



February 13th, 2020

IMAGINE WESTMOUNT 2040 Public Information Session Meeting Report

Step 1 – Process Launch
Master Plan Review Process

City of Westmount

The Art of Building Bridges

transfertconsult.ca

ROUNY-NORANDA - MONTRÉAL - QUÉBEC

SAGUENAY - SHERBROOKE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	CONTEXT	1
2.	FEEDBACK SUMMARY.....	2
2.1	Post-its	2
2.2	Citizen passports.....	3
2.3	Appreciation polls.....	5
3.	RECOMMENDATIONS	7

1. CONTEXT

The following document, prepared by Transfer Environment and Society (hereinafter TES), summarizes the community feedback obtained during Westmount’s Master Plan Review Process Launch event, held on January 29th, 2020, from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm, at Victoria Hall in Westmount. Styled as an open, informal meeting, the so-called Public Information Session had the following objectives:

1. Inform Westmount’s community of the Imagine Westmount 2040 Master Plan Review Process and obtain feedback on the Proposed Review Process in order to improve it;
2. Share with the community general information about the contents of a Master Plan and its usefulness in terms of urban planning and decision-making;
3. Encourage community interest and further participation towards the Master Plan Review Process;

Upon arrival, participants were given a document entitled *Citizen Passport* that allowed them to share their comments and ideas to the Imagine Westmount 2040 team. Post-Its and a confidential *Appreciation Poll* were also available to allow for a broader scope of feedback. As per the number of *Citizen Passports* filled out, a total of 110 citizens participated in this first event.

Broadly speaking, the event garnered a high approval rate. The confidential survey, which approximately one in three attendees answered, shows that participants gave an average response of 4.1 (on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means “Not at all” and 5 “Absolutely”) to the following question: “*Have you appreciated your participation in this first meeting dedicated to the review of Westmount’s Master Plan?*” The following table presents the results of the *Appreciation Poll*.

Table 1: Public Information Session Appreciation Poll Results

Questions	Averaged Results
<i>Have you appreciated your participation in this first meeting dedicated to the review of Westmount’s Master Plan?</i>	4.1
<i>Was the available information clear?</i>	4.77
<i>Would you say that you now have a good understanding of Westmount’s proposed Master Plan Review Process?</i>	3.9
<i>Were you able to share your comments and ideas concerning the proposed Master Plan Review Process?</i>	4.17
<i>Do you plan to participate in the proposed upcoming participatory activities?</i>	4.9
<i>Do you agree with the following statement: “A new Master Plan is essential to Westmount’s future”?</i>	4.7

From these results it is possible to deduce that:

- A majority of respondents (70 %) indicated that they appreciated the meeting and that they were able to comment the process in an effective manner;
- Approximately half of the respondents considered having a good understanding of the proposed Master Plan Review Process;
- Respondents were near unanimous in saying that the provided information was clear, that a new Master Plan was necessary and that they planned to attend the upcoming consultation activities.

2. FEEDBACK SUMMARY

The following information summarizes, per type of consultation tool, the general feedback provided by the Public Information Session participants. Commonly shared ideas, suggestions and comments were grouped together as to facilitate reading and integration into the Master Plan Review Process. For the purpose of this document, citizen feedback provided in French has been translated into English. For a full French version of the provided comments, please refer to the French version of the Meeting Report.

Of note, much of the shared feedback does not concern the Review Process, as was the meeting's aim, but rather general topics that pertain to urban planning, land development and Westmount City affairs. A summary of these comments and suggestions has also been added to this report, for consideration.

2.1 POST-ITS

The following points concern feedback relating to the Master Plan Review Process:

- General appreciation of the process and of allowing citizens to express themselves on this topic (Master Plan);
- Participants seem more interested in discussing issues than the process;
- Good process that must lead to concrete results;
- Sharing of relevant information in advance of a meeting to allow participants to prepare;
- Importance of including a wide diversity of participants throughout the process (age, socio-economic context, gender, ethnic background) to obtain a broad view of the different opinions and perceptions in Westmount;
- Importance of a broad range of consultation activities that go beyond online tools;
- Hold consultation activities where citizens gather (swimming pool, library, parks, elderly centres, etc.);
- Have consultation kiosks at various community events (ex. Family Day) in Westmount;
- Organize in-town consultation activities for families;
- Accept comments shared by phone.

The following points concern general topics that pertain to urban planning, land development and city affairs:

- Commercial streets should evolve towards the sale of local products;
- Commercial streets should aim for mixed functionality (residential/commercial/office);
- Importance of preserving local small stores and acting against rising rents;
- Consider a tax on unoccupied stores to create incentives to rent;
- Importance of topics such as adaptability, road and (elderly) pedestrian safety, lighting, household waste management, active transportation and intelligent cars, green spaces (lower Westmount), green constructions, indoor recreational facilities, street and sidewalk cleanliness and public art;
- Importance of improving existing facilities and infrastructure, especially outdoor facilities, sidewalks and roads;
- Importance of redesigning and adding new cycling paths to ensure safety;
- New public spaces with tools for the community;
- Where do we stand with the interior pool?;

- Importance of easier permitting;
- Importance of building smaller buildings that do not denature local heritage (6 to 8 floors);
- Ban the demolition of heritage buildings;
- Importance of solving local recycling issues;
- Have all property owners provide the City pictures of all four-sides of their property, new property owners should provide their pictures with the welcome tax;
- City decisions should be made in the context of the climate crisis;
- Consider establishing area-wide geothermal wells;
- Create an innovation policy;
- Consider planning successes of neighbouring cities (ex. Verdun).

2.2 CITIZEN PASSPORTS

The following points concern feedback relating to the Master Plan Review Process:

- General appreciation towards the meeting, the presentation, the process and the planned public hearings;
- Announce consultation events and share important information through local independent newspapers and flyers, not only online;
- Importance of a dynamic and open process that uses new tools (apps, social media, online forums) to reach out to a diverse segment of Westmount's population;
- Ensure that the website is kept up to date so citizens can follow the process and the various activities;
- Webcast activities so people can be informed on their own time;
- Importance of themed activities to reach out to a diverse segment of Westmount's population (ex. art activities, outdoor events, etc.);
- Hold consultations in the spring and fall to ensure participation and cohesion with Westmount Park's consultation process;
- Display public invitations in local storefronts and public spaces;
- Display consultation tools in public spaces to encourage outreach;
- Use existing communication channels to reach out to a wider audience;
- Importance that all activities and information be provided in English and French;
- Inform various ethnic groups of the process in their native language to foster participation;
- Reach out to the younger generations through schools and CEGEPS;
- Reach out to the community where they are located (religious institutions, schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, park, sports areas, community centers, homeless shelters, etc.);
- Ensure that the process is engaging and that citizens feel that they are part of a process that includes many other stakeholders. The City must also share its perspective, since public participation and cocreation can lead to problems and makes it harder to see the big picture;
- Identify community expectations and use that as a roadmap;
- Ensure diverse consultation activities (ex. brainstorm activities);
- Hold consultation activities per area, to initiate local conversations about local issues;
- Organize small group discussions during consultation activities (ex. library, Westmount Recreational Center, schools, etc.);

- Model consultation activities on the Office de Consultation Publique de Montréal (OCPM);
- Be clearer about each meeting's purpose and share event dates in advance to allow preparation;
- Serve food (ex. cookies);
- Hold shorter consultation activities to encourage more participation;
- Provide lots of information;
- Provide information on the contents of a Master Plan, so citizens can better contribute;
- Keep conversations practical when discussing urban planning topics;
- Raise awareness about the various issues Westmount faces to ensure participation;
- Present different alternatives of urban planning for comparison during discussions;
- Provide a community liaison for subsequent follow-ups and to answer citizen questions;
- Share consultation results promptly, honestly and transparently;
- Ensure ongoing communications and follow-ups after consultations to explain decisions;
- Importance of undertaking actions once discussions are over;
- How will the Genivar traffic study of a few years ago be integrated into the Master Plan?;
- How can the community be ensured that the Master Plan is not sidelined with every new Council?;
- Worry that the consultation process is an empty process, as everything will be decided behind closed doors;
- How will the process be held accountable to the community?;
- Ensure the Master Plan responds to new realities;
- Rely on known experts to explain issues to the community;
- Avoid low-quality activities such as the Commercial Streets survey;
- Include Review Process presentation in the letter addressed to new owners;
- Potential participatory workshop subjects: urban and pedestrian layout criteria, collective facilities and infrastructure (parks, pool), commercial revitalization and proximity services.

The following points concern general topics that pertain to urban planning, land development and city affairs:

- Ask relevant stakeholders for a wish list (school authorities, local businesses, hotels, commercial avenues, etc.);
- Meeting community expectations may be a challenge due to competing interests. The City must avoid sacrificing the interests of its residents;
- Provide greater transparency of the various planning and permitting activities at City Hall;
- Include existing problems that have already been identified (letters to the editor in the Westmount Independent, complaints to Council, etc.) and incorporate solutions into the Master Plan;
- Build an interior swimming pool;
- Build indoor recreational facilities (basketball and volleyball courts);
- Modernize local schools to ensure sustainability, set them apart from neighboring schools and encourage the arrival of new residents;
- Consider a palliative care center for the community;
- Consider small residences and food services in larger residences for senior citizens;

- Provide a revitalization plan and tackle high rent to help local commercial streets (Sherbrooke, Greene, Victoria);
- Could Sherbrooke Street be revitalized in a similar fashion to Wellington Street?;
- The Master Plan's goal should be to make Westmount self-sufficient (food stores, pharmacies, etc.);
- Build a massive central parking in Victoria Village to encourage everyday shopping;
- Allow the opening of new businesses (restaurants, bars and stores) to encourage daily commercial activities;
- Do other cities in and around Montréal also prepare Master Plans? Is there joint coordination?;
- Remember that Westmount is a small enclave in Montréal so avoid comparisons with larger cities like Copenhagen;
- Enforce building regulations when work does not follow the schedule;
- Worry that high rise buildings are the new norm near Atwater;
- Concern about the growing number of condo-residential units in Westmount and the demolition of heritage buildings (old Armory building);
- Showcase proposed real estate developments, demolitions and renovations to the community to allow a better understanding of what is at stake;
- Provide tax credits for house renovations;
- Act to control the rental price of residential units;
- Ban all plastic bottles and bags;
- Recycling and organic waste is an issue that must be resolved as a matter of priority;
- Bylaw modernization needs to take into account current issues like garbage collection;
- Include environmentally friendly living in the Master Plan (ex. public transit, autonomous vehicles, smart home/buildings, etc.);
- Keep Westmount park natural and maintain green spaces;
- Encourage sustainability in local development (green roofs and walls, urban gardens, etc.);
- Ensure safe cycling and pedestrian transportation in Westmount;
- Build sound barriers next to the railway;
- Add more parking;
- Maintain local road infrastructure.

2.3 APPRECIATION POLLS

The following points concern feedback relating to the Master Plan Review Process:

- General appreciation of the meeting format and the event;
- It would have been preferable to begin with the presentation and then let participants peruse the information posters;
- Ensure clearer wording on invitations (6 to 9 drop-in);
- Provide handouts at the event with the available information;
- Organize brainstorming sessions and hold meetings to provide ideas concerning existing development endeavours;
- Hold thematic workshops with group discussions and a mediator for upcoming activities, so participants can hold quality of life and urban planning discussions;

- Hold presentations in French and English, not only in English;
- Clear yet vague information on the process, which is probably to be expected this early in the process;
- Designated experts to discuss issues regarding urban planning and development would have been useful;
- Good examples of successful planning. Please provide more local examples to encourage practical feedback;
- Process needs to be more specific, as the steps are too vague and do not explain how topics will be determined or take place (Land Diagnosis, Values & Vision, Thematic Consultations);
- Provide more information on various planned projects and what the Preliminary Master Plan will be;
- Find inspiration in what Sidewalk Labs does in Toronto, to ensure a more diverse outreach (elderly);
- Information posters were clear but provided little information specific to Westmount;
- Well established process that is not Westmount specific enough (could apply anywhere);
- The community will participate as long as they feel listened to and that communications are honest and accurate;
- Bylaw revisions should be clearly communicated to the community in advance to allow adequate review time.

The following points concern general topics that pertain to urban planning, land development and city affairs:

- Since Westmount is a small enclave of a larger city, there are many aspects that the Master Plan will be unable to control;
- To a certain extent, Westmount has no control over the actions of government and the surrounding cities;
- Westmount should prioritise the basics (park and light maintenance, public space cleanliness, etc.) before undertaking new projects. Contracting out has been expensive and not as promised;
- Maintain parks as natural as possible;
- Use best practices to revitalize shopping in Westmount (Verdun is a good example);
- Good mobility in Westmount (good snow removal) but street crossings are not elder-friendly;
- Bicycle and pedestrian collisions are a constant danger.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the feedback obtained during the Public Information Session, the following actions are proposed to the Imagine Westmount 2040 team to strengthen the Master Plan Review Process. TES believes that the implementation of these recommendations will bring forth a process that meets the community's current expectations:

1. Maintain the process' general guidelines, as proposed at the Public Information Session;
2. Provide detail as to the upcoming planned process steps (activities, objectives, schedule, how the topics for discussion will be identified, etc.) to allow for more effective and precise feedback;
3. Promote greater transparency towards the community by sharing, in advance, relevant information about meetings/activities via the website and by holding all public activities in English and French;
4. Provide citizens with clearer invitations and objectives for each public activity;
5. Make greater use of local media to convey relevant information to the community, while maintaining the website as the primary tool for public information;
6. Intensify efforts to publicize the process' public activities (physical posters, use of social media, local media, website, etc.).