

TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT CASE STUDY

LES COCHÈRES DE LA GARE, Sainte-Thérèse, Que.



LES COCHÈRES DE LA GARE

Figure 1—Les Cochères de la gare with a linear park and bike path in the foreground

Project data

Developer	Habitations Viagère
Date completed	2005
Site area	0.7 ha (1.7 acres)
Number, type, size of residential units	94 condominiums, 75–95 m ² (800–1,000 sq. ft.)
Other land uses on the site	None
Gross residential density	134 units per hectare (uph) (54 units per acre (upa))
Maximum height	Four storeys
Parking	94 spaces or one space per unit; all parking is located in the interior courtyard between the buildings
Unit selling prices	Average is \$130,000 (2005)
Type of transit	Commuter train and bus (local and regional)
Distance to transit station	90 m (300 ft.)
Pedestrian connectivity	Excellent

PROJECT SUMMARY

Les Cochères de la gare

Les Cochères de la gare is the first of several recent residential developments in the Town of Sainte-Thérèse that are close to a commuter train station with service to downtown Montréal.

When finished, these projects will comprise a complex of residential buildings clustered around the town's newly constructed train station. The first project—completed in 2005—was Les Cochères de la gare, a 94-unit condominium built by local developer, Habitations Viagère.

The structure itself is two buildings arranged in a V with a central courtyard with surface parking for residents. The project offers small, affordable units for couples and young families. Located about 90 m (300 ft.) from the train station and the regional bus terminal, Les Cochères de la gare facilitates public transit use and is a model for collaboration between a municipality and a private developer.

TRANSIT SYSTEM OVERVIEW AND PROJECT CONTEXT

Located in the Regional County of Thérèse-de-Blainville, the Town of Sainte-Thérèse has a population of about 25,000. It is part of the North Shore, a rapidly growing and mostly car-dependent suburban area on the “mainland” north of Montréal and Laval.

Commuter rail service from Montréal to Sainte-Thérèse ceased in the early 1980s because of falling ridership. Service was resumed in 1997 to provide an alternative, temporary link to Montréal during reconstruction of a major bridge. The popularity of the service encouraged Montréal's Metropolitan Transit Agency (*Agence métropolitaine de transport*—AMT) to re-consider the train's temporary status. In 2000, service to Sainte-Thérèse became permanent. Since then, service levels have increased, with more than a dozen weekday trains to and from Montréal. The trip from Sainte-Thérèse to downtown Montréal takes about 45 minutes.

The train station is about 500 m (1,600 ft.) from Sainte-Thérèse's downtown and within walking distance of landmarks, such as the central town square and city hall, as well as small retail shops and restaurants. The train station is part of a multi-modal transportation hub that also includes a bus station, with regional and local bus services.

By the late 1990s, little greenfield land suitable for conventional suburban development was left in Sainte-Thérèse. Ninety per cent of the town's land base was urbanized and the remaining parcels had become quite expensive.

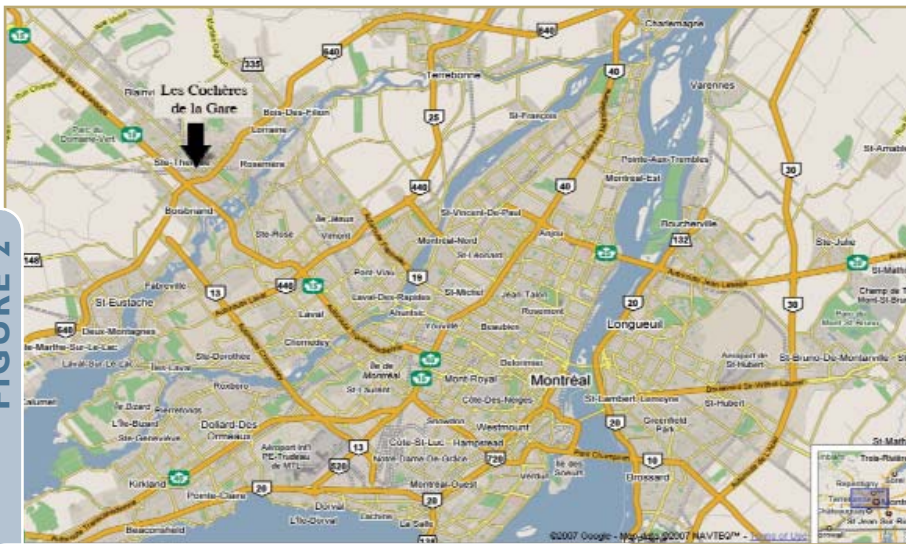


FIGURE 2

Les Cochères de la gare in relation to Montréal.

Source: adapted from ©2007 Google
—Map data ©2007 NAVTEQ™

These conditions, along with the re-introduction of commuter train service in 1997, triggered interest in redevelopment of an underused industrial sector alongside the railway. Redeveloping this area would put these parcels to the most efficient use while building ridership for the reintroduced train service. Additional expansion and development along the town's former commercial corridor, also within 500 m of the train station, would provide services to residents of the new district and further favour pedestrian and transit use.

These development goals were embodied in a formal Development Concept Plan (*Concept général d'aménagement*), created by the Town of Sainte-Thérèse in 1999. The Concept Plan included revitalisation of the town's downtown corridor as well as redevelopment of the area around the rail line.

With the train stop re-activated, a nearby area of about 3.2 ha (8 acres) of former industrial use was cleared to accommodate a parking lot and to provide shelters and quays for local bus service. The municipality played a key role in clearing the area to support its redevelopment. A new train station and permanent parking area with 664 spaces were added by the AMT. In addition, a linear park with bicycle and pedestrian pathways, paid for by the municipality with some provincial support, were added alongside the railroad.

Given the lack of other large land parcels available for development in the municipality, the unused industrial lands around the train stop were considered a prime location for residential development. The enhanced pedestrian and bicycle access to the station encouraged private development initiatives. Les Cochères de la gare was the first of several private residential development projects foreseen for the area around the train station.

The density of Les Cochères de la gare is much higher than that of the existing residential neighbourhood around it. Comprising small, multi-unit apartment buildings, duplexes and single-family homes, the surrounding residential neighbourhood includes housing stock that was constructed because of its access to factories and the downtown.

Growth in this area has been slow because it is about one to 1.5 km (0.6 to 0.9 mi.) from the area's two major highways, Autoroutes 15 and 640. Since the start of train service in 1997, developers have shown more interest in the area, building a few infill residential projects and creating several new commercial establishments.



FIGURE 3

Les Cochères de la gare is 90 m from the Sainte-Thérèse Station and adjacent to a linear park with pedestrian pathways (parallel along the rail line).

Source: adapted from ©2008 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.



FIGURE 4

Map shows the location of Sainte-Thérèse on the Blainville line

Source: Réseau des trains de banlieue de L'AMT

DEVELOPER'S PERSPECTIVE

Les Cochères de la gare was developed by Habitations Viagère, the first of the developer's three projects close to the new train station.

Parking and Bicycle Storage

There is parking in the interior courtyard between the two buildings and alongside the buildings. All parking is surface, but the arrangement of the buildings is such that most of the parking is well-hidden between and behind the buildings.

Furthermore, because of the closeness to the train station, the developer was able to reduce the parking to one space per unit (rather than the usual 1.5 spaces per unit in conventional developments). There is storage for 30 bikes within the parking area. A cycling path, on the linear park between the project and the transit hub, provides a route to the train station, bus depot and to the town's central commercial area.



FIGURE 5

Station, linear park and residential buildings; Les Cochères de la gare is to the far right

Source:
Habitations
Viagère Inc.

Transit-Oriented Design Considerations

Les Cochères de la gare was the first of six parcels to be developed under the municipality's 1999 Development Concept Plan. The site is directly across from the train station on the site of a former clothing factory. Access to the train station and adjacent bus terminal is facilitated by sidewalks and a linear park that run parallel to the rail tracks, with both cycling and pedestrian paths. At approximately 134 units per hectare, it offers high density near a transit station, consistent with TOD.

The facade of the building facing the rail line is punctured by carriage passageways (*cochères* in French). These passageways allow easy movement between both of the buildings, the linear park, the train station and bus terminal.

The passageways play on the historic architecture of Saint-Thérèse, referring to an era when transportation was limited to horse and carriage and rail. The building design also references traditional architecture with mansard roofs and towers, thus blending with surrounding buildings, including those of the nearby downtown.



FIGURE 6

Les Cochères de la gare's architecture references traditional architecture of the area including mansard roofs and towers and incorporating "cochères" or carriage entranceways

Later development on lots adjacent to Les Cochères de la gare will include several retail shops providing basic services. Furthermore, the bike path that runs through the linear park leads to the downtown retail area, providing direct access by bicycle to additional services and amenities. The distance from the project to the downtown is approximately 600 m (1,950 ft.).

Project Success and Costs

Les Cochères de la gare is composed of relatively small two- and three-bedroom condominium units that cater to small families or residents without children. The average price of the units was \$130,000 in 2005, which made the units affordable for young, first-time buyers at a time when the average price for new condominium apartments in the Montréal CMA was \$180,000.¹ According to the developer, most residents are between 30 and 55 years old and household sizes are one to four persons.

Purchase and clearing of the property by the municipality of Sainte-Thérèse began in 1998. Decontamination of the lots (by the municipality) and construction began in early 2004, and was completed in July 2005.

Both the developer and the municipality consider the project to be very successful. Publicity by the developer highlighted the relationship of the buildings to the train station. The municipality helped build support for the project through public consultations on the Development Concept Plan, beginning in 2003.

Residents had a general familiarity with the plan to redevelop the area. Some concerns regarding building heights and development densities were voiced by residents at the initial consultation events. Additional public sessions that provided detailed planning and development schemes helped relieve these concerns and increase support for the area's redevelopment.

The rapid sale of the units confirms the success of the project. All condominiums were sold before the project's completion in 2005 and the development is fully occupied. The developer did not price the units higher than a comparable unit elsewhere in the town. However, the developer predicts that the closeness to the train station will most likely mean higher resale values for the units.

The developer was not faced with any unusual financial or liability issues. There was no financial assistance from federal or provincial sources.

¹ Market Analysis Centre, CMHC, National Office.

Municipal Support

The developer acknowledges that the municipality played an exceptionally positive role in the realization of the project. The Town of Sainte-Thérèse produced a concept plan for the area around the train station, adopted zoning changes to support transit-oriented development, and purchased and serviced the lots before re-selling them to developers. The municipality also conducted public consultations on the concept plan, which helped prepare the ground for developers to achieve community acceptance for their specific projects within the planning area.

Barriers and Obstacles

The developer did not encounter serious opposition to the project, as a result of the municipality's role in publicizing the redevelopment of the area before the development of Les Cochères de la gare.

The redevelopment and intensification of the area around the transit node had been established in planning and land use regulations put forth by the Town, so Habitations Viagère was not faced with applying for zoning changes. When construction began for Les Cochères de la gare, the installation of the train and amenities (the station, pathways and parking) had already shaped the area's conversion from an under-used and derelict industrial sector to an area undergoing renewal.

Key Factors of Success and Lessons Learned

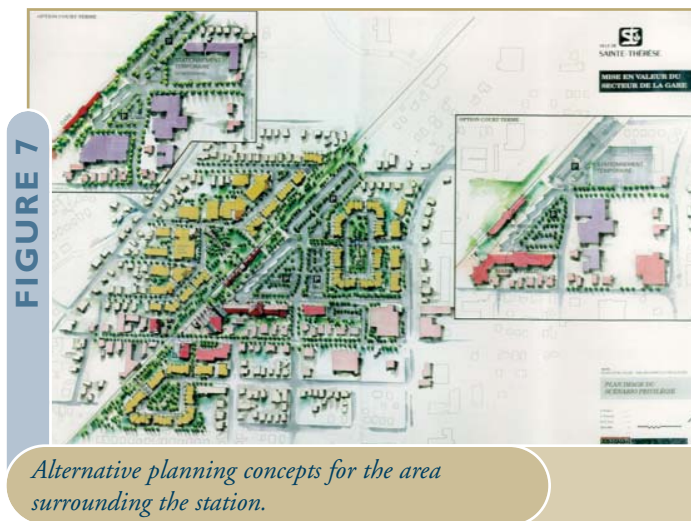
The developer attributes the success of the project to the assistance from the municipality, by making land available, putting in place the regulatory measures to support dense, residential development and providing the necessary infrastructure. Excellent access to the transit station, coupled with a lack of comparable units available in the wider area, ensured that there were enough buyers.

MUNICIPAL PLANNER'S PERSPECTIVE

The parcel of land developed for Les Cochères de la gare was made available by the demolition of existing, industrial buildings that occupied the site. In 1999, the first phase of the Development Concept Plan, which included strategies to revitalise the town's main commercial corridor, was implemented. This

Concept Plan also included the area around the train station, in anticipation of permanent train service. When AMT decided to make the train service to Sainte-Thérèse permanent, the revitalization plan was further detailed to include the sector around the rail line.

The site of Les Cochères de la gare was given priority by the municipality as the first redevelopment project in the planning area due to the site's location near the station and the newly created linear park and pedestrian pathways. Future phases of development will include six additional residential projects of different sizes, to be targeted at various demographic and income groups in order to support socially mixed development.



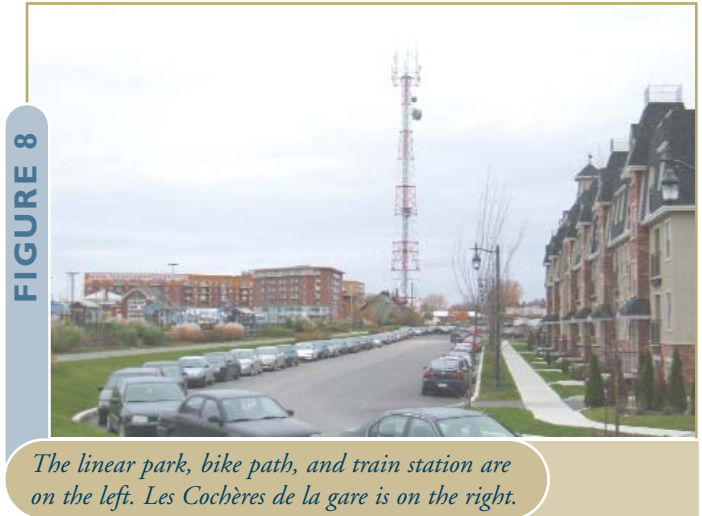
Alternative planning concepts for the area surrounding the station.

Municipal Process and Support for Project

In 1999, the Town of Sainte-Thérèse created a Development Concept Plan (*Concept général d'aménagement*) for the area around the train stop, which included six parcels for residential development. The planning area of approximately 10 ha (25 acres) included parcels for residential development, a parking area, a train station and bus terminal. With the exception of a former piano factory that will be incorporated into one of the residential projects, the existing, abandoned buildings were demolished to provide land for new development.

The Development Concept Plan established objectives for TOD development in the area. These include: relatively high residential densities for vacant or underused parcels near the train station; improved multi-modal transportation services; a greater range of retail services close to the area; and the

construction of a network of pedestrian pathways within 500 m (1,600 ft.) of the train station. Further details were added to the plan after AMT's decision in 2000 to make train service to the area permanent.



The linear park, bike path, and train station are on the left. Les Cochères de la gare is on the right.

Several regulatory measures were put in place to encourage transit-oriented residential development close to the train station. First, zoning of properties near the station was changed to accommodate residential development of three to seven storeys and building densities of up to 80 per cent lot coverage (compared to 30 per cent permitted for the rest of the town). These and other details, such as required setbacks and parking regulations (one space per unit), were then outlined in a set of design guidelines (*Plan d'implémentation et intégration architecturale*—PIIA). The creation of these guidelines was overseen by the municipality's urban consultation committee (*Commission consultative d'urbanisme*—CCU), of five municipal officials and three residents.

The municipality also invested financially to prepare the area around the train station for development. Municipal authorities purchased parcels adjacent to the station for residential development and land along the train tracks for the linear park.

The municipality also supported the project by decontaminating the land and constructing the required infrastructure, including sewerage, drinking water, sidewalks and street lights. In addition, the linear park, with pedestrian pathways and cycling routes, was constructed to support alternate forms of transportation. The construction of this infrastructure was paid for by the

municipality in the expectation that taxes collected from the properties after development would repay the initial investment. Private developers purchased lands from the municipality.

In total, the purchase of the land and construction of necessary infrastructure, including the linear park, required a municipal expenditure of \$4 million. An additional \$1.5 million was provided by the province to support these interventions. AMT cleared an area and paid for the construction of the train station and parking lot.

The town's Concept Plan and urban design guidelines were compatible with the objectives set out in the regional plan (*Schéma d'aménagement et de développement*—SAD), which was created by the Regional County in 1987 and revised in 2004. The SAD proposed general measures that shaped the planning and development of Sainte-Thérèse, including the consolidation and diversification of local services through mixed-use development and increased development near to public transit hubs.

Public Consultation

In 2003, public consultations were held to present the Town's overall planning concept for the area around the train station. Several subsequent neighbourhood presentations were also scheduled to discuss specific development projects as they were proposed, the first being Les Cochères de la gare.

Private developers, including Habitations Viagère, also met with residents in the area immediately surrounding their development projects, and they provided information to residents whose properties were adjacent to new development parcels. Initially, there was some opposition. Residents voiced concern regarding high densities and high lot coverage at the initial public meetings. Subsequent public information sessions and the distribution of detailed information helped to relieve initial concern.

Challenges

The unusual level of planning and development support offered by the Town of Sainte-Thérèse facilitated what could have otherwise been a challenging set of operations for any private developer, including re-zoning and infrastructure installation. From the perspective of the Town of Sainte-Thérèse, the investment in land and infrastructure construction was costly and would be difficult to repeat elsewhere in the town. However, the initial public investment in the train station area will leverage a much greater private investment and eventually be repaid through higher property tax revenues.

Success Factors

The municipality supported the project by setting in place the conditions for higher density residential development around the train station. Furthermore, population growth in and around Sainte-Thérèse, coupled with the re-establishment of commuter train service, supported such development. Finally, redevelopment of the area around the train station would not have been possible if land parcels suitable for development had not been available.

The development of other parcels in proximity to Les Cochères de la gare will include both residential units and a few retail shops that will provide commercial services to current residents. The financial and planning support of the municipality has enabled development that is consistent with overall TOD planning objectives.

RESIDENTS' PERSPECTIVES

Twenty residents from the project were interviewed in the fall of 2006 about their motivations for choosing a home in that location, their level of satisfaction and their transportation choices.

Reason for choosing this location

Proximity to transit was either the main reason or a secondary reason in residents' decision to move to Les Cochères in 45 per cent of the households surveyed. Proximity to transit was second only to unit price as the main or secondary reason for moving to the development. For 25 per cent of respondents, proximity to work influenced their decision and 20 per cent said proximity to amenities was an influence.

TABLE 1

Reasons for choosing Les Cochères

Reason	Main reason (%)	Some influence (%)*
Proximity to transit	10	35
Proximity to work	5	20
Proximity to school	5	5
Proximity to daycare	0	0
Proximity to amenities (for example, shopping, parks, trails)	0	20
Price of unit	25	25
Size of unit	0	5
Architectural features (e.g. layout, look of building)	0	10
Other/don't know	55	70

* More than one response allowed so total >100 per cent

In a separate question, 45 per cent of respondents said that the building's location near transit served as a very strong influence or somewhat of an influence.

For 75 per cent of respondents, the rent or purchase price of their unit in Les Cochères was higher than in their previous location. Of these, 33 per cent accepted a higher price because of design features of the home they purchased in Les Cochères, 27 per cent said it was due to the amenities in the neighbourhood and 20 per cent said the location of the building near transit was a key reason.

Among residents surveyed, 80 per cent said they were very or somewhat satisfied with respect to the overall cost of living there, while 65 per cent of respondents were very satisfied with the amenities in the neighbourhood and the rest said they were somewhat satisfied. A further 85 per cent were very or somewhat satisfied with the character of the neighbourhood. Most residents (65 per cent) were very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the amount of parking but only 35 per cent were satisfied with the amount of visitor parking.

Travel to work, shopping and school

Nineteen per cent of residents surveyed indicated that public transit was their main mode of travel to work, a little less than the CMA average of 21.7 per cent, but significantly more than the Sainte-Thérèse average of only 5.3 per cent. Of those residents who used transit most often, 75 per cent found access to the transit stop very convenient and the rest found it somewhat convenient.

In terms of changes to travel patterns compared to their last home, 15 per cent of respondents indicated that they use transit more for getting to work, 10 per cent walk more than before, and 5 per cent own one less car.

TABLE 2

Comparison of Les Cochère travel patterns with Montréal travel patterns

Travel variable	Les Cochères	Montréal CMA*
Mode of travel to work	63% motor vehicle as driver 6% motor vehicle as passenger 19% public transit 0% walk 6% bike 6% other	65.5% motor vehicle as driver 4.8% motor vehicle as passenger 21.7% public transit 5.9% walk 1.3% bike 0.7% other
Percentage households with vehicle(s)	95%; 25% two or more cars	72%; 22% two or more cars†
Average length of trip to work	35 minutes (one-way)	76 minutes (round trip)‡

* Source: 2001 census

† Source: Spending Patterns in Canada, 2001, Statistics Canada

‡ Source: "General Social Survey on Time Use: Cycle 19, The Time it Takes to Get to Work and Back," Statistics Canada (by Martin Turcotte), 2005

TABLE 3

Change in travel patterns since last home location

Change since last home location	Work trips (%)	Shopping trips (%)	School or day-care trips (%)
Use transit more than before	15	0	0
Drive less than before	10	5	5
Walk more than before	0	5	5
Own one less car	5		

Demographics

At 1.4 people per household, the household size among respondents was smaller than the Montréal CMA average of 2.4. The residents surveyed were considerably younger than the CMA average. There were fewer lower- and upper-income households in Les Cochères compared to the Montréal CMA: half the respondents were grouped in the \$50,000-\$100,000 range.

TABLE 4

Demographic and income data

Demographic variable	Les Cochères	Montréal CMA*
Number of people/household	1.4	2.4
Age range†	60% < 35 years 40% 35 – 65 years 0% > 65 years	21% < 35 years 59.5% 35 – 65 years 19.5% > 65 years
Household income	35% under \$50,000 50% \$50,000 to \$100,000 5% over \$100,000 10% don't know/refused	57.8% under \$50,000 30.8% \$50,000 to \$100,000 11.4% over \$100,000

* Source, 2001 Census

† For Les Cochères, age of survey respondents and for Montréal CMA, average age of household maintainer(s)

SUMMARY AND LESSONS LEARNED

The success of Les Cochères de la gare reflects the vision of the municipality of Saint-Thérèse, whose political leaders and planners saw the arrival of the train, coupled with the existence of under-developed properties in the area, as the chance to shape development in a transit-oriented fashion.

By purchasing the affected properties and providing the necessary infrastructure to support development, the municipality was able to exercise an unusual amount of control over the form of development in the area. And by preparing the properties for development through both land-use regulations and soil clean-up and putting infrastructure in place, the municipality created a positive situation where private development could thrive.

Habitations Viagère developed Les Cochères de la gare according to the Town's TOD objectives and has blazed a path for other developers to follow. In total, private investment is expected to amount to \$150 million at the completion of all development sites designated in the Town's Concept Plan. The Town's initial investment for the infrastructure is expected to be repaid through taxes collected from the properties after development.

The developer's sensitivity to the historic architecture of Saint-Thérèse ensured that the new development was appropriate to the area, especially the town's historic core. For example, the use of carriage entranceways to enable access and views through the buildings' facades is both historic and sensitive to the need for easy movement to and from the station and residences. The project has enjoyed great success, as evidenced by the pace of sales as the project was under construction. The financial success of Les Cochères de la gare has provided an incentive for further transit-oriented development of the area around the train station.

The use of public consultations, neighbourhood meetings and the distribution of information on the part of the municipality and the developer helped keep residents informed throughout the planning and development process. Communication during all stages of the planning and development process thus alleviated strong opposition to the project and will likely facilitate subsequent stages of the area's redevelopment.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Developer	Planner	Transit authority
<p>Philippe D'Alcantara Habitations Viagère 45, Boulevard Desjardins Est Sainte-Thérèse, QC J7E 5W9 Tel: (450) 508-1012 Fax: (450) 508-1016 Email: philippe@olymbec.com www.habitationsviagere.com</p>	<p>Normand Rousseau Hôtel de ville 6, rue de l'Église, CP 100 Sainte-Thérèse, QC J7E 4H7 Tel: (450) 434-1440 ext. 224 Fax: (450) 434-1499 Email: nrousseau@ville.sainte-therese.qc.ca</p>	<p>Agence métropolitaine de transport 500, Place d'Armes, 25th floor Montréal, QC H2Y 2W2 Tel : (514) 287-8726 Fax: (514) 288-2660 www.amt.qc.ca Conseil intermunicipal de transport des Laurentides 33, rue Blainville Ouest, Suite 101 Sainte-Thérèse Québec J7E 1X1 Tel : (514) 287-8726 Fax: (514) 288-2660 www.citl.amt.qc.ca</p>

While price was the main factor in residents purchasing decisions, they also chose this project because of its proximity to transit. Most residents reported being very or somewhat satisfied with the overall cost of living, with the amenities in the neighbourhood and with the character of the neighbourhood.

The proximity to transit has had some influence on occupants' travel behaviour with 15 per cent taking transit more now than they did while living in their last residence, 10 per cent walking more than before, and 5 per cent owning one less car.

REFERENCES AND SOURCES

Byrns, James. "Le développement durable et le transport en commun dans la région de Montréal," Forum sur le développement durable. Conférence des Nations Unies sur les changements climatiques." 29 November 2005.

"Transit Oriented Development" Ville de Sainte-Thérèse. 2006.

"Un terminus intermodal tout neuf à Sainte-Thérèse: un meilleur service pour les utilisateurs des transports collectifs," Agence métropolitaine de transport. 16 February 2004.

"Ville de Sainte-Thérèse: Le Redéveloppement d'un secteur," Colloque Spécialisé Transit-Oriented Development. Département de l'études urbaines touristiques, Université du Québec à Montréal. November 2006.

WEBSITES

Town of Sainte-Thérèse
www.ville.sainte-therese.qc.ca
Agence métropolitaine de transport
www.amt.qc.ca

Although this information product reflects housing experts' current knowledge, it is provided for general information purposes only. Any reliance or action taken based on the information, materials and techniques described are the responsibility of the user. Readers are advised to consult appropriate professional resources to determine what is safe and suitable in their particular case. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation assumes no responsibility for any consequence arising from use of the information, materials and techniques described.