



**PLAN DE  
DÉVELOPPEMENT  
CULTUREL  
D'OUTREMONT**

CULTURAL PORTRAIT OF THE BOROUGH

Culture and Library Division • August 2020

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## Toward a new cultural development plan

### An ongoing, inclusive and participatory process

Based on a recommendation from the Culture and Commercés Committee, the borough of Outremont launched in February 2020 a call for proposals to develop its new Cultural Development Plan, which will renew the cultural policy *Outremont ville d'art et de culture* ("Outremont, City of Art and Culture"), adopted in 2001 when Outremont was a municipality.

The ARTENSO research centre has been tasked with conducting the various steps in the process of mapping out the new plan, which will be adopted in the winter of 2021. The process includes a variety of documentation and consultation activities with organizations representing the borough and the general public.

Maintaining and further increasing the borough's investments in culture must be a shared concern: everyone needs to be on board. The process leading to adoption of a cultural development plan is an opportunity to engage all stakeholders around the key objectives associated with the unique characteristics of the territory in question, the people who live there, and the dynamics it generates.

A cultural development plan is a mechanism, like the rudder of a vessel, meant to allow everyone to work together in the same direction. It is a tool that fosters the borough's development by identifying its strengths and challenges, and then bringing the community together around priorities to be acted upon.

This Plan will articulate clear orientations, priority actions and new collaborative ventures with the community and the arts & culture milieu over a five-year horizon (2021–26). It is made up of two parts:

- A master plan, validated through public consultations; and
- An action plan to give concrete expression to the orientations.

This document summarizes the state of affairs as of summer 2020, which is the first step in the process. It provides highlights of the three parts of the report:

1. The borough and its population
2. The cultural profile of the borough
3. Observations and findings

# 1. THE BOROUGH AND ITS POPULATION

## Built and landscape heritage: a singular legacy, a vector of identity

Outremont boasts a wealth of historical, architectural and landscape heritage all across its territory. Its geography and topography endow it with a distinctive character. The territory is here viewed as the primary source of the borough's culture.

Outremont's parks, which attract large numbers of visitors, are places of interest and reflections of the borough's identity. They are also vital spaces contributing to the quality of life of its citizens. The parks are home to century-old trees as well as distinctive landscaping, most of which dates to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The borough recently introduced a *Plan directeur des parcs et des chalets de parcs* (parks and park chalets master plan) that aims to restore the buildings by studying ways to renew their uses. Citizens are attached to these public spaces as venues for family activities, walking, as well as social and cultural activities.

The section of Mount Royal located in Outremont was the subject of a consultative process and was declared a heritage site by the Government of Québec in 2005. It includes an area of archeological interest with strong potential, comprising a cemetery and a prehistoric quarry.

Lying at the foot of the mountain, the borough is mainly residential and includes several institutional buildings and services. Many of these are of exceptional value, regardless of whether they are located in heritage-value districts:

- 13 houses of worship, mostly Christian, including Église Saint-Viateur;
- 15 school buildings;
- 11 commercial, industrial and cultural buildings including Théâtre Outremont as well as repurposed buildings (e.g., the former Kraft–Phoenix Cheese Company plant, converted into condominiums).

Outremont is also enriched by several works of public art from different periods and two commemorative monuments. Four new works will be added to this inventory within two years.

In the northern part of the borough, the site of the former Canadian Pacific marshalling yard is now the MIL campus of Université de Montréal. This district, called Nouvel Outremont, is currently undergoing a real-estate boom and is set to welcome new university pavilions, mixed-use residential buildings, office spaces, and public spaces in the years ahead.

## Land-use and social dynamics within the borough

While built and natural heritage appear to form a strong foundation of identity, a more detailed examination of the borough, its uses and its population reveals many distinct zones, in terms of their entrenchment in the territory and the people who inhabit and transit through it.

The majority of non-residential uses are concentrated in **Outremont Est**, with several retail spaces and businesses grouped along Laurier, Van Horne and Bernard avenues. This area encompasses most of the Joseph-Beaubien and Claude-Ryan municipal electoral districts.

The cultural facilities within this area are many: the Bibliothèque Robert-Bourassa and Galerie d'Outremont, the Maison internationale des arts de la marionnette on Saint-Just Avenue, the Centre communautaire intergénérationnel on McEachran Avenue, the Maison des jeunes on Querbes Avenue, the John-F.-Kennedy Pool pavilion on Outremont Avenue, along with the Théâtre Outremont on Bernard Avenue and Place Marcelle-Ferron at the intersection of Bernard and Bloomfield avenues.

This area's many schools are attended by students from inside and outside the borough. Some of these schools (Guy-Drummond, Lajoie) have *parcs-écoles*, or school parks, allowing shared use of the space by residents outside school hours. There are also places of worship for the Hasidic Jewish, Armenian and Lebanese communities, several public services, and the Outremont métro station.

Relative to the borough overall, this area has the most children aged under 15, the most families, and the fewest senior citizens. The borough's Hasidic communities live mostly there.

**Haut-Outremont** is mostly residential and institutional, with very few retailers. The residences on the mountainside are single-family dwellings and tell the story of real estate development during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The western portion of this area is also home to a few large institutional buildings, including École Saint-Germain d'Outremont (with its *parc-école*), the Université de Montréal Faculty of Music and Marie-Victorin buildings, the Pensionnat du Saint-Nom-de-Marie school for girls, and the École de musique Vincent-d'Indy. Édouard-Montpetit métro station is located here, and next to it is the worksite of a future station of the Réseau express métropolitain (REM) light-rail network.



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There are also cemeteries in Haut-Outremont, most notably Cimetière Mont-Royal, which with its urban forest containing a diversity of tree species has the feel of a large park.

**Outremont Ouest**, mainly residential, is typified by numerous multi-dwelling units along with single and two-family homes. A few large seniors' residences are found here, notably on Rockland Avenue.

Outremont's commercial thoroughfares, Van Horne and Bernard avenues, also have a residential function in this part of the borough. Industrial and business concerns remain active on Bates Road, in older buildings that bear witness to the industrial heyday of the railway.

The past few years have seen the emergence of a new district, commonly designated as **Nouvel Outremont** in administrative documents. Until recently, the north portion of the borough was physically isolated by a railroad that belonged to Canadian Pacific, running along the southern part of its former marshalling yard. The development of the MIL campus and building of new access roads have opened this space up to the rest of the borough.

In the extreme northeast sector, bordered by à Hutchison Street and Atlantic Avenue, the **Secteur Atlantic**, a former industrial area, has also been opened up recently with the construction of Thérèse-Lavoie-Roux Avenue. It is here, on the land formerly occupied by the CP yard, that the new Université de Montréal MIL campus is being developed, with buildings under construction that will house four departments of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences: Chemistry, Physics, Geography, and Biological Sciences. In the coming years, the university will build two new wings that will welcome the Mathematics and Statistics as well as the Computer Science and Operations Research departments.

This area is distinctive, primarily because it lies at the junction of four boroughs (Outremont, Le Plateau-Mont-Royal, Rosemont–La-Petite-Patrie, and Villeray–Saint-Michel–Parc-Extension) and Town of Mount Royal. In its design, the university is emphasizing sustainability principles aimed at ensuring a creative, innovative and inclusive living environment. The campus, with a total surface area of 300,000 m<sup>2</sup>, occupies 13% of the borough territory. It will eventually comprise 1,300 dwelling units, 15% of which will be affordable housing and 15%, social and community housing. Finally, four hectares of public space are currently being developed: a public square, a district park, and two neighbourhood parks.

Although the borough is small and landlocked, it is not isolated, and it shares boundaries with other neighbourhoods and municipalities, thus creating opportunities to rethink relationships within the territory.

## Population characteristics

With 23,954 inhabitants (2016), the borough of Outremont is among the Ville de Montréal's least populous (18<sup>th</sup> out of 19), yet it is also the one with the smallest area (3.9 km<sup>2</sup>). Population density, however, at 6,221.8 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>, is higher than the Montréal average of 3,891.2 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>.

One of the key characteristics of the population is that children and households of more than four people are over-represented. These residents tend to be bilingual, and first- and second- generation immigrants make up 60% of the population. There are strong proportions of university graduates, and high average incomes. The Hasidic communities are particularly concentrated in the Claude-Ryan district, in the eastern part of the borough.



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## 2. CULTURAL PORTRAIT

### Infrastructures

The borough is home to five major arts and culture venues.

- **Théâtre Outremont**, founded in 1929 as a movie palace in the silent-film era and a focal point for art-house cinema in the 1970s and 1980s, has been designated a heritage site by all three levels of government. It was purchased in 1994 by the municipality of Outremont, and the Corporation du Théâtre Outremont has been responsible for its programming since 2010. The theatre earned the status of metropolitan municipal facility on January 1, 2015, coming under the purview of the Ville de Montréal's Culture department. An initial memorandum of understanding was drawn up between that department and the Corporation du Théâtre Outremont for 2015–17, whereby the borough of Outremont continued to provide financial support to the Corporation for presentation of local cultural programming.
- **Galerie d'Outremont**, inaugurated in 1993 by the non-profit organization GAO, is a venue for visual-arts exhibitions and events. It is part of Montréal's Accès Culture network and features a room of some 150 m<sup>2</sup> that includes a 15 m curved wall. The borough took over management of the gallery from GAO in 2019.
- **Bibliothèque Robert-Bourassa**, which opened in 1998, has 8,000 subscribers and provides the public with free access to more than four million documents. It is administered directly by the borough and is part of the Montréal library network.
- **Centre communautaire intergénérationnel (CCI)** opened in 2006 as a mixed-use facility and is administered by the borough. It houses community spaces, multifunctional rooms, dance studios, and the borough's arena.
- **Maison internationale des arts de la marionnette (MIAM)**, or international house for puppetry arts, co-founded by the organization Casteliers and the Association québécoise des marionnettistes, was inaugurated in the fall of 2018. The MIAM, a centre for puppetry creation, performance, training and arts outreach, was designated as Outremont's legacy gift to Montréal as part of the city's 375<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations

The borough enjoys a reputation as a one-of-a-kind hub for the puppetry arts, and since 2006 has hosted the Festival international de Casteliers, presented every year in various public spaces and venues in Outremont.

In 2015 the borough initiated discussions on **Quartiers culturels**, or culture districts, which led to the identification of several focal points that could qualify as cultural districts or be combined to form units conducive to development of such districts. One aim of the Cultural Development Plan renewal process is to finalize that process of reflection and identify the hubs to be developed.

## The Arts and culture offering

Outremont has always positioned itself as a “city of art and culture.” The borough is notable for its strong presence of artists and writers, and is home to several significant cultural institutions. A number of associations, comprising many volunteers, develop cultural activities on the territory. In addition, the borough supports and encourages cultural and socio-cultural activities in public spaces, mainly in parks (e.g., performances and screenings).

The borough of Outremont provides cultural services via the direct management of cultural institutions (Bibliothèque Robert-Bourassa, Galerie d’Outremont and CCI) that serve the community. This offering is enhanced via support for arts and culture organizations (Théâtre Outremont, Casteliers) established on its territory and via implementation of complementary programming, including that presented in public spaces and parks.

The organizations present and active in the borough are well established, in many cases for many years, enabling them to deliver regular activities and be widely known to the public.

While Théâtre Outremont and Casteliers have outreach mandates extending beyond the borough, these two organizations provide services, exhibitions, events and performances aimed essentially at Outremont residents.

Borough residents enjoy an extensive range of music- and dance-related cultural leisure activities. The music offering is complemented by a significant number of teaching and performance venues affiliated with schools and universities. Organizations collaborating in this cultural leisure offering include the Société d’histoire d’Outremont, Académie de danse d’Outremont, Centre d’études musicales Pantonal, Les Amis de la place Marcelle-Ferron, Outremont en famille, Maison des jeunes d’Outremont, and Grandes Oreilles.

School-age and other young audiences along with families are the groups most targeted by the various organizations in the borough. There are also specific activities organized for and attention paid to seniors. The borough’s cultural mediation / art education initiatives include a Schools component (in collaboration with the Marguerite-Bourgeoy school service centre) and a Families and Seniors component.

The *Culture et commerces committee*, chaired by the borough councillor responsible for culture and comprising citizens who manage venues or own retail businesses, supports the work of the borough’s Culture and Library Division, notably in conceptualizing arts and culture events.

The Table de la Petite Enfance d’Outremont and Table de concertation des aînés d’Outremont (respectively the early childhood and seniors issues tables) also provide support to the borough administration in fostering partnerships across the cultural and social milieu.

Volunteers also play an active role in ensuring Outremont’s cultural vitality, providing invaluable support to the borough’s work. Some arts and culture organizations in the borough are staffed almost entirely by volunteers.

There are also initiatives led by members of the Hasidic communities, with support from associations such as Friends of Hutchison Street / Les Amis de la rue Hutchison, that aim to promote knowledge of religious and cultural practices. These include initiatives in 2019 that featured visits to synagogues and an introduction to *sukkahs*, the temporary dwellings built during the harvest festival of Sukkot.

Some of the socio-cultural activities in the borough are held in private spaces; examples include one-off performances for charity and graduation concerts.

## Creation and presentation

Many artists and writers live in Outremont. The borough plays a facilitation and support role on behalf of emerging artists.

Outremont’s essentially residential character means there are few music performances in cafés and bars and limited opportunities for growth of alternative cultural presentation spaces. Some initiatives like OUF!, Casteliers’ off-festival event, encourage residents to embrace unconventional performance spaces.

## Funding

Approximately 10% of the borough of Outremont’s budget is earmarked for the Culture and Library Division, and goes to fund arts and culture activities (public events, cultural mediation) and support organizations and infrastructures (Bibliothèque Robert-Bourassa, Galerie d’Outremont, Théâtre Outremont, and Casteliers). Note that this amount does not encompass heritage spending, which is the responsibility of another borough division.

The borough receives support from the Ville de Montréal’s Service de la culture and the touring programs of the Conseil des arts de Montréal.

## 3.OBSERVATIONS AND FINDINGS

### Cultural uses of the territory

Culture plays a pivotal role in land-use planning. Art and design beautify spaces, and enhance people's sense of security in urban environments. Land-use planning favours the enhancement and development of cultural attractions, including built and landscape heritage. Cultural activities enrich neighbourhood life and contribute to the vitality of local businesses.

The **borough's cultural heritage** is already celebrated and could be further harnessed to increase public appreciation, through such initiatives as themed tours and visits, the promotion of churches as spaces for outreach, the Mois de l'architecture (Architecture Month), and so on.

Outremont's **public spaces**, especially its parks, are especially well suited to development of the local arts and culture offering. They are powerful markers of identity for the borough and encourage cultural inclusion.

Public-access spaces such as storefronts also provide opportunities to spotlight creative projects and processes, whether temporary or more permanent. The park chalets also offer potential as **presentation venues** for small-scale events. The Kermesse Soleil summer carnival is frequently mentioned as a festive, inclusive event.

Outremont is undergoing a dramatic transformation with the establishment of the **MIL campus**. This presents an extraordinary opportunity for cultural development on several levels: creation of a public space for events presentation; installation of new public artworks to generate interpretive and participatory activities; projects to be developed jointly with the university (e.g., around scientific culture and artist-researcher incubators); taking advantage of the influx of new residents to rethink the notion of "living together" in public places; etc.

The MIL campus has also created an interface with the adjacent Parc-Extension district, one of the most multiethnic in all of Canada. Area residents, including families of diverse backgrounds and their children, have been quick to make this newly opened territory their own. There is significant potential for cultural exchanges. The **interaction between culture and urban planning** remains a challenge, as does the risk of gentrification.

The **Centre communautaire intergénérationnel** can be an even more potent hub for reflecting the cultural life of the community. Our sense is that it has not achieved its full potential for development and that, as a community space, it has the capacity to link cultural leisure and professional arts practices even more closely. It is strategically located, especially given the urban development that is accompanying the MIL campus project. Once focused on the south part of the borough, it now sits at the junction of Outremont old and new.

### Public participation in arts and culture

Culture is a tool for inclusion. It has the capacity to bring people together by including all generations and promoting the joys of living together and getting to know one another. Engaging in artistic and cultural activities allows for discoveries, initiates exchanges, and connects people of diverse backgrounds in our schools and the community at large, over and above language barriers.

Outremont's cultural identity is rich and complex. Recent initiatives aimed at intensifying **cross-cultural dialogue** must be further pursued and sustained. Promoting cultural inclusion of greater numbers of people also means taking an interest in each other's culture, more fully reflecting our communities in the public space, and stimulating cross-sector networking.

There have been various **cultural events** in the past, for example the Lebanese community's annual parade, but these have proceeded outside the borough's arts and culture "system." Initiatives promoting visits to the places of worship of our various communities, including the Hasidic communities, could be encouraged, as could activities focusing on the customs of Outremont's various ethnocultural communities. Further thought could be given to amplifying the participation of these communities in borough activities and events.

We are, however, seeing a cultural offering for **young audiences**, with growing participation by young families, as well as networking among the many schools and social groups such as Outremont en famille, the Table Petite Enfance Outremont, and the Maison des jeunes.

**Cultural mediation**, also known as art education, is a valuable outreach philosophy and a strategic resource for accelerating interactions between residents of different ages and backgrounds through collaborative art projects, in traditional venues as well as public spaces.

**Participation in culture** comes in many forms and encompasses numerous ways of engaging with culture. Volunteer work is one. The people of Outremont are well known for their involvement in various aspects of civic life. There are opportunities here to mobilize around a proposed master plan and ideas for specific actions.



## Artistic vitality

Arts and culture activities provide stimulating opportunities for interaction with the public. Professional artists, committed to their practice, contribute specific skills relative to a particular discipline, technique or creative process. It is important to value the contributions of our creators to the cultural vitality of the borough.

Although the many artists and writers who live in Outremont are implicitly recognized, their **visibility** in the cultural life of the borough seems to be too discreet. Outremont has few **spaces for professional creation**. Organizations specialized in management of artist studios, like Ateliers créatifs, could be made part of thinking on this issue.

New areas of action could be created for the purpose of identifying, promoting and further encouraging **dialogue and collaboration between artists and cultural stakeholders** in the borough. Often, the challenge for organizations lies in forging partnerships with other sectors. **Dedicated programs** (mediation, research-creation residencies) could also be used to amplify the presence of artists in existing institutions and living environments (e.g., schools, the library, seniors' residences).

## The digital environment

Although digital is a determining factor in cultural development today, attracting increased attention and investment from policymakers in Montréal as well as Québec City, its role in the borough remains to be further explored.

In the current context of the health crisis and stay-at-home guidelines, we have seen an upsurge in **online arts and culture offerings**, be they in terms of presentation, teaching or co-creation. This situation is raising new questions, as much about the vitality of cultural stakeholders as about the literacy of target audiences. The **digital divide**, viewed not only from the perspective of access but also from the cognitive perspective (We can access anything, but what can we learn?), can also be conceived of at a local level.

## Municipal organization

Outremont is one of Montréal's smallest boroughs, as measured by area as well as population; its role is complementary to those of the municipal and provincial governments.

That said, even at the local level, over and above infrastructure maintenance a master plan must also consider culture workers. The trend today in cultural action is to emphasize **pooling** rather than development of new structures.

Whereas heritage is under the responsibility of a different department than arts and culture, we must contemplate the benefits of considering art, heritage and culture together with a view to integrated cultural development.

**Internal as well as external dialogue and collaboration** are always mentioned among exemplary management practices. Dialogue and collaboration among cultural milieux enables actions to be undertaken with other socio-economic and educational partners so as to strengthen the borough's cultural dynamics. To that end, the creation of the *cellule communautaire intersectorielle* (cross-sector community unit) by the borough administration, in response to the ongoing health crisis, could serve as a model for a **Culture and Community issues table**.



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