

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate publication

The Borough of Saint-Laurent holds an innovative Urban Concept Design contest for the revitalization of Décarie Boulevard

Saint-Laurent, March 7, 2006 – At a public event that was held yesterday evening at the Centre des loisirs, the results of the **Urban Concept Design contest** that was held by the Borough as part of the project to revitalize Décarie Boulevard were announced by Alan DeSousa, Mayor of Saint-Laurent and member of the Montréal Executive Committee responsible for sustainable development. Mayor DeSousa also revealed that the contest winner, **Schème Consultants**, had been awarded the mandate of guiding the Borough through the work that will be carried out on the artery in order to create the desired image. \$840,000 will be injected into the execution of the first phase of the revitalization of Décarie Boulevard this year.

According to the Mayor, *“the concept that the jury selected is perfectly aligned with our objective, which is to make Décarie a destination of choice, not only for the citizens of Saint-Laurent, but also for the entire population of Montréal. This project includes an integrated approach to sustainable development that effectively addresses current environmental issues.”*

A commercial artery located at the heart of Saint-Laurent’s history

Retail trade is an important driving force in any region. In Saint-Laurent, there are a number of commercial sectors that the community is intent on preserving and seeing prosper. One such sector is Décarie Boulevard, which was home to the very first commercial developments in Saint-Laurent. Even now, Décarie continues to testify to the remarkable vitality that Saint-Laurent once enjoyed, and serves as a striking illustration of the new multicultural reality of its population.

It is only fitting that Décarie be included in the Saint-Laurent chapter of Montréal's Master Plan as one of the districts whose development constitutes a short-term priority. Five general orientations specific to Décarie Boulevard were proposed, namely the enhancement of Décarie Boulevard itself; the consolidation of its urban and multifunctional character and its vitality; the enhancement of its architectural form, signage and storefronts; the preservation of the tranquility of the neighbouring residential area; and the encouraged densification and intensification of its urban character north of Côte-Vertu Boulevard while respecting the scale of the adjacent residential area.

It was with this in mind that Saint-Laurent set aside \$1 million, including \$840,000 for carrying out the development work on Décarie Boulevard, and \$110,000 for a renovation subsidy program targeting business facades and signage, with a view to revitalizing the commercial artery, assigning it its own colours, and making it a destination of choice for the Montréal public.

A project born of consultation and cooperation with the surrounding area

In order to accomplish this, Saint-Laurent created a joint task force in 2005, comprising various stakeholders from the Borough, representatives of City of Montréal central services, and ten representatives of merchants located on Décarie. Through the work of this task force, it became clear that the revitalization of Décarie Boulevard entailed not only certain physical tasks on-site, but also an integrated brand concept aimed at increasing the use of Décarie Boulevard and enhancing retail activities.

Saint-Laurent entrusted Zins Beauchesne with the mandate of carrying out a diagnostic study of Décarie Boulevard, and of recommending a new branding. This branding involves three major components: the urban, natural and clean district focus; the multicultural focus; and the “three generations” focus of the surrounding clientele and population.

A design contest based on the quest for excellence

The next step involved holding an Urban Concept Design contest, for which Saint-Laurent launched a public call for tenders to firms that specialize in urban design and development. Held in partnership with Design Montréal, of the Service de la mise en valeur du territoire de Montréal, the purpose of this contest was to encourage the submission of proposals that would concretely and effectively translate the three designated components into a new brand image for Décarie.

According to Mayor DeSousa, this was the ideal way to respond to the main urban, architectural, social, cultural, economic and environmental issues in the context of a public project. *“The contest represents an excellent means of making an informed choice based on the analysis and comparison of several concrete proposals. It creates competition between companies that are interested in submitting the best possible proposal, and forces them to put their creativity and qualifications to the test in their quest to receive the contract. For us, it ensures excellence in terms of the proposals that are received, which will ultimately produce results that are inherently more legitimate,”* he explained.

Four firms selected

Four finalists were selected following the first step, which involved evaluating the expertise and experience of the five companies that submitted an offer of services. These four firms were then asked to submit a concept that was in keeping with the three major branding objectives for Décarie, and to submit two models that outlined the main aspects of their proposals while respecting certain technical details that were included in the specifications.

The jury was made up of eight people: Renée Courchesne, Saint-Laurent industrial commissioner and coordinator of the revitalization committee; Marie-Josée Lacroix, design commissioner and director of Design Montréal; Michel Valade, commissioner of the *Service de la mise en valeur du territoire* of Montréal; Marie-Claude Le Sauteur, architect with the *Division soutien technique et environnement* of Saint-Laurent; Dang Nguyen, engineer and head of the *Division soutien technique et environnement* of Saint-Laurent; Éric Paquet, head of the *Division urbanisme* of Saint-Laurent; Ron Williams, architect and landscape architect; Yves Barrette, owner of Bar laitier Leclerc and merchant representative; and Denis Lemieux, architect with Design Montréal, who served as facilitator.

A first in Montréal

Reiterating the innovative character of the project, Alan DeSousa underscored the fact that Saint-Laurent was the first Montréal borough to launch a qualification process such as this by holding an urban design contest for the revitalization of a commercial artery.

“We are very proud of the process that has been followed in the revitalization program for Décarie Boulevard, because it required the cooperation of all parties involved. We believe that the concept proposed by Schème takes into account the needs of the merchants and those of the surrounding population. We are also very pleased that we were able to rely on the valuable support of the Design Montréal intervention group in organizing our design contest. This innovative collaboration is an excellent example of the spirit of partnership that must exist between the boroughs and the City of Montréal central services,” Mayor DeSousa concluded.

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