

Evolution of Pointe-Claire's built environment

As part of the citizen participation and consultation process related to adopting a new planning program, different themes will be discussed in order to allow everyone to increase their knowledge and comment on the issues to which our City must respond. These infosheets will then serve as a base for discussion during future public participation activities.

This first infosheet addresses the **continuous transformation of towns and cities**, and more specifically, how this process has occurred in Pointe-Claire. The purpose of this infosheet is to outline the history of the transformation of our city, from the first houses in the 19th century to the present day, when there are very few vacant lots left in the area. The fact sheet then discusses the transformation strategies already observed in Pointe-Claire, including the renovation, extension, demolition and reconstruction of single-family homes, as well as the construction of new multi-family buildings. The reasons leading to these transformations are also presented. Finally, existing and new transformation strategies in Pointe-Claire are presented, each representing distinct opportunities and challenges. The strategies included cannot be applied in the same way everywhere. In particular, they must not simply copy other examples applied elsewhere on the island of Montreal. Instead, they must be unique and adapted to the distinct realities of Pointe-Claire.

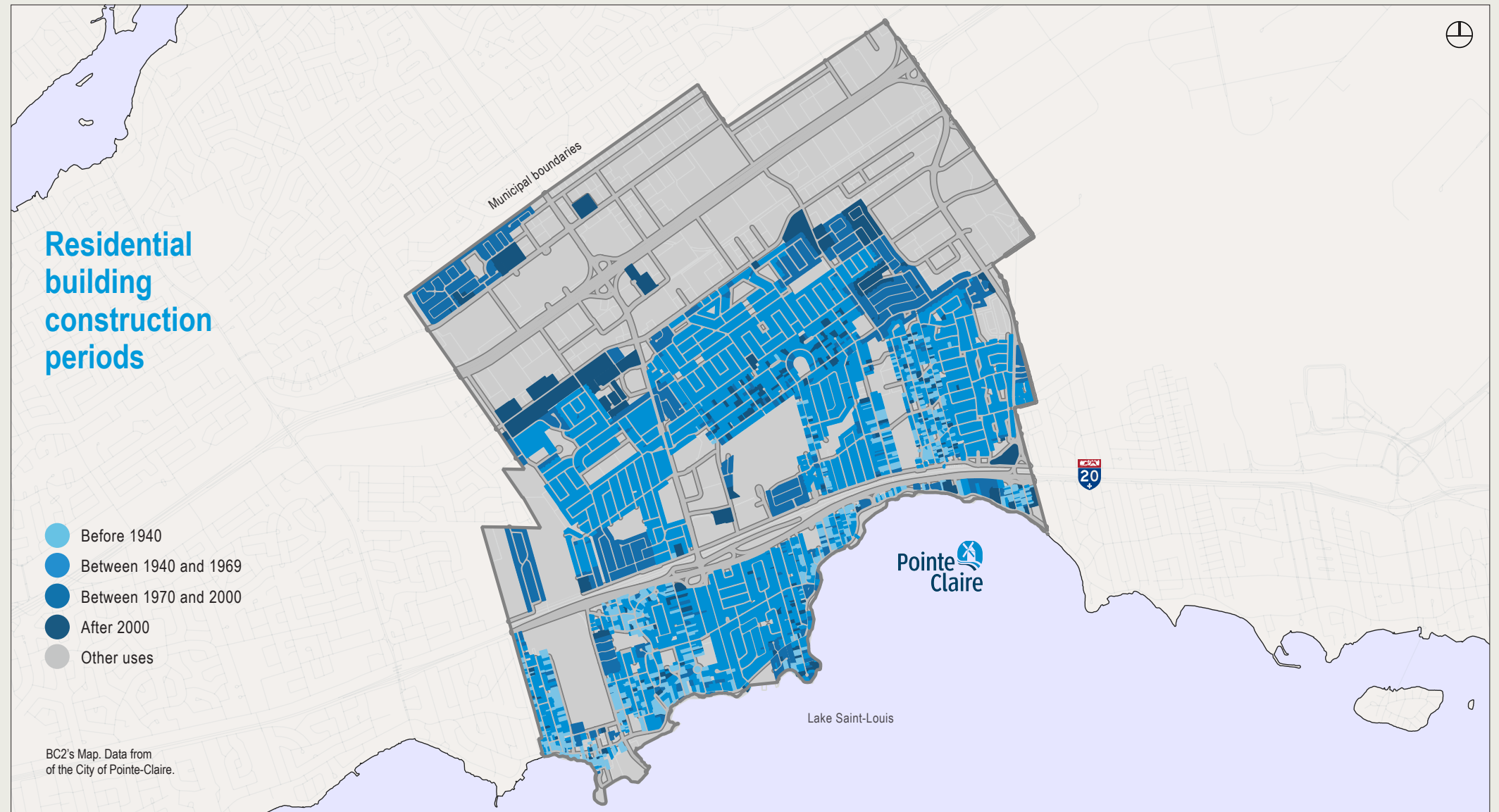
Our city has been evolving continuously... since 1680!

Pointe-Claire's history officially began in 1678 when the Sulpicians began to transfer land in the area. During that period, development was rural in nature, and at very low densities. Urbanization of Pointe-Claire accelerated in 1855 with the arrival of the railroad connecting Montreal to Belleville. This allowed Pointe-Claire residents to travel to Montreal in 45 minutes. The reduction in travel time, and the rural and waterfront nature of the area attracted Montreal's upper middle class to Pointe-Claire. They saw the area as a perfect country retreat. In time, these leisure homes

were gradually transformed into principal residences. Only after 1940 did this transformation into a Montreal suburban town accelerate, with construction of Highway 2 (today's Autoroute 20) and the democratization of the automobile. This passion for suburban development, coupled with the creation of major shopping centres, such as Fairview Pointe-Claire (whose construction began in 1964), led to the almost complete urbanization of the City. Today, very few vacant lots remain within city limits.

This brief history of the development of Pointe-Claire leads to the conclusion that the city has been constantly evolving since its founding. Initially, a rural landscape, then a place for leisure and rest, and more recently a metropolitan suburb.

Here are the major evolutionary stages of the modern built environment, illustrated in the map below.



Our city has been evolving continuously... since 1680!

Before
1940



The urbanization of Pointe-Claire began in the Pointe-Claire village area and generally in the southern part of the city, as well as in the Valois neighbourhood near the Valois train station. Prior to 1940, these were mainly summer cottages and second homes of the Montreal bourgeoisie.

House constructed in 1943, 12 Victoria Avenue, Lakeshore

1940
-
1969



After the Second World War, new neighbourhoods saw the construction of bungalows, split-level houses (particularly homes built by architect Louis B. Magil, very common in Lakeside Heights), rental apartments and townhouses (two-three storeys), as well as the first shopping centres.

Magil development house, 96 Sunderland Avenue Lakeside Heights

1970
-
2000



Following the rapid land development of the previous decades, this period was a time of infill consolidation. Most of the last remaining empty lots were developed, semi-detached and rowhouses built, and more shopping centres added.

Rowhouses on Val-Soleil Avenue Lakeshore

2000
-
today



Since the early 2000s, we've seen construction of private seniors' residences and multifamily buildings (condos, rentals), and single-family homes (detached, semi-detached and rowhouses) often on smaller lots.

Seniors' residence, Hymus Boulevard, City Centre area

Today, most residential lots have buildings, few vacant lots remain. The main trend noted for the last dozen years in response to increasing demand has been to “build the city on the city”, i.e. through transformation or redevelopment. Currently, this trend involves **two distinct strategies**.

Strategy 01 Within residential neighbourhoods

Renovation, extension or demolition (sometimes with lot subdivision) and the construction of new single-family houses, including:

- Renovation and extension of single-family houses; –
- Demolition and reconstruction of single-family houses; –
- Demolition, lot subdivision and construction of two single-family houses.

Strategy 02 In non-residential districts

Transforming underutilized buildings or reclaiming vacant land for redevelopment into multifamily or mixed-use (commercial and residential) buildings. Generally, these lots are in the “City Centre” district, near major roads or near an axis served by public transit.

Statistical portrait of Pointe-Claire's built environment

Residential space make up

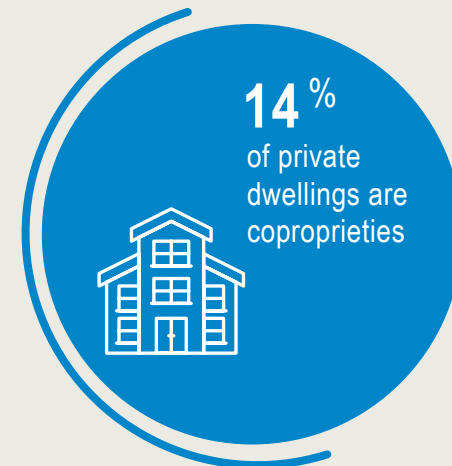
88 %

of single-family dwellings (detached, semi-detached and rowhouses)

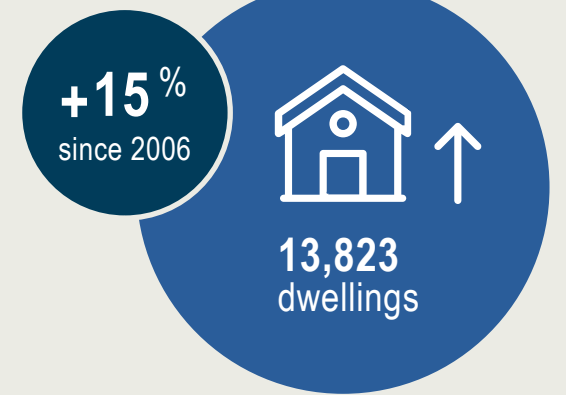
12 %

of multifamily dwellings (duplex, buildings, etc.)

Source: City of Pointe-Claire

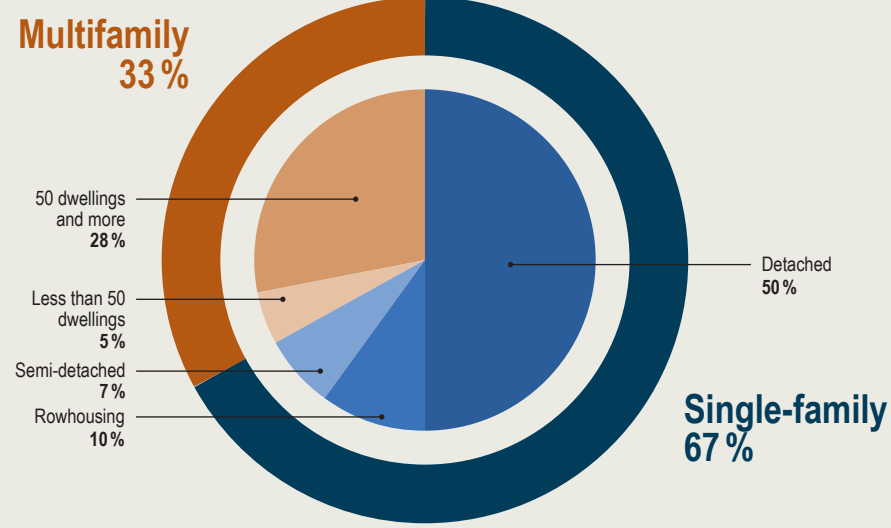


Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census

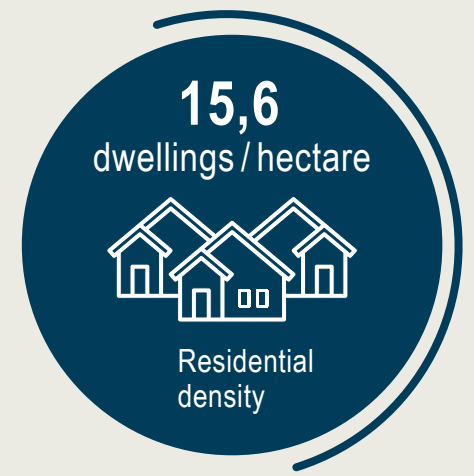


Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 and 2021 Census

Housing typology (2021)



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census



Gross density, Source: City of Pointe-Claire

In order to look at the strategies that we want to adopt in our city, we must first understand the reasons behind this transformation.

The population is increasing

Each year, new residents move to the City of Pointe-Claire. Between 1991 and 2021, the City of Pointe-Claire's population grew by 28.7%. According to data published by the Institut de la Statistique du Québec in 2022, this demographic growth should continue in the coming years, reaching 38,258 individuals in 2041, an increase of 4,770 from the population in 2021 (+14%).

The population is aging

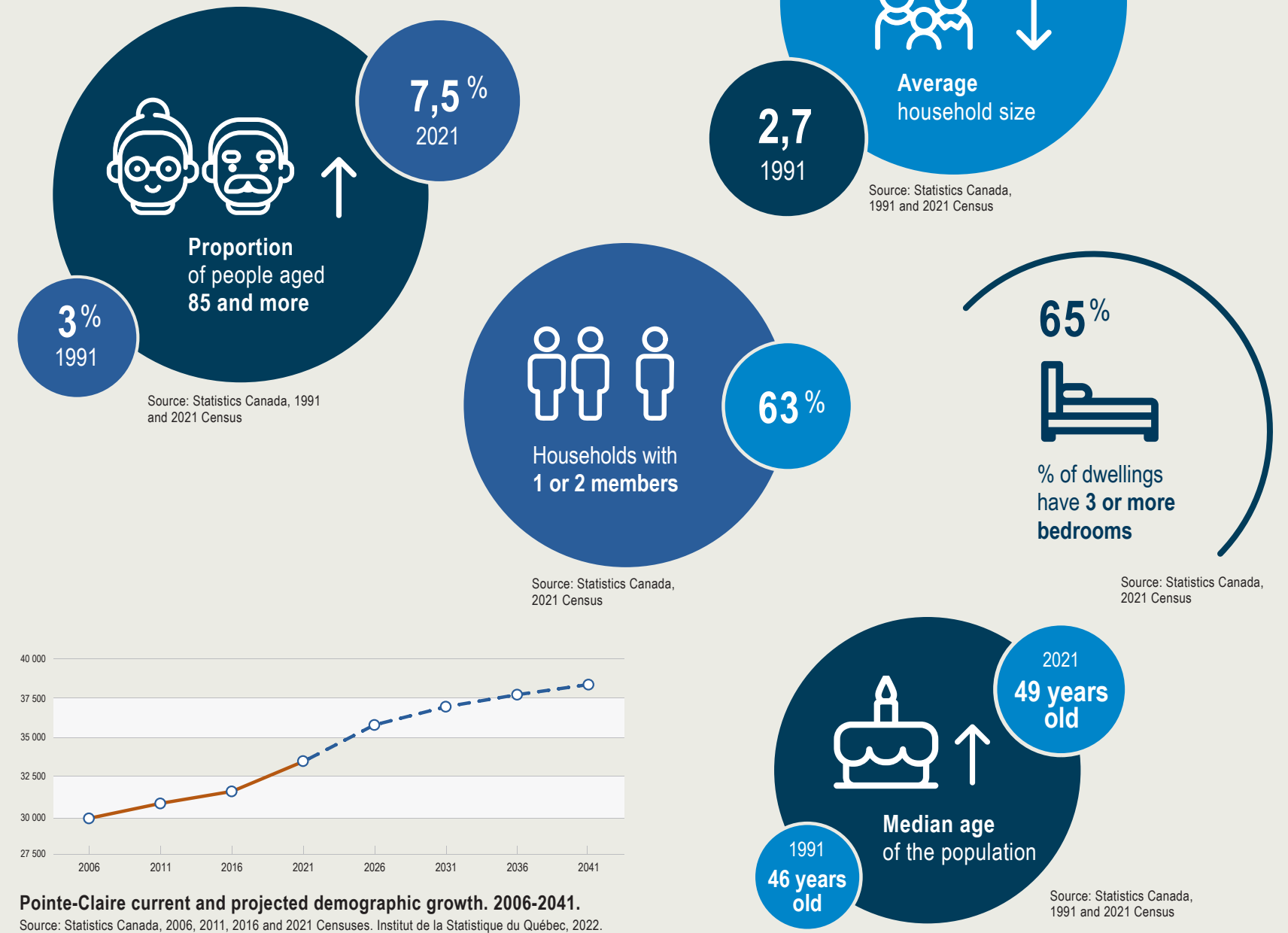
The demographic profile of households is changing. The population is aging throughout the province. Pointe-Claire is no exception. This aging leads to a change in residents' needs, in particular for housing that is smaller, accessible and easy to maintain.

The housing supply is not always adapted to the needs of households

Lifestyles and household composition are both being greatly transformed. While household size is dropping, a majority of housing in Pointe-Claire (primarily single-family homes) includes three or more bedrooms. This means that current housing characteristics do not match the changing needs of households. In addition, this decrease in household size means an increase in the total number of households to be housed in Pointe-Claire.

The need to diversify available housing provides a partial explanation of the changes being observed in the built environment.

Some population data for Pointe-Claire

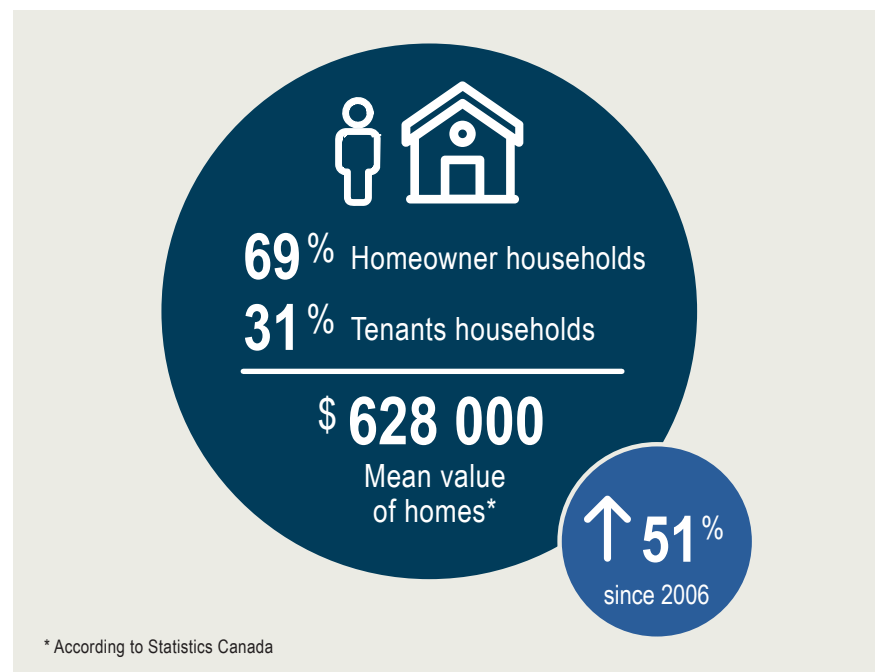


Property values are increasing steadily

According to Statistics Canada, between 2016 and 2021, the mean value of homes in Pointe-Claire went from \$416,061 to \$628,000, an increase of 51%. The value in 2021 was 25% higher than for the Montreal metropolitan region (\$500,400). This increase in prices means that many households are having housing problems. In 2021, 20% of Pointe-Claire households were spending more than 30% of their income on housing. According to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, a dwelling is considered affordable in Canada if the household living there spends less than 30% of its before-tax income for it. This means more affordable options must be made available for less affluent households.

An aging built environment

82% of dwelling units were constructed before 1991. Also, 895 units (7% of the housing stock) require major repairs, meaning there is some pressure for the renovation, extension, demolition and reconstruction of Pointe-Claire's housing stock.



The increasing cost of maintenance for aging infrastructure and preserving Pointe-Claire's high levels of service

The City of Pointe-Claire's primary objective is to improve quality of life for its citizens by maintaining and improving municipal services. Continuing to offer citizens neighbourhoods where it is enjoyable to live and work is an essential concern for the City.

In order to not worsen the fiscal tax burden for residents, while keeping a taxation level that can preserve our facilities, infrastructure and services at a level of quality that responds to the expectations of Pointe-Claire citizens, we must respond by welcoming new households and consolidating our employment nodes. This will mean the tax load will be shared by a greater number of households and companies.

The regional context: Arrival of the Réseau express métropolitain and the minimum densities imposed by the Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal

Throughout the greater Montreal metropolitan region, there is a trend to densify around suburban train stations and the planned Réseau express métropolitain (REM) stations. This trend can be observed throughout the Montreal metropolitan region and is a result of the urban planning requirements of the Plan métropolitain d'aménagement et de développement (PMAD), which promotes the creation of Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) areas. The principal metropolitan planning tools impose higher residential density objectives around public transit stations as well as a mixture of land uses. Two REM stations are planned within Pointe-Claire city limits, adding to the three existing hubs created by the EXO suburban train network. Consequently, new real estate development projects in these areas are proposing denser building typologies that can take many forms to meet minimum density targets and be financially viable.

Why redevelop Pointe-Claire?

- Growing population and decreased household sizes means more dwellings are needed;
- Only 3.9% of lots in Pointe-Claire are currently undeveloped;

So, what can we do?

We have to build the city on the city, through redevelopment!

How can we guide Pointe-Claire's transformation?

In summary, no land remains vacant in Pointe-Claire for development of new neighbourhoods that would meet the increasing needs of residents. So we must turn to redevelopment strategies.

As a reminder, certain redevelopment processes can already be observed in Pointe-Claire, in particular:

Within residential neighbourhoods:

- Renovation;
- Extension;
- Demolition and reconstruction; and
- Subdivision of an existing lot to accommodate new houses

In the City Centre area, on major roads and near public transit:

- Construction of medium and high-density multifamily and mixed-use (commercial and residential) buildings.



Note that these are just some of the redevelopment strategies that could be used to respond to the needs of our residents. In order to ensure that the transformation of our city continues to be carried out in line with the aspirations of the population and through strategies that respond to Pointe-Claire's unique context, it is important to assess the range of strategies available to define where and how each of these strategies fits into the redevelopment process of the city.

The strategies described below all represent opportunities and challenges. They all have as primary objective the transformation of the built environment, whether to promote renewal of the building stock, or to increase the number of dwellings available in Pointe-Claire. It is important to note that redevelopment of Pointe-Claire will inevitably occur through a **combination of several strategies**. In particular, implementation of these strategies must be well targeted according to their ability to respond to local needs in order to **improve quality of life for citizens**. For example, strategies to recommend for Cedar Park Heights will, of course, not be the same as those for Pointe-Claire's City Centre. We must identify the **right strategies in the right places together**.



We must identify the right strategies in the right places together.



How can we guide Pointe-Claire's transformation?

Renovation and extension of single-family houses

This strategy is well-used in Pointe-Claire. In fact, between 2016 and 2022, 20% of properties containing one to four dwellings were renovated or enlarged. This transformation strategy has been successfully applied in our residential neighbourhoods, including in the Lakeside, Village and Cedar parts of Lakeshore, and in Sunnyside and the Veterans' area.

Opportunities

- 01. Maintain and renew the built environment.
- 02. Improve building energy efficiency.
- 03. Respond better to the needs of today's households (e.g. number of bedrooms, office space, garage, finished basement).

Challenges

- 01. Transform the built environment while respecting neighbourhood character and ensuring architectural cohesion.
- 02. Maintain the urban tree canopy and preserve permeable surfaces.

Before



Extension

After



115 King Avenue
Valois

How can we guide Pointe-Claire's transformation?

Demolition and reconstruction

Only 2% of construction permits issued between 2016 and 2022 were for the demolition and reconstruction of a property with one to four dwelling units. The purpose of this strategy is to transform the built environment, without modifying density or use. The strategy can be observed in our residential neighbourhoods, in particular in the Veterans' area and the Valois village.

Opportunities

1. Renew the built environment and improve housing quality by replacing houses in poor condition with new construction, which is often more energy efficient.
2. Respond better to the needs of today's households (e.g. number of bedrooms, office space, garage, finished basement).

Challenges

01. Transform the built environment while respecting neighbourhood character and ensuring architectural cohesion.
02. Maintain the urban tree canopy and preserve permeable surfaces.
03. Manage construction materials sustainably (collection, reuse, recycling).

Demolition

Before



Reconstruction

After



56 Broadview Avenue
Sunnyside

How can we guide Pointe-Claire's transformation?

Demolition, subdivision and construction of two single-family houses

This strategy involves demolition of a detached single-family house followed by the subdivision of that one lot in two, in order to permit construction of two single-family units instead of one. This strategy is particularly apparent in the Veterans' area, on Saint-Louis Avenue.

Opportunities

1. Renew the built environment and improve housing quality by replacing houses in poor condition with new construction, which is often more energy efficient.
2. Respond better to the needs of today's households (e.g. smaller lot to maintain, finished basement, garage).
3. Increase the number of dwellings (replace one dwelling with two).
4. Share the cost to maintain and upgrade municipal infrastructure among a greater number of households.

Challenges

01. Transform the built environment while respecting neighbourhood character and ensuring architectural cohesion.
02. Maintain the urban tree canopy and preserve permeable surfaces.
03. Manage construction materials sustainably (collection, reuse, recycling).

Demolition and Subdivision

Before



After



342 Saint-Louis Avenue
Veterans's area

Missing Middle Housing

In the middle range of housing types are those that are neither single-family houses nor large buildings. In other words, we can promote the construction of buildings with two to nine dwellings, but no higher than three storeys in most cases. In Pointe-Claire, only 2.2% of dwellings are located in buildings with two to nine units, and this type of housing occupies only 1.7% of the residential area. Up until now, this strategy has not been applied very often in Pointe-Claire.

The Missing Middle strategy could be used to increase the number of dwellings in our residential neighbourhoods in a way that integrates well with the existing environment. It could also act as a transition between areas with higher density or commercial activity, and our low-density residential neighbourhoods.

Opportunities

01. Respond better to the needs of today's households (e.g. smaller households, renter households).
02. Diversify housing available within a residential neighbourhood.
03. Share the cost to maintain and upgrade municipal infrastructure among a greater number of households.
04. Permit intergenerational and multifamily arrangements (e.g. aged parents living on the ground floor of a duplex, with adult children living upstairs).
05. Allow owners to gain rental income, making ownership more possible for some households (e.g. a household that lives on the ground floor in a duplex and rents out the upper floor).

Challenges

- 01. Transform the built environment while respecting the unique neighbourhood character and ensuring architectural cohesion.
- 02. Maintain the urban tree canopy and preserve permeable surfaces.
- 03. Manage urban mobility.
- 04. Respect privacy (e.g. location of windows, doors, entrances, terraces).



Creation of accessory dwelling units

Also known as “secondary dwellings”, the accessory dwelling unit (ADU) is the softest form of densification. It can take the form of a backyard house, a garage or basement converted into a dwelling or an add-on to the main building.

Creating a second dwelling on a lot already occupied by a house is a development tool that provides a more diverse range of housing without disrupting the existing urban form. This strategy integrates well into our residential neighbourhoods and reduces the pressure to create very high density areas.

Opportunities

01. Respond better to the needs of today's households (e.g. smaller households, renter households).
02. Diversify housing available in a neighbourhood.
03. Share the cost to maintain and upgrade municipal infrastructure among a greater number of households.
04. Permit intergenerational and multifamily arrangements (e.g. parents living in the main residence with adult children in an accessory dwelling unit in a finished basement).
05. Allows owners to gain rental income, making ownership feasible for some households (e.g. a household living in the main residence rents an accessory dwelling unit in its backyard).

Challenges

01. Transform the built environment while respecting the unique neighbourhood character and ensuring architectural cohesion.
02. Maintain the urban tree canopy and preserve permeable surfaces.
03. Manage urban mobility.
04. Respect privacy (e.g. location of windows, doors, entrances, terraces).

Different types of accessory dwelling units (ADU)

ADU in a garage extension



ADU in a renovated garage



ADU in the backyard of a main house



ADU in a finished basement



How can we guide Pointe-Claire's transformation?

The transformation of underutilized buildings or the reclamation of vacant land for redevelopment into multifamily or mixed-use (commercial and residential) buildings.

This strategy is of particular relevance near our commercial and industrial zones, and is not appropriate for our residential neighbourhoods where detached single-family houses predominate. Rather, it is more appropriate for the City Centre and around the transit (REM) hubs located along Autoroute 40, as well as on the major roads, such as Hymus and Brunswick.

The goal of this strategy is to transform large underused, paved spaces such as parking lots or disused commercial or industrial buildings, in the middle of higher-density districts, with a mix of uses. The mixed-use approach ensures the availability of local services and quality of life for citizens living in these higher-density settings.

Opportunities

01. Renew the built environment and create dwellings meeting the needs of some of today's households, including with affordable housing.
02. Make better use of vacant and underused space, located near infrastructure, services and public transit.
03. Create complete and connected neighbourhoods and districts (public transit, active transportation, etc.).
04. Reduce heat islands by converting paved spaces (parking lots, shopping centres) into newly designed inhabited areas (green spaces, green roofs and white roofs, etc.).
05. Share the cost to maintain and upgrade municipal infrastructure among a greater number of households.

Challenges

01. Ensure high quality of life in dwellings that are sometimes located near disturbances (e.g. commercial districts, major roads).
02. Manage urban mobility.
03. Maintain the urban tree canopy.



Multifamily property – Ventura condos near the future Fairview REM station



Multifamily property – Kubik Condos near the Valois station

The transformation of Pointe-Claire's built environment that we are experiencing started several years ago and is the result of a combination of several factors such as:

- Population growth and lifestyle changes
- Population aging
- Changes in household size and composition
- Lack of maintenance of some housing which led to its aging and sometimes the deterioration of the built environment
- An urban fabric that is almost completely built-out

After reading this infosheet, you can understand that urban transformation is a determinative process that may have impacts on:

- Mobility and traffic
- The addition or reduction of heat islands
- The need for investment to adapt the capacity of existing infrastructure to serve properties
- The transformation of open space, natural or humanized areas
- The carbon footprint and energy efficiency of buildings

What's Next?

Now we must act together, to decide how to manage these changes so that the city of tomorrow will mirror our expectations and our collective vision of a living environment where life is good. As part of the development of a new planning program, the City wishes to evaluate with citizens how the various transformation strategies available to us can be adapted to our local reality. The quality of management of each strategy can make the difference, to ensure projects are well integrated into our neighbourhoods.

It is up to the citizens of Pointe-Claire to think about how all of the different strategies can be adapted to our reality together. The City is listening.

