1967) (source Bibliothèque et Archives Nationales du Québec)

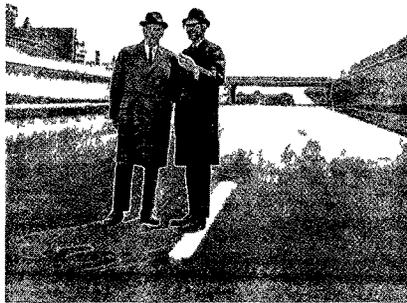


Figure 24 Cérémonie d'inauguration de l'Autoroute Décarie Adrien Hubert (1967) (source Bibliothèque et Archives Nationales du Québec)

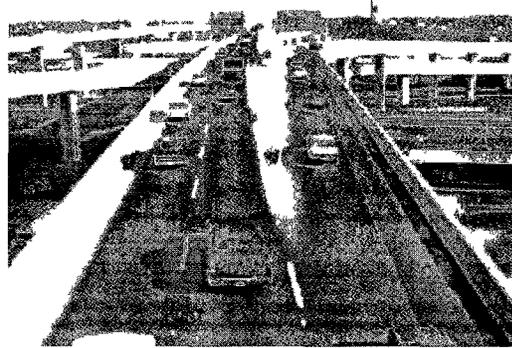


Figure 25 Echangeur Turcot Gabor Szilazi (1969) (source Bibliothèque et Archives Nationales du Québec)



Figure 26 Echangeur Décarie Métropolitain (1970) Gabor Szilazi et Gilles Langevin (source Bibliothèque et Archives Nationales du Québec)



Figure 27 Voie Rapide Décarie maquette (1965) Adrien Hubert (source Bibliothèque et Archives Nationales du Québec)

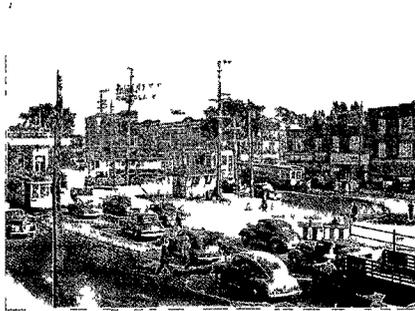


Figure 28 Decarie/Queen Mary (1947) (source: Archives Nationales du Québec)

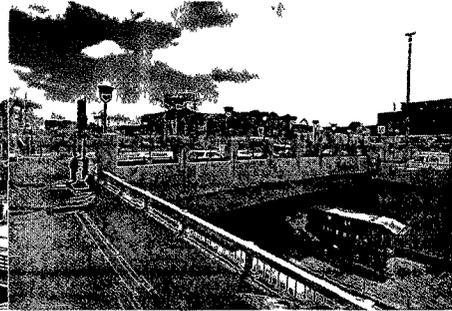


Figure 29 Decarie/Queen Mary (2010) (source: Google Street View)

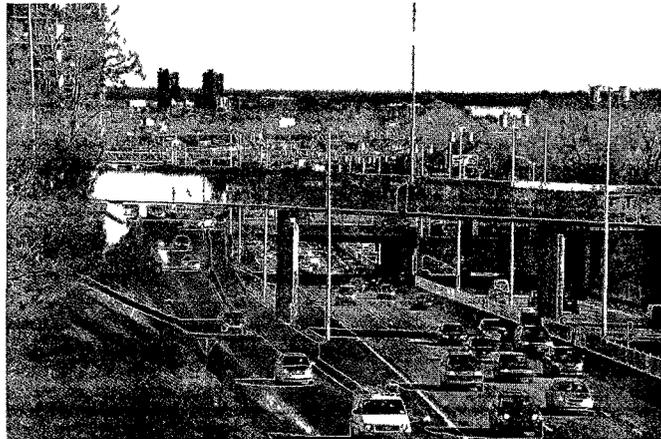


Figure 30 View of the Decarie looking south, from Addington st (source: personal)

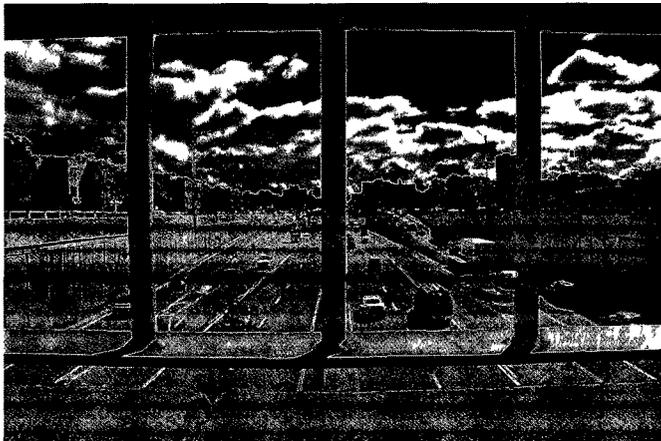


Figure 31 View of the Décarie looking south, from Dupuis st (source: personal)

Chapter Three: Planning Montreal today

When Quebec officially became a Welfare State during the ‘Quiet Revolution’, the province underwent a series of reforms, resulting in a *much-thickened* government apparatus. Hence, Montreal has become of an unequaled complexity and its number of public institutions has reached unlikely proportions compared to most ‘world cities’.⁴⁹ Indeed, most developed countries are today undergoing a process of simplification of government structures, towards more efficient management and administrative cost reduction, by opening parts of the public system to the private sector. Recently in Quebec however, the trend appears to be the opposite; faced with problems, new institutional entities are created to solve them.

Does this mean Montreal is having to ‘catch up’ again? The fragmentation of government’s responsibilities, in the form of private-public partnerships is only starting to appear, and mostly in the Health sector where projects have been developed in public-private-partnerships (PPPs). It is the case for the *Centre Hospitalier de l’Université de Montréal* (CHUM) and the *Centre Universitaire de Santé McGill* (CUSM) and also increasingly for long-care treatment facilities (*Ressources Intermédiaires*). This has not however reached the transportation sector yet.

This chapter will examine the different issues, — social, political and administrative, — which are today relevant to the matter of infrastructural renewal in Montreal. As hinted briefly in the Decarie chapter, the administrative boundaries of the Decarie are thought to act against forming a cohesive body of citizens interested in its renewal. The complexity of Montreal’s politico administrative boundaries will therefore be explained in the first section, historically and contemporarily. The second topic is the one of public consultation, again a process that is found inefficient to deal with large-scale developments such as urban infrastructure, for its process and ‘timing’. The third part will look at the status of master planning in Montreal, which finds itself in a state of ‘fragmentation’ and ‘vagueness’, this resulting in the inability establish a ‘common vision’. The last section will analyze a relevant case study to the understanding of the Décarie’s issues: the Turcot Exchange, a project which aroused major controversy recently in Montreal.

⁴⁹ Pierre Delorme, *Montréal, Aujourd’hui et Demain: Politique, Urbanisme, Tourisme*, (Montréal: Liber, 2009), 9.

3.1 ‘One island, one city’

Montreal has been struggling with inter-municipal conflicts since the middle of the 20th century, when its size grew to a level that imposed the consolidation of basic services together. The city faced logistic problems in relation to its fragmented landscape of multiple municipalities. Unlike most other Canadian cities, such as Toronto for example, Montreal struggled with the task of amalgamating its municipalities, in and outside of the island. This division has since been inhibiting a possible collective vision for greater Montreal.

Attempts to unify Montreal as one City have been made several times in the past, with the most recent one close to being successful. Historically, there are two main events which might have acted as ‘counters’ to a possible successful unification. That is, the “One island, one city” project in 1957, and the creation of the Montreal Urban community (MUC) in 1970.

The Drapeau’s administration in 1957 proposed to unify the island, with the powerful slogan “One island, one city”. Despite from being a conceptually pleasing idea, realistically it only increased the already existing polarization between the suburban and the urban region of Montreal, already emphasized by Montreal’s geography — of being an island. The mayor wasn’t hiding his beliefs — he did not support any structure that wouldn’t recognize Montreal’s preponderance over the suburban area.⁵⁰ He was however defeated that year and the Montreal Metropolitan Corporation (MMC) was created in 1959. It is under this legislation that *Horizon 2000* was initiated.

In 1970 however, the “One island on city” project was partly realized through the creation of the MUC. Despite a lot of resistance from the municipalities, the need to combine some of the basic services, such as sewers, aqueducts, firefighters, police, public transport,⁵¹ and so on was needed, but the fact of applying this concept solely to the island resulted in contributing again to the polarization. This project sparked future conflicts, both within the island and between the MUC and the suburbs, the latter benefitting from some services offered by Montreal, but not having to pay for them. The financial aspect became the main source of discord between the municipalities, and still is to this day.

In 2000 however, things were set to change: mayor Pierre Bourque was determined to reform the system and amalgamate all of Montreal’s municipalities. His idea was however not favored by many of his co-workers, who thought it to be

⁵⁰ André Lortie, *The 60s: Montreal Thinks Big*. (Montréal: CCA, 2004), 87.

⁵¹ Jacques Benjamin, *La Communauté Urbaine de Montréal: une réforme ratée* (Montréal: Aurore, 1972), 17.

an insurmountable task, but Bourque was a fighter, and he gained the support of other cities willing to change as well, Quebec, Hull and others. The MMC was created in 2001. The model adopted was the one of 27 boroughs, 18 being the existing suburban ones, and 9 on the island, made from regrouped municipalities. This reduced the number of elected representatives drastically, from 290 to 94. Apart from solving the fiscal unbalance between urban and suburban Montreal, one of the objectives of the ‘new city’ was to create a strong urban pole, at the scale of Quebec, but also of North America and the World.⁵² The law 170 planned also the formation of ‘transition committees’ to assure that the mergers were being done respectfully of the existing conditions.

In 2003 however, the Liberal Party is elected in Quebec, and Bourque loses the elections in Montreal to Gerald Tremblay. During the campaign, Tremblay made sure to gather on his side all the former municipalities unsatisfied by the mergers. As soon as elected, the liberal party instigates another law, granting the merged municipalities to adhere or not within the ‘new city’. Thus this is how many municipalities decided to go back to their original status. Since it was agreed that the municipalities should not go back completely to their autonomy, another structure was created, the *Conseil d’agglomération*, which resembles the former MUC. This new structure, supposedly planned to be ‘light and democratic’, became instead a platform for conflicts, and even required another structure to be added in 2008, the *Secretariat de Liaison*, made for the sole purpose of information inquiries of the 15 reconstituted municipalities.

In retrospect, it appears to many Montrealers that what happened in 2003 was a step taken backwards. Indeed, the suburban-urban conflicts are found to be tenser than before, while the situation returned to its original status: the one of *status quo*.

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3.2 Public consultation

The process of public consultation in Montreal is quite recent. In fact, it emerged in response to the unregulated phase of development that took place post-60’s. The first structure designed to accomplish such task was created in 1978 by the Quebec Government, and entitled the *Bureau d’audiences publique sur l’environnement (BAPE)*. Around that time was also instigated a legislation providing citizens the right to information and self-expression on new developments. Even though the idea seemed flawless, politicians did not allow such granted rights without restrictions; ‘Montreal’s special charter’ subtracted

⁵² Pierre Delorme, *Montréal, Aujourd’hui et Demain: Politique, Urbanisme, Tourisme*, (Montréal: Liber, 2009), 30

from the law the obligation to consult citizens for modifications to the *Plan d'Urbanisme*.⁵³

The entity assuring this function has changed names and structure many times between 1978 and 2003, some more successful than others. The analysis will focus on the most recent structures. After the *Sommet de Montréal* in 2002, reforms are made to the consultation process, following recommendations and the *Office de Consultation publique* is created. Largely inspired from the former BAPE, the Office stipulated that it was an independent entity, with a president not within the public function and that it had to consult citizens for modifications to the *Plan d'Urbanisme*. In 2003 however, the chart is amended again, excluding the office from assuring that role.⁵⁴ Instead, the boroughs can choose to have a consultation through the *Office*, or conduct their own directly. This is how many important cases that should have been treated by the Office were exempted from it.

Griffintown (figs. 36, 37) is one of the most controversial examples. The urban renewal project of the developer DeVimco covered 1,2 million sq.ft. This represents an entire neighborhood, and while such a massive project should have been treated by the *Office de consultation Publique*, the borough decided to conduct the consultation directly. This was controversial since the city was involved 'personally' in the project, therefore a biased actor, but was chairing the meetings.

Yet, it seems as if the process has the appearance of being democratic, but the added exceptions *in fine print* deviate that assumption. Unsurprisingly, it is being criticized extensively today, especially when it comes to large-scale projects concerning a great number of individuals.

Public consultation for infrastructure projects

Large-scale infrastructural projects are bound to be contested: their vast physical imprint affects many citizens, businesses, and the city more generally. In relation to those projects, another more fundamental issue is found to act against a successful consensus, and that is the late timing in the project's development. As Mario Gauthier explains:

In fact, by intervening late in the decisional process, the process developed by the BAPE favors the expression of conflicts, oppositions and even controversies. Moreover, they confine the public in a

⁵³ Yves Archambault, 'Les Hauts et les bas de la consultation publique à Montréal', in *Montréal, Aujourd'hui et Demain: Politique, Urbanisme, Tourisme*, Éd. Pierre Delorme (Montréal: Liber, 2009), 78.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 82.

reactive position, which contributes to polarize positions and isn't propitious to the elaboration of consensual solutions.⁵⁵

Indeed, the dialogue is directly un-eased by the fact that citizens react to an already underway project. It is a backward process to design a proposal, knowing it will not meet the citizens' demands. If they were to be consulted prior to the establishment of a proposal, then would the process possibly evolve much more smoothly, and in a consensual agreement?

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3.3 Montreal's many master plans

In Montreal, there are many levels of institutions working simultaneously on transportation schemes. The STM, AMT and the MTQ represent respectively the City of Montreal's Transit Society, the Metropolitan region of Montreal's Transportation agency (owned by the Quebec government), and the Provincial Minister of Transports. Yet, transportation plans are also found within the City of Montreal and the MMCs plans.

In fact, it is hard to dissociate infrastructure planning from urban planning, the two being intrinsically connected in the urban context. This has been recognized by political entities: in 2002, the *Rapport Bernard* was published, a document specifically prepared to help shaping the new directions of the municipal apparatus following the *mergers*. The report noted that no efficient and successful transportation system could exist, without a metropolitan common vision sustaining it.⁵⁶ This triggered in 2004 the elaboration by the MMC of the *Projet de Schéma Métropolitain d'Aménagement et de développement* (PSMAD) but also, by the City of Montreal, the *Plan d'Urbanisme* and *Plan de Transport*.

Projet de Schéma Métropolitain d'Aménagement et de développement

The PSMAD is a master plan encompassing the entire urban region, just like *Horizon 2000* was, and it is meant to reflect the so-called 'common vision'. The scheme presented in 2004 has however been rejected and is being drawn again presently. Among the many reasons for this, here is one example.

The plan meant to solve the issues of sprawl and protection of agricultural land. The technique adopted was to implement a strict set of regulations, that would basically coerce the suburban municipalities to adopt a similar density model as

⁵⁵ Mario Gauthier, "La planification des transports et le développement durable à Montréal : quelles procédures de débat public pour quelles solutions intégrées ? », *Flux* n° 60-61, (2005): 32.

⁵⁶ Pierre-Yves Guay, 'Le Projet de Schéma d'aménagement et de développement: un échec', in *Montréal, Aujourd'hui et Demain: Politique, Urbanisme, Tourisme*, Éd. Pierre Delorme (Montréal: Liber, 2009), 42.

the one of Montreal. Aside from being well intentioned, this strategy is however simplistic and inflexible: suburban areas cannot be remodeled with a simple regulation.

Other regulations promoted densification in the island, and a reduction of development in the suburban areas. It is not surprising that the plan did not please the suburban municipalities, as development is a crucial aspect of their revenues in Quebec. In fact, one of the great challenges of a 'common vision' lies in the calculus of the property tax. In Quebec, it constitutes for 66% of the municipalities' incomes, compared to 35% in Canada and 21% in the United States.⁵⁷ The dominance of this type of tax influences the mayors to encourage development in their area, perhaps at the stake of other externalities such as environment and sprawl.

Plan d'Urbanisme

The *Plan d'Urbanisme* of Montréal, adopted by the municipal council during the meeting of November 22nd, 2004, is the reference document in terms of intervention on the territory. It presents a vision for the renewal and development of the territory on a 10 year timeframe.⁵⁸

This plan, drawn in 2004, is made of a series of objectives, guidelines and extremely ambitious proposals, such as a Tram line, the extension of metros, the removal of parts of highways, and so forth. It is inspiring, but unfortunately devoid of realism: as stated in the conclusion of the document, it will be used to seek Federal and Provincial support, and convince the Transportation Ministry to undertake their projects. It is in fact so ambitious that it can hardly be believed, especially with the set time frame of 10 years. This *unrealistic* nature is precisely the result of political strategy, in the midst of an unstable political climate. Planning expert Raphaël Fischler describes this strategy as political 'vagueness'.

This vagueness is a virtue in a turbulent environment. Politicians may claim that an official plan represents 'a social contract', but the twin needs numerous forces in balance at all times and to ensure reelection periodically make them weary of contracts that might bind them prematurely to certain decisions. From a politician's point of view, the freedom of choice afforded by most master plans is a strength rather than a weakness.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Ibid., 72.

⁵⁸ Micheal Applebaum, *Plan d'Urbanisme* (Montreal: Ville de Montreal, 2004)

⁵⁹ Raphaël Fischler, "What Sort of Problem in the Replanning of the Turcot Interchange?", *Montreal at the Crossroads: Superhighways, the Turcot and the Environment*. Éd. Pierre Gauthier (Montreal: Black Rose, 2009), 80

⁵⁹ MTQ's 2008–2012 Strategic Plan mission statement, URL: <http://www.mtq.gouv.qc.ca>

What can be understood from these two plans, is that they are far from attaining a 'common vision'. The greatest challenge still remains to be surmounted, and that is the one of establishing a collaborative platform between the city, the MMC, and the MTQ, the latter being ultimately the decider. The specific issues embodied in infrastructural renewal will be explained in the following section through the example of the Turcot Exchange.

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3.4 Infrastructural renewal: the example of the Turcot Exchange

The Turcot is located at the southbound of the Decarie expressway, and is a major intersection in the network: it connects Highway A-15 (north-south) and A-20 (east-west). Completed in 1967, it is made of an impressive number of elevated lanes crossing each other. The concrete 'jungle' is today alarmingly decaying, and has become a threat for the security of its users. (fig. ?)

There was recently a fierce controversy on the project proposed by the MTQ in September to renew the exchange. The plan of the MTQ was to simply rebuild the lanes on the ground with embankments, and demolish the elevated ones subsequently, while taking the advantage to add capacity. Unsatisfied by the proposal, groups of citizens, environmentalists and professionals gathered to oppose to the project. Here are some of the motives behind the project's rejection by one of the main groups: *Mobilisation Turcot*

The government plans to build a new highway that will be built right alongside the existing elevated structure. While nobody denies that the Turcot Interchange is in need of repair, the proposed lower structure will have a negative impact on public health, on our environment and on the socio-economic development of the South-West. Not only does this project lack vision, it will endanger Montrealers' health and well-being. We therefore demand that the government return to the drawing board, to develop a plan that will have a beneficial impact on the environment and on the population's quality of life.⁶⁰

Citizens are blaming the lack of vision of the Government: this is a holistic critique. It does not blame solely the poor technique of un-building and rebuilding, but suggests a much deeper set of issues, anchored in the *approach* of the MTQ. Does this mean that after 40 years, we stand 'at the crossroads'⁶¹ again? Among the many underlying causes of such fundamental disagreement, the issue of 'top-

⁶⁰ Mission statement, *Mobilisation Turcot*, 2008 (<http://www.mobilisation-turcot.info>)

⁶¹ 'Montreal at the crossroads' is the title of two books: one in 1975, in response to the unregulated development in Montreal in the 70's, and one in 2009 in response to the unsustainable infrastructural developments today.

down' approach and the imprecise character of 'sustainable infrastructure' will be discussed.

Top-down approach

As it stands today, the province controls most large-scale developments in and outside the island, ranging from transportation plans to the location of Institutions. The Quebec's *Loi sur l'aménagement et l'urbanisme* grants the plans of the province superiority over local and regional plans. Hence, if parts of Montreal's master plan are found to conflict with provincial objectives, the former will be modified.⁶²

This appears for many as the main source of debate: how can an entity far removed from local issues decide on projects having extensive local impacts? It seems as if history is repeating itself. The province had the same powers in the 1960's for urban highway construction, and the projects completed without the influence of the *Service d'Urbanisme* are critically assessed today. The even greater problem nowadays, is that the Montreal's urban planning department isn't part of the elaboration of the plans at all. This disconnection obviously polarizes the city and province again. Without collaboration between the two, a decent consensus can hardly be found.

Furthermore, the MTQ is a team of engineers and not the multi-disciplinary team needed to undertake a project of 'sustainable infrastructure'. It is known today that urban infrastructure design "requires the experience of the local resident and the art of the designer as well as the science of the engineer to become a positive contribution to city-building."⁶³

Sustainable infrastructure?

One of the main 'visions', collectively acknowledged by all parties, and officially stated by the MTQ, is to "ensure the sustainable mobility of people and goods throughout Québec via safe and efficient transportation systems that contribute to the province's development."⁶⁴ But what exactly does that imply? Sustainability is one of the broadest terms used extensively today in a series of different contexts and fields. Indeed, the different parties do not have the same conception of 'sustainability', as the rejection of the proposal has shown.

⁶² Québec government, *Loi sur l'aménagement et l'urbanisme*. (Québec: L.R.Q., 2009), A-19.1

⁶³ Raphaël Fischler, "What Sort of Problem in the Replanning of the Turcot Interchange?" in *Montreal at the Crossroads: Superhighways, the Turcot and the Environment*. Éd. Pierre Gauthier, (Montreal: Black Rose, 2009), 85.

⁶⁴ MTQ's 2008–2012 Strategic Plan mission statement, (<http://www.mtq.gouv.qc.ca>)

On the other hand, infrastructure is also a multifaceted topic: views on transportation vary depending on who discusses it. For a given highway segment, the nearby resident will be affected by the direct health and environmental impacts, while the driver will be by the traffic; the government will look for efficiency and flow, while the city will see an opportunity to integrate public transit. The list of diverging views could go on, but it shows the extent of the issues, and the large number of actors concerned by it. Again, the ubiquity of the issues of sustainability in relation to infrastructure requires a trans-disciplinary platform, something that isn't part of the actual governance system.

In the unfolding of the Turcot case, the City strongly opposed to the project, supporting the citizens, and requested the MTQ to draw a new proposal. After the presentation of the new project a year later, city and citizens were still not satisfied, but it then became a matter of either delaying the project again, or accepting it. The mayor decided to go with the proposal with minor revisions.

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Conclusion to chapter

As pointed out throughout this chapter, the renewal of infrastructure in urban environments is a generator of conflicts. Its many contradictions only emphasize the issues of coordination and collaboration between governance structures, but also concerns a great number of actors simultaneously. Concluded from the Turcot example is the need for a trans-disciplinary platform, in order to establish a consensual dialogue, thus once and for all defining that 'common vision'.

The different topics discussed all contribute to different extents, at the obfuscation of that 'vision'. The struggle to unify Montreal as one single city, is seen to enhance urban-suburban polarization, thus working against mutual agreements. The public consultation system and its questioned democracy refrains the dialogue between citizens and governing entities. The fragmentation of the bureaucratic entities, and the multiplication of master plans congests the system, preventing coordination. In addition, the unstable climate of the political realm diverts the realism of the plans. Ultimately, it is found that the most fundamental reason for an unreached consensus, in the case of urban infrastructural renewal, lies in the 'architecture of governance', with a hierarchy not reflecting the nature of the conflict spatially. (e.g. the MTQ deciding on matters that concern the city)

Hence, what if we were to decentralize the system, rather than attempting never-endingly to find cohesion? Perhaps there is no possible consensus at the scale of the urban region? Could PPPs be implemented on fragments of infrastructure,

therefore reducing the extent of conflicts, fragmenting them in smaller sets of issues? These questions form the basis of the *approach* chosen in regard to the Decarie Expressway, in several ways, as it will be detailed in the subsequent chapter.

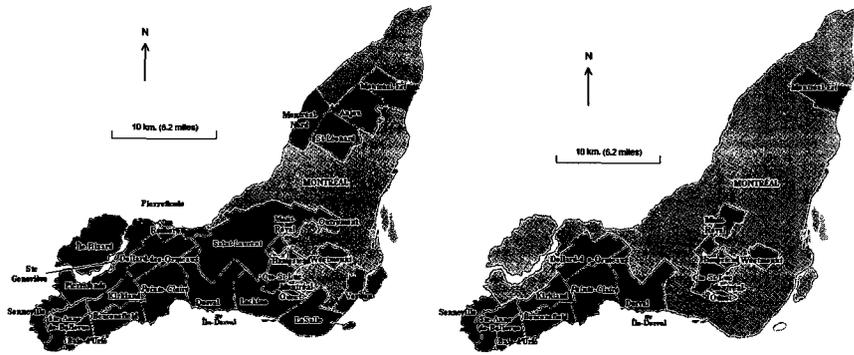


Figure 32 Montreal in 2001, and 2006, before the mergers and after the de-mergers, (source wikipedia.)

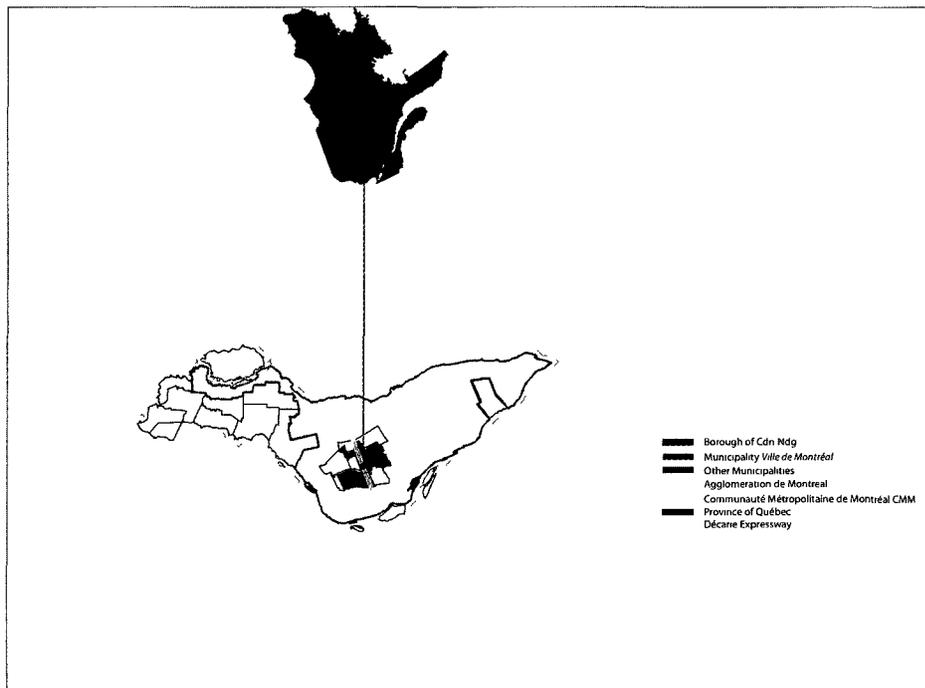


Figure 33 Complexity and ownership

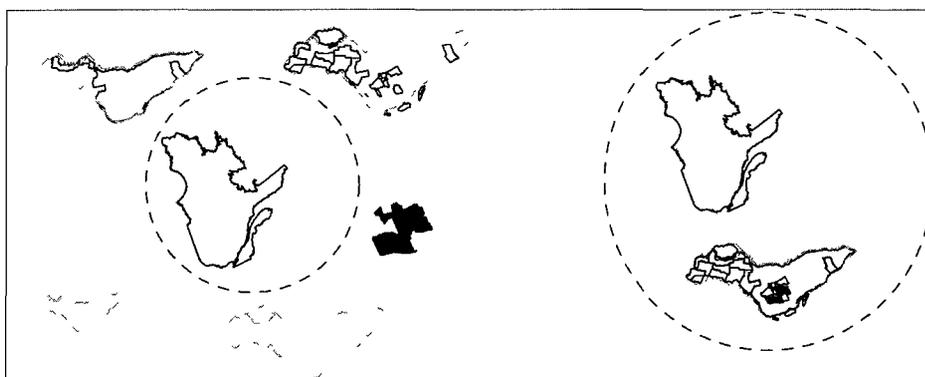


Figure 34 Decentralization

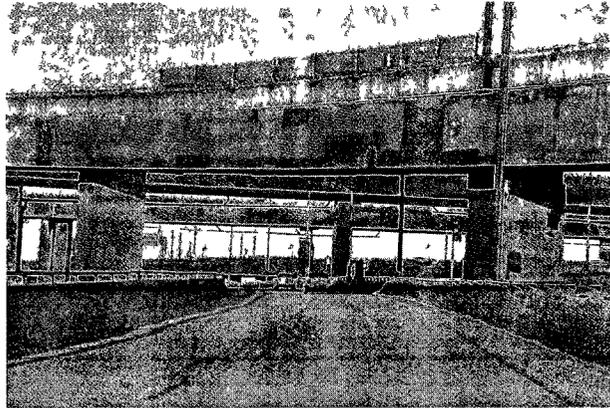


Figure 35 Turcot aging (source: personally)

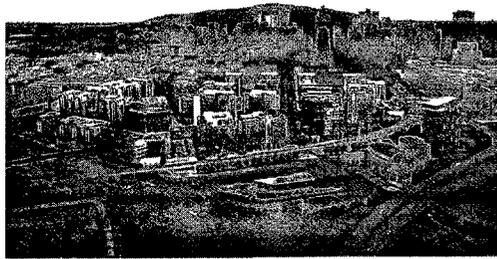


Figure 36 Griffintown (source: D'Amico)



Figure 37 Griffintown protests april 28 2008 (source: CPTP - Council of Urban Planning and Construction professions)

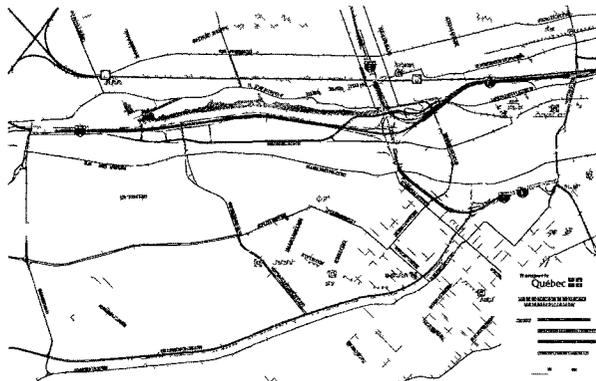


Figure 38 Plan of the Turcot Exchange project (source: Ministère des Transports) <http://www.turcot-ous.qc.ca>

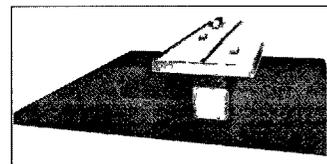


Figure 39 former structure (source: MTC)

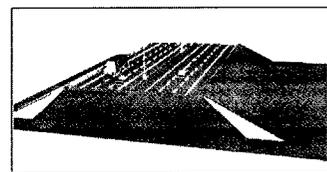


Figure 40 former structure (source: MTC)

Chapter Four: Urban Planning Revisited

This thesis seeks to analyze the intricacies which lie between urban development and its planning structure. Urban development is a phenomena shaped by many diverging forces, – social, economical, political, – which find themselves constantly in conflict in the process of city-making. The planning structure is traditionally meant to add ‘cohesion’, or attempt to regulate development, following principles based on a ‘common vision’.

As discussed in the previous chapters, urban infrastructure lies in the very midst of these conflicts. Its inherently complex and contingent nature requires a close collaboration between the different actors implicated in the process of planning infrastructure: governments, professionals, and citizens, as the example of the Turcot Exchange shows. Thus, infrastructural renewal becomes a topic that combines many critical issues of urban development and its planning structure; it is an ideal point of intersection between the various socio-spatial and politico-economic issues. How, then, can this complex issue become translated and embodied as an architectural exploration? Considering the complexity and multidisciplinary aspect of these issues, how can they be narrowed to typical architectural design methodologies?

The intent is rather to fashion a new kind of *approach* to urban planning, one tailored to inform development in a specific – but critical – way. The ‘project’ thus becomes the design of an *approach*, rather than the design of a project *per se*. It is an approach that seeks to tackle some of the barriers of infrastructural renewal in Montreal today, but also respond to the Decarie, historically and contemporarily, based on the analysis of the two first chapters. The *approach* can thus be roughly summarized by four main guiding principles: ‘Social survey’, ‘plurality’, ‘decentralization’ and ‘cross-programming’.

Social Survey

Partly based on some of the unresolved issues of the public consultation system in Montreal, notably its late timing in the design process, the *approach* here takes ‘public consultation’ as its first step, however in a different format, one perhaps more “scientific”: the on-site Survey.

Physical surveys are the first steps of any architectural project; tracing maps, taking dimensions, evaluating the ground, and so forth. For some reason, *social* surveys are not a common strategy prior to design. A survey is an “investigation of

the opinions or experience of a group of people, based on a series of questions”.⁶⁵ While a building concerns a limited number of individuals, a project ambitiously tackling a site the size of the Decarie concerns an enormous number of individuals, in various diverging ways. In this context, it is believed crucial to undertake this preliminary task, in order to understand accurately the main issues from a local and ‘un-biased’ point of view.

The typical process of public consultation, in Montreal, is a passive system: the citizens need to manifest their opinions from their own initiative, this possibly leading to a biased source of information, – in most cases, only a very small portion of the population actually attends city meetings. Conducted in November on a series of blocks, the *social survey* was intended to interview citizens working in businesses along the edges of the Decarie, but also allow them to write their opinions on the questionnaire prepared. (The details of the *Survey* are found in an Appendix).

The survey has revealed to be an extremely informative tool for understanding the population’s needs and opinions in a broader manner. While most of the questions were aimed at understanding who lives or work on the Decarie, what are their opinions on the quality of architecture, the sound and pollution, the many billboards and so forth, the last question meant to know what the citizens would like to see happen on the Decarie in terms of its renewal. This became one of the starting points for choosing a plural approach, as it will be explained subsequently. While it was expected that the general public would adopt a negative attitude towards the Decarie, and that most citizens would like to see it covered, surprisingly, the majority of answers bent in the opposite direction. Most people were bothered by some of its *effects*; crime and graffiti, pollution, sound, lack of maintenance of buildings, but not so much by the *view* itself.

Plurality

The plurality of the approach is a crucial aspect of the project. The Decarie traverses many different neighbourhoods and areas, thus it cannot be considered as one single site. Furthermore, it is believed that in order to reflect an *approach*, rather than a defined design project, the projection of a series of possible outcomes will aid in defining an ‘unfinished’ state, thereby emphasising *process* over *product*.

By elaborating multiple approaches/projects, it also is intended to remove the designer’s ‘hand’: the research focuses on urban development and planning as

⁶⁵ Definition of Survey, Apple Dictionary, 2009

perhaps *independent* phenomenon from architectural design. Each proposed approach towards the Decarie does, of course, have a design component; it does not, however, lie in its style, whether an aesthetic expression or personal taste. Rather, each proposed approach/project is based on expanding existing programs. These latter conditions are found in the quotidian space of the Decarie, taking as central program the expressway itself, therefore aiming the projects towards its redevelopment in many different ways. The resulting forms, determined by amplifying and- or- mixing existing adjacent conditions, are precisely the so-called designs.

Additionally, as expressed in the conclusion of the historical chapter, the approaches/projects do not attempt to impose a new social context above the existing one, as it has, perhaps, been done in the past. The fact of implementing projects in ‘acupuncture’ is thus believed to be more responsive and respectful to the social constitution of the area, thus adding value and promoting *growth* which stems from *existing* assets, rather than *new* ones.

Decentralization

As mentioned previously, Montreal’s bureaucratic inertia is caused partly by the fragmentation of institutional structures, inhibiting a ‘common vision’ but also mainly due to the ‘ownership’ of transportation networks – the Government is managing all highways, even when they cross Montreal’s inner network. Hence, the approaches/projects take ‘decentralization’ as rule: the projects are defined along the lines of speculative ‘public-private-partnerships’. (In the project, it is being expressed through the narratives accompanying each project, speculating on a possible collaboration between city, citizens, developers, government, and so on.)

The morphology of the Decarie, in fact, offers a propitious ground for such types of relationships and collaborations. It’s ‘air rights’ could very well be seen to become available land, and its programmatic diversity offers unequalled possibilities. While the ‘partnerships’ are pure speculation, they aren’t however unrealistic in the present context: the idea of opening the Decarie to a the private sector is not a new one. Architect Luc Durand, several years ago made a proposal to cover parts of the Decarie, and had already ‘lined up’ a series of interested investors and developers. “Ideally, it would cost the state nothing. The land on top of the Décarie would have a sale price: it should be the exact price of building the cover.”⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Dominique Ritter, “Covering traffic” *The Front*, March 15, 1999.

This concept becomes expanded in the elaboration of the multiple approaches/projects, and interpreted in several ways, taking not only the above of the Decarie as possible 'private' property, but its edges, underground, 'sky', lanes, embankments, display panels, 'sky', and so on.

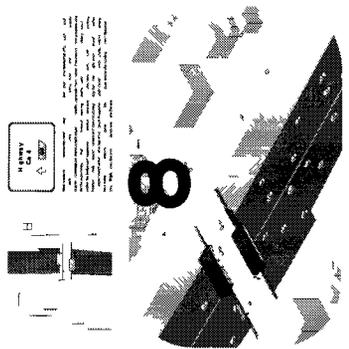
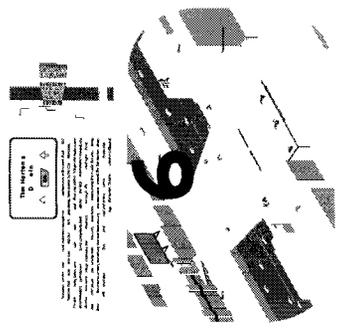
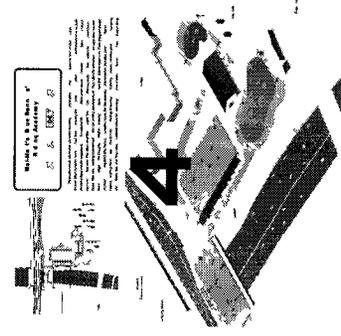
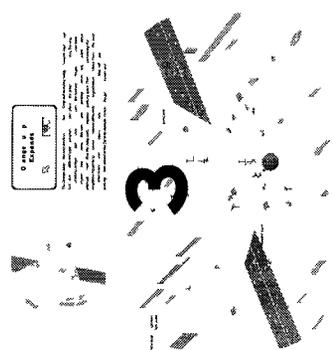
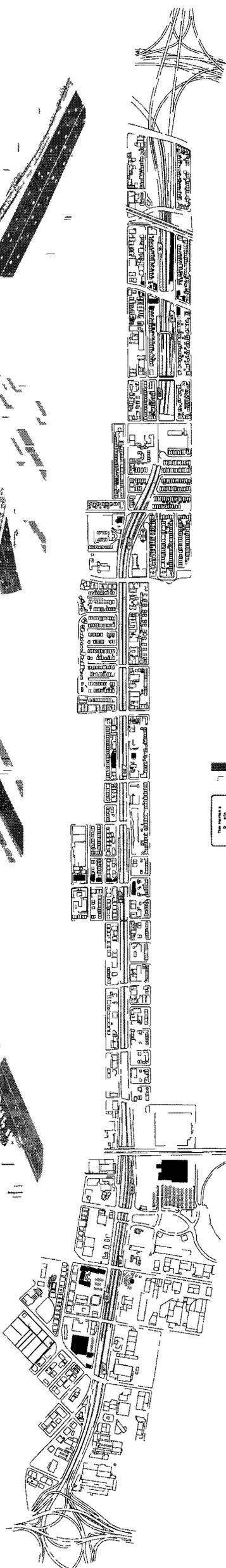
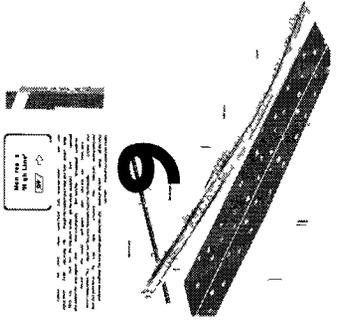
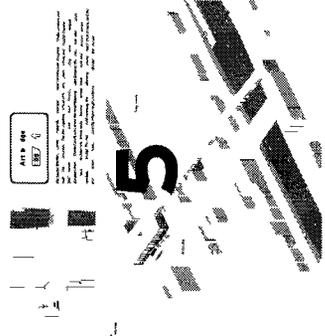
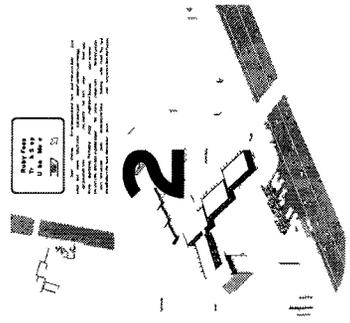
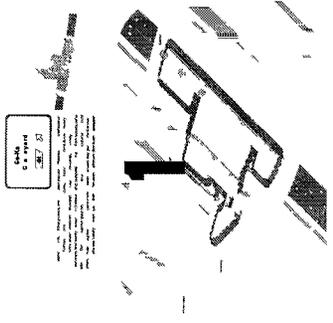
Cross-programming

The speculative elaboration of the projects, and its spatial exploration, is realized by 'cross-programming'. This concept is the *technique*, the spatial strategy chosen to draw the proposals, and is thus based on the previously detailed intentions. It is used in a functional, analytical, and 'objective' way, attempting to embody through the drawing the simple recombination of functions into a new whole, rather than recreating entirely new entities. Indeed, as Architect Bernard Tschumi states, "One can challenge cultural expectations through programmatic recombination's or 'cross-programming', but the question is then whether one is challenging them in a political or consumerist sense."⁶⁷ It is argued that, by reprogramming the Decarie from its constituent, found pieces – pieces perhaps otherwise underappreciated or under-utilized – an entirely new strategy of urban planning can be advanced, one that stitches together displaced fragments of the city into new, if not altogether uneasy, alliances.

⁶⁷ Enrique Walker and Bernard Tschumi, *Tschumi on Architecture: Conversations with Enrique Walker*, (New York: Monacelli, 2006), 19

Chapter Five: Mobilizing the Decarie: a 10-step program

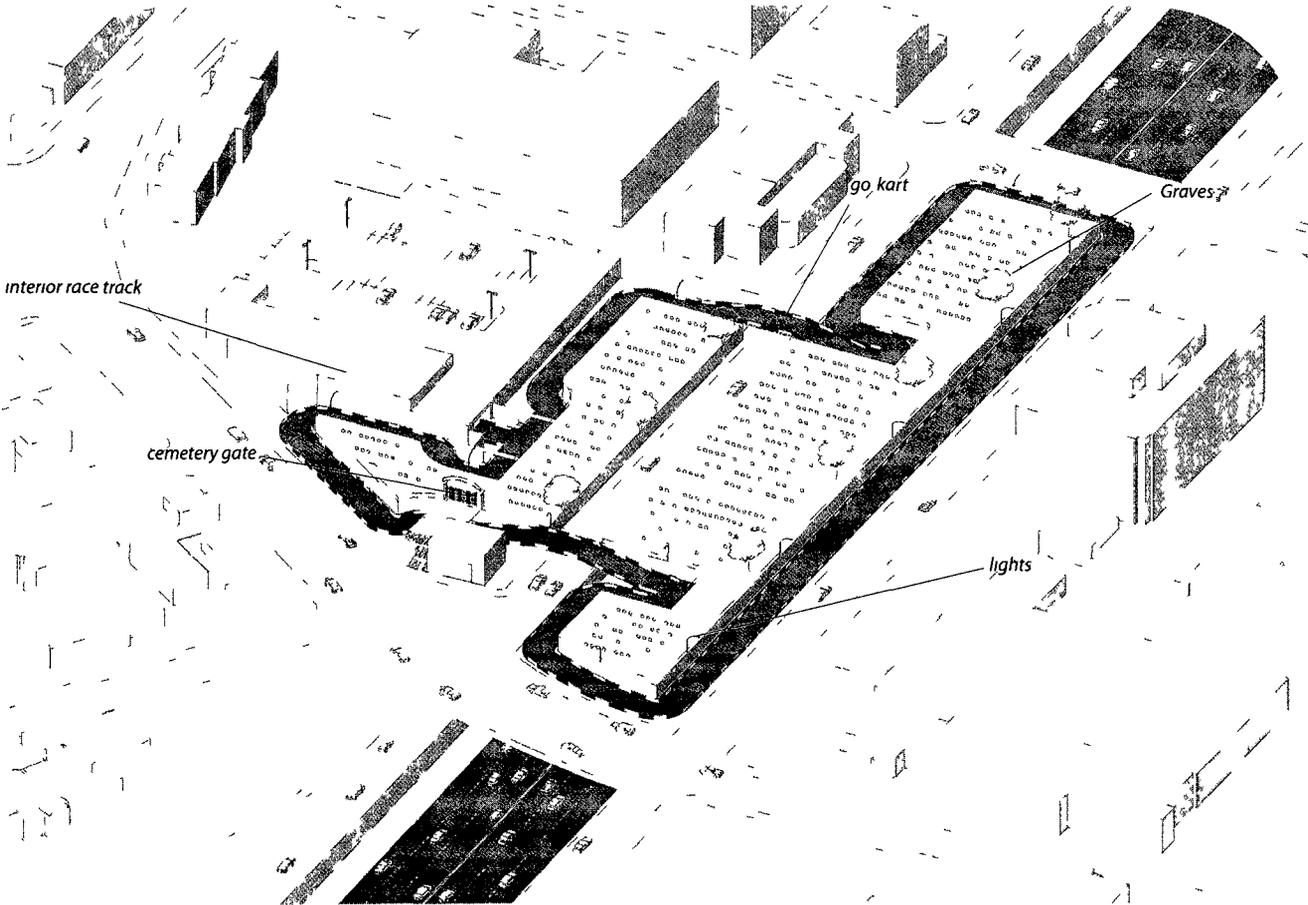
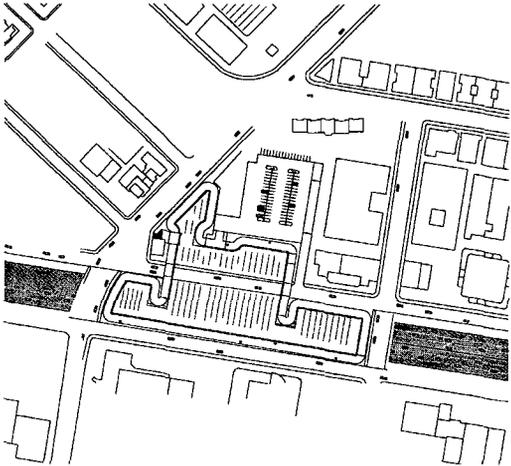
The following 'project' is thus a series of approaches/projects, located at different points on the Decarie. Each project is the re-combination of adjacent conditions through spatial and narrative 'cross-programming'. The Decarie is included in each of the proposals to different degrees, from physically to symbolically. It also has been attempted to tackle the issues of its renewal under as many angles as possible, from utopian to realistic. This range gives a speculative time-frame to the projects, suggesting their implementation in time, rather than all at once. The following pages are consecutively the 10 projects, the first page being the overall plan of the Décarie, with all the locations of the projects.

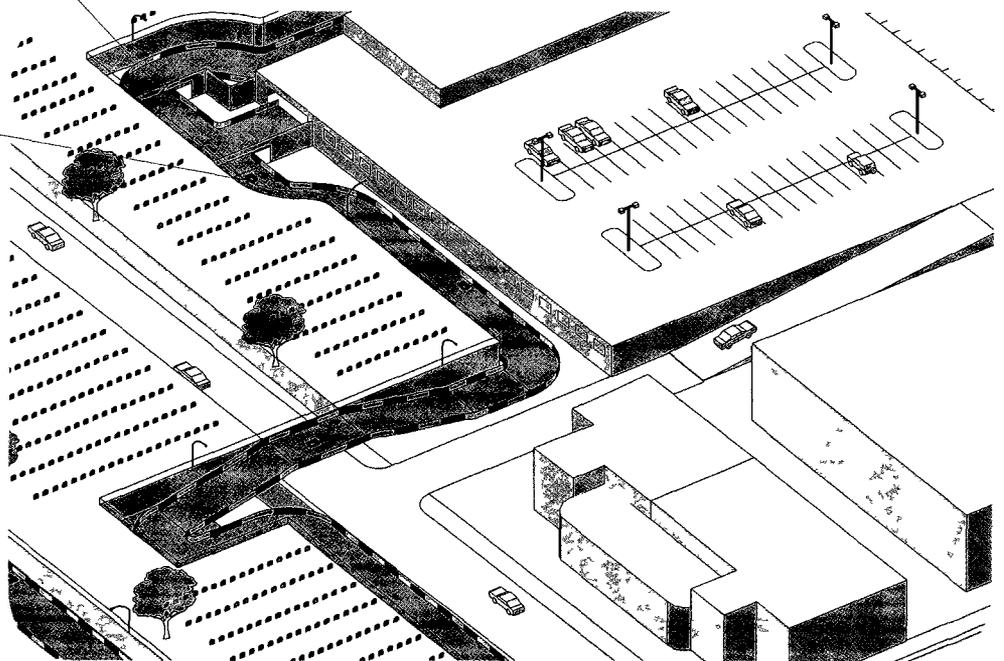
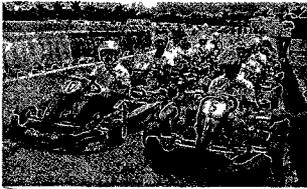
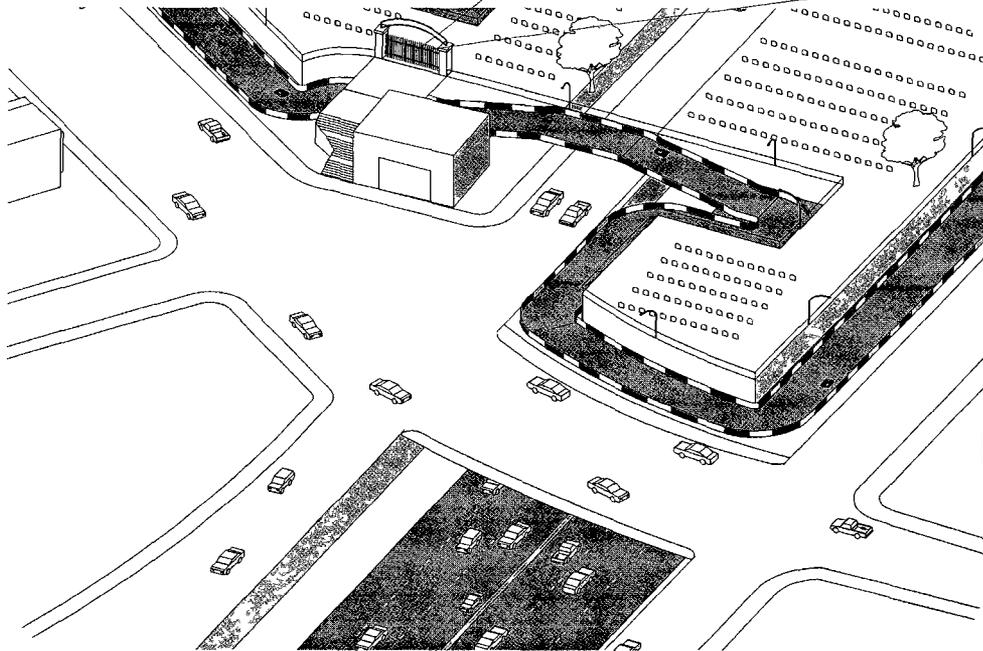


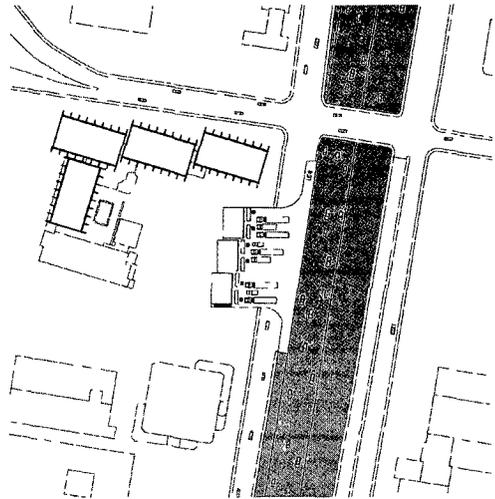
**Go-Kart
Graveyard**

01 ↗

Kart-O-Mania is an interior Karting course, one of the most popular in Montreal for its central location. Last June, Formula one pros came for a fun race during the Grand Prix. The Hirsh Baron Cemetery is one of the oldest Jewish cemeteries of Montreal. Like most City Graveyards, it is running out of space and empty land nearby is scarce. Kart-O-Mania wishes to expand their market from recreational to professional. Their direct outdoor space being the Decarie, they see it as a perfect opportunity to build an amazing huge racing track. Since the space inside the tracks is unused, they give it to the Graveyard, who was looking for empty space. Both parties agree to alternate their hours of operation.





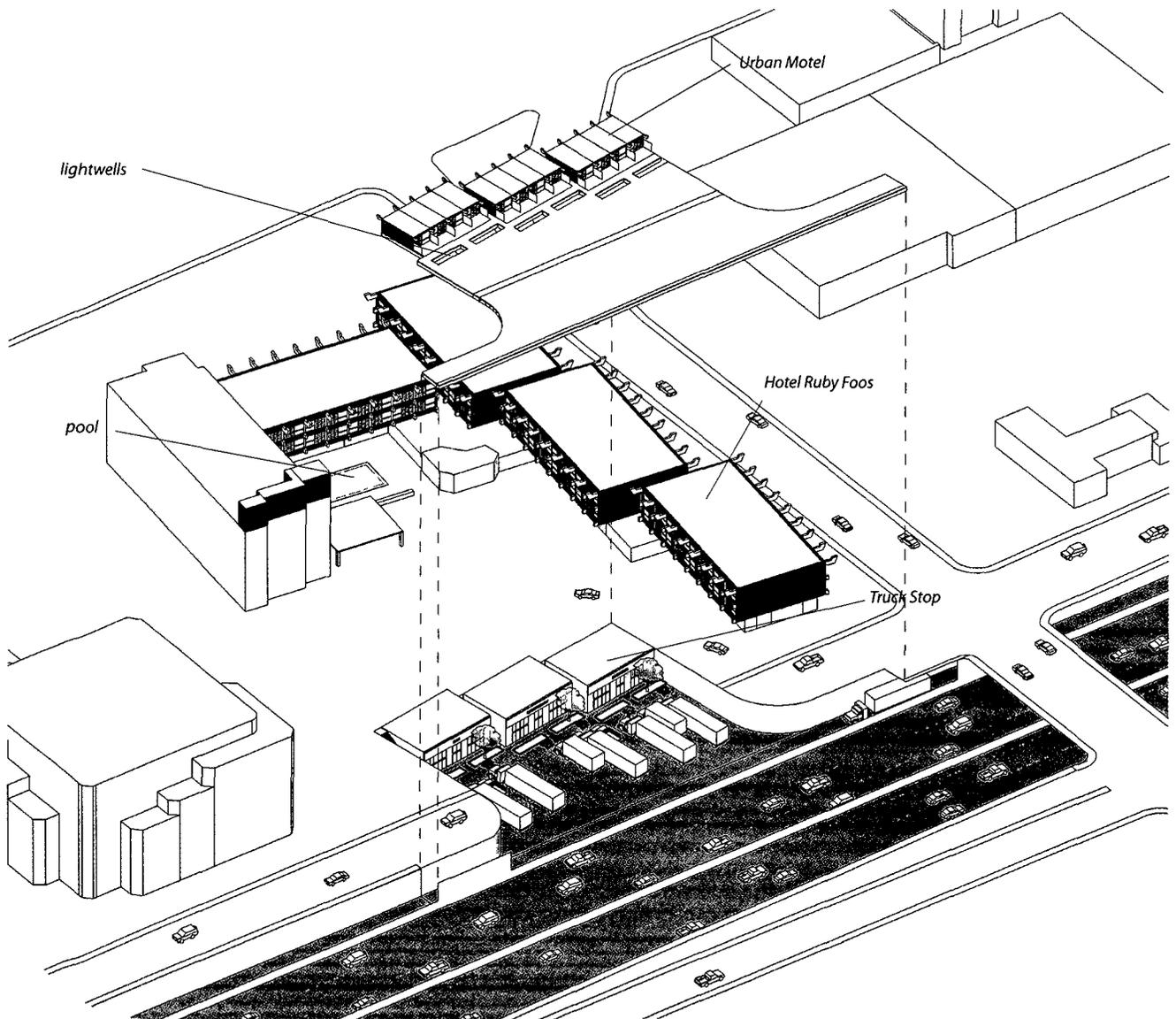


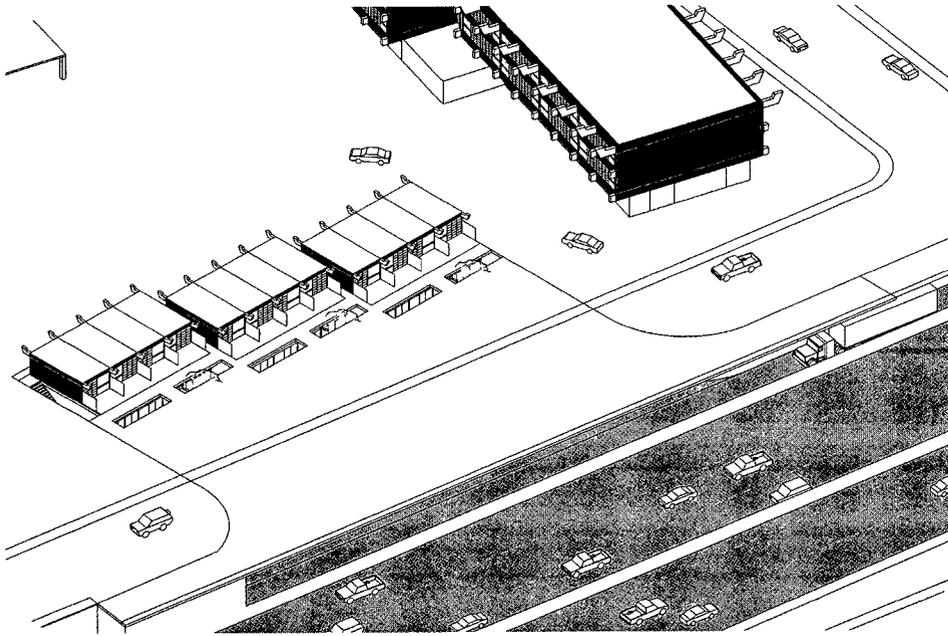
**Ruby Foos
Truck Stop
Urban Motel**

02

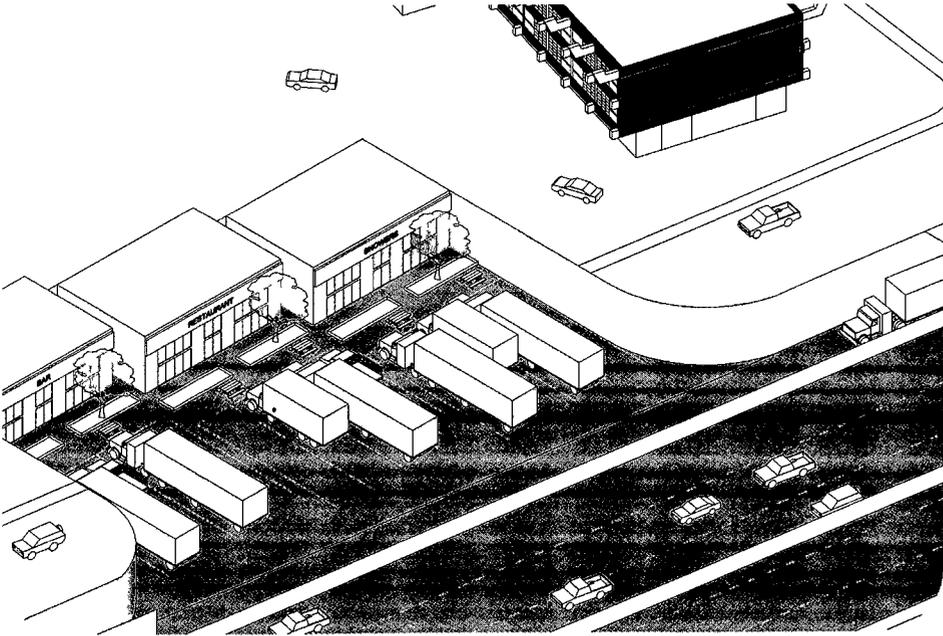


The actual hotel is located next to the former landmark and Chinese food restaurant Ruby Foos, from which it took its name. Its 'kitsch' oriental is style today part of Montreal's architectural heritage. Its design purposely turns its back on the Decarie, slightly set back from the edge, and with 'blind' walls facing the expressway. The hotel is not cheap as one might think because of its location, however the Decarie's effect does have negative impacts on the business. To compensate for this, the hotel decides to open a new section in the parking lot bordering the Decarie, by building an 'urban' motel. They think this will attract the 'truck' clientele for its proximity to the city core and its easy access from the Decarie.

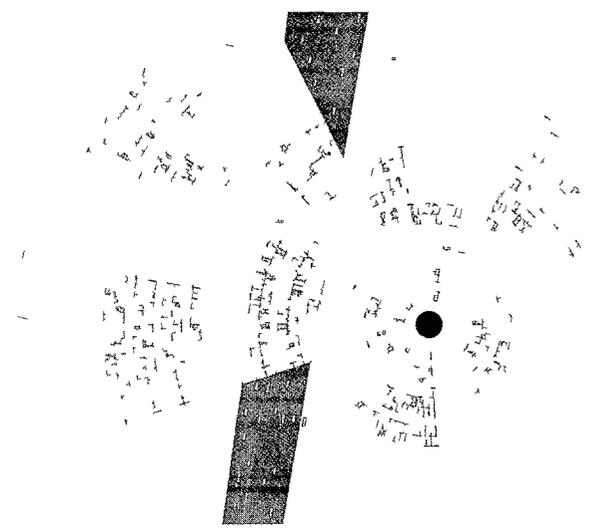




Urban Motel



Truck Stop

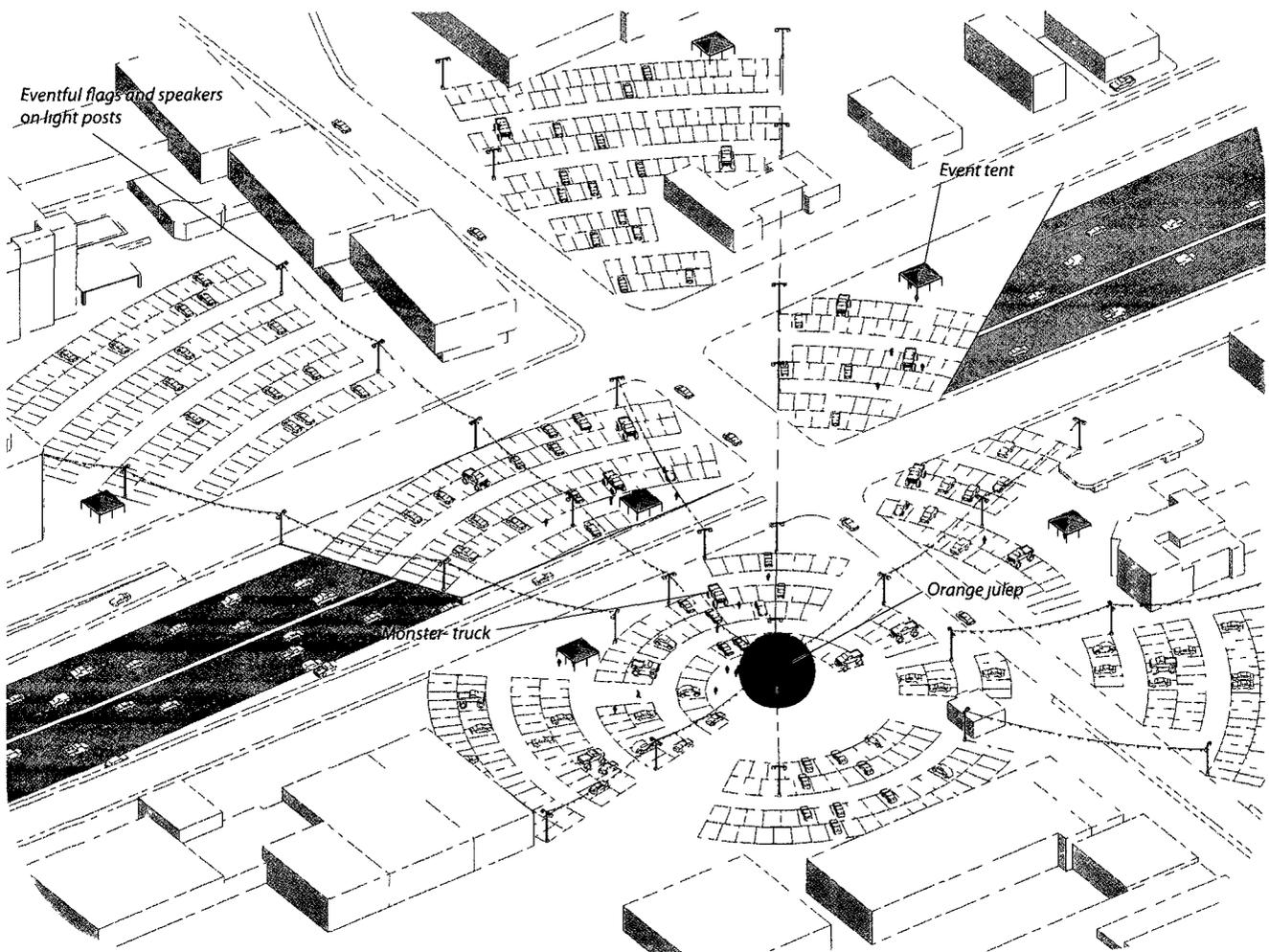


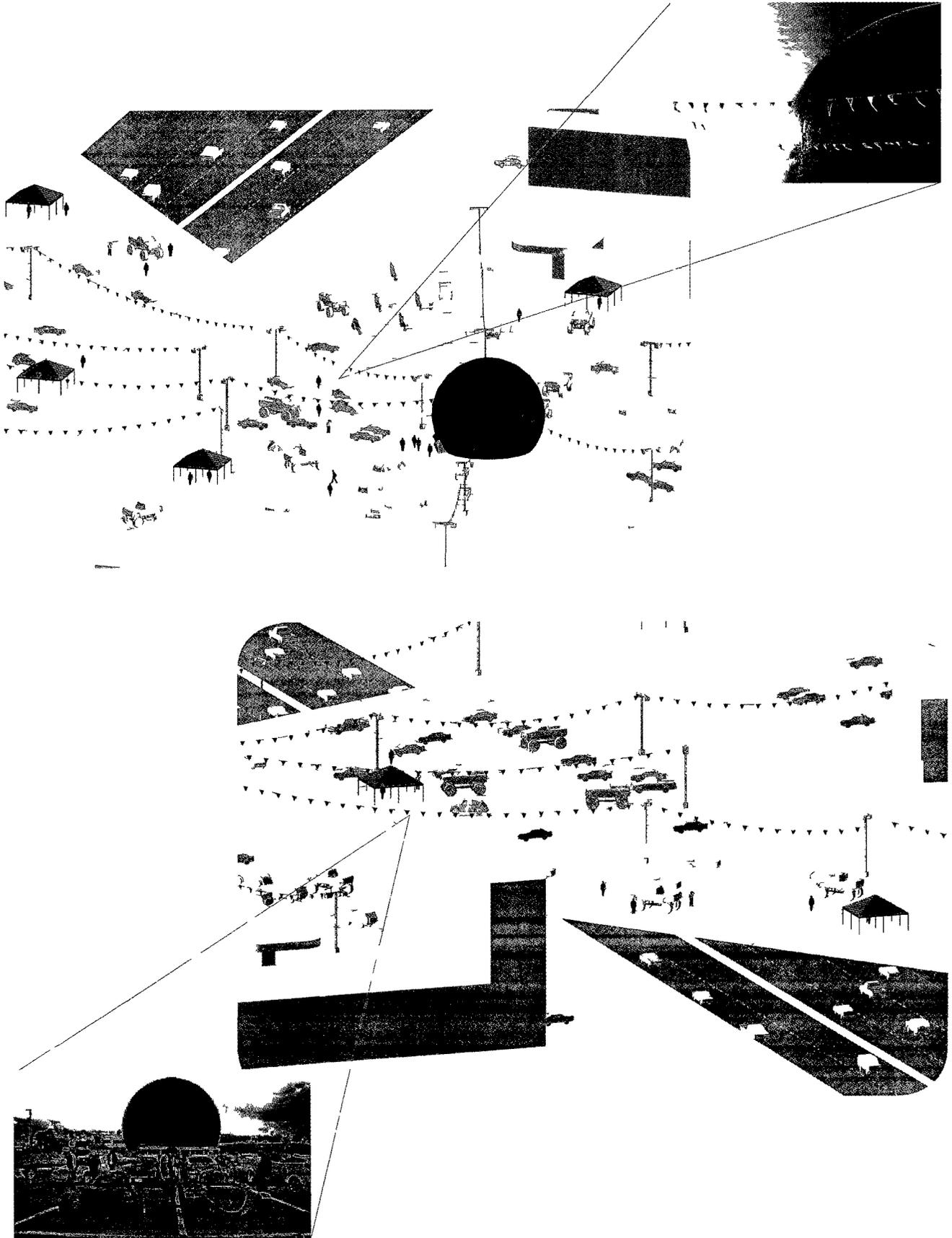
Orange Julep Expands

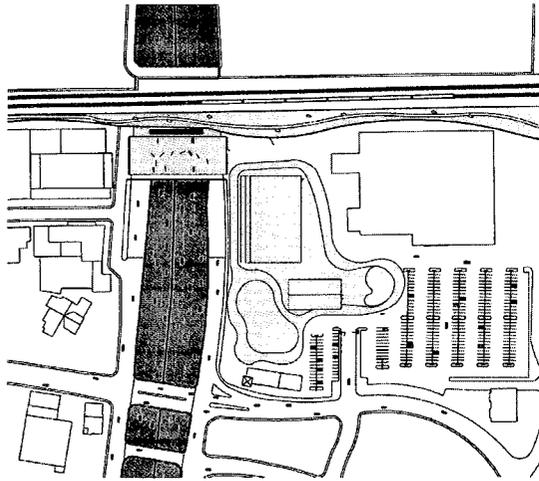


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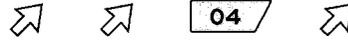
The Orange julep is the only landmark of the former 'Strip' still standing today. It however kept its popularity due to a different type of program that takes place at the Julep, not the one of eating hot dogs and drinking orange juice, but the 'showing off' of cars in the parking lot. People come all over from the region of Montreal to meet at this specific spot. The parking is however small, considering it wasn't planned for events, thus the Julep seeks to expand its parking space. They do so in convincing the neighbouring parking lot owners to repaint differently their organization and lease them to the Julep only when there are events. This opens up a whole new range of activities that will be possible with the parking surface added of the Decarie: markets, concerts, bigger trucks events, and so on.



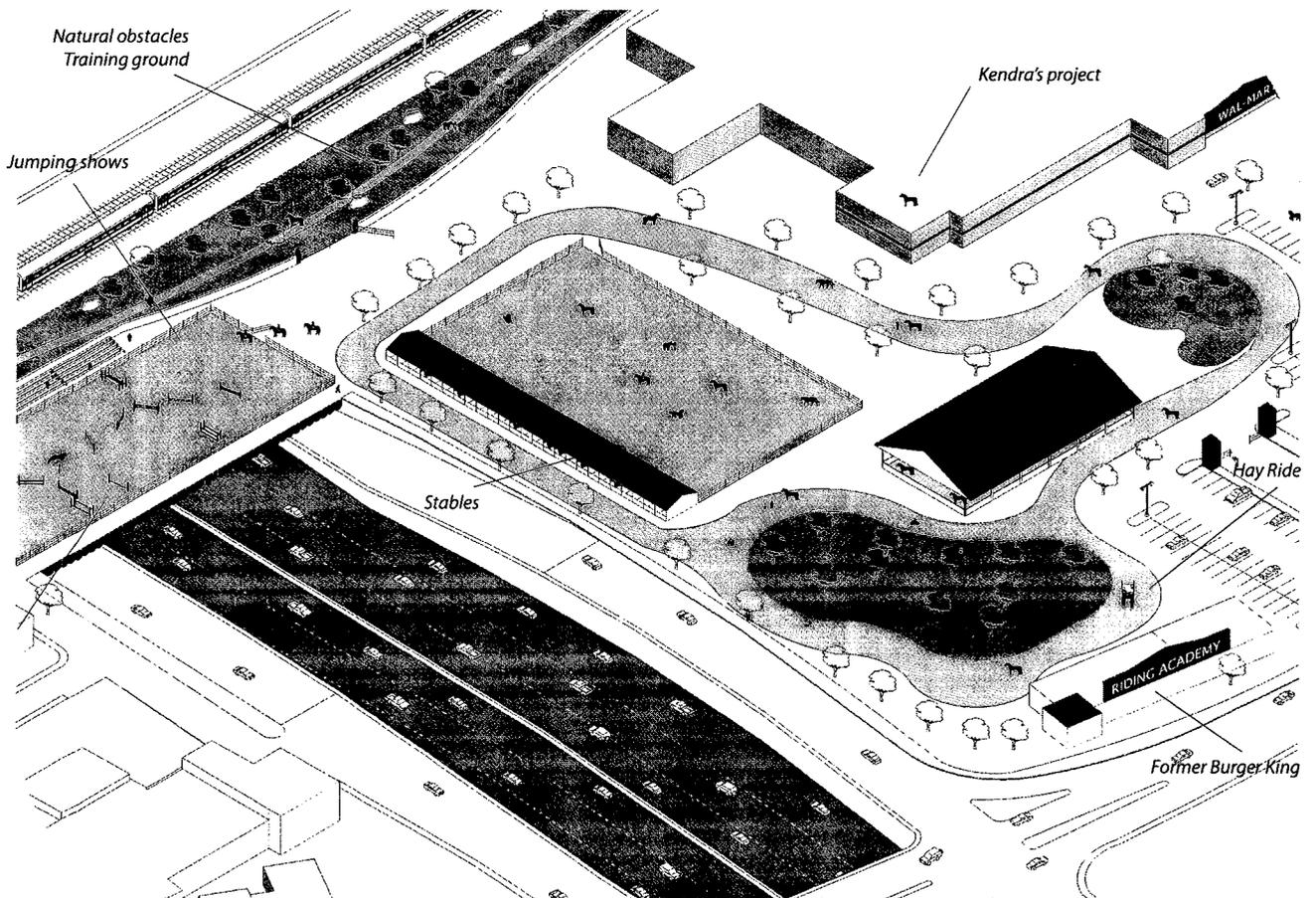


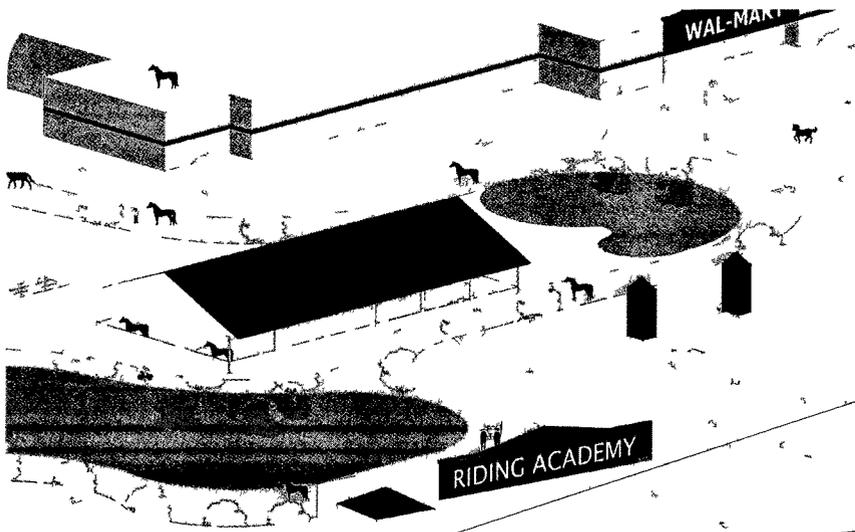
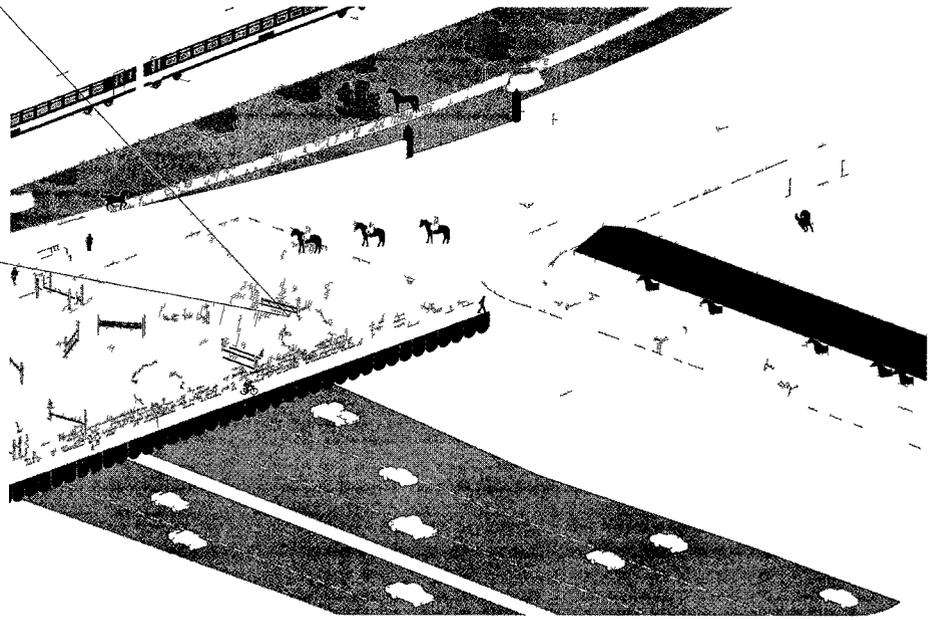
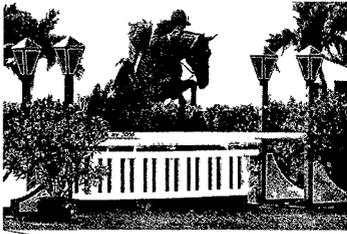


Wal-Mart's 'Blue Bonnets' Riding Academy

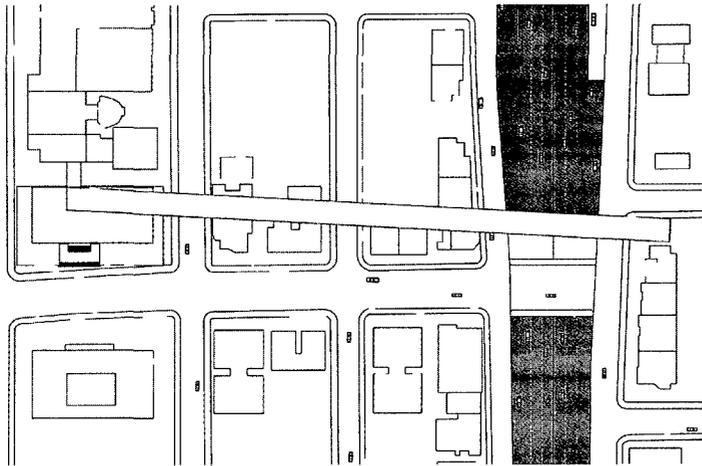


The 'Hippodrome de Montréal' declared bankruptcy in 2009 after the Provincial Government ended its support. The former 'Blue Bonnets raceway' had been in activity for 137 years. Future plans for the site's redevelopment include a massive housing development: it is forecasted that up to 5000 units could fit. Among the main barriers to redevelopment are however Wal-Mart and the adjacent 'Smart Centre', their layouts not being suitable for a neighbourhood. Wal-Mart feeling threatened by the upcoming development, they take the initiative to occupy their vacant land on the edge of the Decarie, as well as covering a section, to assure the citizens approval. Their programmatic strategy is to bring back the horses, a sensitive topic for the nostalgic Montrealers, but also diversify the 'horse activities', gearing them towards the family. The Riding Academy has training grounds, exterior and interior 'jumping show' fields, but also 'hay rides', a 'natural obstacles' training field, and rooms for classes in the former Burger King.



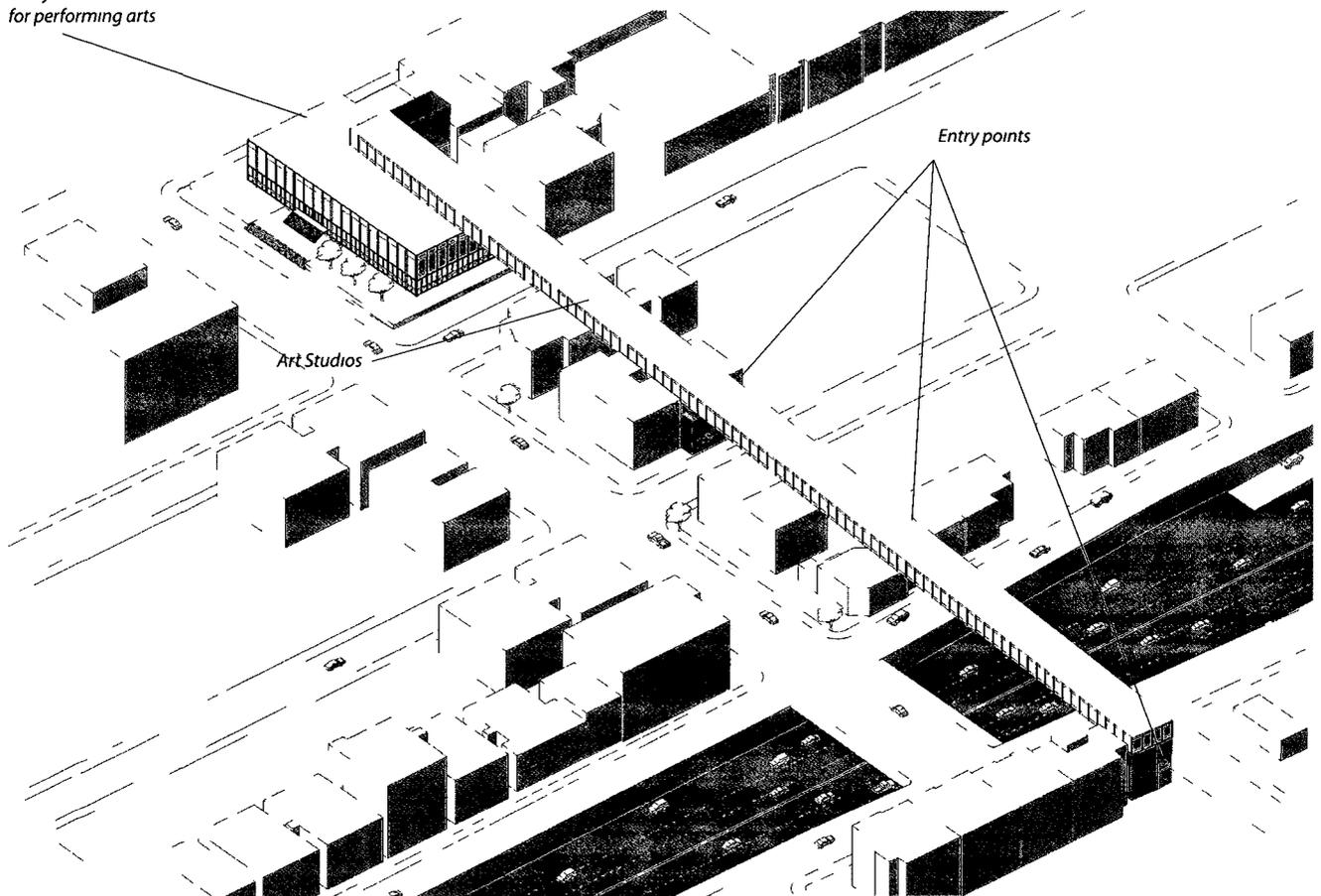


existing condition

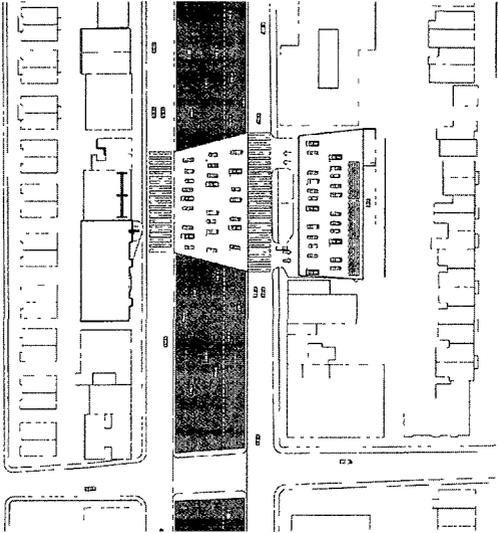
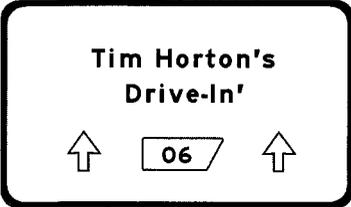


The Saidye Bronfman Centre is a magnificent example of Miesian architecture, designed by Phyllis Lambert and built in 1967. It comprises a Theatre, a gallery, a school of fine arts, a youth institute and a Yiddish Theatre. In 2007 however, they were forced to close the School of Fine Arts for lack of funding but also of space. Helped by a donation from M. David Azrieli, who owns the neighbouring Square Decarie, the Centre is now able to re-open its School. The architecture chosen seeks to honour the actual Centre by its style, and the gesture is meant to be a symbolic one: a bridge. This has a two-fold meaning, the one of allowing the young to reach their dreams, and the one to reconnect the Jewish community, whose neighbourhood has been divided by the Decarie.

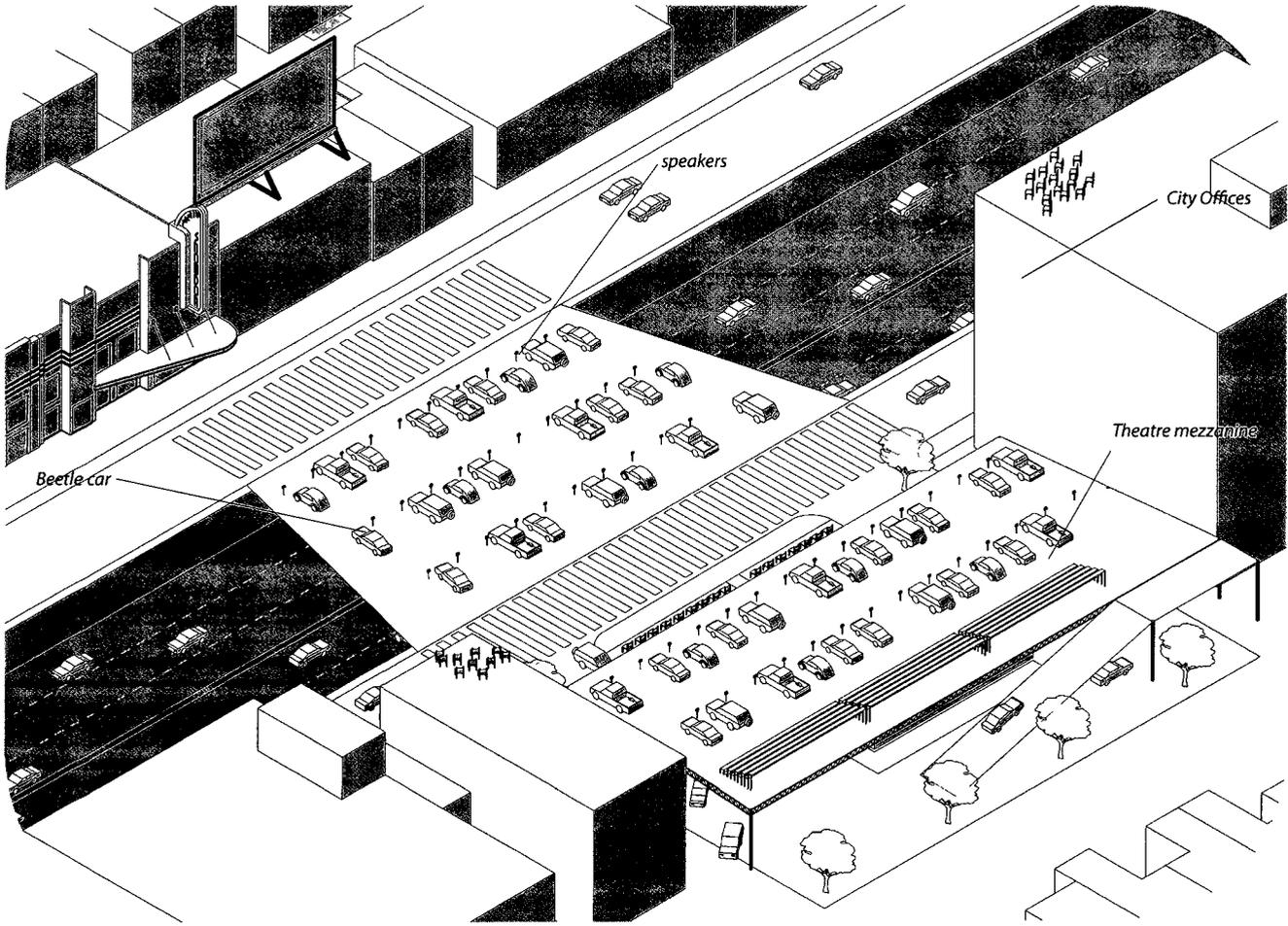
Saidye Bronfman Centre
for performing arts

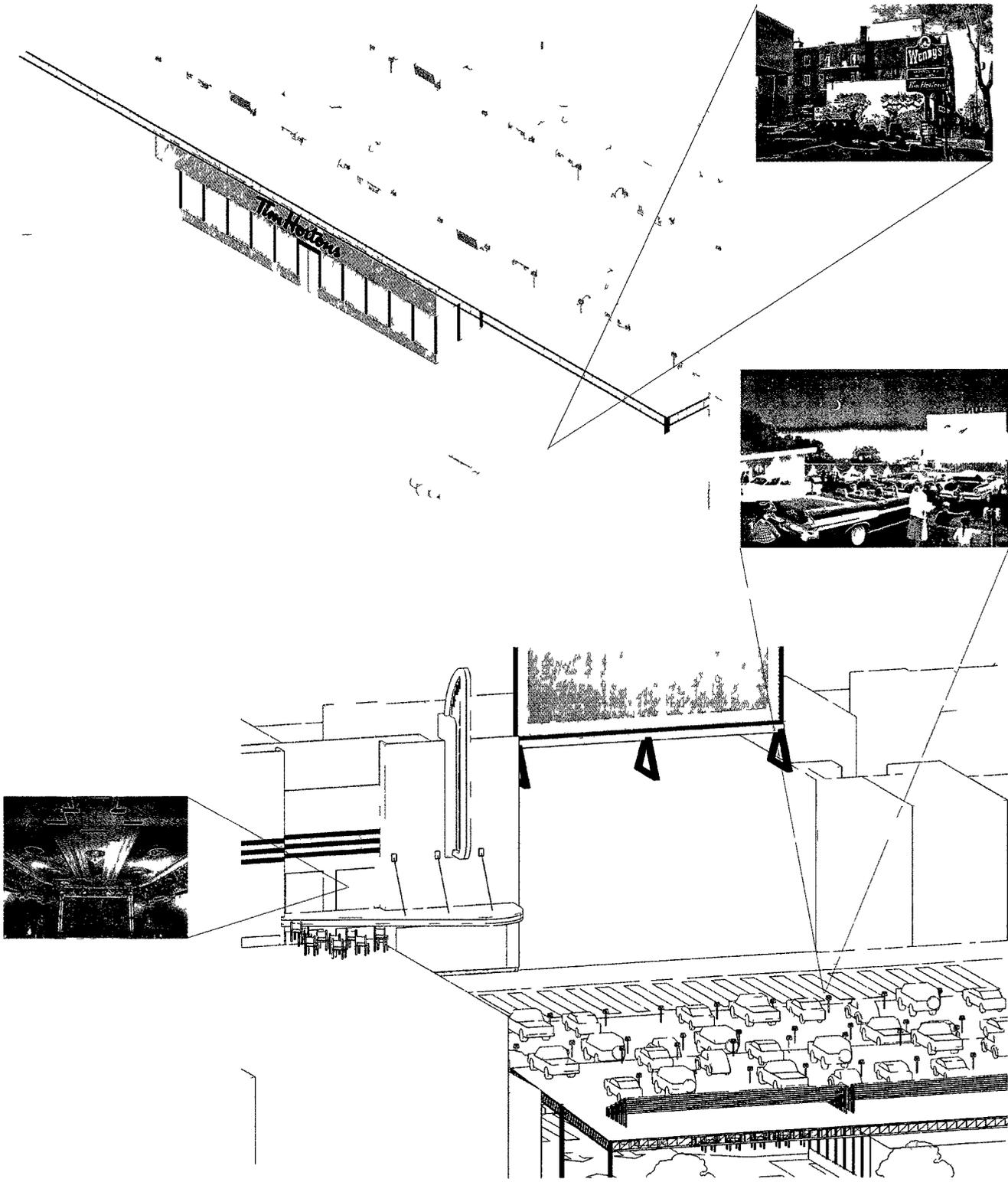


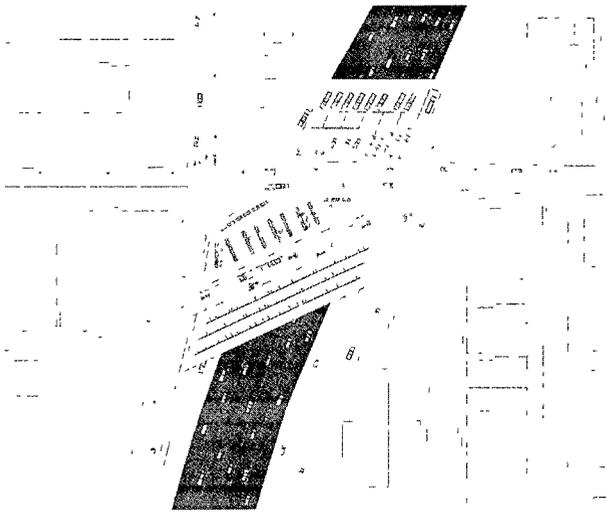




The Snowdon Theatre is one of the most notorious examples of Art Deco architecture in Montreal. Built in 1937, it however had to stop its activities in 1985 due to a lack of popularity. Now owned by the City of Montreal, the Theatre is not being taken care of: its façade is in a state of decay, and a floor was added through the main screen to accommodate a gymnasium for kids. Some complaints from the citizens on the lack of maintenance towards the collective architectural heritage, motivates the City of Montreal, whose borough offices are located right in front, to launch a pilot project in partnership with Tim Horton's, to raise funds for maintaining the façade, but also to bring back to life the cinema activity, something that has been missing in the area since it closed. The Tim Horton's drive-in facility will be used also to drive in the Theatre, located on its roof and across the Decarie, the screen being placed on top of the former Theatre, as if another billboard.



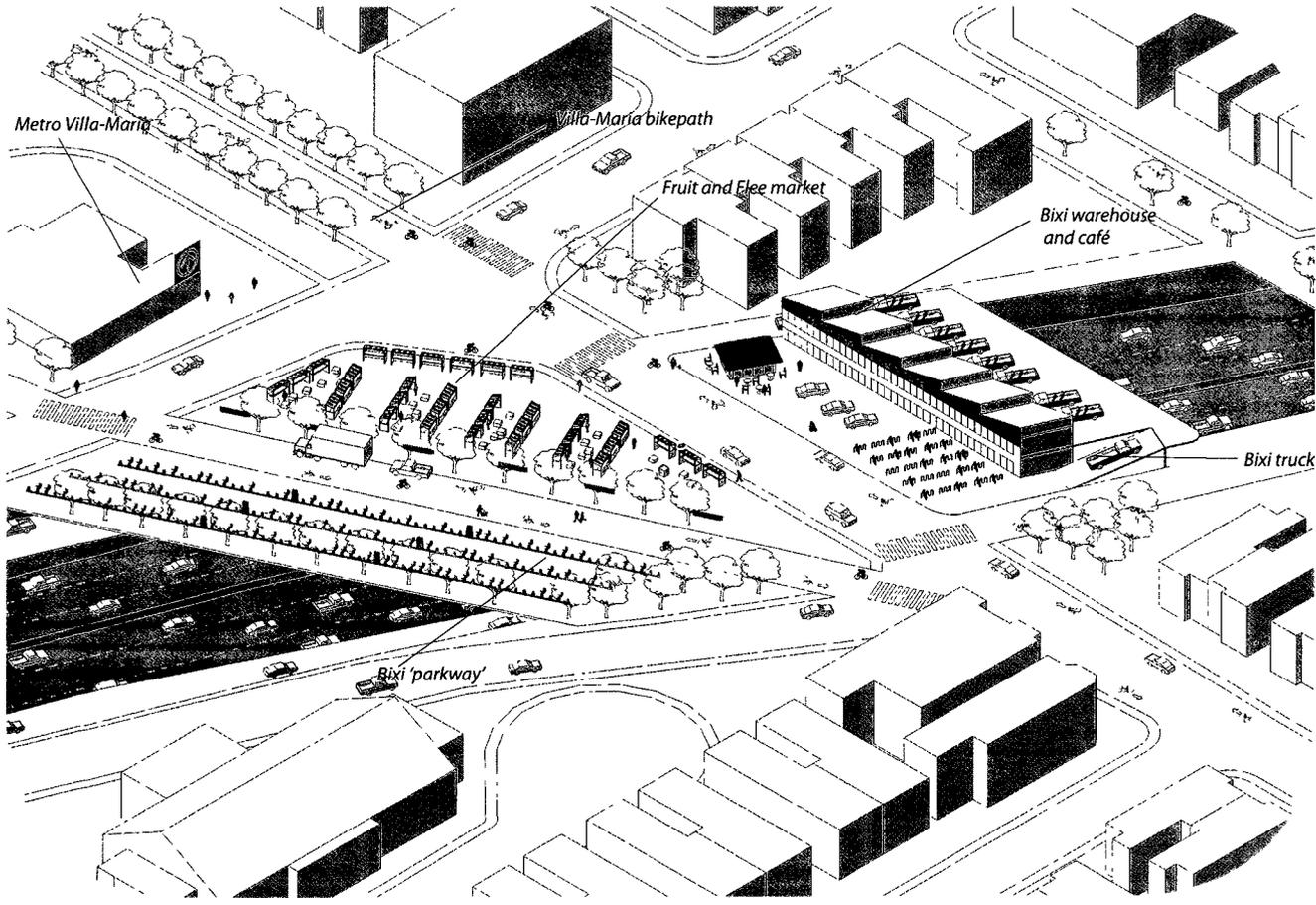


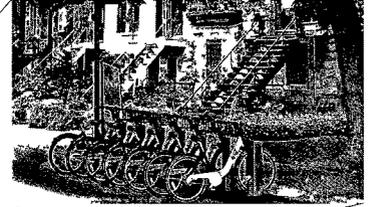
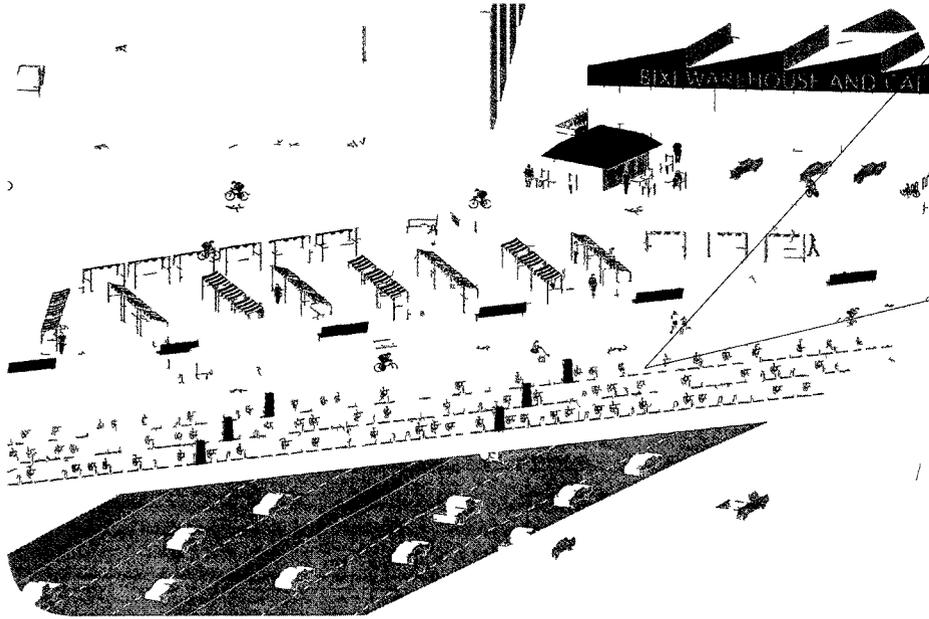


**Villa-Maria
Bixi Parkway**

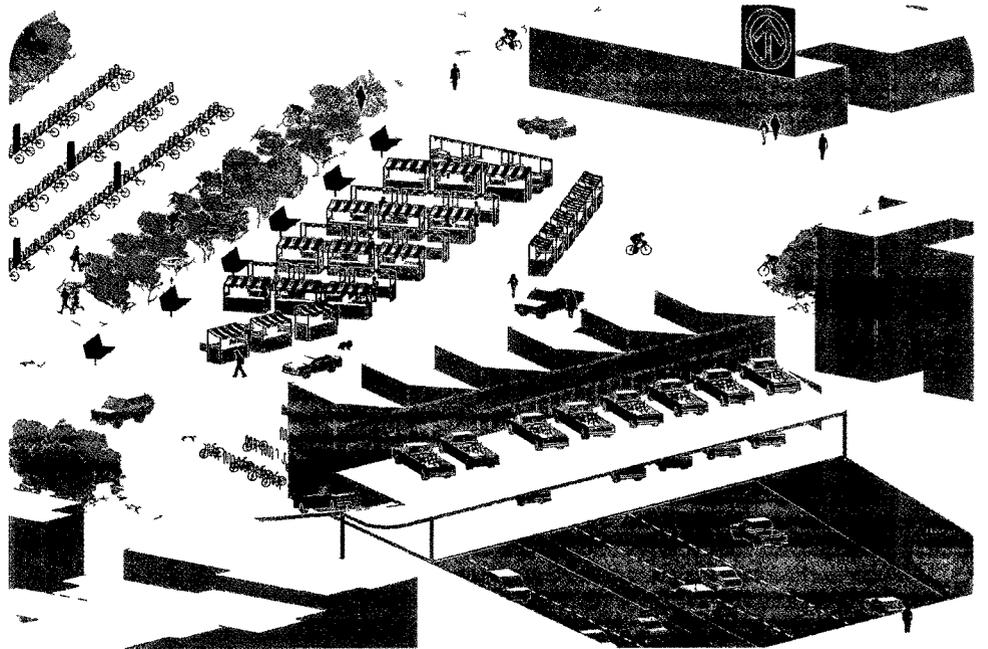
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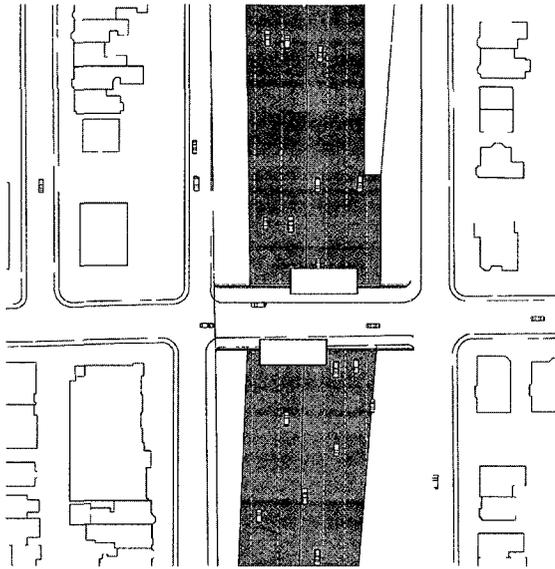
The neighbourhood of Notre-Dame de Grâce (NDG), located right on the west side of the Decarie is badly connected to the transit system, their only metro station being corner Monkland and Decarie on the East Side of the expressway. Recently when the City implemented their new public bicycle system (BIXI), they promised NDG that the Bixis would reach their neighbourhood, but it never happened, mainly because the crossing of Decarie was not bike-friendly enough. A consensus is finally met when the borough manages to convince the MTQ to widen the Villa Maria intersection to allow space for parking the Bixis and multiple bike paths. This allows at the same time to establish a commercial hub around the Villa-Maria metro station, now part of the neighbourhood rather than across from it.



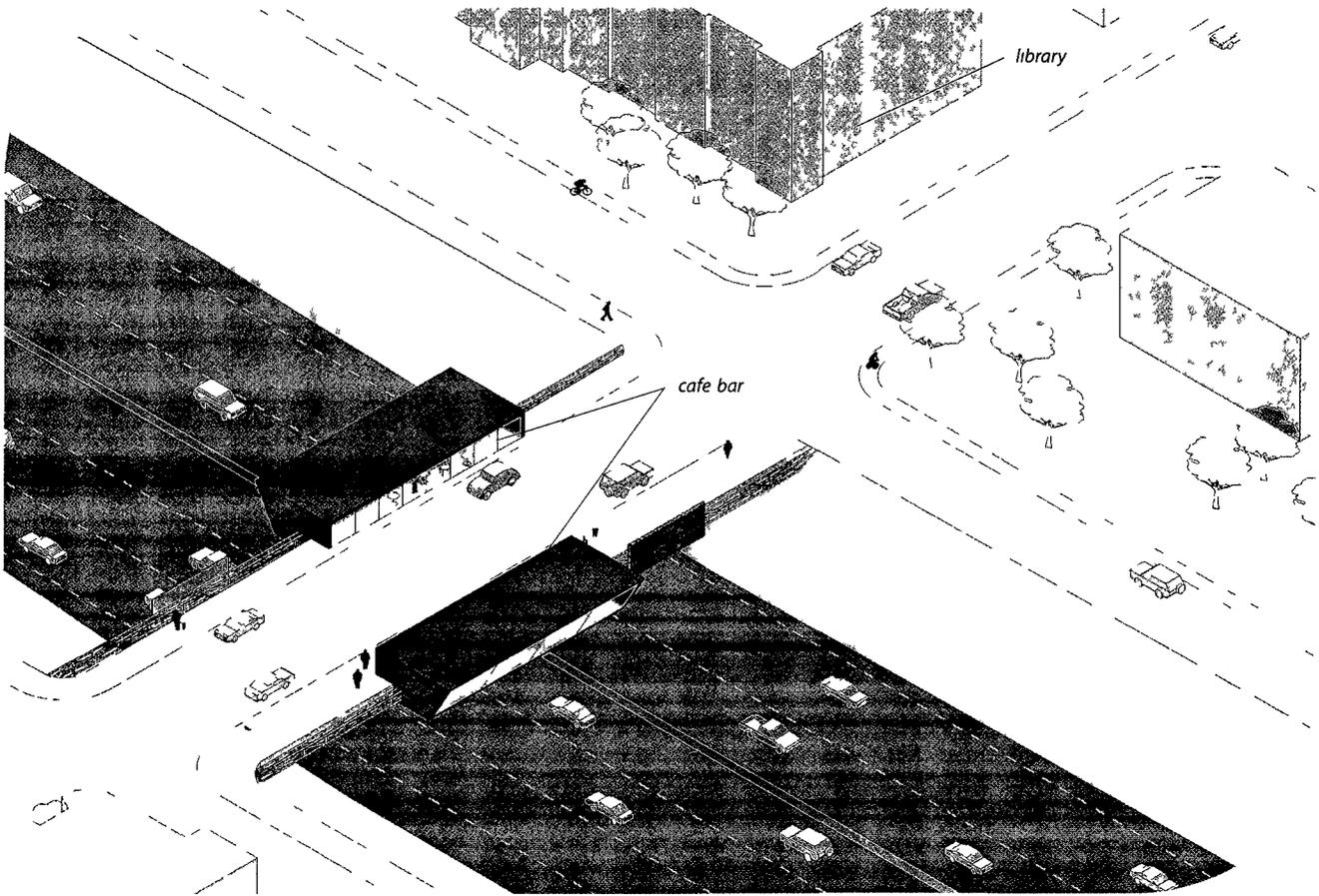


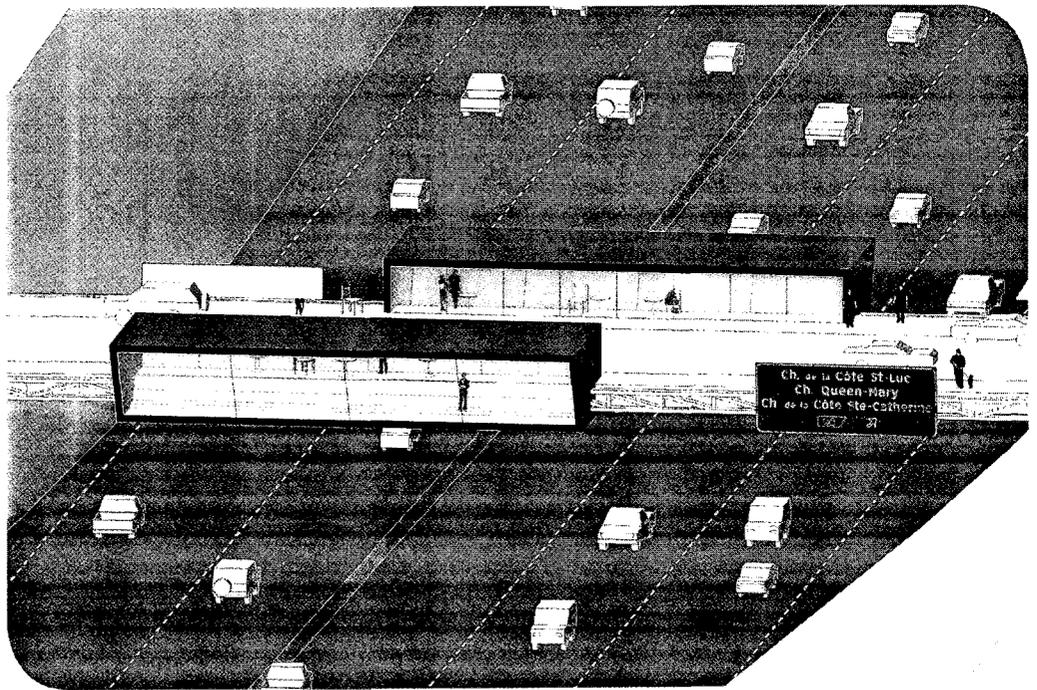
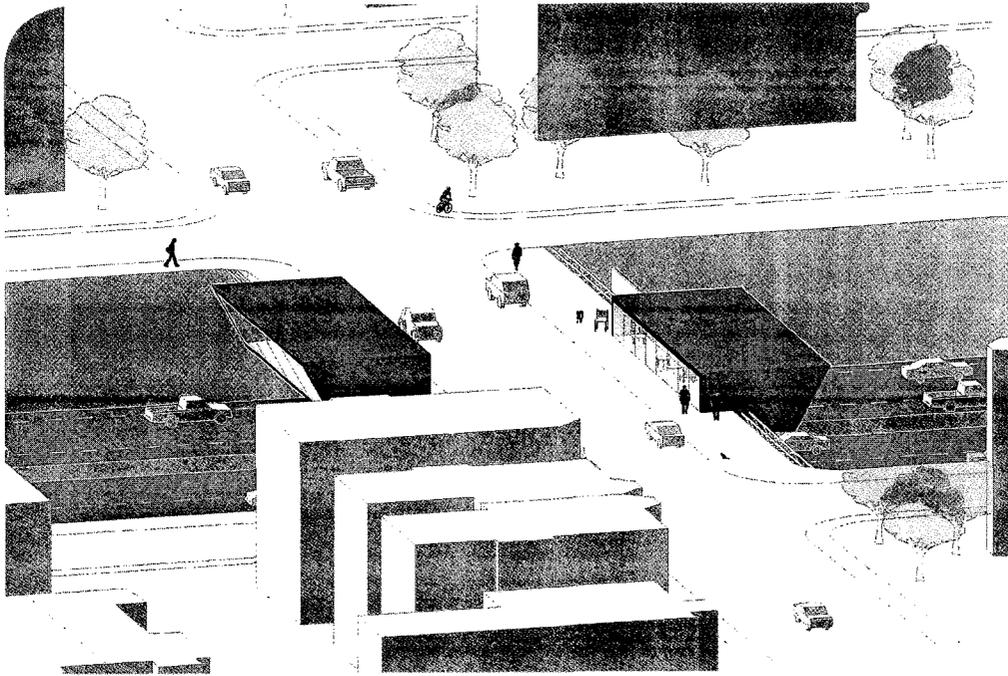
Bixi public bicycle system in Montreal





Most residents do not necessarily mind 'viewing the Decarie, but rather its 'environmental effects', such as sound and pollution. In fact, the expressway has become part of the landscape over time, and even though it has usually a negative connotation, many people enjoy viewing traffic especially from indoor. This inspires a new program idea for the expressway, one that is directly tailored at viewing the traffic: a cafe, restaurant, bar. By building a small unit within the bridge and supported by the reinforced structure of the directions panels, the Cafe becomes an exciting location not only for tourists, seniors and students during the day, but a bar at night, since the sound is lost within the expressway's noise. It also becomes a space frequented by radio channels recording traffic, policeman aiming their radar at cars, or readers who just came out of the library next door, and prefer reading in a more dynamic space. Might it even become a new landmark of the Decarie?



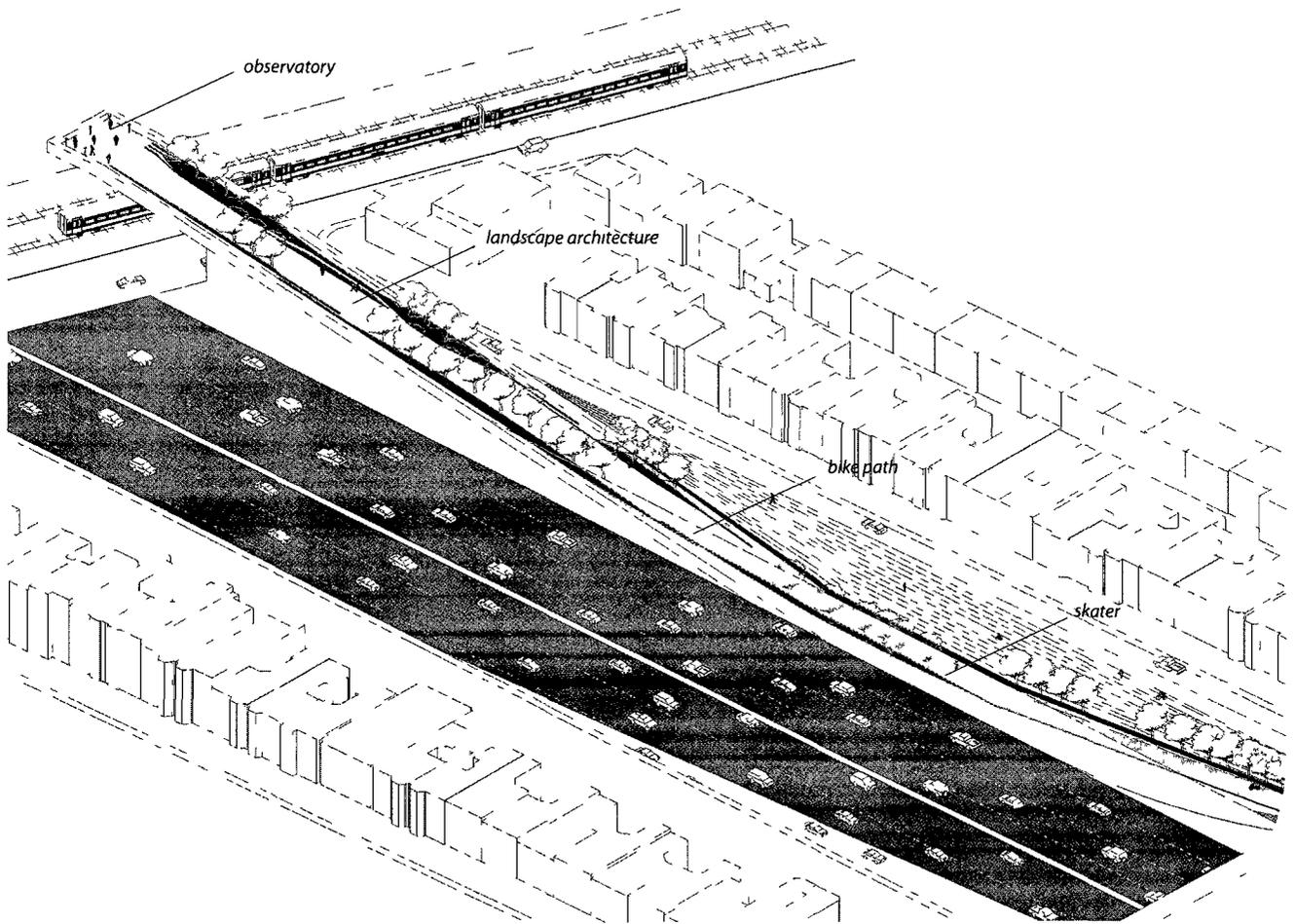
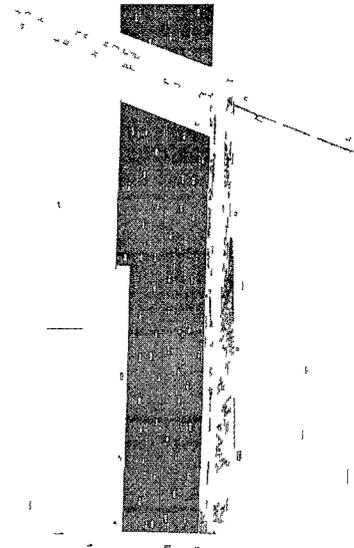


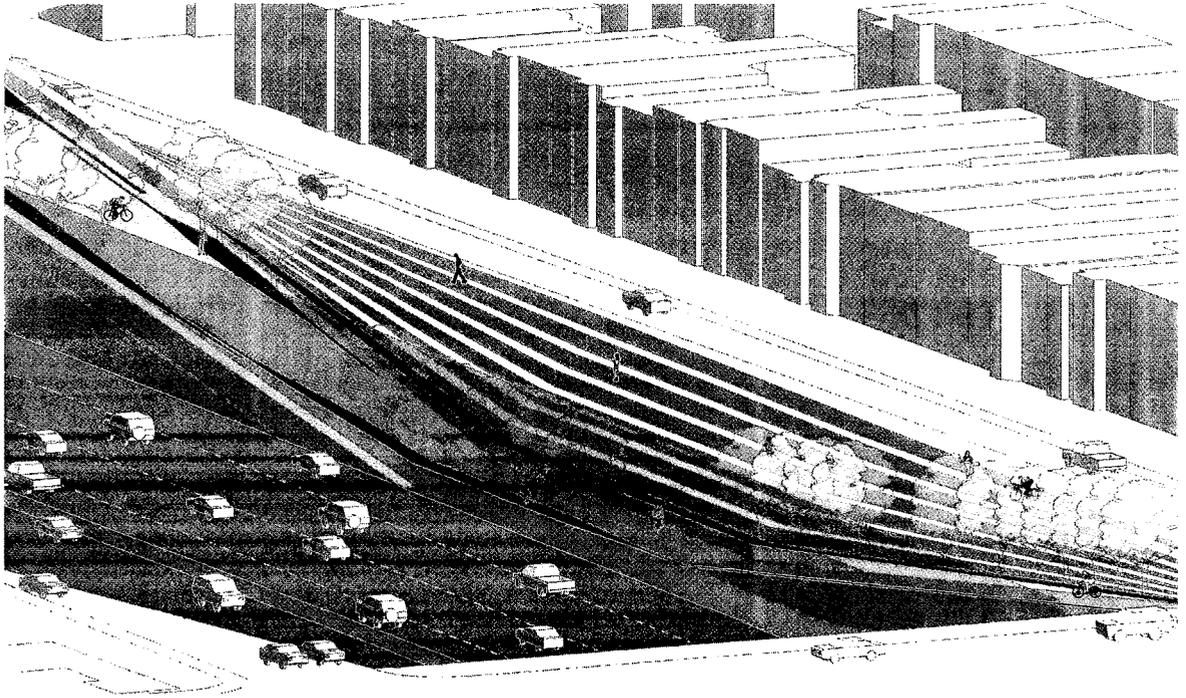
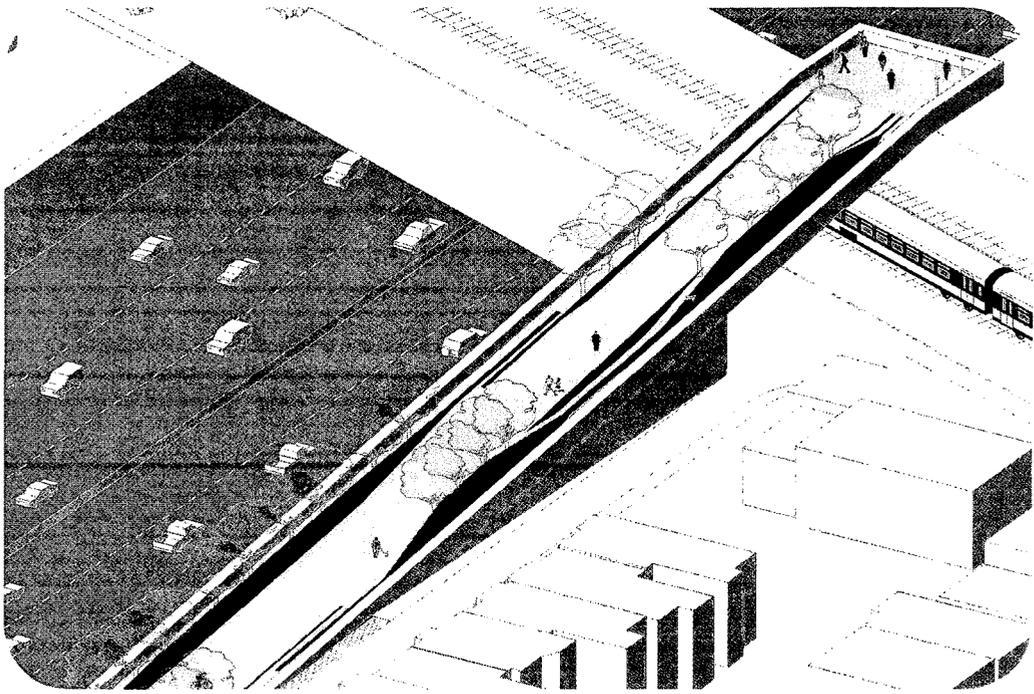
Montreal's 'High Line'

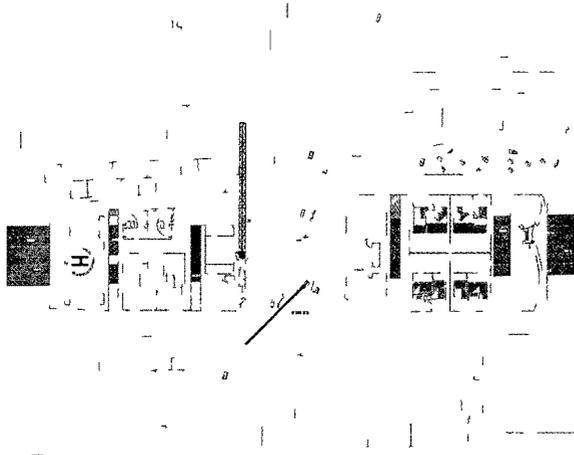
09



In anticipation of the future Centre Universitaire de Santé McGill (CUSM), a ramp was added to the Decarie at Addington street to facilitate the 'upcoming traffic'. Even though the residents protested, and there is already a ramp a block away, it was still built. During the long years needed to get the project accepted and built, the City opposed also against the ramp, arguing it does not fit their sustainability and Transport Plans and managed to condemn it. Instead of demolishing it, which would go as well against their plan, the idea was to launch a landscape architecture competition. Thus this recent 'ruin' becomes Montreal's 'highline'. The beautiful view of the Lachine Canal from that point becomes the concept for designing an observatory in addition to a bike path, a skating ramp and a pedestrian walkway. The ramp design goes along the idea to 'mobilize' the former car-ramp, by all the other alternative individual transportation modes.



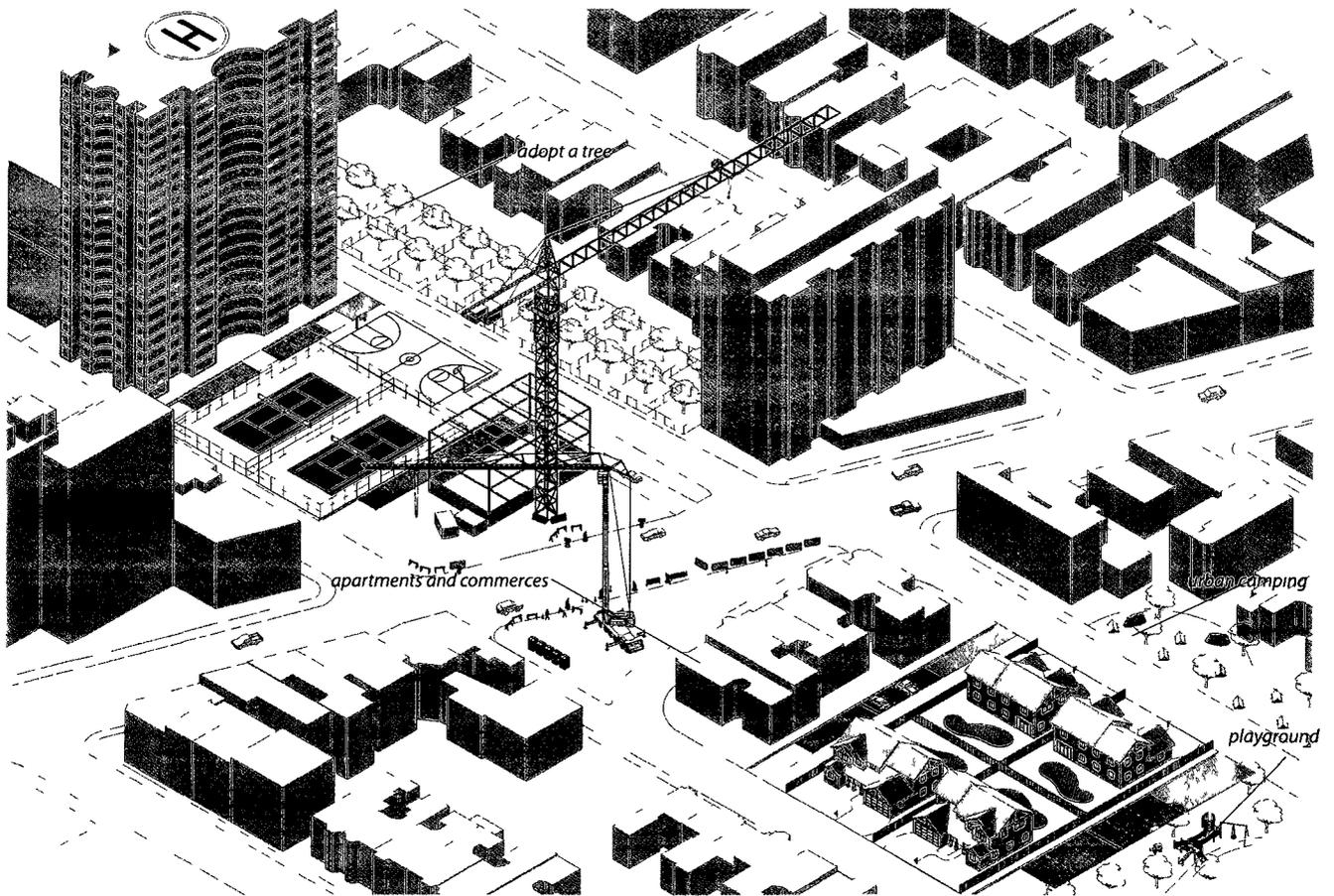


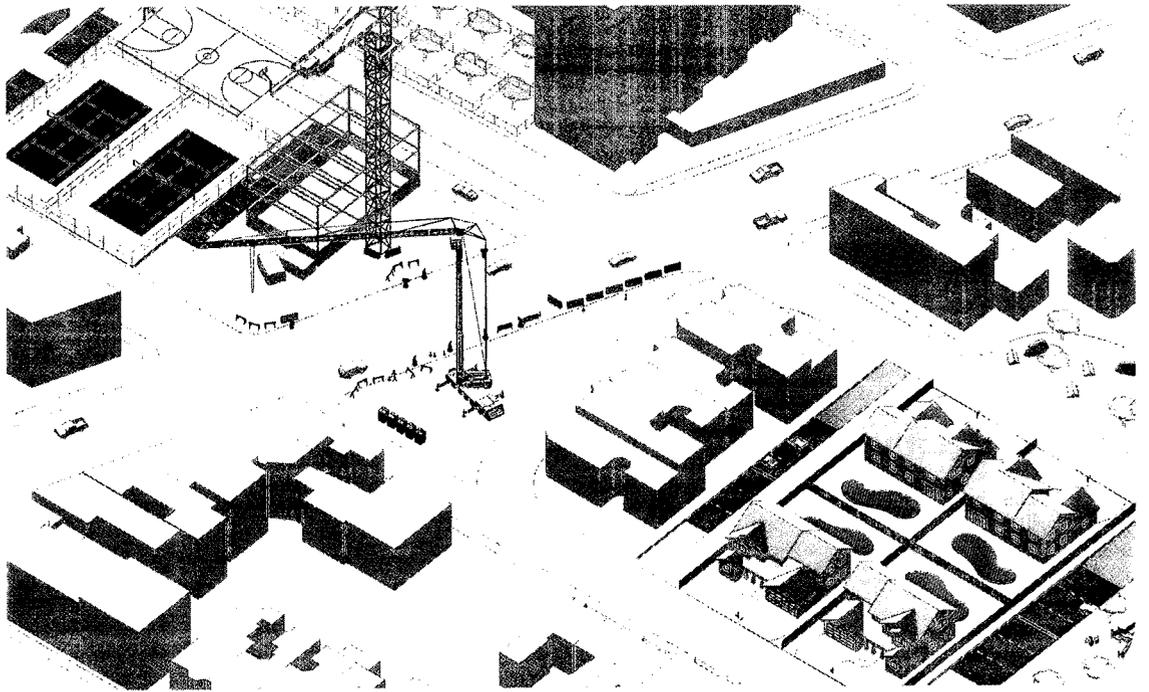
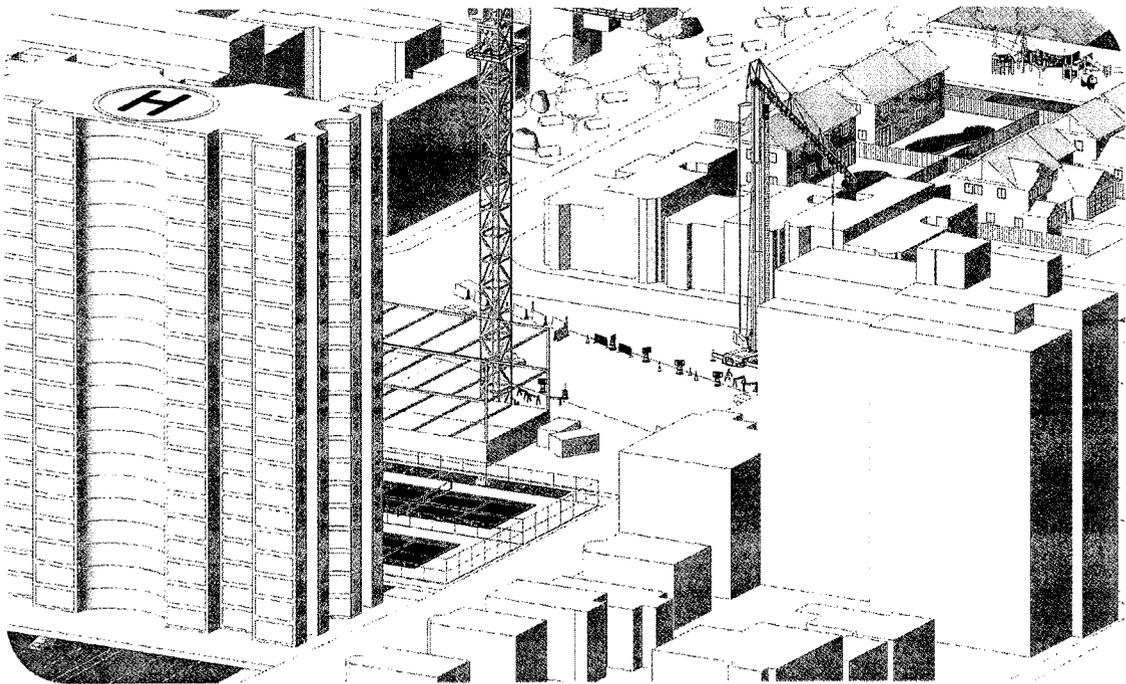


New Development

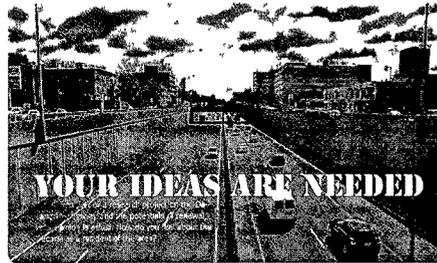


Sherbrooke Street is one of the main arteries of Montreal, crossing almost through the entire island from east to west. When it traverses the Decarie, it has that 'no man's land' effect, which breaks its continuity. Since not many developers are interested in building there, the mix of typologies is stunning, since the city allows almost anything to be built, desperate to see it developed. They finally manage to convince the government to allow the segments around that intersection to be built. Faced with an impressive amount of different proposals for the segments, and based on the already heterogeneous fabric of that city-section, they choose to allow one of each program to be built, this resulting in an even greater but vibrant eclectic space.

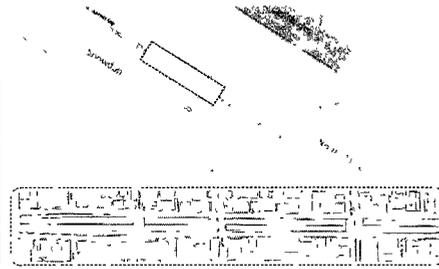




Annexis 1: Social Survey, November 2010



Front of the Survey Card



Back of the Survey Card

YOUR IDEAS ARE NEEDED

Please circle the answers, and complete where there are questions.
Don't hesitate to circle more than one at each question, and add any personal comment!

- 1** Are you working or living next to the Decarie Expressway ?
- if not, where do you live/work?
- 2** Since when have you been living\working next to the Decarie Expressway
- if before 1967, how was it before?
- 3** If you live close to the highway. Is there a neighborhood life in the area?
- If yes, do you enjoy it?
- 4** What is your main mode of transportation?
- 5** When you walk along or across the Decarie, are you bothered by the highway?
- If yes, what bothers you?
- 6** What do you like about this area?
- 7** What do you dislike about this area?
- 8** Do you think anything is missing in the Decarie area? If yes, what?
- ex: park, housing, community center, theater, restaurant, bar, cafe, gym, etc.
- 9** What is your opinion on the advertising panels along the sides of the Decarie expressway?
- 10** On a 1 to 10 scale, how would you describe the quality and appearance of the built environment along the Decarie Expressway? (being the lowest grade)
- 11** According to you, what would be the best thing that could happen in the area to improve it?

*** Please feel free to add any comment on how you feel about living\working near the Decarie Expressway. Thank you!

Questionnaire

Post-script

One of the first questions raised, following the proposal of this ambitious 10-step mobilization, is: when is it for? Is it for today, the future, or is it completely utopian? Before speculating on this matter, it is important to define these 10 projects in terms of their 'typology', and in relation to the broader North American and International context.

The projects possess a peculiar 'typology'. They are not solely laid above the expressway, but are formed by the merger between two distinct entities. Hence, they have a quality which goes beyond the unilateral gesture: they are responsive to their environment both in their creation and functioning. For example, 'Ruby Foo's Truck Stop Motel' is dependent on the expressway's structure and flow, while the expressway's drivers benefit from allowing its truck drivers to stop. Or, in the case of 'Montreal's Highline', the project relies as well on the expressway's structure, and benefits the nearby residents with a park, while also adding value of 'view' for the drivers. Perhaps it is this 'interdependency' that makes these projects differ from recent infrastructural renewal projects in North America, such as the Boston's 'Big Dig'. Boston had aimed literally to sink the downtown expressway below ground, to create a public park above. The intervention in this case doesn't suggest a relationship between the expressway and the new project, it is rather an 'erasure', and a replacement.

Thus, the 'typology' of these projects relates more to what Atelier Bow-wow defines as 'environmental unit' in their guidebook "Made in Tokyo". They use this term to describe similar conditions in Tokyo, such as graveyards above highways, temples cantilevered on the edge of expressways, or cinemas under road intersections.

In Tokyo's urban density, there are examples of a coherency which cross over categorical or physical building boundaries. It is something which differs from the architecture of self standing completeness. Rather, any particular building of this kind can perform several roles within multiple urban sets. They cannot be specifically classified as architecture, or as civil engineering, city or landscape.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Junzo Kuroda, Kaijima Momoyo and Tsukamoto Yoshiharu. *Made in Tokyo*, (Tokyo, Japan: Kajima Institute, 2008), 13.

The similarity of the projects proposed with the everyday landscape of a high-density city like Tokyo, where these buildings appear to have occurred due to pure and simple lack of space, re-sets in perspective this question: for what kind of future are these projects drawn? How can such conditions happen in a context not yet confronted to issues of over-densification and over-population? Would this mean that the only way these projects could someday exist, is when space starts to rarefy in Montreal, forcing these alliances to form? When observing the tendency of other larger Canadian cities such as Toronto, such a density is perhaps not likely to happen in the near future, as the city is growing horizontally.

Considering this, Mobilizing the Decarie suggests more than a speculative future proposal, but rather a 'forced densification' for today, an opportunity to fill unused urban 'empty spaces'. Why would Montreal have to wait again this time for other cities to start acting on densification measures, and have to catch up again? If these projects are contemporary, however, this perhaps reverses the sequence that might have been put forward in this thesis, where a change in the planning structure would allow more flexibility, hence these projects to happen. But considering the current stagnancy, aren't the projects more likely to be triggered by the users of Montreal? Could it start as a form of 'guerrilla urbanism', where citizens request changes in the city by occupying spaces themselves? Perhaps this would then slowly move from the claiming of 'unused space' to formal appropriation and eventually a transformation of the structure itself?

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