

A Shared Vision:  
The Future of Pointe-Claire Village

**Brief**

presented to the public consultation

organized by

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and

submitted to Pointe-Claire City Council

by

La Société pour la Sauvegarde du Patrimoine de Pointe-Claire

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## **Presentation of La Société pour la Sauvegarde du Patrimoine de Pointe-Claire**

In 2000, the Société pour la Sauvegarde du Patrimoine de Pointe-Claire (SSPPC) was established by a group of Pointe-Claire citizens. The society is recognized as a charitable organization. Its members number over 100.

**Its mission:** To preserve and enhance the architectural and archaeological heritage of Pointe-Claire.

Its members are dedicated to preserving their history and their village. They contribute between 4,000 and 6,000 hours of volunteer time annually.

### **Achievements:**

- Preserving the architectural integrity of the Point of Pointe-Claire
- Preserving three heritage houses
- Publishing the brochure *À la pointe claire*
- Creating a pedagogical tool on the history and built heritage of Pointe-Claire for students in the 6th grade
- Conducting 200 historical guided tours for 3,000 visitors
- Sensitizing the City of Pointe-Claire and the Quebec Department of Culture and Communications to the production of studies on:
  - Pointe-Claire's history
  - Its built heritage
  - Its archaeological heritage
- Creating the Société Découverte et Sauvegarde du Patrimoine de l'Ouest-de-l'Île, which has produced maps and installed 100 plaques marking historic buildings
- Creating the Association des Moulins du Québec (Association for the Windmills of Quebec)
- Carrying out the research mission on windmills in France
- Organizing the tour of Quebec windmills by experts from France.

### **Current objective of the SSPPC**

To restore the Pointe-Claire windmill as a living interpretation site of our heritage.

## **History of Pointe-Claire**

The research in the Sulpician archives carried out by the SSPPC in publishing the brochure, «À la pointe Claire», gave us a better understanding of the evolution of Pointe-Claire.

The first concessions along the shores of Lake St Louis in the region to become Pointe-Claire were ceded in 1684 by the Sulpician seigneurs of the Island of Montreal. The Parish of Saint-François de Sales was created in 1713 and was later changed in 1714 to Saint-Joachim de la Pointe-Claire. The establishment of a hamlet was followed by the construction of a wooden fort in 1729. The village of Pointe-Claire itself was founded in 1756 by a development plan, which makes it one of the rare villages created in the French colonial era surviving to this day.

The site occupied by the village of Pointe-Claire has constantly evolved over time. Under British rule, the village became an important administrative centre and subsequently a prime summer resort.

The village of Pointe-Claire is one of the most representative sites exemplifying the evolution of an area in Quebec and Canada. It represents a reference that bears witness to the history of the country from the time of the first explorers.

*The SSPPC desires greater involvement in the future of our village.*

## **Present situation**

Several sites have survived the passage of time and continue to bear witness to our past:

### **1) The Point of Pointe-Claire**

The Point of Pointe-Claire encompasses four of the oldest buildings in Pointe-Claire village. The windmill (1709–1710), a historic treasure, along with the church, the convent and the presbytery, as well as the mission cross, form a unique ensemble.

The buildings on the Point constitute a diversified heritage including functional, industrial, cultural and conventual typologies. Styles include French, neo-classical, neo-Gothic and Second Empire.

The group of buildings on the Point on a site that projects into Lake Saint-Louis composes an exceptional landscape from architectural and natural aspects.

### **2) The village**

The heart of the village has essentially conserved its urban pattern from 1756, and the area covered by its development has increased over 250 years. The houses are normally situated on the edge of the streets without any setback and with limited lateral margins. Urban density is quite high. The single family houses of two stories are often built in a row-house configuration which does not permit much vegetation.

The houses of Antoine Pilon (1710), Demers-Portelance (c.1847), Antoine Felsque (c.1850), Charlebois (c.1850), Brunet (c.1876) and some others as well as the Canada Hotel (c.1850) survived the fire that destroyed almost half of the village in 1900. The Bourgie (c.1905), Mitchell (1900), Legault (1911) houses, and others as well as the Pointe-Claire Hotel (1900) and the post office (1937) were built afterwards. Together, these buildings form one of the richest, most diversified and original urban sites on the Island of Montreal.

During the 20th century, the village was again transformed by the progressive replacement of traditional materials and the disappearance of many principal and secondary buildings to make way for parking lots. In the last 40 years, 25 heritage houses have been removed from the heart of the village of Pointe-Claire, significantly transforming the village. It has been a great loss to the spirit of this site.

## Observations

The principal issues of conservation in this sector concern:

- Inappropriate renovations to houses: poor materials, loss of ornamental detail, unsympathetic replacement of windows and projections, etc.
- Renovations that do not respect the volume of the main building
- Additions not in keeping with old buildings
- New buildings not in keeping with the historic urban fabric

These thoughtless incremental changes combine to diminish our built heritage and have a huge impact on the village as a whole.

*" The core of the village falls under legal protection* under the Site Planning and Architectural Integration Programme (SPAIP) adopted on August 15, 2001 This SPAIP defines clear and realistic objectives which must be scrupulously adhered to. The effects of a SPAIP are measured over a period of years and should be periodically analyzed in order to determine the pertinence of the plan."

Patri-Arch : Inventaire patrimonial et étude du patrimoine bâti de Pointe-Claire, Vol 4, p. 03-3

It is high time to review the SPAIP in order to ensure that it is truly pertinent and that its application is effective.

## Heritage studies

At the instigation of the Société pour la Sauvegarde du Patrimoine de Pointe-Claire, the City of Pointe-Claire and the Quebec Department of Culture and Communications (MCCQ) between 2001 et 2005 commissioned firms of consultants to conduct studies on Pointe-Claire's heritage at a cost of \$100,000.

- The Urban Development Plan of Pointe-Claire (historical study) by Guy Mongrain

" Pointe-Claire certainly enjoys one of the most original heritage sites on the Island of Montreal. From the first concessions to the creation of the village, to the garden city and the modern suburb, an extensive range of developments is represented in Pointe-Claire, making the city an example of a rich, urban heritage." p. V

- Heritage Inventory and Study of Built Heritage in Pointe-Claire by PatriArch

*"The remarkable quality of the built heritage, whose oldest vestiges will soon attain three hundred years."* Vol 1, p. 43

" The sector of the Point of Pointe-Claire encompasses four of the oldest buildings in the village of Pointe-Claire which form a unique institutional ensemble with the windmill, the church, the convent and the presbytery. This coherent group of buildings on the point and its site which extends into Lake Saint-Louis constitute an exceptional architectural and natural landscape." Vol 1, p. 45

- Study of archaeological potential by Archéotec

" The results have been very positive and have shed light on not only the impressive age, but also the importance of the Point in the history of this island. Because of these findings, it is strongly advised that this project (archaeological inventory) be undertaken in order to have a better understanding based on more information of this strategic sector of the island." Research report, Archéotec, 2002, p. 52.

These studies are in the possession of Pointe-Claire City Council. On reading them, no one can be unaware of Pointe-Claire's remarkable heritage.

As stipulated in their mandate, these independent consultants formulated recommendations in order to better preserve and enhance this heritage. The SSPPC supports all of their recommendations. We have included them in our series of recommendations.

## **The role of the City of Pointe-Claire**

The mandate given to Guy Mongrain for the study of the history of Pointe-Claire states that the City of Pointe-Claire is conscious of the exceptional endowment which is its heritage, and that it wants to reinforce its heritage and planning policies by integrating this dimension in an adequate manner.

In this spirit, an agreement was signed with the Quebec Department of Culture and Communications. *The purpose* of the agreement was to provide the City of Pointe-Claire with the knowledge base in support of overall planning for the enhancement of its heritage. It was also to produce a reference tool, a synthesis of the development phases of the city, to serve as a framework for the evolution of heritage issues and any other project involving the enhancement of Pointe-Claire's heritage.

On 23 March 2006, at the request of the SSPPC, a meeting was held between MCCQ officials, Pointe-Claire's Director of Urban Planning and two members of the SSPPC at MCCQ's offices in Montreal.

It became apparent that the MCCQ is conscious of the importance of the heritage of Pointe-Claire and that it is ready to invest financially in:

- A development master plan for heritage
- A tool to sensitize the owners of heritage houses
- The restoration of the windmill (phases 1 and 2)

However, the MCCQ clearly indicated that it is up to the City of Pointe-Claire to initiate the request for all agreements.

This clearly shows that the City of Pointe-Claire must adopt a heritage policy and have an integrated vision. This would demonstrate the strong determination and will of elected officials to protect and enhance our heritage. We would wish to see this determination and will applied in a concrete manner by city officials, and that they be held accountable for their actions to City Council.

## **The entire area of the Point**

The protection of built heritage is the responsibility of the legal body represented by the City of Pointe-Claire. On 16 September 2005, more than 160 members of the SSPPC and sympathisers presented themselves at Pointe-Claire City Hall to request that the mayor and city councillors designate the Point of Pointe-Claire a heritage site.

Three years later, we are still waiting for the Point to be designated a heritage site. This would be a wise and appropriate action by the City of Pointe-Claire to protect this exceptional site.

"We recommend that the City designate as a heritage site the Point of Pointe-Claire, including the tip of the point. The heritage site should encompass the church, the presbytery, the convent, the windmill and the area behind the church and the presbytery. Thus, this architectural and natural landscape would be better protected as it contributes greatly to the distinctive image of the Point. *No new* construction should destroy the fragile equilibrium of this exceptional ensemble."

Patri-Arch, vol. 4, p.01

## Archaeological heritage

In 2001, the City of Pointe-Claire and the MCCQ commissioned archaeology consultants Archéotec to carry out a study of archaeological potential and compile an archaeological inventory with a view to the archaeological supervision of work to renew the public utilities on Saint-Joachim and Sainte-Anne streets.

The archaeological study showed that it is highly likely that evidence of a prehistoric Native presence and of the development of Saint-Joachim parish since the early 18th century will be found on the point and in the village of Pointe-Claire.

Since the archaeological report was produced, there have been at least nine excavations for houses, watermains, sewers, etc. Supervision was exercised on only three, on Saint-Joachim and Sainte-Anne streets, including the excavation of 302 Lakeshore on 14 October 2008.

Archaeological heritage is very difficult to defend given its lack of "visibility". It is all the more important to make this assessment of a building site before work starts. Past and current experience in Pointe-Claire show the difficulty of convincing municipal authorities of the importance of preserving our archaeological heritage.

At the meeting of 23 March 2006 at the MCCQ offices in Montreal, the MCCQ's archaeology official clearly explained that the City of Pointe-Claire has the necessary knowledge base on its archaeological heritage and that it is its responsibility to look after it.

## **The Pointe-Claire mill**

As early as 1698, Dollier de Casson, superior of the Sulpicians (seigneurs of the island of Montreal) set aside the Point of Pointe-Claire as a strategic location to build a fortified mill in case of attack by the Iroquois. Under the seigneurial regime, the seigneurs were required to build a grist mill to feed their tenants. Grain was the staple food, hence the importance of the mill for settling the area at that time.

It all began on the Point of Pointe-Claire with the windmill. It was the key to the future of Pointe-Claire. The windmill is the most treasured vestige of Pointe-Claire's history. It provided sustenance for the first settlers in 1710 until 1866, when industrial flour mills took over. The mill has survived down to today thanks to the Sisters of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame. We owe them a debt of gratitude. It is exceedingly rare since only 18 windmills remain of the 200 that were built in Quebec. It has always been a symbol of belonging to the people of Pointe-Claire, such that in 1911, when the Town of Pointe-Claire was incorporated, the then mayor Dr Lesage and his councillors chose it as the town's emblem.

In 1963, it was the first mill to be restored in Quebec. Despite their best intentions, the early restorers did not respect the architectural integrity of the original structure built by master mason Jean Mars and millwrights Léonard and Charles Paillé.

In 2004, the City of Pointe-Claire and the MCCQ commissioned the firm of architects Lemieux, St-Louis to conduct a feasibility study to restore and develop the Pointe-Claire mill (Étude de faisabilité pour une restauration et une mise en valeur du moulin de Pointe-Claire). It found that there was no expertise in North America to restore a windmill built in the time of New France. No such windmill still has its mechanism. The l'Île-Perrot mill (1707–1708) was restored in 1980 along British lines introduced after 1760. The expertise has been lost here. These mills are of French design, from France, as were the first settlers in Pointe-Claire.

In 2006, Claude Arsenault was commissioned by the SSPPC to conduct a research mission on windmills in France (Mission de recherche sur les moulins à vent en France, été 2006), funded in part by the MCCQ. Over a period of 10 weeks, he covered 10,000 km, visited 70 working mills grinding flour, recorded 50 hours of interviews with millers, owners, associations, millwrights, etc. He built up a network of important contacts (see the report on our website [www.patrimoinepointeclaire.org](http://www.patrimoinepointeclaire.org) ).

In 2007, Claude Arsenault was commissioned by the SSPPC to conduct a tour of Quebec's windmills (Tournée des moulins à vent du Québec 2007). Two experts on windmills from France were invited by the SSPPC in partnership with ICOMOS Canada.

Chris Gibbings, an eminent molinologist with 40 years' experience specializing in French mills, spent three weeks in Quebec, touring the 18 windmills and giving talks.

Thierry Croix, a fifth-generation millwright, spent two weeks doing the same tour and giving talks. The City of Pointe-Claire, represented by two councillors and officials, met with Thierry Croix and Claude Arsenault to obtain expert advice and answer their questions.

The experts' findings are that the heritage represented by our windmills is valuable and specific to Quebec. Some mills are in a ruinous state and most restoration work is not historically accurate. The knowledge of how to build a mill as it was built in the time of New France has been lost. Currently there is no one in North America with the expertise to restore the Pointe-Claire mill to its original state..

Following the mission to France and the two tours of Quebec's windmills with the experts, in addition to research on 500 notarial deeds concerning windmills, we have a better idea of how the Pointe-Claire mill was originally built. Our knowledge base is not complete, but we now know what we do not know. A technical study is thus necessary to round out our knowledge of the Pointe-Claire mill.

The SSPPC is proactive. A molinologist in France has found us a pair of silex millstones 1.97 m in diameter and weighing two tonnes each, just like the ones in the Pointe-Claire mill 300 years ago. These stones are now very rare and there are none to be found in North America. The SSPPC is raising funds to buy and restore these millstones. Millstones are the very heart of a mill and key to building its mechanism.

In December 2006, the City of Pointe-Claire earmarked \$500, 000 for phases 1 and 2 of the restoration of the Pointe-Claire mill:

- Phase 1: masonry, doors, windows
- Phase 2: cap, sails, windshaft, brake wheel, brake and tail pole

The MCCQ is to provide the other half of the funding for phases 1 and 2 of the restoration.

The SSPPC will undertake Phase 3, rebuilding the inside mechanism.

The SSPPC is the driving force behind the mill restoration project. Thanks to its considerable efforts, written authorizations from the Sisters of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame, who hold the usufruct of the land, and the Fabrique, which owns it, have been obtained.

The City of Pointe-Claire asked the SSPPC to withdraw from the file, saying that it would hold direct talks with the Sisters of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame and the Fabrique. It is almost two years since the mayor and city lawyers took over the file and we are no further forward.

The Pointe-Claire mill is the emblem of our city. We will celebrate the mill's tercentenary in 2010. This is the ideal time to restore this key building, which is the pride of the citizens of Pointe-Claire.

## **Recommendations regarding the City of Pointe-Claire**

### Policy

- A commitment from the mayor to act concretely and conscientiously and assume his responsibility for the sound management of the protection and enhancement of Pointe-Claire's heritage
- The involvement of the councillor for the village ward in the protection and enhancement of Pointe-Claire's heritage
- Commitment by elected municipal officials to heritage protection and enhancement
- Creation of a heritage policy for the City of Pointe-Claire

### Consultation

- Establish a Planning Advisory Committee sensitive to heritage and elected by the people
- Establish a heritage committee to meet monthly, composed 50% of representatives of heritage circles
- Be sensitive to the community

### Personnel

- Hire a specialist in the management of built heritage for the Planning Department
- Train town planners in built heritage
- Sensitize the Director General to heritage issues

### By-laws

- Give teeth to the existing Site Planning and Architectural Integration Programmes (SPAIP)
- Create a heritage site for the Point
- Create a heritage site for the village of Pointe-Claire

## Tools

- Create a heritage development master plan comprising:
  - An awareness tool for owners of heritage homes
  - An awareness tool for the public at large
  - Hire a consultant in heritage architecture
  
- Establish a heritage restoration program
  - Procedure manual
  - Technical manuals
  - Access to professional expertise
  - Financial assistance (50%) for restoration
  - Program application: main streets

## Studies

- Historical study concentrating specifically on the Point
- Historical study of the village of Pointe-Claire
- Title research for heritage homes

## Restoration of the Pointe-Claire mill

- Establish a working group made up of :
  - City of Pointe-Claire
  - Quebec Department of Culture and Communications
  - Société pour la Sauvegarde du Patrimoine de Pointe-Claire
  - Sisters of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame
  
- **Hire a firm of conservation experts to manage work**
- Technical study for the restoration of the Pointe-Claire mill
- Hire a real millwright from France
- Draw up a site development plan

### Archaeology

- Archaeological inventory
- Archaeological digs
- Enhancement program with ground marking
- Awareness tool for owners and citizens
- Memorial for the cemetery behind Saint-Joachim's Church
  - Raising of a cross
  - The names of the 5,000 people buried there

### Community awareness

- Install heritage plaques
- Create a self-guided tour of the village

### Projects

- Acquisition by the city of a significant heritage building in the village to serve as the offices of the SSPPC and as an interpretation centre on the village's history.
- Acquisition of the Point of Pointe-Claire when the Sisters move out to their mother house in Montreal with the aim of putting the wind back in the sails of the mill and using a room in the convent as an national interpretation centre for molinological heritage.

### Funding

- Invest the necessary funds to develop our built heritage regarded by experts as remarkable and exceptional.

### Human level

- Preserve the quality of life of residents
- Preserve the residential nature of the village
- Encourage local services
- Attract craftsmen and artists to live in the village

## Security

- Security, surveillance program (vandalism)
- Removal of graffiti by the city at its expense within 24 hours

## Improvement of the urban environment

- Bury electrical cables on the point and in the village
- Refurbish the streets and sidewalks of Saint-Joachim and Sainte-Anne streets south of Lakeshore Road
- Make parking lots more discreet with appropriate landscaping
- Create underground parking on the north-east corner of Sainte-Anne St and Lakeshore Road
- Develop a bike path:
  - Install bike racks at various places
- Replace Frost fences on the river bank by more appropriate fencing
- Install street furniture more appropriate to a historic village
- Plant native trees (e.g. : maples, ash)
- Landscaping (plant flowers, etc.)
- Improve cleanliness

## Conclusion

In today's society, heritage conservation has taken on considerable importance. It meets certain aspirations, in particular the desire to preserve tangible links with our historic roots and provide a feeling of belonging and identity for those who deplore the impersonal nature of all too many cities.

Interest in heritage conservation has grown hand in hand with the general trend toward conservation. The general consensus is that society can no longer disregard its heritage. This idea rests on the responsible management of cultural and natural wealth so that we can pass this heritage on intact to future generations.

The citizen must be recognized as a lead agent in heritage conservation.