

Knowledge and Enhancement of Heritage Buildings

Background

The heritage of the Ville de Montréal (the City), widely recognized, consists of municipal and private buildings that are of heritage interest because of their architectural, historic, landscape, urban or archeological value. This heritage is governed by municipal provisions, such as the *Cultural Heritage Act* (CHA), which are aimed at ensuring its knowledge, protection, enhancement and transmission. Added to this are new provisions of the CHA (2021) that require the City, by 2026, to adopt an inventory of heritage buildings (HB) constructed before 1940. Despite existing frameworks, several factors, in particular the lack of maintenance, can threaten the preservation of HB. In the 2005 *Heritage Policy* (Policy) and its 2017–2022 *Heritage Action Plan* (HAP), the municipal administration committed to act in an exemplary fashion towards its heritage.

Purpose of the audit

To ensure that the City has sound knowledge of the HB on its territory and that it enhances them adequately.

Results

The City does not have complete, centralized knowledge of the HB on its territory or of their preservation status. While an action plan was defined for the adoption of an inventory of HB constructed prior to 1940, its implementation would not eliminate this knowledge gap because no provision was made to integrate the inventory data into the tools used by the City. Incomplete knowledge also limits the scope of the enhancement measures the City can take, measures which are already insufficient for the identified HB. Not only are the Preventive Maintenance Programs (PMPs) not fully implemented, but they do not provide for specific maintenance work on HB, in accordance with the HAP. As for private HB, the measures deployed by the City are insufficient to ensure that their owners maintain them in good condition. Consequently, the enhancement of HB is not fully assured by the City, which exacerbates the issue of vulnerable HB. This underscores the consequences of the investment deficit that results in the partial, if not total, demolition of some HB being the best alternative. In summary, several actions in the Policy and the HAP, aimed at increasing knowledge and enhancement of HB, remain to be completed. The absence of a follow-up of these actions prevents the Direction générale from adequately regulating issues related to the HB on its territory.



Main Findings

Knowledge of Heritage Buildings

- The City has not implemented the actions set out in the Policy, which is aimed at increasing the knowledge and enhancement of HB.
- Municipal and private HB located on the territory of the City have not all been identified.
- The City does not have a centralized picture of the HB identified on its territory. They are spread out across various tools, consisting of data that is neither comprehensive nor accurate.
- The methodology and terminology used to designate the heritage interest of HB is not consistent across the City.
- The methodology used to assess the state of preservation and the investment deficit is not consistent or applied to all municipal HB.

Inventory of Heritage Buildings Constructed Prior to 1940

- The planning and methodology for drawing up the inventory of HB constructed prior to 1940 have been well established and communicated to the agglomeration's stakeholders.
- The inventory process will not, however, eliminate all the gaps in the knowledge of HB.

Enhancement of Municipal Heritage Buildings

- Standards for the upkeep and maintenance of the condition of the HB are not defined or reflected in the PMPs, as stipulated in the Policy.
- The PMPs (regular and safety) that apply to all municipal buildings are only programmed for 68% of HB and only partially completed.
- The investment deficit for municipal HB has been growing for several years, which notably reflects a high number of important HB left vacant or abandoned.

Enhancement of Private Heritage Buildings

- Follow-up inspections of projects under way and upon completion are not carried out systematically to ensure that the work complies with the permits issued and conditions established by the authorities and to avoid the potential and irreversible alteration of HB.
- The methods deployed for rapid repairs to vulnerable HB by their owners are insufficient, leading to increasingly profound deterioration of their state, if not their potential demolition.

In addition to these results, we formulated various recommendations to the business units, which are presented on the following pages.