

For immediate release

Designers and architects from Buenos Aires, Berlin and Montréal envision place d'Armes

Ville de Montréal launches a call for candidates for the "Imaginer la place d'Armes" urban design workshop

Montréal, May 17, 2007 – Mr. Benoit Labonté, member of the executive committee responsible for culture, heritage, downtown and design, today launched a call for candidates for professionals involved in the fields of development and design for the "Imaginer la place d'Armes" urban design workshop, which is a project led by the Design Montréal Office to be held October 20 to 27, 2007. This workshop is part of the place d'Armes development process, which is part of the Three-year capital works program, and is provided for in the 2005-2008 Montréal cultural development agreement with the Québec ministère de la Culture, des Communications et de la Condition féminine.

The urban design workshop will bring together three local teams of urban designers as well as development professionals involved in the fields of architecture, design, urban design, landscaping and urban planning. Each team will include a guest designer from Berlin and Buenos Aires to stimulate partnership with other design cities that are members of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network. A committee of guest experts made up of managers and professionals, skilled in meeting the challenges of urban development, will also take part in the workshop.

The workshop's goal is to take a new look at a highly iconic site in the Old Montréal historical borough, enhance the project's development plan, create local interest and contribute to Montréal's reputation as a UNESCO City of Design.

"Place d'Armes is a valuable microcosm of Montréal history: four centuries of architecture are reflected here in the city's former financial district. The urban design workshop should be an extremely enriching experience, enabling local and international designers to propose modern solutions for the future concept of one of the oldest and best-known public squares in Montréal," said Christine St-Pierre, minister of the Québec department of culture, communications and status of women.

"The event, which results from the Dialogues de Griffintown urban design workshop held in the fall of 2006, shows our administration's commitment to invest in design activities to highlight the creativity of Montréal designers. It is also an opportunity for professional designers and architects of the three cities that have been designated as UNESCO Cities of Design since 2005 to work together," said Benoit Labonté.

Place d'Armes

Place d'Armes is the second oldest public site in Montréal. It was first called place de la Fabrique when it was developed in 1693 at the request of the Sulpicians. It became place d'Armes in 1721 and was the stage of several military events. It was used as a hay and wood market from 1781 to 1813. After it was acquired by the city in 1836, a Victorian garden was created on the site. Its present layout dates back to 1960.

Located in the heart of the city's historical district, place d'Armes includes the Saint-Sulpice Seminary, Notre-Dame Basilica (1824), which was America's largest church when it was built; the New York Life Building (1887), Montréal's first high-rise building; the Bank of Montreal head office (1859), also Canada's first bank; and the Canadian National Bank (1965).

Candidate applications

Teams interested in taking part in the urban design workshop must submit their applications no later than Friday, June 8, at 4 p.m. to the Design Montréal Office at the following address:

“Imaginer la place d'Armes”
303, rue Notre-Dame Est
6^e étage
Montréal (Québec)
H2Y 3Y8

The call for candidates document is available on the Web at: designmontreal.com

The “Imaginer la place d'Armes” urban design workshop, led by the Design Montréal Office, in association with Université de Montréal's Chaire UNESCO en paysage et environnement, also benefits from the contribution of several experts in the municipal field (heritage, parks and green spaces and the Ville-Marie borough) and the financial support of the Québec ministère de la Culture, des Communications et de la Condition féminine as part of Montréal's 2005-2008 cultural development agreement, and the Fonds de développement de la métropole of the ministère des Affaires municipales et des Régions. The Design Montréal Office was created in January 2006 by the city, to implement the municipal action plan aimed at improving the city's design and emphasizing the position of Montréal as a city of design.