

VACANT TO VIBRANT

THE RESEARCH



VACANT TO VIBRANT

Supervised Research Project
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ABSTRACT

In 2008, there were 25 km² of vacant land in Montréal. Despite being easy to spot, vacant lots present a challenge for the City of Montréal to accurately track. Furthermore, these parcels vary in size, shape and location. Revitalizing vacant land through traditional planning procedures is often very slow, economically unviable and politically difficult. Therefore, such spaces have a tendency of remaining unused for years and sometimes decades, in a state of transition between their past and future uses. Temporary use presents a viable approach capable of quickly reinvigorating such spaces. The potential held in vacant land is immense and thankfully, Montréal residents are beginning to take note of it. City workers, planners, designers, organizations and citizens are finding ways of stimulating neglected urban spaces for both immediate and intermediate benefits. With appropriate creative tools and practices at their disposal, it is possible for citizens to directly interact, adapt, and improve their neighbourhoods. The purpose of this research is to create a guidebook summarizing the process needed to actively instigate temporary use on vacant land in Montréal. It provides the necessary information and know-how to go about re-activating a vacant lot. The Guidebook's ultimate goal is to mobilize, empower and support the participation of all actors in the shaping of their urban environment.

RÉSUMÉ

En 2008, l'île de Montréal contenait l'équivalent de 25 kilomètres carré de terrains vacants. Bien qu'ils soient faciles à repérer, la ville n'a toujours pas trouvé un moyen efficace de surveiller leur développement. Les terrains vacants varient dépendamment de leur forme, leur superficie et leur localisation. La revitalisation de ces espaces conformant à des méthodes d'urbanisme traditionnelles peut être très longue, coûteuse et politiquement complexe. Or, un terrain peut demeurer vacant pendant de nombreuses années, dans une phase de transition continue entre son ancien et futur usage. L'usage temporaire de ces espaces peut constituer une approche rapide et efficace pour réanimer des terrains jadis négligés. De plus, ces espaces renferment un énorme potentiel dont les Montréalais commencent à reconnaître. Les fonctionnaires de la ville, les urbanistes, les designers, les organismes locaux et les citoyens sont tous en train de trouver de nouvelles façons de réapproprier ces terrains abandonnés et d'en tirer des résultats rapides. Grâce à de nouvelles pratiques créatives et adéquates, il est maintenant possible de promouvoir une interaction directe entre les citoyens et leur environnement afin de répondre à des besoins communautaires rapidement. L'objectif de cette recherche est donc de créer un guide qui met en lumière les étapes nécessaires pour réapproprier un terrain vacant avec un usage temporaire à Montréal. Ainsi, le but de ce guide est de mobiliser et d'encourager une participation citoyenne, dans le but d'instaurer une démarche indépendante de transformation du milieu urbain.

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INTRODUCTION

Today, North American cities are littered with land vacancy. These parcels of land, which are in a state of transition between their old and new uses, varying in size, shape, and location, can sometimes make up an important portion of the urban fabric. There are many reasons explaining the presence of such spaces. In some cases, property owners acquire and hold onto properties expecting an increase in value. Soil contamination is another reason behind vacancy as it requires a significant amount of time and resources to treat contaminated land and render it reusable. Also, spaces can be intentionally left vacant for long-term infrastructure planning. In fact, revitalizing unused land through traditional planning procedures is often very slow, economically unviable and politically difficult.

Temporary use is an approach that can quickly revitalize vacant urban spaces into intensively used spaces. Such an approach moves beyond traditional planning procedures; it represents a broader shift in the type of planning strategies being adopted these days. Temporary uses have become a key asset for immediate and intermediate benefits that are contextual and flexible, and support an incremental process of urban transformation. Bishop and Williams, in *The Temporary City*, argue that “an alternative approach to master planning is beginning to emerge”¹. They explain how small initiatives, like temporary uses, are able to unlock potential of sites now and sequentially, rather than only in the long term. The authors continue by illustrating how temporary uses can bring forward various potential benefits, such as “economic activities, change the image and feel of an area, stabilise weaker neighbourhoods and reactivate vacant sites”, as well as encouraging “eventual ‘permanent’ development”.²

Montréal has not managed to escape from this reality of abandoned spaces. In 2008, Montréal had a total of 25 square kilometres of vacant land, representing roughly 12% of the island’s area.³ The potential that lies on these grounds is immense and Montréal residents are starting to recognize it. City workers, planners, designers, organizations and citizens are finding ways to occupy neglected spaces for limited periods of time. The temporary projects that are steadily gaining more attention around the city are very diverse - differing in duration, size and function.

The purpose of this research is to create a guidebook that puts forward a process that can be applied for actively instigating temporary use on Montréal’s vacant land. The Guidebook is designed for use by citizens and professionals wanting to start a temporary project on a vacant parcel of land. It provides the necessary information on the process of re-activating a lot. The Guidebook’s ultimate goal is to mobilize, empower and support the participation of all actors in the shaping of their urban environment, as well as to become a beneficial tool for elected officials, professionals, organizations, and citizens. The Guidebook contributes to a future in which the users

of the urban realm have the power and skill to interact, adapt, and improve their environment. It promotes the progressive programming of Montréal's vacant land. Finally, through the presentation of practical initiatives, it supports a vision of a revitalized Montréal where the progress of the city occurs in a mutually beneficial relationship with the advances of the community and its local environment.

Although written for Montréal, the Guidebook can be applied to other cities. Planners and citizen groups can adapt the Guidebook to fit local conditions. With appropriate creative tools and practices, city data on particular pieces of land can enable and inspire citizens to co-create communal spaces with their neighbours.

DOCUMENT STRUCTURE

In Part 1, the theoretical background behind 'temporary use' and 'vacant land' is discussed, along with an overview of the main drivers that lead to the emergence of temporary use projects in cities. The section ends with a description of the various actors involved in temporary use projects on vacant land and a generic model of implementation.

To ground the research in a practical context, Part 2 and Part 3 provide an introductory preface to the Guidebook. Part 2 illustrates the causes generating vacant land in Montréal as well as new initiatives taking place in the city. It ends by explaining how Montréal has the opportunity to explore and exploit vacant land with temporary interventions.

Part 3 showcases that Montrealers are starting to value the potential that lies in vacant spaces. The part begins by presenting the methodology used to better understand the way in which temporary projects are being integrated in the city. Then, three illustrative case studies of temporary interventions are presented. Each case study gives a brief analysis of how individual projects of temporary usage have been implemented. The findings are then summarized and conclusions are drawn.

These findings are integral to the creation of the Guidebook in Part 4. The Guidebook for Vacant Land Transformation builds upon the findings that emerged through the case studies to provide a general framework that may be applied as a resource for future actions and collaborations in a wide variety of contexts.

1 Peter Bishop, Lesley Williams, *The Temporary City* (London: Routledge, 2012), 3.

2 Ibid., 179.

3 Communauté Métropolitaine de Montréal, *Perspective Grand Montréal Vol. 2 No 4* (Montréal: Communauté Métropolitaine de Montréal, 2008), Accessed at http://cmm.qc.ca/fileadmin/user_upload/periodique/0204_Perspective.pdf.

PART 1

LITERATURE REVIEW

An examination of existing literature reveals a rapidly growing body of academic and popular work on temporary uses and vacant land. Part 1 seeks to explain how temporary use has become an accepted solution to problems typically dealt with using traditional planning tools. It goes on to explain the concepts of 'vacant land' and 'temporary use', as well as to discuss the reasons behind the emergence of the latter. Part 1 concludes with a generic step by step process of the formal implementation of such a project on vacant land, demonstrating the interactions and specific roles of the actors involved.

TACTICAL URBANISM



IMAGE 01 - Reclaiming pedestrian space with tactical urbanisme in Madison Square, New York City.

CREDIT: Better Cities & Towns

The complex realities of rapid urban growth in North America today differ from the challenges targeted by traditional urban planning procedures.¹ The issue with traditional planning tools, such as master plans and zoning, is that they are time consuming, often requiring years to be legalized and implemented. Furthermore, although traditional urban planning tools address the question of what should be developed, they often neglect the method needed to achieve these goals, making for unpredictable outcomes.² While these tools are essential to the coherent long term planning of cities, they hinder short term change.

Whether it is an individual addressing an immediate need in their neighbourhood or a municipality simply testing out their plans, a movement is becoming increasingly visible. Flint shares this point of view by stating that “in a future with great uncertainty, planning must be more versatile, adopting multiple methodologies. This involves funky concepts of ground-up, crowd-sourced self organization and spontaneous order”³, in other words, tactical urbanism.

The emerging characteristics of tactical urbanism resonate as “an approach to neighbourhood building and activation using short-term, low-

cost, and scalable interventions and policies” that complements “the slow and complex conventional city building process”.⁴ The Street Plans Collective defines tactical urbanism as having five characteristics:

- a deliberate, phased approach to instigating change;
- the offering of local solutions for local planning challenges;
- short-term commitment and realistic expectations;
- low-risks, with a possibly high reward; and
- the development of social capital between citizens and the building of organizational capacity between public-private institutions, nonprofits, and their constituents.⁵

The concept of tactical urbanism has often been framed as citizen led initiatives that are temporary and that respond to the immediate needs of the public. In the beginning, the term ‘tactical’ referred to the unsanctioned nature of the process. For example, temporary installation may solve a problem, such as an unsafe crosswalk, unsafe bicycle pathway, or an intersection that simply does not function. However, interventions that proved to be successful can become authorized or permanent. Therefore, tactical urbanism projects can be placed along a spectrum of unsanctioned to sanctioned efforts, from guerrilla gardening, to Park-Making, to Pavement to Parks. Tactical urbanism, in this sense, can be seen as a complement to traditional top-down public policies. It is an elastic and global movement with a wide range of design ideas.

Although tactical urbanism encompasses a range of activities on this spectrum, this research project focuses on sanctioned temporary uses. Cities are recognizing that, in the face of economic uncertainty and rapidly changing possibilities, there may be a role for temporary activities or interim phases of development. Such approaches have gained popularity based on a level of resilience,

responsiveness, and flexibility that, critics contend, top-down measures are simply not capable of achieving.⁶ The strength of the movement is its ability to manoeuvre through the city’s spatial leftovers, exploiting the unique assets of a specific location. Németh and Langhorst argue that temporary uses create “immediate and intermediate benefits that are contextual and flexible, and support an incremental process of urban transformation”⁷. For example, San Francisco’s “Pavement to Parks” program aims for the City to work with local communities on streets and public right-of-ways, which represent 25% of the city’s underused land, by quickly, inexpensively, and temporarily converting them into new pedestrian spaces. This program seeks to reimagine the potential of city street, encourage non-motorized transportation, and enhance pedestrian safety and activities. Although the implementation of such projects is done formally, they are meant to be temporary and easily reversible. However, positive interventions may endure. Lydon explains that if done well, small-scale changes may be perceived as the first step in realizing lasting change.⁸ Indeed, observers note that “after testing their performance” some temporary pedestrianized areas “are reclaimed permanently as public open spaces.”⁹

Although tactical urbanism is an approach that can bring permanent changes, it should not be taken as a solution to reconcile the gap between the modest scale of its initiatives and the large urban issues they address. Lydon argues that tactical interventions should not be misunderstood as the cure for the many intractable problems facing cities.¹⁰ What it provides is liberation of new urban practices from traditional building development processes. The city is perpetually evolving and requires flexibility to adapt the built environment to unexpected uses. The range of transitory, temporary and ephemeral urban tactics explored here are complementary to officially sanctioned urban developments.



IMAGE 02 - Neglected New York City phone booth converted into communal library.

CREDIT: Design Boom

VACANT LAND

DEFINITION

The term vacant land is both broad and imprecise, covering various physical appearances of land. Pagano and Bowman explain that vacant land can include “raw dirt, property with abandoned structures, land with recently demolished buildings, perimeter agricultural land, contaminated land, and greenfields”.¹¹ Vacancy can stem from many roots, which the urban economist Ray Northam, tackles by classifying them under 5 categories:

- Remnant parcels (small in size, often irregular in shape; have not been developed in the past)
- Parcels with physical limitations (unbuildable due to major physical constraints such as steep slope or flood hazard; can be large tracts of land)
- Corporate reserve parcels (land held by corporations for future expansion or relocation; typically local firms such as utility companies)
- Parcels held for speculation (land owned by corporation, estates, or single parties in anticipation of a profitable, market-rate sale at a later time; frequently found in transitional areas)
- Institutional reserve parcels (tracts of land set aside by public or quasi-public entities for future development, given need and funding).¹²

Northam’s typology highlights land that is unused for reasons related to physical properties, economic context, and governmental actions. However, his typology does not include derelict land, also known as brownfields. This category is for land that is “so damaged by industrial or other development that it cannot be used beneficially without treatment.”¹³ A closed-down industrial facility where years of environmental abuses have poisoned the soil is an example of derelict land.

Another descriptive label for vacant land is provided by researchers Greenberg, Popper, and West. Their study defines vacancy as Temporary Obsolete Abandoned Derelict Sites (TOADS), and distinguishes three types:

- formerly productive and valued by the surrounding community, but then were abandoned by their owners;
- formerly productive, but were locally unwanted land uses, disliked by the neighbours; and
- unused parcels of overgrown land that haven’t been developed for a long time, or never, because of various reasons.¹⁴

The study underlines an important point: vacant land can also be caused by neglect. However, not all vacant properties are threatening. A simple example is a vacation home that is empty for most of the year, or a short-time vacancy of a property during the period of rent or sale. If the owners are responsible and keep maintaining the property, then the situation does not become hazardous. Dewar argues that a vacant property becomes a problem when the property owner abandons the basic responsibilities of ownership, such as routine maintenance or mortgage and property tax payments.¹⁵

It is difficult to point to a definition that is universally accepted, but for the purpose of this research, the preceding discussion provides the basis for a working definition: Vacant land is unused, abandoned or neglected land that has yet to be (re) developed.



IMAGE 03 - Vacant lot in Philadelphia.

CREDIT: Trulia



IMAGE 04 - Vacant land in Detroit.

CREDIT: The Motor(less) City

TEMPORARY USE

DEFINITION

The interest surrounding research, planning and policy making around temporary usage is rather recent. Thus, the definition of 'temporary use' is complex and ambiguous.

Bishop and Williams' definition of temporary use does not include a classification because it is so diverse. For them, a use is not temporary until it has proved to be, by disappearing. It is this ephemerality that renders temporary usage unique. The authors explain that the concept of temporary can include interventions that are as short as a few hours or as long as a number of years, legal or illegal, and that are community driven, state sanctioned, or privately financed.

Temel's definition comprises both the element of temporality and the characteristics. First, he argues that temporariness belongs to both the realms of ephemeral and provisional uses.¹⁶ The ephemeral relates to uses with no permanent changes brought to existing surfaces and structures, whereas the provisional includes uses that bring lasting changes to the built environment. Although temporary uses do not leave traces that cannot easily be removed, the author argues that they have their own qualities that permanent uses cannot reveal. A project temporarily implemented on a vacant lot can demonstrate the potential of the site and encourage the development of a permanent project. In other words, a temporary use can eventually lead to a permanent use.¹⁷ Temel states that "an event takes place in a particular location in order to charge it with a specific meaning it did not have previously, or that something is tried out, even though one isn't yet convinced it will function over the long term".¹⁸

Temporary use is also associated with land-use conversions where opportunities emerge in-between former primary uses and redevelopment of the area for new primary uses. In other words, temporary uses do not correspond with underlying zone regulation on which they are situation.

Lehtovuori and Ruoppila explain that temporary uses are "secondary" to new primary uses that will be established on vacant or underused land or buildings.¹⁹ The authors clarify the nature of temporary uses as being in between momentary events and permanent (re)development.²⁰

Temporary uses are very diverse. They come in all shapes and sizes, and can have numerous functions. According to Urban Collaborators' Temporary Uses Resource Guide, the best temporary uses are often the ones that were created with a specific community's needs in mind.²¹ To highlight this characteristic, Bishop and William define temporary uses as "a manifestation of a more dynamic, flexible and adaptive urbanism, where the city is becoming more responsive to new needs, demands and preferences of its users".²²

Temporary use can be understood as an ephemeral, but provisional, use with experimental purposes other than what is regulated in order to meet the immediate needs of a community.



IMAGE 05 - Experimental project transforming an abandoned gas station in London into a cinema.

CREDIT: Assemble Studio



IMAGE 06 - Movement Café, a temporary café and performance space in London.

CREDIT: Irina Vinnitskaya

DRIVERS

Recent studies point to multiple reasons behind the emergence of temporary usage. The four main drivers behind this emergence are the economic uncertainties regarding the future of the city, vacant land, new technologies and demographic shifts. Each is described below.

1. ECONOMY

The Global Financial Crisis in 2008 and the resulting recession have definitely left their mark on North America, particularly in the United States.²³ Due to speculation and the overvaluation of assets, major businesses have failed, consumer wealth has declined, and the housing market has collapsed in many areas. The immediate withdrawal of finance from the property market has led to halted, postponed or simply cancelled development projects, widespread evictions, foreclosures and vacancy.²⁴ Such examples would be Montreal's unfinished bus terminal, the Ilot Voyageur.²⁵ Despite today's signs of recovery since 2008's crisis, financial instability has led the appearance of new low cost approaches that can have immediate impact, such as temporary use.²⁶

An example of temporary uses as a direct result of financial uncertainty would be the pop-up shop. Not only is it cool and trendy, but the relatively small amount of capital needed to set one up makes it very accessible. Following the recession, "an increased availability of retail space has made it easier and more attractive to set up such pop-up stores".²⁷

2. VACANT LAND

Extensive literature exists on the topic of vacant land in urban areas. Several authors explain vacant land as the joint result of a shift from an industrial economy to a service economy, the growth of mobile workplaces and suburban migration.²⁸ Whatever the cause of vacancy may be, significant research is being done to look into alternatives capable of dealing with these spaces at a city-wide scale.²⁹ One approach is experimenting the role and potential of temporary land uses on the availability of unused spaces. It is a way to liberate land as a means of production from the fetters of permanent usage.

One such example of temporary use on vacant spaces is Off the Grid, a San Francisco based initiative that began in 2010, aiming at bringing people together through food. Essentially, food trucks and non-permanent kitchens take over parking lots and vacant spaces throughout the city and become public restaurants where the community can be brought together through food.

3. NEW TECHNOLOGY

New technologies are playing a major role in enabling and spreading the word about new tactics and techniques. They mobilize growth and publicize actions digitally for easy replication. While the economy took a precipitous downturn after 2008, the increase of social media oriented platforms, and the use of portable devices on which to access them, meant that it was easier to mobilise people and resources. Many temporary activities do not

have the luxury of time in which to build up a client base. For that reason, internet access and mobile networks provide the ability to advertise their existence quickly, cheaply, and at a large scale.³⁰ Mobile applications also allow 'non-experts' to take part in how urban spaces are enacted. They create a participatory realm in which people actively engage with their environment by collecting and sharing data and ideas via digital methods.³¹ Being able to facilitate networking among communities of interest greatly enables vibrant platforms of user-created content, which helps communities of interest tackle the realities of urbanisation.

An example is Shape My City, a platform where you can connect to share, discuss and develop urban ideas related to the future of the city of Toronto. The platform has many functions, including the spread of information, the organization of events and the advancement of a discourse pertaining to urbanism, ecology and design. It also allows users to notify others about urban issues such as temporary uses.

4. DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS

Problems of gentrification and social exclusion created by thriving real estate markets and deliberate municipal policy have increased the pressure on certain neighbourhoods to cater to new needs.³² Neighbourhoods with increasing social discrepancies present an ideal opportunity to critically examine existing planning procedures and consider alternative models of development. In today's complex world, "no single master plan can anticipate the evolving and varied needs of

an increasingly diverse population or achieve the resiliency, responsiveness and flexibility that shorter-term, experimental endeavors can".³³ Temporary uses can become an interesting solution to the problem. UCS suggests that temporary users of space are "evidence of a trend to greater social commitment, to more participation, to active networks and the desire to try out something new".³⁴ Over the past decade, there has been an explosion of interest in regards to public participation. People are willing to engage in issues that are perceived to concern them directly, and are no longer willing to be the passive recipients of government services or decision making.³⁵

An example of this participation in city-shaping is 569 Acres, a New York City Land Access Community Program started in 2011. The program responded to the reality that "hundreds of acres of vacant public land are hidden in plain sight [...], concentrated in neighbourhoods disproportionately deprived of beneficial land uses."³⁶ 596 Acres builds tools to help communities gain access and unlock the hidden potential of these spaces as well as improve the living conditions in their communities. They have been changing the paradigm of urban development, getting more people to see that communities have rights, even in the face of developers, and despite a history of top-down political determination.



IMAGE 07 - Two-day pop-up store in a wooden container along the coast of a Netherlands suburb Scheveningen. CREDIT: Brand Spaces



IMAGE 08 - Over twenty food trucks occupying the vacant parking lot of Fort Mason, San Francisco. CREDIT: Marion Liautaud

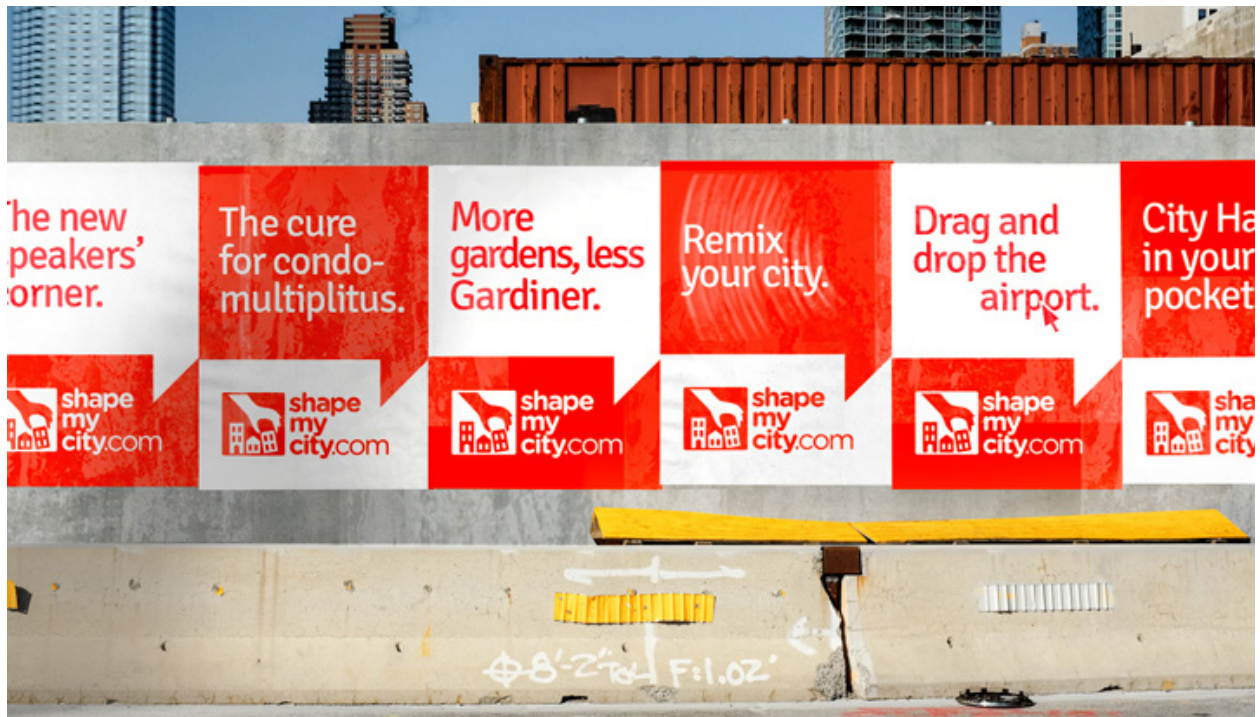


IMAGE 09 - Shape My City, a platform to share, discuss and develop urban ideas related to the future of Toronto. CREDIT: Zinzan Studio



IMAGE 10 - 596 Acres signs to reclaim vacant land for citizens of New York. CREDIT: Living Lots NYC

VACANT LAND + TEMPORARY USE

As discussed, vacant land tends to evoke negative imagery: abandonment, decay, emptiness, and even danger. It is often perceived as a problem or negative situation that requires a solution. Beyond this bleak portrayal, however, alternative conceptions of vacant land are possible. These spaces may come to symbolize opportunity, representing a resource that localities can maximize.

Oswalt, Overmeyer, and Misselwitz explain that temporary users usually take over unused spaces to accommodate their temporary projects.³⁷ The instant availability of vacant spaces appears to be significant in allowing temporary activities to take hold and flourish. Because land owners seek viable development opportunities, vacant land is a temporary condition between its old and new use. Thus, combining temporary use and vacant land is only logical because they both share the element of temporariness.

PROCESS

Various researchers have begun to outline the general steps relating to the formal implementation of temporary use on vacant land. This section summarizes the five major steps of implementation and the actors' roles throughout the process.

First, implementing a temporary use on a vacant land generally involves two components: an idea coming from the initiator and a vacant space supplied by a property owner. Location is an important element in the realization of a temporary project because the latter is likely to take place on a space that provides suitable component. Such example would be implementing a community garden on a vacant lot that provides suitable daylight to grow plants.

Second, in the case of sanctioned uses, the negotiation process plays a crucial role. Initiators must obtain permission from the owner to temporarily use a site. The attitude of land owners towards the temporary use project is a deciding factor in the implementation of a project. At this step, the support of agents and public authorities is important for the establishment of trust between owners and initiators, who do not necessarily share common interest in exploring new potentials of a vacant site. Because initiators are not necessarily from the official, institutionalized domain of urban planning and urban politics, the support can allow them to experiment without the risk of eviction.

Third is the agreement. Accomplishing this step can be complex because not all actors have the same motives behind their involvement in the collaborative process of temporary uses on vacant land.³⁸ However, "in many cases, temporary uses only become possible through the determined action of key agents, who bridge the gap between the different milieus of the users, the site owner and municipal authorities and therefore create a protective umbrella which allows for the flourishing of temporary use".³⁹

The development of the temporary use project is when initiators get to experiment with new ideas at relatively low cost. It is important to note that these are experimentally driven grassroots initiatives and not city driven developments. Therefore, planning authorities should be used in an advisory capacity, while not forgetting that their expertise is vital to the successful completion of negotiations and to the formal implementation of a project. Such example would be the guidance of planners in acquiring necessary permits in the implementation of a temporary use project by local citizens.

Lastly, the element of temporality of these uses means that they are only for a limited time period, whether it be a day, a month or a year. Thus, the last step is termination. However, such uses can also become a long-lasting success.⁴⁰ With the agreement of all actors, temporary uses can find permanence and outlive their initial mandate.



IMAGE 11 - Temporary community garden on vacant property in Vancouver.

CREDIT: Shifting Growth



IMAGE 12 - Urban Physic Garden, a pop-up community garden in London.

CREDIT: Sustainable Spaces

CONCLUSION

The views presented above are reflective of the increasing realization among citizens and planners alike that vacant land holds untapped potential. Sites that are temporarily undeveloped do not need to remain temporarily vacant; they can be used to accommodate various temporary projects capable of making a difference in the lives of citizens. The literature reviewed in Part 1 demonstrates that temporary use is emerging as a useful tool to respond to the immediate needs that citizens maintain in the shaping of their community. There are reasons behind the emergence of temporary uses which will be explained through the context of Montréal in Part 2.

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PART 2

MONTRÉAL

Part 1 taught us that temporary use can complement traditional planning methods, in addition to being used as a proactive and permissive planning tool. When implemented on vacant spaces, temporary uses have the capacity of bringing immediate and intermediate benefits to the space, as well as being able to address specific site conditions.

Part 2 explores how Montréal's current conditions are encouraging the implementation of formal and informal temporary projects on vacant land. Economic uncertainties, the presence of vacant lots, the rise of new technologies and demographic shifts are all factors pushing Montrealers to proactively reshape their neighbourhoods by collectively repossessing neglected land. Part 2 seeks to situate Montréal in context allowing it to understand the reasons behind the presence of vacant land and the emergence of temporary use.

HISTORY AND CONTEXT

The 19th century saw Montréal's economy shift from one of trade and commerce to one of industry and manufacturing. The opening of the Lachine Canal in 1825 significantly increased the flow of international goods thanks to the introduction of larger ships, as well as making Montréal one of the largest ports in North America.¹ Moreover, during the 1850s, the city found itself at the heart of a new railway system that linked the Maritimes with Ontario and the American Mid-West.² Consequently, the city quickly became an industrial transit hub via land and sea. This pushed the city to authorize and actively encourage the construction of factories and manufacturing plants.³ As a result, large factories emerged throughout the city during the 1850s and well into the 1870s. By 1881, 70% of Montréal's workers worked in factories⁴ and by the end of the 19th century, Montréal solidified its place atop the Canadian economy.⁵

The rise of the city's industrial sector led to an important demographic increase. In fact, Montréal's population almost quintupled between 1852 and 1901.⁶ This growth was due in large part to immigration and urban migration from surrounding rural areas. Neighbourhoods such as Hochelaga (1870)⁷, Saint-Gabriel (1874)⁸, Saint-Henri (1875)⁹ and Saint-Louis (1879)¹⁰ were established as industrial areas which soon developed important residential sectors in order to accommodate the growing number of workers. These new working-class industrial neighbourhoods were primarily located adjacent to the railway network and the Saint Lawrence waterway. A two to three storey row-housing vernacular built longitudinally to the street developed, giving little thought to the incorporation of green space. Hence, working class neighbourhoods, integrating residential, institutional, commercial and religious buildings around important industrial centres, began to emerge, shaping new living environments.

By the 1950s, the manufacturing industry carved a commanding role for itself at the heart of Montréal's economy.¹¹ However, the 1960s saw the beginning

of the city's industrial decline. Globalization forced local industries to compete with emerging Asian countries, where labour costs were significantly lower.¹² Furthermore, the closing of the canal in 1970¹³ and the decreased prominence of the railway network forced companies to leave the city's industrial areas, located in the inner city, in search of more modern facilities, more affordable real estate and other forms of transportation.¹⁴ Hence a suburbanization of the city's industries took place. This exodus accelerated unemployment and pushed the work force to also relocate to the suburbs.¹⁵ By the 1970s, working class neighbourhoods, which originally developed around a central source of income, were left without a mode of sustenance and fell into disuse.

In contrast to rising economic hardship, Montréal entered a period of urban modernization as well as the creation of major projects between 1950 and 1975.¹⁶ Besides international endeavours such as the Universal Exposition of 1967 and the Olympic Summer Games of 1976, the city invested heavily into road infrastructure and large-scale complexes. In order to free up sought after urban land destined to the construction of highways, boulevards, parking lots, and mixed-use buildings, over 28,000 homes were demolished between 1957 and 1974¹⁷. More than a third of the downtown core was demolished to make way for massive super-complexes containing offices, underground malls, restaurants and parking space¹⁸. The Maison Radio-Canada, the Ville-Marie expressway and the Jacques-Cartier Bridge are just a few examples of projects that were implemented with little regard to the existing urban fabric. The creation of interconnecting expressways that divided the inner city stimulated strong suburban demographic and economic growth. Thus, the city's deindustrialization and modernization was detrimental to the inner city's growth throughout the 60s, 70s and 80s¹⁹.

After a long and painful period of industrial reorganization marked by a high rate of unemployment²⁰, the municipal government

reinvented Montréal's economy. In the 1980s and 1990s, the city diversified its economy by investing in technologies, aerospace, life sciences, pharmaceutical and clean tech sectors.²¹ The city's transition from an industrial to a service sector driven economy led it to an urban renewal and development on neighbourhoods. The turn of the millennium saw efforts implemented to try and improve elements of the built environment, with an emphasis on housing, community buildings and urban design.²² Targeted areas, such as Pointe-Saint-Charles, St-Henri, Marconi-Alexandra and Hochelaga²³, are being revitalized in order to improve the quality of life and become suitable for new population groups made up of university-level educated professionals with high median incomes.²⁴ A rebranding of these neighbourhoods is taking place resulting in the complete demolition or the conversion of many abandoned industrial buildings into condos or lofts.²⁵



IMAGE 13 - The neighbourhood Faubourg à m'lasse was entirely destroyed in the 1960s to make room for Radio Canada.

CREDIT: Montreal Archives



IMAGE 14 - Silo no 5, abandoned since 1994.

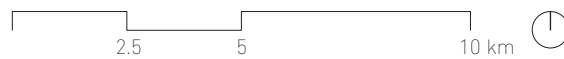
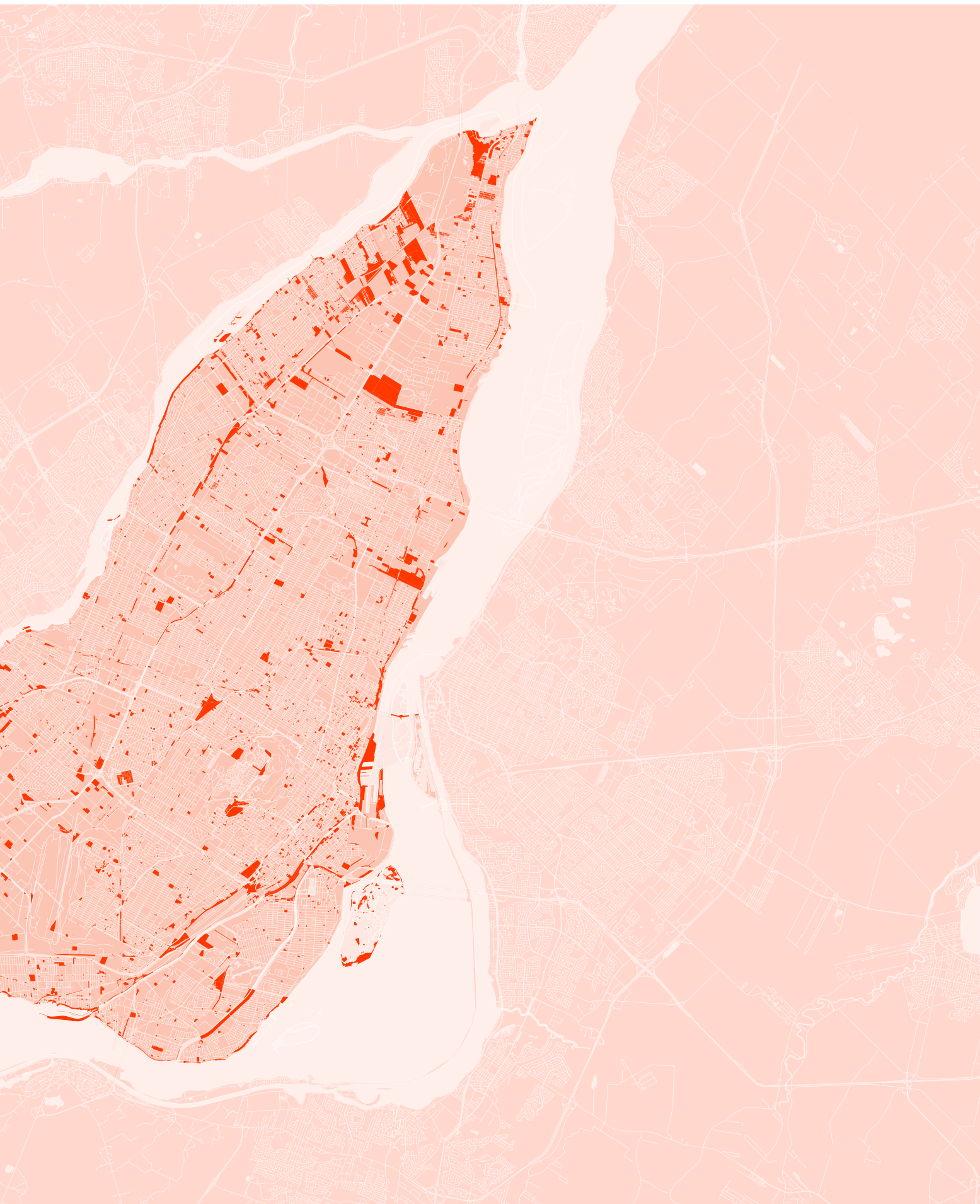
CREDIT: Etienne Lamoureux

VACANT LAND IN MONTRÉAL

Despite important real estate investments over the past two decades, a significant amount of vacant land still marks Montréal's city centre. Urban land vacancy can be explained by historic and financial causes.

Obtaining an accurate count of vacant land is a difficult task in the North American context because agreeing on a common definition can be very complicated.²⁶

The most recent vacant land count in Montréal was in 2008 and, according to the available data, the city then had a total area of 25 square kilometres of vacant land, representing roughly 12% of the island's total area.²⁷



HISTORIC CAUSES

As seen in the previous section, the post-industrial period in Montréal brought about an increase in the number of abandoned residential and industrial properties. The departure of companies and industries left the city with sizeable vacant lots and buildings, particularly along the banks of the Canal and along the railway system. Moreover, the fleeing population in former working-class neighbourhoods explains the presence of vacant lots in residential areas, where houses fell to ruin.

Montréal's urban modernization also explains the presence of vacancy. The implementation of heavy road infrastructure such as the Turcot Interchange and the Metropolitan Expressway brought about a significant amount of underutilized space. Also, because of the development of off-island suburbs on the South and North shores of the island, the island's extremities never saw the need to be

developed.²⁸ This is why important parcels of vacant land remain in the boroughs of Rivière-des-Prairies, Pointes aux Trembles, Montréal-Est and Anjou.

Furthermore, a large amount of vacant land is qualified as contaminated land.²⁹ Unfortunately, these sites, predominantly located along railways and the Canal, are heavily polluted, meaning that they can only be deemed reusable following major decontamination treatment, which would require significant investment and time. Moreover, Montréal went through a long process of reclaiming land along the banks of the Rivière des Prairies to the east, and the lac des Deux-Montagnes and lac Saint-Louis to the west. Disconcertingly, the infill of land on these sites was primarily completed through the use of waste.³⁰ Today, large amounts of these areas remain empty or underdeveloped due to the presence of polluted substances.



IMAGE 15 - Vacant land around the abandoned silos of the old Canada Malting factory.

CREDIT: Benoit

FINANCIAL CAUSES

Industrial decline and modernization are integral to the cycle of abandonment, but, at the same time, inflated values can have a similarly detrimental effect. Speculation is an inevitable element of a competitive free market and has been shown to contribute to land vacancy and abandonment.³¹ In Montréal, certain neighbourhoods, particularly traditional working class communities, have slowly shifted, welcoming new businesses and upper middle class population groups. The demographic transformation of such urban spaces gave rise to a new wave of developers who also double as speculators, landowners and entrepreneurs.³² These new players are targeting neighbourhoods that are transitioning from production to consumption spaces and attracting major urban projects that also bring considerable real estate and speculative pressure.³³

Although Montréal neighbourhoods are being transformed into vibrant urban environments and attracting major real estate investments, there is still a noticeable amount of land that remains

vacant. This can be explained in some instances by property owners who acquire and hold onto properties with the sole desire of flipping it in a few years.³⁴ In essence, these land speculators become free-riders because nearby landowners and businesses, as well as the municipal government, invest in properties and infrastructure that make the neighbourhood more desirable which, in turn, increases the value of such vacant properties.³⁵ In other words, the lot owners do almost nothing to contribute to rising property values in the neighbourhood because they tend to hold onto their property in anticipation of a profitable market-rate sale at a later time.

These vacant spaces are generally physically smaller than post-industrial abandoned sites and somewhat homogeneously dispersed throughout the urban grid. In sought after neighbourhoods, where more real estate interest is being generated, vacant properties that linger year after year are in high demand for alternative use because of their accessible location.



IMAGE 16 - Vacant lot on Sainte-Catherine street in Hochelaga neighbourhood.

CREDIT: Quartier Hochelaga



IMAGE 17 - Vacant land under the Bonaventure Expressway

NEW INITIATIVES

In the past, Montréal planning entailed controversial measures, such as the demolition of 28,000 homes in the 1960s.³⁶ Since then the city has reinvented itself and has taken a completely different approach to urban planning. The city has put effort in the streets and squares by transforming them into dynamic and lively public spaces. Today, Montréal can be described a smart, tactical and festive city.

SMART CITY

One of the newest trends involving Montréal's city planning initiatives is a push to establish Montréal as a Smart City. In December 2014, the city hosted its first Smart City Conference, which was mainly aimed at urban planners, government employees and business developers. One of the major themes discussed was how to create a smart city that is open and inclusive to the public. So far, Montréal has invested in the creation of an online database capable of sharing information about traffic, the urban environment and public participation events.³⁷ With its goal of making the city a recognizable smart city, Montréal established, in the spring of 2014, a Smart and Digital City Office. The Office has the mandate of providing a framework for five main areas of activity: urban mobility, direct services to citizens, way of life, economic development and democratic life.³⁸ Montréal's role as a Smart City is to use technology as a means to invite citizens to make their desires broadly known. By proposing more effective solutions and by launching innovative new services, which are then brought to the global market by astute investors, the city will be able to receive better citizen input.³⁹

To get the Montréal community more involved, the city launched a collaborative platform, Faire Montréal, to engage thousands of citizens in projects that enrich the social and cultural fabric of the city. Through Faire Montréal, the city capitalizes social enterprises from urban farming to art installation projects and allows dynamic and

transparent discussions between municipalities and their residents.⁴⁰ The platform invites citizens to discover over 180 projects⁴¹, monitor their results and contribute to their development. In addition, the platform allows the creation of links between individuals, encouraging them to exchange knowledge and skills, as well as organizing meetings for innovation and co-creation workshops.

In terms of vacant land, a new practice of building online tools to help citizens connect with and use empty lots in their neighbourhoods is emerging in cities around the world. In 2011, 596 Acres, a land access and advocacy organization, was established in New York.⁴² With their interactive map, the organization uses openly available governmental data to identify empty lots in New York that locals can then transform and put to better use. The organization facilitates the transformation of vacant lots and their tool allows people to connect to one another through simple social networking functions. Since its creation, the tool has been replicated in various cities in collaboration with other organizations, such as Philadelphia (Grounded in Philly), Los Angeles (LA Open Acres) and Montréal (Lande). Lande⁴³, created in 2014 for Je fais MTL, facilitates the repossession of vacant land in the city thanks to its collaborative platform which allows citizens to track down vacant spaces in their neighbourhood and demonstrate their interest in participating in its transformation process.

TACTICAL CITY

Tactical interventions are slowly becoming more apparent in Montréal. The logic is based on certain planning approaches, like tactical planning and the Open Streets and Placemaking movements, that have gained international recognition thanks to their success. Precedents from around the world have led to the elaboration of low-budget temporary interventions in Montréal. Over the past few years, the number of tactical projects has been increasing and they are repeatedly coming back every summer. Park(ing) Day⁴⁴ and 100 in 1 day⁴⁵ are both international movements. Montréal participates by encouraging locals to get involved in their cities to embellish them and help them evolve. The main objective of the transformation of spaces is to animate them in a fun and festive way, and eventually start a debate on how to optimize the usage of space. These events are an occasion to respond to the sometimes critical views of city life, and to implement the many ideas citizens can have as solutions to urban issues.

Temporary public spaces have been popping up over the last few years. Place Shamrock, Place De Castelnau and la Grande Terrasse Rouge are examples of projects that are emerging in the streets of Montréal with the objective of beautifying the streets with playful, colourful and modular installations. In 2015, Montréal released the Programme d'implémentation de rues piétonnes et partagées, which aims to create new public spaces along animated commercial arteries, parks, or public buildings and institutions in different boroughs.⁴⁶ Using a tactical urbanism approach, the city implemented five new pedestrian streets during the summer of 2016.⁴⁷ The city currently has the desire to further explore the benefits of projects implemented under this plan by documenting and promoting them as sources of inspiration, and evaluating their impacts with a before and after study.⁴⁸

FESTIVE CITY

The two largest events for which Montréal is remembered upon a global scale are the Universal Exposition of 1967 and the Olympic Games of 1976. Both events left legacies that are still physically and mentally present in the city. The main urban development undertaken for Expo 67 was the creation of the subway system, which opened in 1966 with three lines and 26 stations to accommodate the Expo's projected 50 million visitors.⁴⁹ The Olympic Games had a different impact on the city, as its short-term and rather rushed planning as a whole left Montrealers with a debt that has taken over thirty years to pay off.

Today, hundreds of events are organized every year attracting hundreds-of-thousands of Montrealers and tourists alike. The majority of these events take place on Sainte Catherine Street around Place des Arts, as well as in Old Montréal and in Jean Drapeau Park on the artificial Saint-Helen's Island. With festivals lighting up the seasonal

calendar, Montréal is Canada's cultural hub. The city's lively events close entire city blocks to traffic, and massive stages appear across town for free concerts, improvised theater and cinema.

Events are ephemeral occurrences that require temporary spaces to function. Events typically temporarily borrow properties with a permanent use, such as a carnival taking place on a parking lot for a weekend. Different permits are required for specifically zoned properties and areas to be successfully occupied by an event. Temporary events can be a one time occurrence; however, they can also be turned into recurring or even permanent events such as seasonal festivals. The strong presence of cultural activities and festivities in Montréal influences how public spaces, including streets, are being used to respond the need for cultural and social gathering spots in different parts of the city.



IMAGE 18 - Place Shamrock, a pedestrian street near Jean Talon Market.

CREDIT: Mathieu Baril



IMAGE 19 - Montréal Complètement Cirque, a 10-day festival in Quartier Latin.

CREDIT: Renaud Vinet-Houle

CONCLUSION

Given the large amount of vacant land stuck in a state of transition between old and new uses, temporary use on such lots is an ideal alternative to successful urban renewal. Temporary uses bring attention to underused and neglected spaces within the urban context and illustrate their potential. Bishop and Williams argue that temporary use may “stimulate economic activities, change the image and feel of an area, stabilise weaker neighbourhoods and reactivate vacant sites”⁵⁰. Moreover, it is an approach that can accelerate an eventual ‘permanent’ development.⁵¹

The new initiatives described above as well as an overall uncertainty regarding the future make a sound case for the implementation of formal and informal temporary projects on Montréal’s vacant land. Today, the city is witnessing a growing demand from citizens to enhance their quality of life by creating new public spaces.⁵² As a result, the incorporation of approaches other than traditional planning is an unavoidable topic for city workers and they are rapidly transforming their practice to incorporate tools that are complementary to traditional urban planning procedures.⁵³ Montréal is opening windows for temporary use, however, it has yet to be successfully incorporated into the formal planning and management of the city.

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PART 3

CASE STUDIES

Temporary uses are increasingly recognized as a means of bringing vibrancy back to blighted urban sectors and improving vacant spaces. By making use of existing resources, they offer a quick and low-cost alternative to urban reinvigoration. Part 2 demonstrates that there are opportunities to exploit vacant land with temporary use in Montréal. Montrealers are beginning to realize the immense hidden potential held within vacant spaces that linger for years. Temporary interventions on vacant lots can either be formal or informal, as well as bottom-up or top-down procedures, lasting anywhere from a couple of hours to a few years. Temporary projects vary greatly because they are inspired by the local context in which they are undertaken. Furthermore, the implementation process behind each project is unique and varies greatly, based on the actors behind its inception. For these reasons it is challenging to compare such projects with each other.

Part 3 begins with a brief explanation of the methodology used for this research, followed by three case studies illustrating the challenges regarding the implementation of temporary projects on vacant land in Montréal. Part 3 concludes by comparing each case to its specific context rather than comparing them to each other.

METHODOLOGY

METHOD

Village Éphémère, Champs des Possibles and Parc des Gorilles are the three case studies used for this research. The selection of each case study was made after conducting an initial search for temporary interventions that had been implemented in Montréal. Projects in which planners and officials had been involved as well as those carried out on publicly accessible vacant space were of particular interest. These examples expose the level of success attained by temporary projects as well as to what degree such projects have been beneficial to the physical fabric of a space.

To widen the scope of the research conducted, this study was based on a series of interviews with both citizens and professionals. The ethics of this research was reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Board (REB) Office of the McGill University Policy on the Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Human Participants and the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans and the research followed the prescribed procedures for informed consent and ethical research involving human subjects. The recruitment script, consent form, and interview guide are reproduced in the Appendix.

Interview respondents provided the framework for the temporary project in which they were involved. Individuals who had been involved in these projects were contacted via email with an official request to be interviewed for the project. Luckily, all five individuals contacted were interested and gave their consent in sharing their perspective and experience. The interviews were all conducted in person, between April and May 2016, and lasted approximately 30 to 60 minutes. With the agreement of the participants, the interviews were recorded for analytical purposes. Participants also indicated the level of confidentiality they wanted to maintain in their responses. All interviewees chose to reveal their names and agreed to be quoted directly.

An interview guide was created, containing a set of questions that was sent to the interviewee a day

before the meeting. It includes a set of general questions for all actors to answer. The guide was used to help structure the discussions but the exact wording of questions and the order in which they were asked varied depending on the topics on which the interviewees chose to focus as well as their responses. This flexibility during discussions allowed for a deviation from the script and for further clarification through more elaborate responses by the interviewees. This method allowed the interviewee to guide the conversation and discuss key elements they feel are essential for the research.

Ultimately, for each case study, interview questions focused on the process behind each project, the actors involved in their production, the roles that these actors had, the procurement of permits and permissions, the likelihood of replication of each project, and the relationship each project maintained with longer term planning processes. The interview also took into account the future of each project with regards to its transition from a temporary project to a permanent one.

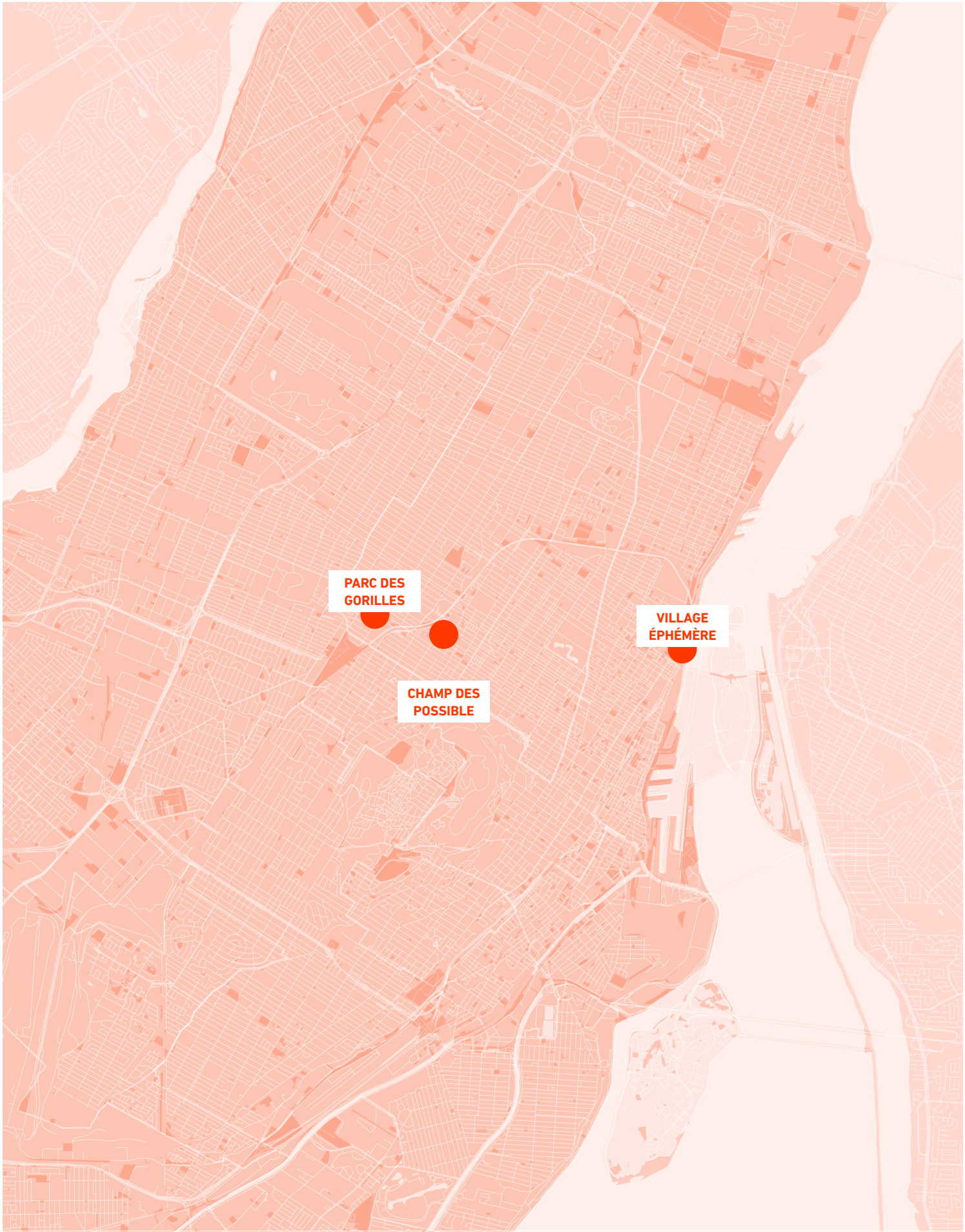
CHALLENGES

Because of limited time frame and scope of this project, it was not possible to be exhaustive in the study of temporary projects in Montréal. Projects included in this report are a sample of existing temporary projects meant to showcase the various ways in which temporary projects are being implemented in the city.

Maybe the most difficult part of this project was the practical challenge of researching a very current and growing movement. The practice of temporary use is still relatively new and evolves daily. During the course of this research, new temporary projects led by both informal and formal actors were brought to light in Montréal. To the extent possible, new articles, books, and project advancements were incorporated into this project.

CASE STUDIES

Interviews were conducted for each case study to better understand the process behind each project, the actors involved in their production and the relationship each project maintained with longer term planning processes. The aim is neither to be comprehensive nor to compare temporary use, but rather to see how these temporary projects developed and how they responded to the specific challenges of the site.



MAP 2 - CASE STUDIES



1. VILLAGE ÉPHÉMÈRE

Jérôme Glad, Project Developer at
Pépinère et Co. Interviewed on May 5,
2016.

2. CHAMP DES POSSIBLES

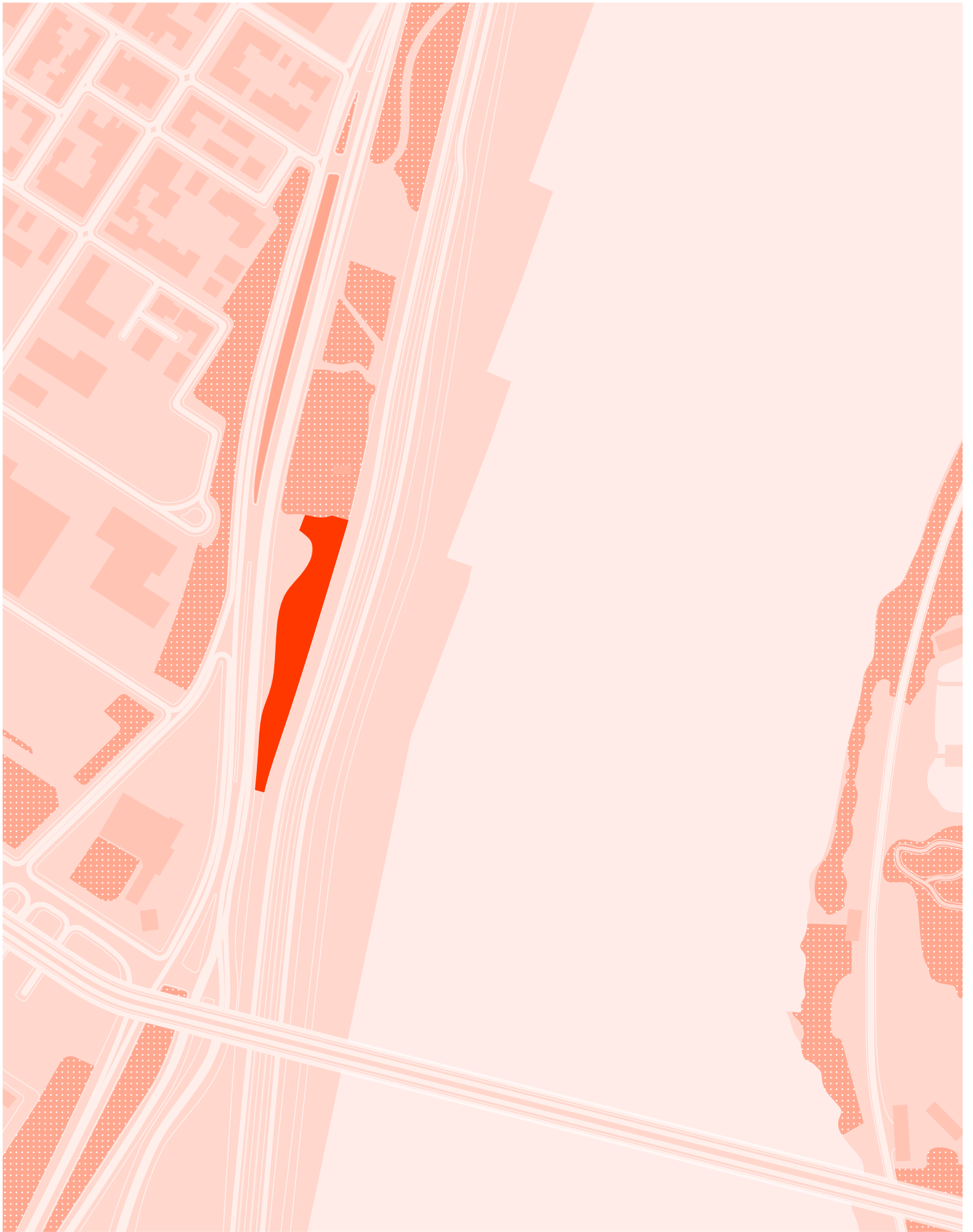
Caroline Magar-Bisson, Development
Coordinator at Champ des Possibles.
Interviewed on May 25, 2016.

3. PARC DES GORILLES

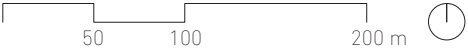
Frances Foster, Board Member of Gorilla
Park. Interviewed on May 4, 2016.

Trevor Goring, Board Member of Gorilla
Park. Interviewed on May 4, 2016.

Mikael St-Pierre, Urban Planner and
Assistant Director at Soder. Interviewed
on June 15, 2016.



MAP 3 - VILLAGE ÉPHÉMÈRE



VILLAGE ÉPHÉMÈRE



TYPE OF USE: Festive



LOCATION: The Fullum snow disposal site in the Sainte-Marie neighbourhood, south of Notre-Dame Street and east of de Lorimier Avenue.



SITE OWNERSHIP: Ministry of Transportation of Quebec



TIME: Summer 2013-2014-2015-2016



GOALS: Bringing people together in a common living environment; inviting designers to participate in the creative process and co-build the site; giving visual access to the Saint Lawrence River and the Jacques Cartier Bridge; contributing in the effort of making Montréal a creative city.

In 2013, the ADUQ (L'Association du Design Urbain du Québec) had the intention of implementing a project that aimed to transform an abandoned site into an animated venue called "Village Éphémère". Jérôme Glad, former member of ADUQ and Project Developer at Pépinière et Co., explains that the purpose of the project was "to attract locals to lesser-known and underused parts of the city as a way for them to discover the potential of neglected land." In 2013, the ADUQ intervened on a vacant lot at the edge of the Peel Basin. For years the site faced major development challenges because physical barriers created by the Bonaventure Expressway and the train tracks isolated the site. The site's potential, however, lay in the vistas it had of both the downtown core and the lower city's industrial past (the Lachine Canal, Farine Five Roses and the Silo 5). The transformation consisted of an installation garden, comprising twenty pavilions designed and built by local designers, as well as food trucks and a bar. Visitors were encouraged to walk, bike or take public transport to the site, as no vehicular parking was made available. This pilot project weakened the notion of inaccessibility associated with the site. In one night, from 5 p.m. to 11 p.m., Peel Basin's ephemeral village received about 900 visitors. Jérôme expressed how overwhelming it was to spend so much time on preparing a project that disappeared a few hours after being implemented.

The success of a one evening event at the Peel Basin led to a two-month long project throughout the summer of 2014. That year, the site selected for the venue was a vacant lot facing the Saint Lawrence River, just steps away from the Jacques Cartier Bridge, called Pied-du-Courant. The pillars of the bridge actually sit on and become a part of the Pied-du-Courant landscape, where decades ago, houses were torn down and never rebuilt. During the winter months, the lot is used as a snow disposal site, but remains vacant throughout the rest of the year. The feeling of the site is of isolation from the neighbourhood. It is intersected by the bridge and the industrial railway tracks. Moreover, the lot's absence of programming and purpose

discourages many from crossing over into the area. However, the creation of the Village Éphémère animated this desolate landscape and transformed it from an abandoned space to a festive place for the masses.

The 2014 Village Éphémère was spatially designed as a continuous promenade where multiple pavilions are organized to face a central multifunctional space, framing views upon the river, La Ronde Amusement Park and the dazzling fireworks of the Festival de l'International des Feux Loto-Québec. Twenty teams, supported by a crowd funding were chosen to carry out their design intentions. It was crucial that each installation could easily be dismantled to further emphasize the transitory nature of the project. ADUQ and Pépinière & Co. assured the management of the space and the programming of the events, while Les AmiEs du Pied-du-Courant, an association of local citizens, ensured access to the river in Centre-Sud, and other collaborators worked together to re-activate the Pied-du-Courant. The two-month long event was a success in attracting people in positive and never before seen ways. The Village was open Thursday through Sunday, from June until August, with free admission, and it allowed citizens to enjoy local gastronomy, beverages, music, a sandy beach, vistas and various installations.

Although the intention was to recreate the Ephemeral Village on different under-used spaces in the city every year, the snow disposal site received so much positive feedback and generated so much public interest, that the event, led by Pépinière et Co. and under the name Village au Pied-du-Courant, became recurrent, launched throughout summer 2015 and 2016. Thus, the efforts of Pépinière & Co., the Ville-Marie Borough and its residents, as well as various designers, architects and artists, means the Pied-du-Courant lot can be reclaimed year after year by users as a playful site for creation, experimentation and leisure.



IMAGE 20 - Village au Pied-du-Courant in Sainte-Marie neighbourhood.

CREDIT: Andréanne Gremen



MAP 4 -CHAMP DES POSSIBLES



CHAMP DES POSSIBLES



TYPE OF USE: Public green space



LOCATION: Former St-Louis Rail Yard. South-west of Canadian Pacific Railway tracks, between the streets de Gaspé and Henri-Julien, in the Mile End neighbourhood.



SITE OWNERSHIP: City of Montréal



TIME: 2000s until present



GOALS: Protecting the green plot of land by formally zoning it as a 'green space' and maintaining it as a public space for informal usage.

Champ des Possibles is an abandoned green lot in Mile End, between the Canadian Pacific Railway Tracks and St-Viateur. It is bordered to the north-east by Avenue Henri-Julien and an active Carmelite convent, and, to the south, by textile manufacturing plants built in the 1960s which have today been transformed into residential lofts. Rue Bernard forms the western edge of the site, and the landscape is terminated where the overpass, the train tracks and the ruderal landscape meet. The site is an irregular shaped polygon of approximately 9,000 square meters that was leftover following the construction of the transcontinental railway and the St-Louis Rail Yard, which was active for seventy-five years. In the 1980s the site fell into disuse after a long process of deindustrialisation. Over time, the rank, oil-saturated earth slowly turned green and fragrant as flora from across the country and even across the world took root and proliferated. Today, the site is known for its rich biodiversity of seasonal species of flora and wildlife.

At the turn of the millennium, hundreds of artists and young professionals settled in the Mile End. The arrival of this new population triggered a long process of informal appropriation of the vacant land by the community. Caroline Magar-Bisson, Development Coordinator at Champ des Possibles, explains how “the un-programmed character of the site and its rich biodiversity captured the imagination and hearts of nearby residents, as well as artists, urban naturalists and activists.” Over the past decade, many people have poured life into the site by using it for ecological, cultural and social engagements. The local community has been using Champ des Possible as a festive, recreational and artistic canvas, a nature interpretation site, as well as a pedestrian transit corridor between the Mile End and Rosemont. It is the scene for a growing number of practices and experiments, some permanent and others temporary, that can be seasonal, organized or spontaneous initiatives.

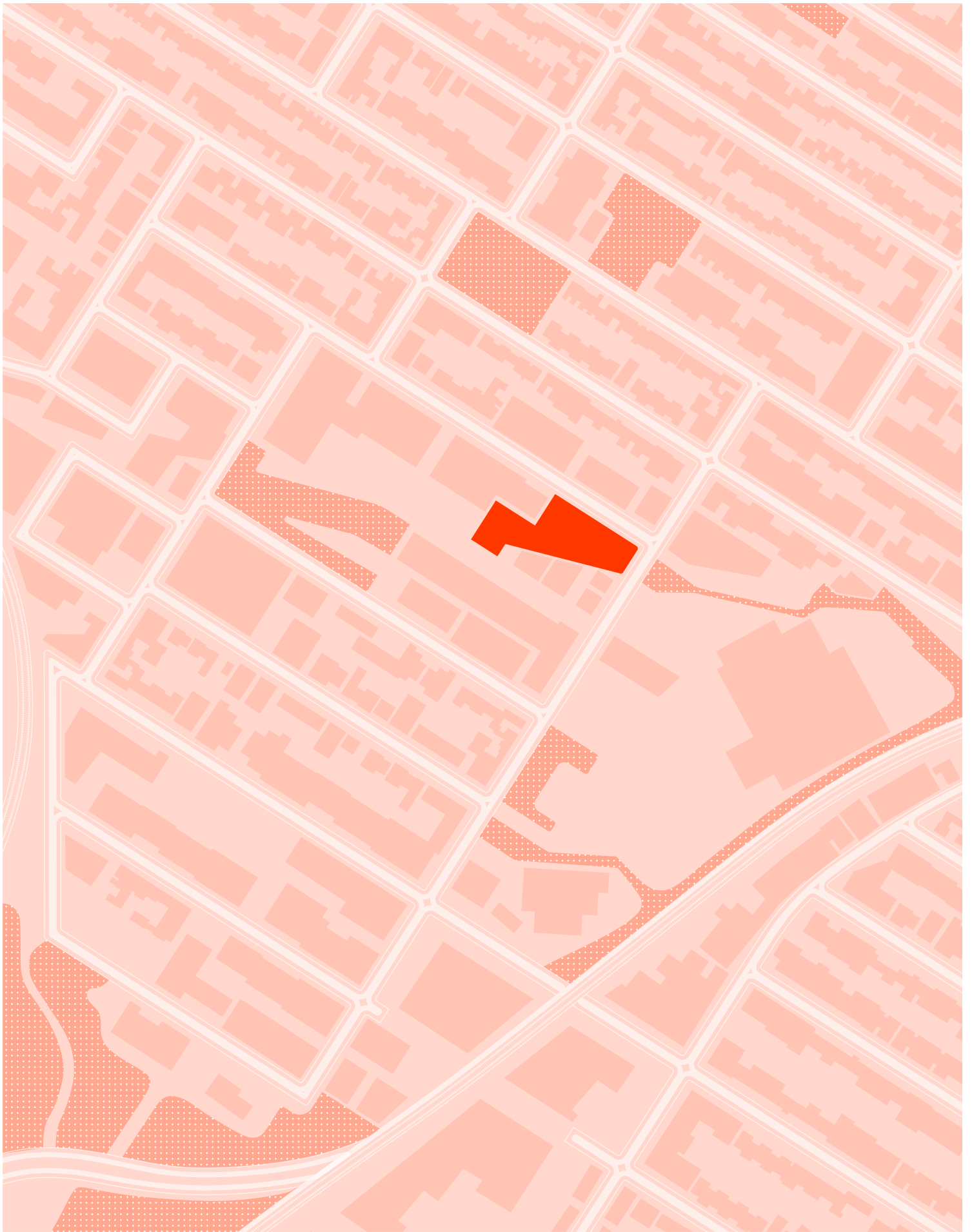
This open wild green space was at risk many times over the past decade of being lost because

of high demand developable land. In 2006, the City announced the revitalization of the Mile End east sector and had plans to transform Champ des Possible into a city truck yard and storage space for public infrastructure. The City did not take into account the need for green space in the area. The threat to the field as an open space resulted in the mobilization of community residents. Members of the Mile End's citizens' committee opposed the city's development plans. In 2008, the City of Montréal bought the land for Canadian Pacific Railway. However, the aim behind the acquisition of the land was to expand the street grid for residential use by building new road infrastructure. This only intensified the community's cries for protection of the area. Following many years of lobbying and public outreach, a citizen-led group named Les Amis du Champ des Possible succeeded in having a section of the site officially preserved as a green space in 2013. In addition, the Plateau borough adopted an innovative new co-management plan, which directly involved Les Amis du Champ des Possible in the maintenance and organization of the public space. Caroline explains that what made this space unique was to have it seen not as a park, but “to have it zoned as a ‘green space’ for free usage”. Today, Champ des Possible, as indicated in its name, is a space with no defined function, allowing it to become whatever its citizens need it to be. It is an urban laboratory that welcomes experimentation and opens up a new interpretation of what long devalued post-industrial sites can become.



IMAGE 21 - Movie night at Champ des Possibles.

CREDIT: Maia Iotzova



MAP 5 -PARC DES GORILLES



PARC DES GORILLES



TYPE OF USE: Public green space



LOCATION: North-West of corner Beaubien and St-Urbain in the Marconi-Alexandra neighbourhood



SITE OWNERSHIP: Olymbec Group



TIME: Summer 2014-2015



GOALS: Restoring a plot of land into a natural urban space and developing a public park managed by and with the participation of the Marconi-Alexandra community.

Parc des Gorilles is a vacant asphalted plot of land used as a makeshift parking lot, like so many others in cities across the continent. The area's relevance lies in its past and in the strong community interest in seeing it converted into a neighbourhood friendly green space. Up until 2012, the space was an untamed oasis lined with mature trees and shrubs, highly valued by the Marconi-Alexandra residents as, apart from Mozart Park, one of the only green spaces in the area. The name Parc des Gorilles was adopted by Frances Foster, a local resident and artist who frequented the wasteland for over 20 years, referring to the wild "jungle-looking" character of the space.

In response to the growing need for green space in an area which is rapidly transitioning from an industrial to a community oriented residential sector, the city opted to push forth the idea of having a park on the abandoned plot, formerly owned by Canadian Pacific Railway, in the *Plan de développement urban économique et sociale* (PDUES) 2012. However, this proposal encountered a major obstacle when, in May 2013, the lot's new landowners, Olymbec Group, one of the largest private industrial real estate holding companies in Eastern Canada, illegally rid the site of all its greenery, including over 50 mature trees. Within a few weeks, Olymbec had completely transformed this wild oasis into a heat island, without obtaining the permission to do so or the permit required to proceed with future development. Frances described it being a "horrific" event.

The event brought elected officials to intervene and place the land on reserve in order to come to a mutual agreement with the property owners. If an agreement is not reached by 2017, "the city will might proceed with the expropriation of the lot", says Mikael St-Pierre, Urban Planner. He explains that the intention behind the reserve was to forbid any construction or acquisition of building permits in order to restore the site for Montréal's 375th anniversary. The residents who were formerly attached to the once green space came

together, and their voices were heard. "Up to 50 locals reunited to express the anger caused by the destruction of Parc des Gorilles", says Trevor Goring, local resident and artist. The community worked with the municipality for nearly a year on the co-management of the future park which resulted in the creation of Les Amies du Parc des Gorilles, a non-profit organization made up of residents dedicated to the community re-appropriation and re-planting of the park.

As the city waits to acquire possession of the lot, a recent wave of activism has shed light upon the situation and the possibility for the site to accommodate temporary interventions. Residents, organizations, architects, designers and students have expressed their visions for the future park by temporarily occupying the site with their installations. In August 2013, the architecture firm Atelier Barba, along with other organizations, accompanied a group of urban agriculture students to build a mobile urban farm that was spontaneously installed on the large graveled land. On May 20th 2014 and 2015, ADUQ, in collaboration with local organizations, occupied Parc des Gorilles by inviting people to join them for a special picnic to highlight the successful mobilization of the community; community members had obtained the decree from the borough of Rosemont La Petite-Patrie for the land reserve and the formal commitment to create a park in co-management with the community. As for the residents of Marconi-Alexandra, they occupied the site with installations such as vegetable bins during the summer of 2014, in order to highlight the 100 in 1 day Montréal, an event showcasing citizen activism aimed at reclaiming the city. The installations remained for over a year until Olymbec sent a notice putting an end to the temporary project and asking that all installations be removed within five days. Frances, who received the notice from Olymbec, clarifies that it was for security and sanitary reasons. Ever since, citizens have been waiting for the city to complete the process of acquiring the land.

There are "high hopes for the future of the site", says Mikael. He explains how The Société de développement environnemental de Rosemont (Soder), a local organization, and the municipality have the intention of intervening in Marconi-Alexandra by changing the landscape and replanting in accordance with the PDUES objectives. The project put forward, Chemin Vert, is a green corridor of approximately 1.2 km in length, located along the former Canadian Pacific Railway tracks that once connected the Jean-Talon train station to the Mile-End. "One of the most sought after and important sites along this corridor is the Parc des Gorilles." The Soder aims to have public consultations beginning in 2017, in order to come up with a vision that reflects the citizens' desires. While likely exhausting, the process will result in definition of the degree to which the Parc des Gorilles is a necessary communal green space in this fast developing neighbourhood.



IMAGE 22 - Community garden on Parc des Gorilles

CREDIT: Le Devoir

CONCLUSION

Despite the increasing popularity of temporary projects, there are no established models for their implementation. Formal temporary projects are much more complex endeavours to execute than is generally assumed. They have yet to procure themselves a formal place within the wider planning system, which means that each project needs to be negotiated on a case by case basis. Much depends on the will and talent of the actors initiating these projects. In addition, classifying and identifying examples of temporary usage can be difficult because their varying functions and a definition of temporary ranging from hours to years. Despite their uniqueness, a number of common themes were drawn from the case studies.

With regards to this research, the most important distinction to be made lies between the short, event-like temporary projects which last but a few hours and the longer ones lasting many years. Shorter projects allow for more experimental interventions with public spaces, because the commitment on the part of the stakeholders required for a project lasting only a few days is relatively low. Longer-term projects remain in place long enough to become more established in the local area and for communities to begin to grow around them, making it more difficult for them to disappear. When implementing a temporary project, citizens must keep in mind that it is in the project's nature to eventually be taken down, unless legal procedures to render the project permanent are put into place, similar to what was done for the Champ des Possible.

This ambiguity with regards to the duration of a project is another reason behind the reservations that many property owners maintain towards the idea of allowing their lot to be used for temporary use. Other concerns on the part of property owners include the possibility that temporary users will not vacate the property when asked to do so, as well as a feeling that it is simply less of a hassle to leave the site empty. Liability and safety are other concerns that can prompt property owners to block the reappropriation of their vacant space, as they can be held liable if someone becomes injured.

A further challenge lies in the complexities of land ownership. Vacant lots may appear to be a single open space but, in reality, they are comprised of many land parcels owned by various entities. Unfortunately, Montréal does not have an updated record of vacant land and this lack of information causes uncertainty and confusion as to who owns what. This shortage of data can be problematic for lots that have a long and varying history of vacancy and can sometimes lead to mistakes, as seen in all three case studies. Looking at Village Éphémère, land ownership was an obstacle in the completion of their 2014 temporary project in Saint-Marie. Jérôme Glade, Project Developer at Pépinière et Co. explains that they applied for city-funding to begin the project in collaboration with the city, on a city-owned piece of land. The request was accepted and the site in question was to become Village Éphémère for the summer. However, "a month before the village's inauguration, the organizers, as well as the City, were surprised to learn that the site was in fact owned by the provincial Ministry

of Transportation". Mistakes such as these could be avoided if the City kept updated records of the landownership of neglected land.

The long term effects of temporary projects tend to be relatively intangible, but can nonetheless be very significant. They can help improve the image and feel of an area as well as build relationships between the actors and the citizens involved. Because temporary projects rely so heavily on the interaction and the strength of the relationships formed between the actors involved, a major benefit of such outcomes is the professional networking created which is often re-activated for future projects. Temporary projects allow a dialogue to be started which can allow discussions with a range of stakeholders in a situation that requires a much lower level of commitment than a permanent project.

These projects are also meant to become important spaces for locals and can serve as focal points for community activities. Ideally, there would be initiatives set up to provide new community spaces when a temporary project comes to an end, as well as funding for continued activities, so that the benefits of these projects can be maintained.

There are a growing number of positive precedents of temporary use outside of Montréal. Such case studies of temporary uses would be very valuable for a deeper analysis on the subject, and would be recommended for any further research.

PART 4

GUIDEBOOK

The Guidebook is meant to be a separate document that stands on its own. The Guidebook is designed for use by citizens and professionals wanting to start a temporary project on a vacant land.

VACANT TO VIBRANT

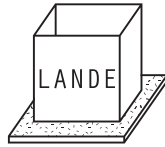
THE GUIDEBOOK



VACANT TO VIBRANT THE GUIDEBOOK

Written by Eadeh Attarzadeh
Under the supervision of Dr. Lisa Bornstein
Montréal, Canada 2016

The Vacant to Vibrant Guidebook was prepared as part of a larger supervised research project during my Master in Urban Planning degree at the McGill School of Urban Planning (2016).



LANDE is an organization that facilitates the repossession of vacant lands in Montréal by its citizens for permanent or temporary usage. Since 2014, the organization has been helping reveal the potential of underused spaces in order to enhance the quality of life in Montréal's neighbourhoods.

Their mission is to offer an interactive map that identifies the vacant land in Montréal which allows citizens to demonstrate their interest in participating in the transformation of an unused space into a used space. The map helps to form groups of citizens and the organization accompanies them in the process of realizing their project with services in mobilization, project management, and negotiation.

Lande believes that citizens can and should contribute to the transformation of their environment. They help neighbours form connections with their city in order to create communities that are more livable and inclusive.

www.landeMTL.com

THE GUIDEBOOK **(P. 6)**

STEP 01. GETTING STARTED **(P. 8)**

STEP 02. ENGAGING THE LOCAL COMMUNITY **(P. 11)**

STEP 03. CO-CREATING A PROJECT **(P. 16)**

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GET INSPIRED **(P. 27)**

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THE GUIDEBOOK



Vacant sites can be found all over the city. They are often abandoned or neglected spaces that linger for years, waiting to get developed. Although some may consider these spaces as eyesores, vacant land actually holds great potential. With some enthusiasm and creativity, unused spaces can easily be temporarily transformed into used spaces.

Empty spaces are ideal sites for temporary projects that are quick, do-able, low-cost, and short-term. Get a few people from your community together and personally involve yourselves in shaping your neighbourhood by building a project together. Temporary projects are amazing things: they make better use of urban space, they quickly respond to community needs and they have the ability to turn strangers into neighbours.

This guidebook will point you in the right direction by providing general steps and information to successfully create your own temporary project on vacant land. While this guidebook tries to be as comprehensive as possible, there is no one size fits all process. Each project will be unique and have to be adapted to its local context. This guidebook should be used as a point of assistance, but feel free to deviate from it as needed; each project is different! The guidebook envisions projects that are small-scale and community based. This should not limit your imagination, ambition, or adaptation of these resources. If you want to plan a large scale project, DO IT! Take the resources provided here, alter them, improve them, and develop the best temporary use project you can. Your project will build better places to live, stronger neighbourhoods and a better tomorrow.

*TEMPORARY
PROJECTS ARE
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NEIGHBOURS.*

TEMPORARY USE ON THE RISE





STEP 01

GETTING STARTED

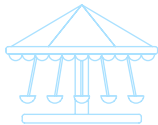


We all refer to the places we reside in different ways. From streets to blocks, neighbourhoods to communities, the places we call home vary in size, diversity, urban form and vibrancy.

Just like the places we call home, a temporary use project can take on many different forms. The first step in implementing a temporary use project on vacant land involves two components: an idea and a vacant site. There is no preferred order to a successful outcome, but it is important to consider what type of temporary use is suitable in a given space.

IDEA

Start by identifying the need and decide on a general idea. This can be almost anything! Note that initiators do not necessarily need to have a fully developed concept at this stage. The project will take shape once discussions with other actors commence.



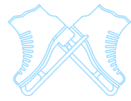
PLAYGROUND



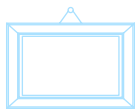
COMMUNITY GARDEN



WILDLIFE AREA



ICE-SKATING RINK



EXHIBITION SPACE



WORKSHOP SPACE



EVENT SPACE



AND MORE!

VACANT LOT

Every vacant space has specific components that influence the suitability of a temporary use project. Before the work can be done, a basic understanding of the site and the community is necessary.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER INCLUDE:

- ▶ What is the current ownership situation of the land?
- ▶ How long has the land been underutilized or vacant?
- ▶ Are there any obvious reasons why the land is empty?
- ▶ What is the soil quality of the land?
- ▶ Is there a significant threat to user safety?
- ▶ Does the land have any upcoming development plans?
- ▶ Does the municipality have any future plans for the space?

A GOOD PLACE TO START LOOKING FOR ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS INCLUDES:

- ▶ Asking your neighbours
- ▶ Consulting Lande's Vacant Land Interactive Map: landeMTL.com
- ▶ Consulting the City's online assessment roll: servicesenligne2.ville.montreal.qc.ca/sel/evalweb/index
- ▶ Calling the City's information line, 3-1-1

STEP 02

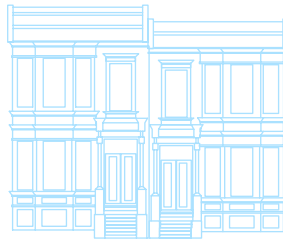
ENGAGING THE LOCAL COMMUNITY



By bringing together interested actors from a variety of backgrounds, an effective team can be created to implement a temporary use project. It is important to seek input from your community during the early planning stages of a project to encourage a greater participation and building enthusiasm.

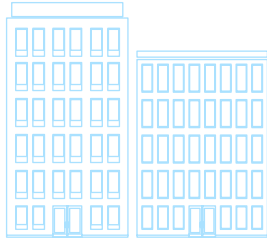
KEY ACTORS

Identifying actors capable of helping in the planning of events and projects is crucial. Be inclusive – anyone can potentially become partners in the project's implementation, such as volunteers, sponsors and collaborators. Meet people you have never met and make strong connections!



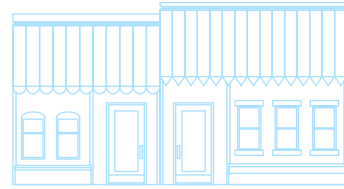
FRIENDS & NEIGHBOURS

The easiest way to begin the process is by engaging those around you. Residents can provide information about the changes they have witnessed and the assets they have lost or are in need of. Invite your neighbours to local meetings and exchange ideas. Ask them what kind of improvements they would like to see in their neighbourhood. Encourage them to invite their friends and neighbours. There is strength in numbers



INDIVIDUAL EXPERTS

Professional experts such as architects, urban planners, landscape architects, designers and artists can help with creative design ideas, technical expertise and drawings.



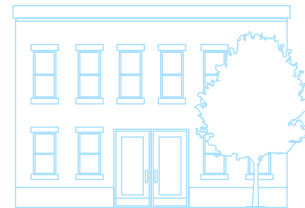
STORES & BUSINESSES

Local shops and offices can be great resources. They can be pulled into the temporary use project for their creativity in the development phase, as well as for providing goods and services.



CITY WORKERS

Bringing in a key municipal official early on in the process can provide your project with invaluable experience related to the ins-and-outs of dealing with the City. It is always beneficial to be forthcoming and transparent with local officials about the project, as they should feel involved in the process. Often, these individuals have proven to be very supportive and participated constructively in the development and implementation of temporary use projects.



ORGANIZATIONS

Getting in touch with local community groups and nonprofits is crucial when initiating developments. They can provide assistance in having a legal and organizational framework throughout the process. This may include lease contracts with owners, official permits and political and administrative support. They can also provide funding, expertise and programming, as well as promote your project through their networks.



COMMUNICATION



Communication is vital to the success of a temporary use project. Initiators should be open and transparent with their intentions and circulate any information they have.

STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING A WIDE ARRAY OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS INCLUDE:

- ▶ Using social media and social networking sites to quickly connect with people and share ideas on a large platform.
- ▶ Using graphic announcements, such as posters and flyers. Be pragmatic - not all residents have online access.
- ▶ Holding public meetings and open information sessions to allow the community to personally meet the project initiators and organizers.

STEP 03

CO-CREATING A PROJECT





CO-CREATION WORKSHOP



Get together with key community groups, exchange ideas for the vacant site and co-create projects together. This does not have to be formal; it can be as simple as getting a few people together in someone's living room. This step is easy and fun. All you need is paper, markers and creativity!

It's important to know that not all individuals will have the same ideas for the site. Consider having a strong point person to mediate discussions and lead the effort during this process. Do not think that only professionals can play this role: you can do it too!

Write a short report that summarizes the results. This document should include the vision for the vacant space, graphic representations, goals, priorities, partners and maintenance plan.



TAKE IT TO THE COMMUNITY



Now that you have completed some of the initial concept work, take it to your broader community to get their feedback and ideas! A public event in the space you'd like to change works best.

Consider creating a presentation of the report that can be shared with the community. This can be done through social media, by creating a website, a poster or another visual tool. Think of a presentation as a visual tool that can be used to market your public space improvement efforts to potential partners, political supporters, funders, and community residents.

STEP 04

THINGS TO CONSIDER





NEGOTIATION



Reaching an agreement can be an exhaustive process when many actors with different views are involved in the collaborative process of temporary use projects on vacant land. When negotiating with landowners, demonstrate the benefits attached to the project and reach an agreement that will make everyone happy.

Although temporary usage projects have generally been shown to be financially beneficial for landowners, there are a few reasons behind an owner's unwillingness to partake in negotiations:

- ▶ Concerns over a temporary use project becoming permanent
- ▶ Holding the property back from being developed by a more profitable project
- ▶ Liabilities related to safety and security concerns
- ▶ Lack of motivation fueled by the belief that it is 'easier' to leave the land vacant

For this part of the process, Lande and city officials can be a valuable resource to the successful completion of negotiations. Acquiring the landowner's agreement is necessary in order to avoid any form of eviction or destruction of the temporary use project.



LEGAL FRAMEWORK



This step is necessary to formally implementing a temporary project on vacant land and Lande can offer their services to insure that the legal framework is done properly. The required legal documents will vary depending on the land's ownership situation and the desired actions related to the project.

Land can be publicly or privately owned. In both cases, co-managing the space can become an effective way of delegating responsibilities to many actors involved!

PUBLICLY OWNED LAND



For publicly owned parcels of land, an order from the municipality is necessary to temporarily waive regulations attached to the site. You will also be required to get permits depending on your project, such as the planning of events, having live music, and selling food or alcohol. This is why maintaining a healthy relationship with city officials is crucial. The modalities of what can be done without a permit can vary and are very site specific.

PRIVATELY OWNED LAND



For privately owned lots, specific permits are also required but getting permission to use the land is vital. Private landowners will want to be released from all liabilities related to the safety and security of the site. Getting insurance is an easy way of liberating the landowners, the city and yourself from such liabilities.



FUNDING



Plan smart and affordably. Initiators generally need to be willing to put in a certain amount of time in order to see the successful outcome of a project. This work is usually unsolicited, as it can be difficult for initiators to receive sponsorships and pay themselves.

However, receiving goods and services based sponsorships are easier to come by. They can include the land itself, building materials, waived fees or pro bono work. Structures and installations can be built very cheaply, from low cost, reclaimed or even donated materials. Talk to your neighbours, local organizations, businesses and resource centres. There are many different people and organizations that will be more than willing to help out with resources and supplies. Be sure to solicit help from local social networks as well. Don't be afraid to ask!

It is important to thank everyone involved in the execution of a project. In return, publicity can be offered to the sponsors. Advertising can easily be done once the project is begun by putting up signs on site or even by including the sponsors' logo in visual communication tools.

STEP 05

BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL PROJECT





DO THINGS THAT ARE REVERSIBLE

Implementing projects that are reversible and that can easily be removed ensures landowners that the project is not permanent. Often times, if a project is easily implementable, it will have a greater ability to be realized and get off ground.



SHARE EXPERTISE

Implementing projects that are reversible and that can easily be removed ensures landowners that the project is not permanent. Often times, if a project is easily implementable, it will have a greater ability to be realized and get off ground.



BE TRANSPARENT

No one wants to be left in the dark. Be open and share your intentions, as it ensures constant support from all actors and neighbourhood residents. Clear communication is always key!



4

BE PATIENT

Keep in mind that interruptions of any kind can stall your project from getting off the ground. They can be associated with legal interruptions, licencing disputes or delays in planning approvals and agreements between actors. Implementing projects takes time and requires patience and a willingness to learn along the way.



5

BE CREATIVE

It is important to highlight do-able, low-cost actions that are easy. The perk of temporary use projects is that you can experiment with new, low risk ideas. Step outside the box and explore new possibilities. Don't hesitate in being different and inspiring.



6

HAVE FUN

Doing projects that bring more enjoyable spaces to a neighbourhood requires a lot of personal time. However, seeing the fruit of countless hours of hard work and energy is always satisfying. Try to keep everyone engaged and entertained during the process by having fun!

**GET
INSPIRED**



PARC DES GORILLES



TYPE OF USE: Public green space

LOCATION: North-West of corner Beaubien and St-Urbain in the Marconi-Alexandra neighbourhood

SITE OWNERSHIP: Olymbec Group

TIME: Summer 2014-2015

GOALS: Restoring a plot of land into a natural urban space and developing a public park managed by and with the participation of the Marconi-Alexandra community.

FACT: Since 2013, the City placed the land on reserve to forbid any construction or acquisition of building permits in order to restore the site for Montréal's 375th anniversary.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: parcdesgorilles.net



CREDIT: Le Devoir

CHAMP DES POSSIBLES



TYPE OF USE: Public green space

LOCATION: Northern part of Mile End, former St-Louis Rail Yard.

SITE OWNERSHIP: City of Montréal

TIME: 2000s until present

GOALS: Protecting the green plot of land by formally zoning it as a 'green space' and maintaining it as a public space for informal usage.

FACT: In 2013, the Plateau borough adopted an innovative new co-management plan, which directly involved Les Amis du Champ des Possible, a citizen-led group, in the maintenance and organization of the public space.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: amisduchamp.com



CREDIT: Maia Iotzova

VILLAGE AU PIED DU COURANT



TYPE OF USE: Festive space

LOCATION: The Fullum snow disposal site in the Sainte-Marie neighbourhood

SITE OWNERSHIP: Ministry of Transportation of Quebec

TIME: Summer 2014-2015-2016

GOALS: Bringing people together in a common living environment; co-building the site with local designers; contributing in making Montréal a creative city.

FACT: The intention was to recreate an ephemeral Village on different under-used spaces in the city every year. However, the 2014 site received so much positive feedback and public interest, that the event reoccurred on the same site through summer 2015 and 2016.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: aupiedducourant.ca



CREDIT: Andréanne Gremen

ARPENT VERT



TYPE OF USE: Public space

LOCATION: In the lane, between Bourbonnière Ave. and Valois Ave.

SITE OWNERSHIP: City of Montréal

TIME: 2016 to 2019

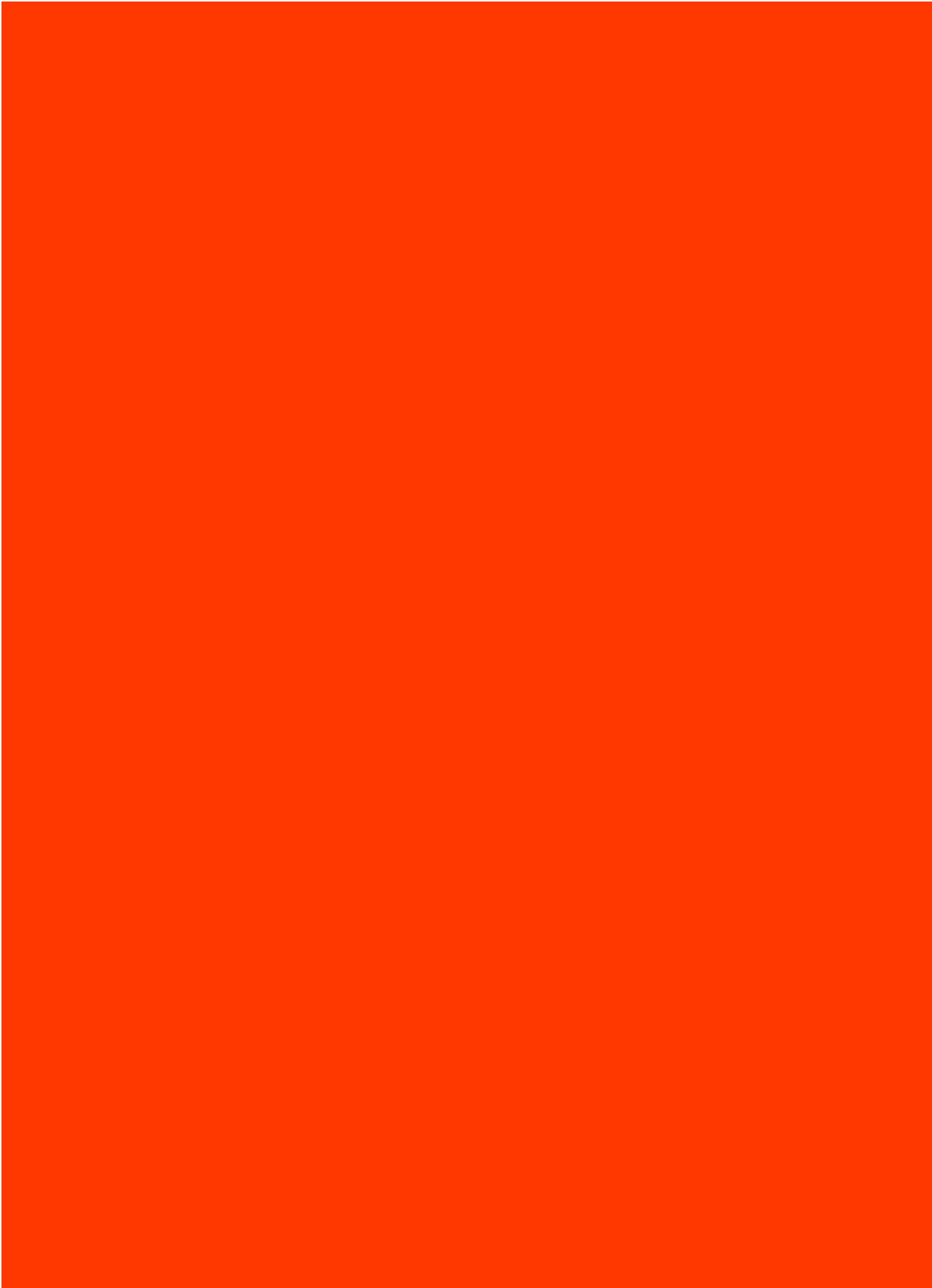
GOALS: Creating a gathering spot for the neighbours to garden, rest and socially interact with one another.

FACT: In June 2016, the Borough authorized a group of citizens to temporarily occupy the vacant lot for a period of 3 years.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Facebook Group L'Arpent Vert - Transformons Lafontaine / Valois



CREDIT: Lande



LONG TERM EFFECTS



Temporary projects rely heavily on community interaction and relationship building. Your project will initiate discussions on how to improve the image and feel of the neighbourhood. It will demonstrate that something concrete is happening, capable of changing the neighbourhood's image. Ideally, if the space remains vacant at the end of your temporary use project, there should be a dialogue advocating for the re-appropriation of the space for temporary activities, so that the benefits attached to temporary projects can be maintained.

Building a strong sense of community engagement can have a big effect on the way people view an area and on the way neighbourhoods are being shaped. Your project will prove that ordinary citizens are capable of changing urban spaces, beyond their own backyard. People like you and me have the power to see the changes we want our neighbourhoods to undergo become reality. Feeling empowered to personally shape your neighbourhood has no price and the effects are beyond temporary!

*FEELING
EMPOWERED TO
PERSONALLY
SHAPE YOUR
NEIGHBOURHOOD
HAS NO PRICE
AND THE EFFECTS
ARE BEYOND
TEMPORARY!*

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research is to create a guidebook that puts forward a process that can be applied for actively instigating temporary use on Montréal's vacant land. Temporary uses gain much of their strength through their easy and quick implementation characteristics, but after a close analysis of case studies, along with helpful inputs from other key articles, some overlapping patterns become apparent in the organization of these projects. In Part 1, the theoretical background of temporary land use and vacant land was discussed as well as an overview of the current conditions that lead to an increase in temporary projects in cities. Part 2 and 3 explore how temporary projects are gaining popularity and being implemented within the Montréal context. Temporary projects can be difficult to compare because they are so rooted in their urban context, however, common issues and findings have been drawn from these case studies.

Part 4, an analytical synthesis of Part 1 to 3, presents the overarching procedures of temporary use on vacant land that can be applied in a variety of contexts in the form of a guidebook. The Guidebook attempts to formalize a specific outline with regards to the implementation of temporary use on vacant land. This tool, designed for communal and professional use, provides the steps and information necessary to the re-activation of a vacant lot. Although written for Montréal, the Guidebook can definitely be applied to other cities. Planners and citizen groups can adapt the Guidebook to fit local conditions. With creative and appropriate tools and practices, cities can turn city data on particular pieces of land into information that enables and inspires citizens to create communal spaces together with their neighbours.

The emergence of short-term, pop-up interventions is becoming a staple in urban life, as people enjoy the immediacy of the temporary. The ephemeral is beginning to solidify its existence within the urban realm - something which was formerly inconceivable. More than ever, citizens have the power to let their input be heard and become proactive actors in the shaping of their cities. Temporary use allows city building to become an organic process rooted in the needs and desires of the community. This practical approach gives people the power to dictate the changes they see developing in their city.

This research hopes to inspire a move away from stagnation often associated with vacant land and to assist readers in seeing the potential associated with creative solutions and collaborative community work. Although these actions do not solve the large-scale issues of most cities, temporary use projects do engage in filling the voids created by vacant land and bridging the gaps left in the urban fabric. Most importantly, the empowerment of communities through a personalized shaping of their urban environment has no price, and its effects are far from temporary.

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INTERVIEWS

Caroline Magar-Bisson, Development Coordinator at Champ des Possibles. Interviewed on May 25, 2016.

Frances Foster, Board Member of Gorilla Park. Interviewed on May 4, 2016.

Jérôme Glad, Project Developer at Pépinière et Co. Interviewed on May 5, 2016.

Mikael St-Pierre, Urban Planner and Assistant Director at Soder. Interviewed on June 15, 2016.

Trevor Goring, Board Member of Gorilla Park. Interviewed on May 4, 2016.

APPENDIX

INTERVIEW RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Cher(ère) _____,

Je m'appelle Eadeh et je complète ma maîtrise en urbanisme à l'université McGill. Sous la supervision de Professor Lisa Bornstein, je suis présentement en train de faire une recherche sur l'usage temporaire et les terrains vacants à Montréal. Mon projet souhaite développer un guide de transformation de terrains vacant en usage temporaire. Le guide, autant désigné pour les citoyens que pour les professionnels, offrira les étapes à suivre pour implanter un projet temporaire sur un terrain vacant. Il permettra de faciliter l'accompagnement citoyenne en offrant les informations nécessaires sur le processus de mobilisation, de réglementation, ainsi que le rôle des différents acteurs.

Je vous écris dans l'optique d'avoir votre implication de ma recherche. Le Champ des Possibles fait parti de mes études de cas et votre rôle dans le développement de ce projet est la raison pour laquelle je vous écris. Je suis particulièrement intéressée à connaître davantage sur comment vous avez initié votre projet, les démarches du processus d'implantation et les obstacles confrontés.

L'entrevue prendra que 30 minutes et pourrait prendre place à un endroit qui vous conviendra le mieux. Je suis disponible par courriel et par cellulaire afin de trouver une date d'entrevue.

Merci infiniment à l'avance pour l'intérêt et le soutien que vous portez à cette recherche!

Bien cordialement,

Eadeh Attarzadeh

Master of Urban Planning Candidate at McGill University

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

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Supervisor: Lisa Bornstein
School of Urban Planning
(514) 398-4075 Fax: (514) 398-8376
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Title of Project: Vacant Land Transformation Guidebook for Montreal: A study on vacant land and temporary uses

You are invited to participate in a research study being undertaken at McGill University on the state of vacant land and temporary use in Montreal. The research will help citizens and professionals to better understand Montreal's vacant land situation. It will allow the possibility of contributing to a future in which the users of the urban realm have the power and skill to interact, adapt, and improve their environment. It will bring the opportunity to propose a different and progressive program for Montreal's vacant land. Finally, it will provide the ability to envision a revitalized Montreal where the progress of the city is in a mutually beneficial relationship with the advances of the community and its local environment.

As the lead researcher, I am a student in the Master of Urban Planning program at McGill University, working under the supervision of Professor Lisa Bornstein. The study is being conducted as part of the Supervised Research Project, which is the final requirement of the MUP program. This research project has been reviewed and approved by the McGill Research Ethics Board.

Purpose of the Study: The Research has two purposes. First is to provide the theoretical framework which will explain the main concepts, motivations, and ideas related to temporary appropriation of vacant land. This will help explore the situation of Montreal's vacant land: why they exist, how they effect the community, how people relate to them. Second is to create a vacant land transformation guide book for Montreal. This will strengthen local infrastructures, reconnect internal links and empower communities. The book can be used by citizens and professionals that want to start off a new temporary project on a vacant land. It will provide the steps to the process of transforming a lot. It will include information on identifying a lot, bringing people together, developing an idea, finding resources, and building an idea.

What would be involved in the study: Your contribution to the study would be to answer a series of questions based on your experiences and your opinion on vacant land and temporary uses in Montreal. You would also contribute on completing the information of the steps to the process of transforming a lot. The interview would be held at your convenience either by phone, Skype, email, or in person.

Time required: The interview would require 30-45 minutes of your time.

Confidentiality:

Data linked with identifying information:

If you decide to participate in this study, your responses will be treated confidentially. If you wish, no information will be given in any research report or paper that may identify you. Please select the level of confidentiality that you would like to be observed by choosing one of the following options:

Do you consent to the release of the information provided in the interview and **to be identified by name and title** in any research reports, presentations or publications arising from this research?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Do you consent to the release of the information provided in the interview **but only wish to be identified by general title and organization** in any reports, presentations or publications arising from this research?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Do you wish for all your responses to be kept confidential, **being identified only by general title indicating your level of knowledge on the subject?**

Yes ☐ No ☐

If you choose to maintain full confidentiality, your responses would be coded, stored, and presented in a manner that protects your identity. In all cases, all data related to your interview would be stored in a password-protected folder on the researcher's password protected computer. The researcher and the supervisor, Lisa Bornstein, would be the only ones with access to this information.

When the research is completed, data and signed consent forms will be kept separately in a locked cabinet at McGill for seven years following publication, as per McGill's policy on the ethical conduct of research involving human participants. It will be destroyed after this time.

Audio recording: With your permission, an audio recording of the interview will be used for transcription purposes only, and would not affect the level of confidentiality. The data would be destroyed once transcribed. Please indicate if you agree to be recorded by selecting one of the options below:

Do you agree to an audio recording being taken for transcription purposes for this study?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Voluntary participation: Your participation in this study would be completely voluntary. You would be under no obligation to participate, and you would be free to refuse to answer any question or to end the interview completely at any time, without giving a reason. In addition, you could withdraw your consent to participate in this study at any time, not just during the interview. Even after the interview, you would have the right to contact me and withdraw from the study, have your responses destroyed or withdraw a portion of your responses. If already published, you could still withdraw from future publications if you wish.

Dissemination: The research report prepared at the end of this study will be accessible at the McGill University Library. It may also be shared with planners, municipalities, community organizations, and interviewees. The research may also be published in articles for professional or scholarly journals, or be presented at professional or academic conferences. If you wish to receive a copy of the executive summary, please indicate so here.

Do you wish to receive a copy of the summary of the research findings at the conclusion of the study?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If you have questions about the study, please contact the researcher or Faculty Supervisor.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights or welfare as a participant in this research study, please contact the McGill Ethics Officer at (514) 398-6831 or lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca.

Agreement: Please sign below if you agree to participate in this study, only after having read the consent document and having received satisfactory answers to any questions you might have. If the interview is held via telephone or Skype, you will be asked to provide your consent verbally to the researcher.

Participant's Name: (please print) _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

INTERVIEW GUIDE

INTERVIEW GUIDE

VACANT LAND TRANSFORMATION GUIDEBOOK FOR MONTREAL: A STUDY ON VACANT LAND AND TEMPORARY USES

RESEARCHER: Eadeh Attarzadeh

Respondent ID: _____

Informed consent done ☐

Date & Location: _____

KEY TOPICS

1. Role of each actor in the development of temporary projects
2. Steps to the organizing and executing a temporary project
3. Character Areas: the opportunities and challenges this guidebook presents.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of my research project is to create a Guide for Vacant Land Transformation for Montréal. It will be designed for use by citizens and professionals in starting a temporary project on a vacant lot. It will provide the steps of and necessary information on the process of re-activating a lot. This guidebook, and the re-use of vacant lands for short- and medium-term projects, will strengthen local infrastructure, reconnect internal links within neighbourhoods, and empower communities.

GENERAL QUESTIONS FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS

- What was the tactical project in which you were involved?
 - What was your role in the project (leader, organizer, participant)?
 - What was the impetus for the project (what inspired the project)?
 - What were the goals?

QUESTIONS RELATED TO THE ROLE OF VARIOUS ACTORS

- Did you complete your project with support from official channels (policy makers, administrators, city planners)?
 - If yes, did you find this collaboration helpful?
- Did you research official means by which you may have completed your temporary project?
 - If yes, did you receive useful information or support for your project?
 - If no, was there a particular reason for not researching more official channels for the project?
- Did you complete your project with support from organizational actors?
 - If yes, did you find this collaboration helpful?
- Where their other actors involved in your project?
 - What was their role?

QUESTIONS RELATED TO ORGANIZING AND EXECUTING A TEMPORARY PROJECT

- What steps did you go through to obtain the permission to temporarily use the site?
- What was the attitude of the land owner toward your project?
- How long did it take to reach an agreement?
- Did you experience any barriers with respect to completing this temporary project?
 - How did you address these barriers?
- Were there any steps taken in making your project go from temporary to permanent?
- Is there anything you would like to add or any questions that I haven't asked you about that I should have? Or anyone you think I should speak with?

