

Valois Village upgrade to increase number of parking spots



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PROGRAMME PARTICULIER D'URBANISME DU VILLAGE VALOIS | SPECIAL PLANNING PROGRAM FOR VALOIS VILLAGE
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An artist's illustration of the entrance to Valois Village at the western end of the commercial strip on Donegani Ave. Illustration courtesy of City of Pointe-Claire. -

The people spoke. The city listened.

A Special Planning Project for Valois Village in Pointe-Claire was sent back for some tweaking in February after merchants vigorously opposed a proposed reduction in the number of parking spaces available along the commercial strip which stretches from Sources Blvd. to the east to Valois Park to the west.

Two weeks ago, city council adopted the reworked Special Planning Project which increases parking spaces from 315 to 383.

“It’s fantastic,” Diane Hodges said of the SPP. “I think we can do wonderful things in this village.”

Hodges owns Bramble House, a specialty store for British food products housed in the Valois Commercial Centre at the east end of the village.

After seeing the first draft of the SPP in February, she launched a petition which was signed by every business in the village’s two strip malls. The first draft had eliminated the strip-mall parking lot.

“We wanted the city to know that the parking lot was not on the table,” Hodges said.

Hodges said the city was very receptive to their concerns and she is thrilled with the results.

She was also impressed to see that the SPP had flagged the eastern portion of the village as a “heat island” and proposed tree plantings in the sector.

“We had asked for trees because we knew the area was a heat island and was having a negative impact on pedestrian traffic,” Hodges said. “And the parking remains. It’s fabulous.”

Over the course of the last year, residents and business owners in Valois were consulted and consulted again. The message was clear. Sprucing up a commercial district by adding greenery, pedestrian walkways and a bike path is good. Sufficient parking is crucial.

Finding a parking spot in the area is made even more challenging because the tiny parking lot available to commuters who catch the train at the Valois station overflows quickly which sends drivers searching for day-long parking in adjacent residential streets.

The 35-page SPP, produced by urban-revitalization experts Convergence, acquiesced on parking but not without sending a message.

“Although the number of parking spaces will increase in the village, ideally, in a sustainable development context, reducing the importance of public parking spaces is coherent with the transformation of a village into a neighbourhood on a human scale that promotes active transportation. It makes life much more enjoyable and safe for pedestrians and cyclists, it encourages increasing numbers of residents to leave their cars behind and it reduces the demand for parking.”

The SPP divides the sector into three segments, park land (Valois Park at the west end of the sector), the central “mixed-use” zone which will accommodate buildings up to three storeys and the extreme east-end of the commercial strip which has an empty lot re-zoned for multi-family residential, accommodating buildings up to nine storeys.

The 170,000-square-foot triangular empty lot which once held a derelict strip mall and a small hydro building near the intersection of Donegani Avenue and Sources Boulevard has been sold, but no word yet on what will be built.

A long list at the end of the SPP details short, medium and ongoing goals. Completing a bike path west of the Valois train station and installing bike racks in the area are the top-two short-term projects. Redesigning the sidewalks and introducing greenery and street furniture are top priorities in the medium-term projects. And improving the flow of communication between business owners and city administration is top of the “ongoing” initiatives list.

To see the complete Special Planning Project, visit www.pointe-claire.ca/en/news/new-special-planning-program/?platform=hootsuite (<http://www.pointe-claire.ca/en/news/new-special-planning-program/?platform=hootsuite>).

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