

Frequently Asked Questions –1000 Lucerne Road Project February 19, 2025

Latest Developments

The Town of Mount Royal has received [a letter from the Ministry of Culture and Communications of Quebec](#) (*French only*) informing us that a proposal for heritage designation under the Cultural Heritage Act has been submitted for the Beth-El Synagogue. This proposal will be analyzed by the Ministry.

Following this notification, the municipal council adopted [a resolution](#) (*French only*) to pause the regulatory modification steps required for the amendment to the urban planning plan.

Redevelopment project for the Beth-El synagogue site at 1000, Lucerne Road.

A. QUICK OVERVIEW

- The Beth-El synagogue, located at 1000, Lucerne Road, closed its doors several years ago following the congregation's and the daycare's move.
- Since the end of August 2019, the building has been abandoned and no religious or educational institution has expressed interest in occupying it.
- At the end of 2019, the building was sold to property developer SAJO, who plans to revitalize the site as a multi-housing residential project.
- According to the Town of Mount Royal's urban plan, the former synagogue is designated for "institutional" use. In other words, in its current form, the urban plan doesn't allow for the development of a residential project.
- To respond to the property owner's request and allow a residential project, it is first necessary to modify the urban plan to change the "institutional" usage to "high-density housing", the definition and description of which are explained later in this document. Without this modification, no residential project will be possible.
- For the proposed residential project to come to fruition, the process must take place in two stages:
 1. First, the Town must amend the urban plan;
 2. Second, the Town must amend the zoning by-law (height, number of floors, setbacks, etc.).
- The Act respecting land use planning and development (LAU) governs the process for amending the town's planning rules. As part of the urban plan



amendment process, in accordance with this law, the Town held a public consultation meeting on January 7, 2025.

B. PROJECT PROPOSED BY DEVELOPER SAJO

The property owner is proposing to build a residential housing project comprising 47 multi-family units with a variable number of floors (maximum 4 floors on some sections). The height of this project will be similar to that of the central portion of the existing building. In addition, the top 2 floors will be set back from the street to better integrate the dwellings into the landscape. Underground parking, a park and green space will also be part of the project.

C. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. What are the steps to be taken and the timeframes involved between now and the start of the project?

In order for a residential project to be built on this site, the Town of Mount Royal's urban plan must be modified. Currently, the Town's urban plan provides for institutional use, which must be changed to residential use. Subsequently, the Town's zoning by-law will have to be amended to establish the rules and normative specifics of the project (e.g.: height, number of floors, setbacks, etc.).

2. Why would the Town agree to modify this institutional use for the benefit of a residential project?

Congregation Beth-El vacated the premises several years ago and sold the property to a developer at the end of 2019. The building has been empty since then. There hasn't been any demand for a religious or educational institution. Therefore, in order not to have an abandoned building, it is appropriate to change the categorization of the site to allow for residential development, as requested by the owner.

3. Wouldn't it be better to build a school, a community centre or welcome a new religious group in order to preserve the building's institutional vocation?

There is no demand for an institutional building (religious group, school or daycare). The *Centre de services scolaire Marguerite-Bourgeoys* (CSSMB) had confirmed to us that they didn't have a need for a primary school on our territory. The property is now privately owned, and the owner wishes to develop it. As any owner would do, SAJO has submitted a request to the Town to modify the urban plan to allow the construction of a residential project. The Town is studying this request and welcomes positively a residential project, for which the parameters have yet to be defined.

4. What are the potential uses of the institutional lot at 1000, Lucerne Road if it were to remain institutional?

- In the zoning by-law, grid P402 authorizes certain community and institutional uses, such as:
 - Places of worship;
 - Cultural equipment;
 - Day-care services.

5. What is concordance regulation and how does it apply to the 1000, Lucerne Road project?

When a municipality amends its urban plan, the LAU requires it to carry out a concordance exercise. This involves checking whether the Town's planning by-laws (zoning by-law, subdivision by-law, building by-law, etc.) still comply with the amended urban plan. The exercise is necessary because the urban plan and the planning by-laws cannot be contradictory. **If a contradiction appears in a planning by-law following an amendment to the latter, it must be corrected by adopting a concordance by-law. A concordance by-law does not require referendum approval.**

In the case of the 1000, Lucerne Road project, if Council adopts the amendment to the urban plan, as proposed in project 1440-2, a concordance by-law will have to be adopted to amend the zoning by-law. The concordance will relate only to the purpose of the amendment to the urban plan, i.e. to replace the 'institutional' designation with a 'high-density residential' designation. Consequently, the grid of zone P-402 of the zoning by-law will need to be amended by concordance in order to remove the institutional uses and replace them with residential uses. It should be noted that standards such as building height, number of floors permitted, land use coefficients, setbacks, etc., **won't be modified by the concordance exercise** and will have to undergo a regular zoning change process to be amended.

This means that the change in land use will be made in accordance with the urban plan, for which referendum approval is not required. **On the other hand, a change of zoning, which determines heights, setbacks and the number of floors, will require referendum approval. The public will therefore be able to have their say on the density of the site when time comes to discuss change of zoning.**

6. Did the Town conduct a formal assessment of sewer capacity before considering the change of use of the site?

The Town requires that all development projects meet strict sewer discharge standards; this future project will be no different. In addition, the proposed project includes the transfer to the Town of a 1,114 sq. m (12,000 sq. ft) plot of land for a park/green space. Also, according to preliminary plans, the permeable surface area on the site will be greatly increased compared to the current state, and there will be no surface parking. These actions will clearly represent improvements on the existing situation. They will not only help to green the area, but also encourage water to percolate into the ground.

7. What impact would this new construction have on traffic in the area?

A 47-unit residential development will generate significantly less traffic than a synagogue (or other religious institution), school or daycare centre. Unlike these institutions, where people arrive and leave in large numbers at specific times, the residents of a residential development do not all enter and leave at the same time; as a result, traffic is spread out over time and will not have any noticeable effects. In addition, the traffic study commissioned by the developer confirms that this project will have no negative effects on traffic flow.

8. Why a 'high-density' project?

According to our bylaws, any project of three (3) dwellings or more qualifies as high density. This is a nomenclature and does not mean that a residential tower is planned. The zoning by-law that will eventually be adopted will specify the height, number of floors, etc., and will ensure that it is not a residential tower that will be built, but rather a 47-unit building with a maximum height of 14.6 m (48 ft).

9. How would a 'high-density' residential development help to improve the quality of life in our Town?

A residential project is the only option the Town has received for development on the site; we cannot maintain the status quo and leave the building abandoned. A development that blends in with its surroundings, adds green space to the area and reduces permeable surfaces is to the community's advantage. What's more, such a project would not only attract young families to the Town of Mount Royal, but could also be of interest to those thinking of leaving their current home for a smaller property.

10. There seem to be discrepancies between what has been announced (47 units) and the regulations for high-density housing (80+ units) that have been conveyed. What exactly is the nature of this project?

The proposed project under study by the Town provides for 47 housing units. According to the Town's by-laws, any project of three (3) dwellings or more qualifies as 'high density'. The Town's urban plan states that 'high density' represents an average threshold of 80 to 150 dwellings per hectare. However, **it is important to understand that these figures are only guidelines and orientations** towards densification. As the Town is fully developed, these figures are only a general indication and **there is no obligation to respect them precisely. The project under study is for 47 housing units, and the Town has no plans to increase this figure.**

11. Wouldn't subdividing the land into individual lots to build single-family homes or semi-detached houses be a better idea to make the residential project blend in better with the environment?

The proposed project does not involve subdividing the lot. The property belongs to a private owner, who is proposing and submitting to the Town his planned project for the site.

12. Could this change of use from institutional to residential create a precedent or vested right for other institutional sites in the future?

No, a Town Council is always sovereign. The decision taken in this case does not bind the current Council or future Councils to any other similar request.

13. What are the latest developments regarding this project? What are the next steps?

Amendments to the urban plan

At its December 17 meeting, the Council adopted draft *by-law 1440-2 amending the Town of Mount Royal's Urban Plan* with regard to the change of land use for the property located at 1000, Lucerne Road. The purpose of this draft by-law is to amend the urban plan in order to replace the 'institutional' land use designation with the 'high-density residential' land use designation at 1000, Lucerne Road. In accordance with the *Act respecting land use planning and development*, this draft by-law was the subject of a public consultation on January 7, 2025. The next steps for this draft by-law are:

- Final adoption by the Municipal Council;
- Transmission to the *Agglomération de Montréal* for analysis of compliance with the Land Use Planning and Development Plan;
- Issuance of a certificate of conformity by the *Agglomération*;
- The by-law comes into force;
- Concordance exercise only, to remove 'Institutional' uses and replace them with 'residential' uses at 1000, Lucerne Road, **without affecting the other normative elements.**

Amendments to the zoning by-law

Once these steps have been completed, the Town Council can move on to the zoning by-law amendment stage. Typically, the steps involved in amending a zoning by-law are as follows:

- Adoption of a first draft by-law;
- Public consultation;
- Adoption of a second draft by-law;
- Under the Act, residents of zones adjacent to the zone affected by the zoning change have eight (8) days to request the holding of a register. For residents of a contiguous zone to be able to participate in the register, the request must be signed by at least 12 residents from the zone;
- Final adoption of the by-law;
- Holding of a register (one day from 9:00 to 19:00) if requested by one or more contiguous zones. It is not currently possible to determine the number of signatures required for the register, as this number will be determined on the basis of the number of contiguous zones that have submitted a request;
- If the required number of signatures on the register is reached, a referendum will be held, unless the Council decides to abandon the draft by-law. The referendum will be open only to residents of contiguous zones that have requested a register.

14. The idea of large-scale construction is causing concern (comings and goings, noise and air pollution). What has been planned to mitigate the effects of construction?

If the project moves forward, it is expected to take around 30 months to complete. Of course, the developer will have to comply with municipal by-laws on construction hours and work.

15. What is the proposed project?

The project proposed by the developer is a residential project of 47 condo units, with a maximum height of 14.6 m (48 ft) (similar to the height of the central portion of the existing building). According to the latest proposals, the building has side setbacks of more than 9.1 m (30 ft) on each side. This is a building project with variable heights, ranging from 2 to 4 floors. The third floor is set back and the fourth floor is even further back, so as to be barely visible from Lucerne Road. Parking is provided entirely indoors. The details of the project have not yet been finalized, and the Town will have to discuss them further with the developer. The building is planned to be in two sections, each with a 24.4 m (80 ft) frontage, and with a 24.4 m (80 ft) wide open space in between. This will avoid creating a heavy volume impression along Lucerne Road and will help to keep the site more open.