



Addendum



The World Urban Forum

The World Urban Forum recently held in Vancouver was a unique opportunity to further explore, and possibly confirm, a number of the objectives in this proposal. It soon became apparent that the most significant aspect of Expo 17 may well be the Habitat 2017 community.

As the Vancouver forum made clear, today's world is rapidly urbanising and cities have yet to cope with the tremendous demand on housing and services. In Canada, real estate and construction costs have increased dramatically, making the concept of equitable and affordable housing nearly unattainable.

At the same time, NGOs devoted to providing shelter for the poor have come up against a brick wall of NIMBYism as well as a dearth of affordable real estate.

Interestingly, the city might have the land, but can't afford to develop. The NGOs, through volunteer work, sweat equity, donations, and even union concessions, might have the

potential to develop – but can't afford the land. A possible solution, therefore, may involve a broader social contract between cities and NGOs.

The NGOs also indicated that a piecemeal approach to affordable housing cannot keep pace with the recent increase in urbanisation and gentrification. A mixed community – established from the ground up – might be the most effective option. Montreal already has considerable experience in this direction with the highly regarded Angus Shops development.

Another concern involves the divide between rental and ownership. It is generally understood that viable communities cannot be built or sustained unless residents have a hand in the process and a lasting guarantee of a roof over their heads. Those who participate in the creation of their community and have equity in their living space are much more inclined to protect their investment. The city and the Société d'Habitation du Québec have already

recognised this through the Accès Condo program. However, unusually high real estate prices continue to lock out low-income citizens.

Heritage, though only touched upon at the forum, is also an important issue. Successful urban rehabilitation inevitably requires recognition of history and culture even when they have been paved over by progress.

Most importantly, the World Urban Forum proved to us that major cities around the world no longer feel compelled to hide their poor and their homeless behind a facade. Instead, mayors sat side by side and openly discussed the difficulties they face and were not ashamed to air their concerns publicly. This extent of political will and openness, inconceivable a generation before, might be applied to an international exposition to considerable acclaim.



Health and social issues were explored in the Man in the Community complex at Cité du Havre. Source: N Milkovich, A Erickson

It has been mentioned earlier in this proposal that a world's fair today would need to offer more than mere promises of a better future. Rather than simply promote human values and aspirations, a contemporary world's fair would need to apply them. In other words, the city itself might constitute one of the most important exhibits of all. To a certain extent, this is already the case with many housing expos and possibly even Montreal's own Angus Shops development in Rosemont-Petite Patrie.

A lingering irony of Expo 67 and Expo 86 is that both fairs managed to displace a number of the city's poor while promoting exactly the opposite principles during the exhibition. Expo 67, for example, devoted nearly an entire peninsula (Cité du Havre) to the Man in the Community, Man and Health, and Man in the Environment (Habitat 67) exhibits. The average Expo visitor remained oblivious to the fact that a real community (Victoriatown) had vanished to make way for these and other attractions.



Habitat during Expo. Source: Catherine Bujold

"Habitat 67 in Cite du Havre reveals to the fullest the extent to which man has used his ingenuity in combining shelter with all the attributes of modern life, in an urban world in which living space is at a premium. It unites the advantage of apartments by housing many families in a small area. It answers the suburban dream of gardens. And it places every home within walking distance of stores on sheltered streets."

– Expo 67 official guide



Inside Man in the Community. Source: N Milkovich, A Erickson



The irony of Expo lives on today, as indicated in the figures of a socio-economic profile in the Vision 2025 report. The remaining Habitat 67 complex, along with other developments east of the Bonaventure expressway, currently houses some of the city's most affluent singles, while one of Canada's poorest areas, Pointe St Charles, continues to struggle with social and environmental decline on the other side. This disparity is a far cry from the original intentions of Expo's architects or their exhibits.

Whether by accident or design, one small pavilion at Expo 67 eventually resulted in a complete reexamination of the status quo. Undoubtedly the most controversial structure on the site, the Indians of Canada pavilion boldly alerted the Expo visitor – and more importantly the average Canadian – to the plight of Canada's First Nations in 1967. And, rather than bring shame to a country basking in its centennial year, the Indians of Canada pavilion brought numerous accolades and a positive shift in public perception and policy towards our native people.



The controversial yet highly popular Indians of Canada pavilion at Expo 67. Canada's native people were given free reign to tell their own story and Montreal was commended for its forthright approach.

"Expo visitors who went expecting to encounter the Noble Red Man stereotype and the usual baskets-and-beadwork displays were shocked out of their skins...This unique pavilion, with its blunt, uncompromising message, was widely publicized and probably had more to do with a change of attitude on the part of the public than all the seminars, taskforce reports, and white papers combined."

– Pierre Burton, "The Last Good Year"



SOCIÉTÉ DU HAVRE

Economic and environmental divide: Pointe St Charles, Bonaventure expressway, Cité du Havre.

In a similarly forward approach, perhaps, Habitat 2017 could offer a rare opportunity for Montreal to accomplish on the southwest shore what Expo 67 strived for at Cité du Havre. This time around Montreal itself – including its social challenges and its achievements – could become a dynamic component of the exhibition and its aspirations.

The term “Habitat” was originally conceived for Expo 67 and has since been adopted by government agencies, NGOs, and even the United Nations Human Settlements Program that arose from the first World Urban Forum, Habitat I, in 1976 in Vancouver.

In its broadest sense, Habitat implies that everyone in the world has a right to food, shelter, safety and a community. When Montreal distilled these concepts into a single word and built them into a single structure at Cité du Havre, it offered the world a prototype and a promise. Perhaps it is time to expand upon that promise – and truly offer the world a shining future in 2017.



“Our society attempts to provide housing support and advocacy for those who have absolutely no other housing alternatives. They are a group that are often perceived by themselves and other people as undeserving and sometimes even as less than human.”

– Liz Evans, Portland Hotel Society

“The term “hard-to-house” should be put to rest. The interviews show that homeless people with complex needs can be housed successfully.”

– CMHC, Socio-economic Series 05-027

Arthur Erickson, principle architect of Man in the Community for Expo 67, recently designed the Portland Hotel complex in Vancouver’s downtown eastside. Considered a landmark in social policy, the Portland provides housing and medical assistance and has become a template for other cities around the world. Source: N Milkovich, A Erickson