



SDC ●●●
DISTRICT
CENTRAL

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/ REVOLUTION D'AFFAIRES

SDC ●●●
DISTRICT
CENTRAL

Humaniser
le monde
des affaires

Le nouveau monde des affaires,
c'est ici

activity

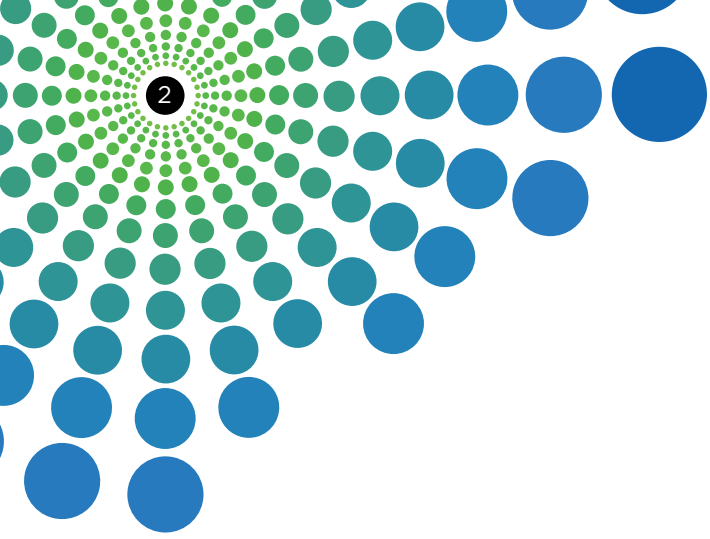
2020

REPORT

Le nouveau monde des affaires,
c'est ici

Humaniser
le monde
des affaires

DISTRICT CENTRAL
Le nouveau monde des affaires, c'est ici



2

the District Central is

Close to

1,800

businesses

united to develop a sector with outstanding economic, urban and human potential.

25,000

workers

The 4th highest concentration of employment in Montreal.

3

business pillars



+



+



Breathe new life into this legendary neighbourhood, make it shine on a broader stage and propel it to the very top of Montreal's economic landscape.

5

sectors with distinct yet perfectly complementary ambiances

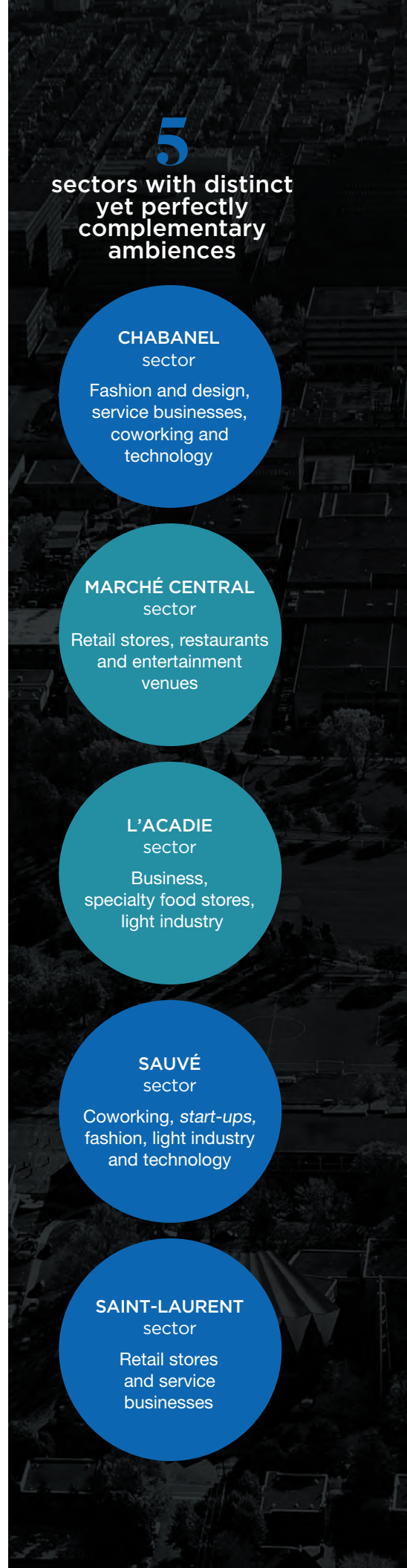
CHABANEL
sector
Fashion and design, service businesses, coworking and technology

MARCHÉ CENTRAL
sector
Retail stores, restaurants and entertainment venues

L'ACADIE
sector
Business, specialty food stores, light industry

SAUVÉ
sector
Coworking, start-ups, fashion, light industry and technology

SAINT-LAURENT
sector
Retail stores and service businesses



message from the chairman of the board



From a business perspective, the pandemic has pushed numerous entrepreneurs to the brink of bankruptcy. Fortunately, these businesses-accustomed to reinventing themselves and innovating in order to keep up with market trends-have shown extraordinary resilience during this unprecedented set of circumstances.

As the Chair of the SDC District Central's Board of Directors, I had the extreme privilege of witnessing first-hand the determination with which the business people have taken part in this challenge. Their determination was matched only by their willingness to find solutions that would relieve the population and help them in carrying out their essential tasks.

In the fight against this invisible enemy, the diversity of the territory's economy has proven to be a invaluable asset. Anyone who travelled through the District Central, at the height of the crisis, has seen the activity that reigns in the area, confirming the role played by businesses in the District's three business pillars-sectors which were deemed essential. Overnight, businesses in design and urban manufacturing came together to develop and produce medical and protective equipment. Others contributed by feeding the population, while certain businesses in the technology sector made it possible, thanks to their products, for a majority of businesses to pursue their activities remotely and for merchants to take the essential digital leap.

None of this would have been possible without the strength of relationships established over the years. That said, it is still too early to claim victory. Although the agility businesses have shown has enabled them to overcome many challenges, things will never be the same for some businesses that have been adversely affected by confinement measures.

Once again, the importance of working with the territory's vital forces will take on all its meaning. As such, I would like to assure all member businesses of the unwavering support and commitment of the SDC's Board of Directors.

Together, we will meet the challenges and rise stronger.

Delia De Gasperis

Functional Consultant, CGS Québec Inc.

message from the executive director



It's times like these when being present is the one and only priority. As reflected in the activities presented in this report, this past year has been just that for the SDC District Central.

Faced with the crisis, over the past 12 months, the SDC team has paid particular attention to supporting local businesses. The concerted efforts in place by professionals helped maintain and even solidify the ties established with member entrepreneurs. More importantly, the in-depth knowledge of the issues, made possible by this strengthened proximity, ensured that a clear message was conveyed to authorities regarding the local needs encountered. It also set the tone for recovery preparations.

In addition to the direct support provided to members, the SDC has been preparing for the future. In order to do so, and to the extent possible, work on key issues, including transportation and urban planning continued. After taking a moment to reassess its priorities in light of the new economic challenges imposed by the pandemic, the SDC also maintained its focus on identifying promising projects in its territory. The robust recovery plan that ensued is the result of the contribution of a dozen committed business volunteers. I would like to warmly thank them for their generosity. Their respective expertise and know-how proved to be very helpful in these uncertain times, to say the least.

In terms of operations, the events over the past year have also allowed our organization to grow and gain confidence. As a result, we are starting the new year fully cognisant of the challenges ahead, but also confident that we will be able adequately support local entrepreneurs within the territory as they face the challenges of a post-COVID-19 economy. With \$300,000 in funding received through the *Fonds d'initiative et de rayonnement de la métropole* (FIRM) at the very end of 2020 will help get the relaunch off on the right foot. More importantly, the public assistance obtained has demonstrated the leverage effect that membership dues offer when it comes time to diversify the sources of financing needed for the development and rebirth of the territory.

Hélène Veilleux

2020 at a glance

Online release of the new CRM

Consultation on the issue of vacant premises

January



Salon RH/Mode

Beginning of pandemic

March



Deployment of the territory's revised communications strategy

First meeting of the roundtable on the economic development of the borough

May

June



February

Workshops to identify promising projects for the District Central

April

Active participation in the development of support measures for businesses with socio-economic partners



June to September

Work of the District Central's Recovery Committee



Presentation of the District Central at the *Journée stratégique sur le développement immobilier et urbain*

Virtual Annual General Assembly and Budgetary General Assembly

New partnership with Riipen

July



Resumption of work by the Transportation Committee and the Urban Planning Committee

November



August

Socio-financing campaign for businesses in the District Central



October

Unveiling of the District Central's second mural

December

Confirmation of funding from the *Fonds d'initiative et de rayonnement de la métropole* for the Connecteur d'opportunités project in the amount of \$300,000 over three years

Start of the development of a communications platform related to the District Central's relaunch plan



2020 Highlights



Together we are stronger, overcoming challenges

In the face of an unprecedented health crisis, the SDC District Central doubled its efforts to support its members and put their needs forward.



Inform

From day one, a continuous monitoring service for the progress of health measures and support measures for businesses was established in order to adequately keep members informed. The information gathered was relayed in real time through newsletters and publications on social media, and were accessible and updated daily on the SDC website.

With a view to providing appropriate support, the team was in daily communication with members by email or phone. This approach allowed the SDC to direct their members to assistance measures and resources adapted to their reality, be it online or through partner agencies, such as PME MTL.



Represent

The extensive understanding of challenges faced by members in the territory also allowed the SDC to make numerous representations to authorities. The active presence of the Executive Director of the SDC District Central to the Board of Directors of the *Association des SDC de Montréal* made it possible, among other things, to ensure that the reality of the District's entrepreneurs was considered in discussions and decision-making. The same goes for participation in the new roundtable on the borough's economic development. The SDC team also represented members on several of the Ville de Montréal's working committees to identify measures to be put in place for the recovery. These meetings were in addition to the representations made regarding vacant spaces and new assistance programs available in the area. It is also worth mentioning that local businesses benefitted from privileged access to elected officials in the sector, including the Minister of Economic Development, Mélanie Joly, and Christine St-Pierre, MNA for the Acadie riding.





Act

At the height of the crisis, the bridges established with elected officials were crucial in mobilizing businesses in the textile industry and supporting the deployment of a local manufacturing force for medical equipment, such as gowns and masks. In partnership with Vestechpro and the office of Minister Mélanie Joly, the steps taken have also enabled businesses in the area to obtain government contracts.

In an effort to respond to the needs generated by the pandemic, the SDC also identified all members involved in the manufacturing or sale of masks and disinfectants and promoted them within the entire business community. This also generated a lot of business-to-business networking and helped foster the development of unlikely business relationships, such as between Communautique who started producing visors in collaboration with local elastic manufactures.

Members hardest hit by the crisis, including those in the retail industry, were also offered close support. For example, the SDC registered all merchants in the territory on the *Le Panier Bleu* website. A socio-financing campaign, carried out in collaboration with the SDC Fleury Ouest, and the *Association des gens d'affaires Gouin Ouest*, also helped stimulate local

buying thanks to a \$25,000 grant to increase purchases made by clients in the territory. A dozen merchants from the District Central benefitted from this initiative which not only helped increase the purchasing power of consumers, but also provided a foundation for a eventual relaunch.

With the same objective in mind, in July 2020, the SDC entered into a partnership with Riipen. This firm manages an electronic platform that connects higher education students and employers for various projects. Through this agreement, the \$2,500 user license was made available to SDC District Central members free of charge. Eleven projects were submitted by local businesses, more than half of which led to twinning opportunities. The projects carried out vary greatly, ranging from sustainable development market studies to the development of a social media strategy. In light of its success thus far, the partnership will continue in 2021.

Finally, since commercial rent is a major issue for many members, the SDC offered an online training course on commercial lease renegotiation strategies in August 2020.

Being proactive despite uncertainty

Despite the crisis and the particular efforts required, the SDC District Central remains committed to focusing on key files and objectives put forward in recent years.

Attractiveness of the territory and member outreach

Due to the upheavals inherent to this pandemic, the SDC had to revise the deployment of its communications strategy planned for 2021 in order to adapt to new priorities.

However, efforts to deploy the District Central brand moved ahead. For example, a promotional web campaign was deployed to attract the attention of businesses looking for a new business location. Promotional videos were also produced and distributed, one depicting the District Central in a few figures, the other highlighting the multiple, underground and urban face of the sector.

With a view to ensuring an advantageous position for the territory on Montreal's economic scene, a website to support businesses interesting in settling in the District Central was also developed. By answering a series of questions, entrepreneurs were directed to available rental spaces in the territory. They could also discover the names of other businesses that have taken the plunge before them.

In September 2020, the *Journée stratégique sur le développement immobilier et urbain* took place in Montreal which included a presentation on the District Central and its emergence as a business district. Organized by Open Forum in a hybrid format, this event brought together many business people and allowed the SDC's Executive Director-a guest panelist at the event-to assert the District Central's position in the Greater Montreal area.

For a second consecutive year, the SDC acted as a partner at the largest career event in Quebec's fashion industry. Held at the beginning of March 2020, only days before the onset of the health crisis, the *Salon RH/Mode* allowed the team to position the District Central as the territory of choice to work in the fashion and design industry. As a partner of this event, the SDC was allowed to invite two of members to participate in the event as exhibitors free of charge in addition to offering a rebate of \$200 to each member who reserved a booth.



Salon RH/Mode - March 2020

These efforts have been doubled by several initiatives to promote the value of members and the territory's business pillars. Against the backdrop of the crisis, businesses in the District Central have demonstrated the resilience and capacity to innovate, and specific communication efforts were made, among other things, to promote the uniqueness of the territory's social and economic fabric and its agility. Publications alone on various social media platforms were viewed more than 745,000 times and generated more than 40,000 interactions. The reach of reports published in the *Les Affaires* newspaper and on the CBC website (English Radio-Canada) also contributed to highlighting the achievements of the District's member businesses. The SDC also took advantage of the past year to produce its very own documentary. This activity was intended to bring to the forefront the development potential of urban agriculture in the District Central and was the SDC's first contribution as a member of the committee on urban agriculture in the District Central.

Strategic Day - Real Estate & Urban Development



Making of the documentary on urban agriculture





Vacant lot at 50-150 Louvain West

Transportation and urban planning

Following a months-long hiatus because of the pandemic, the Transportation Committee and Urban Planning Committee were able to resume their work in November 2020.

In accordance with the priorities identified last year, and at the request of the Transportation Committee, a study was conducted on off-street parking. The resulting recommendations will be analyzed in the coming months and should lead to the identification of sustainable solutions for the area and their implementation.

A study aimed at assessing the potential to connect to the District's train stations to the *Réseau express métropolitain* (REM), which is currently under construction, have also been carried out. The most promising courses of action have also been identified. The most promising courses of action for the territory identified at the end of the exercise will be subject to representations by the SDC over the coming year.

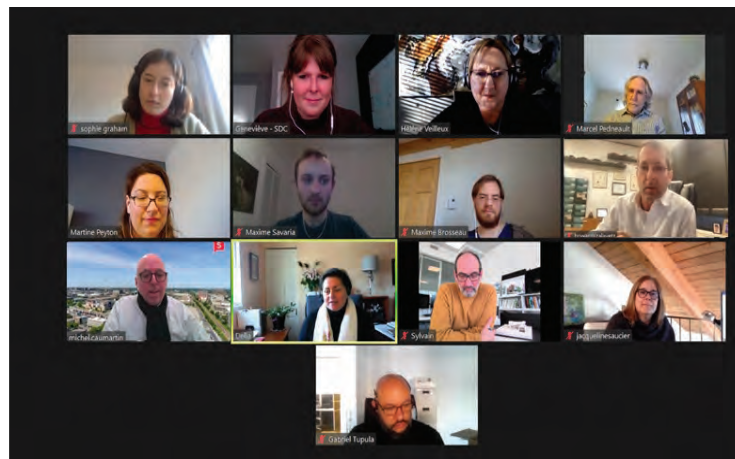
In order to create a sense of continuity, regular follow-ups on the implementation of the Local Mobility Plan (LMP) were carried out. Among other things, two pedestrian counters were installed to measure pedes-

trian mobility habits in the District Central. The SDC and the business community both view mobility as a vector of economic development which ultimately led to the writing of an article in the *Routes et transports* magazine by the *Association québécoise des transports* last fall.

The file on the vacant lot at 50-150 Louvain Ouest remained active throughout 2020 but did not gain as much attention as expected by the municipal authorities due to the ongoing health crisis. Thanks to continuous monitoring by the SDC team and the community's commitment to this file, the SDC supported the nomination of the lot as the development site for the future Jean Paul Riopelle museum.

The possible development of a TOD area at the Ahuntsic and Chabanel stations also mobilized significant energy. Like any other project of its kind, the objective is to encourage dense urban planning that would give local residents access to public transit within walking or biking distance. From the business community's perspective, such an orientation would help transform the territory into a real living environment and, ultimately, increase the attractiveness of the District Central. Members of the Urban Planning Committee have taken the floor in this file in order to best represent the views of the community

Urban Planning Committee





with respect to the development of this project. As a member of the project office, the SDC will have a front-row seat when it comes to future developments in this file.

Moreover, in the wake of the participatory budgets put forward by the *Ahuntsic-Cartierville borough*, a citizen initiative led to the launch of a glass recycling project. From October 2020 to December 2021, Montrealers are invited to drop off their glass bottles and food containers at one of two locations, including the parking lot of the SAQ Dépôt du Marché central, located in the heart of the District Central. This project—the first of its kind in Montreal—will allow 100% of the glass collected to be recycled. The SDC District Central is one of the partners on the all party committee that will analyze the impacts of this pilot project.

Cultural animation of the area

Major events scheduled for 2020 were cancelled due to the pandemic. Yet, the project to create a second mural was brought to life. This new work of public art is displayed on the east facade of the building located at 99 Chabanel Ouest. Designed by visual artist Cyrielle Tremblay, the mural spans a breathtaking 30 metres and proposes a heterogeneous composition highlighting both the history and alterity of the District Central.

This mural is in addition to the one created two years ago paying tribute to fashion journalist Iona Monahan, displayed at a public square, baptized Place Iona-Monahan in her honour. Its realization was made possible through a private-public partnership involving the Ahuntsic-Cartierville borough, the SDC District Central, gallery owner Yves Laroche and Howard Szalavetz of Immeubles HS, owner of the building hosting this new urban mural.

Given the enthusiasm generated by this initiative, the SDC intends to work on the creation of additional murals in its territory.

Meetings and exchanges with members

Although face-to-face opportunities were rare for SDC members in 2020, the foundations of community life were nonetheless maintained.

In addition to the meetings conducted as part of the work of the territory's Recovery Committee, the Transportation Committee and the Urban Planning Committee, the SDC was able to hold 6 consultation workshops aimed at identifying the District's most promising projects. Held in February 2020, before the onset of the pandemic, these workshops brought together nearly 60 people and helped identify clear priorities for the development of the territory.

Although the Annual General Assembly was initially cancelled due to the crisis, it was finally postponed and combined with the Budgetary General Meeting in September 2020. Both of these not-to-be-missed events, held in virtual format, led to the creation of a video highlighting achievements in 2019 as well as presentations on activities underway and the outlook for the coming year. The meeting also welcomed two new administrators, Hicham Jerando of Services J.T.D and Howard Szalavetz of Immeubles HS, and reappointed its current Vice-Chair Eyal Cohen. All officers subsequently reassigned to their respective roles including current Chair, Delia De Gasperis of CGS Québec Inc., until the next elections scheduled for March 2021.

Preparing for tomorrow

By adopting a more proactive approach, the SDC has made a point of laying the groundwork for the upcoming revival of the neighbourhood.



Relaunch and business plan

The SDC's business plan, officially adopted in 2019, reached a new milestone in 2020. In February 2020, a first series of consultation workshops conducted out with the community identified promising areas for future projects. Unfortunately, after only 6 of the 10 planned meetings, this promising momentum was quashed by the pandemic.

The gradual resumption of economic activities in May subsequently revealed that the socio-economic context in which the business plan was drafted had significantly changed. Also, the SDC felt it was necessary to determine if the orientations previously identified were still relevant in the context of the recovery [from the pandemic]. With the help of a dozen business volunteers, representing the area's three main areas of activity, the revaluation of issues and objectives made it possible to confirm the direction that should be taken. Members of the Recovery Committee were unanimous. The future lies in the realization of promising projects, shared and built on collective intelligence thus reinforcing the recommendations in the business plan. The objectives are clear; it is not only imperative to enhance and support the commercial and business offering on the territory, but also to promote connectivity between the various actors.

The deployment of the relaunch plan will be embodied in the *Connecteur d'opportunités* project, a large-scale initiative funded by the *Fonds d'initiative et de rayonnement de la métropole* (FIRM). With \$300,000 in financial support over three years, this project will serve as an anchor in the creation of a communications platform aimed at facilitating the exchange and sharing of goods and services, the implementation of business-to-business collaboration circles and the development of client-market intelligence.

In the summer of 2020, in an effort to better understand the needs of consumers, the SDC mandated Groupe Altus to carry out a market study on the commercial offering available in the Chabanel area and the demand of workers and residents of the area for different types of businesses. In October 2020, the completed exercise

confirmed the relevance of promoting short circuits of fashion goods in addition to offering current goods and services to residents and workers of local businesses.

It should also be noted that, like the 2019 business plan, the District Central's relaunch plan was presented to MPs of the territory.

Development and improvement of tools

In the absence of events, the talents of SDC's professionals were put to good use on other projects.

The team took the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the use of the new client management tool (CRM), how to set it up and optimize it. The context was indeed favourable for the collection of new information on members and their integration into this tool. Implemented in January 2020, the objective of this tool was to enable networking and business development with members and between them. Video tutorials were also produced to support users.

The organization's website also underwent a transformation. In addition to the 'Settle down here' page aimed at supporting the attractiveness of the territory as described above, a section listing media hits was created, along with a page dedicated to the work of the District's Recovery Committee and the plan that followed.

Governance and human resources

The Governance Committee held two meetings in 2020. The work carried out led to the finalization of the organization's Code of Conduct and its policy on the prevention of psychological and sexual harassment. The next step will be to continue the reflection initiated at the end of last year with respect to a possible contract management policy. The Committee also intends to use the next 12 months to examine the SDC's obligations in terms of access to information, to update internal management regulations and to develop a protection policy on personal data. These projects will be carried out with the support of generous business volunteers and a team of four seasoned professionals.



balance sheet and projections for 2021

	2020
REVENUES	
Member contributions	\$ 739 493
Funding	
Borough of Ahuntsic-Cartierville - Project	20 000
Borough of Ahuntsic-Cartierville - Operations	100 000
Financial support program for interventions aiming at the improvement of the businesses carried out by SDCs	100 000
Socio-financing campaign	25 000
Interest on member contributions	3 388
Other revenues	1 799
	989 680
Irrecoverable debts	(130 783)
	858 897
EXPENSES	
Financial support program for interventions aiming at the improvement of the businesses carried out by SDCs	100 000
Administration fees	128 107
Economic development	118 641
Member services	79 649
Communications and marketing	130 989
Animation and events	17 637
Territory development and operation	78 018
Socio-financing campaign	25 000
	678 041
EXCESS OF REVENUE OVER OPERATING EXPENDITURES	\$ 180 856
OTHER ELEMENT	
Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy	67 404
EXCESS OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES	\$ 248 260



Despite the precarious situation caused by the pandemic and the significant downfall in membership dues, 2020 produced a surplus of \$248,260 for the SDC District Central. The worst was avoided thanks to the efforts made to obtain government financial assistance. In total, more than \$310 000 in public funds were injected into the territory over the last year to support the activities and members of the SDC.

Facing the future with determination, in September 2020, members also adopted an operating budget of \$948,515 for the coming year.

These sums will enable the deployment of the *Connecteur d'opportunités* project that is at the heart of the District Central's relaunch plan and the development of three promising projects:

- The creation of a communications platform to facilitate the exchange and sharing of goods and services
- The establishment of business-to-business collaboration circles
- The development of client-market intelligence

These projects will also allow the SDC to:

- Make the district and its members shine through its communication efforts.
- Make the positions and needs of the District Central known to the various economic development agencies.
- Pursue the work of the SDC's labour committees:
 - Opportunities to connect the REM to the neighbourhood
 - The development of a TOD area at the Ahuntsic and Chabanel stations
 - The future of the vacant lot at 50-150 Louvain Ouest
 - Aligning communication with the community
 - Governance policies
- Proceed with the hiring of three new resources, two of which are funded by the *Connecteur d'opportunités* project
- Create a new socio-financing campaign for merchants
- Revive the District Central's pop-up space



the power of relationships

2020 board of directors



Delia De Gasperis, cpa, ca
CGS Québec Inc.
Chairman



Lina A. Aristeo
Plume



Howard Szalavetz
Les Immeubles HS



Eyal Cohen
Marcarko
Vice-chairman



Michel Caumartin
Quadreal
Marché Central



Émilie Thuillier
Mayor of
Ahuntsic-
Cartierville



Laetitia Bedout
Pixmob
Treasurer & Secretary



Hicham Jerando
Services J.T.D.



Gabriel Tupula
Yamba
Big Bang



**Maude Théroux-
Séguin**
Outgoing director
in September 2020
Les Cavistes

Team



Hélène Veilleux
Executive Director



Geneviève Dufour
Strategy & Business
Relations Director



Gwen Formal
Communication,
Marketing & Event
Project Manager



Johanne Valiquette
Administration and
Member Services
Coordinator

District Central Recovery Committee

Laetitia Bedout
Pixmob - Committee Chair

Emmanuel Amar
IDX Design + Com

Charles Benoualid
CGS Québec Inc.

Monique Chartrand
Communautique

Élisabeth Deschênes
ZA Communication

Éric Duchemin
Laboratoire sur l'agriculture
urbaine

Stéphanie Gauthier
Agence Jodabe & Les Griffés

Hicham Jerando
Jerando Fashion

Gabrielle La Rue
Locketgo

Jacqueline Saucier
Fonds immobilier de solidarité
FTQ

Alexandre Skerlj
PME MTL Centre-Ouest

Howard Szalavetz
Les Immeubles HS

Hélène Veilleux
SDC District Central

Geneviève Dufour
SDC District Central

Urban Planning Committee

Jacqueline Saucier
Fonds immobilier de solidarité
FTQ - Committee Chair

Clément Canac Marquis
Concerts Ahuntsic en Fugue

Michel Caumartin
Quadreal-Marché Central

Delia De Gasperis
CGS Québec Inc.

Frédéric Lizotte
AEDN Realty

Martine Peyton
Éléments Planification urbaine

Adnane Ramromi
Groupe SolAirEau

Maxime Savaria
Resident and student in civil
engineering

Sylvain Simard
Simard Architecture

Howard Szalavetz
Les Immeubles HS

Gabriel Tupula Yamba
Big Bang

Hélène Veilleux
SDC District Central

Geneviève Dufour
SDC District Central

Transportation Committee

Stewart Black
Les Immeubles HS

Eyal Cohen
Marcarko-555 Chabanel

Albert Ezerzer
Groupe Dayan

Alain Gagné
PCI Automatisation Industrielle

Émilie Joly
MOBA

Frédéric Lizotte
AEDN Realty

Olivier L. Pouliot
Société de transport de Montréal

Marc-André Perron
PME MTL Centre-Ouest

Hélène Veilleux
SDC District Central

Geneviève Dufour
SDC District Central

Governance Committee

Lina A. Aristeo
Plume - Committee Chair

Maude Thérroux-Séguin
Les Cavistes - Outgoing
Committee Chair

Laetitia Bedout
Pixmob

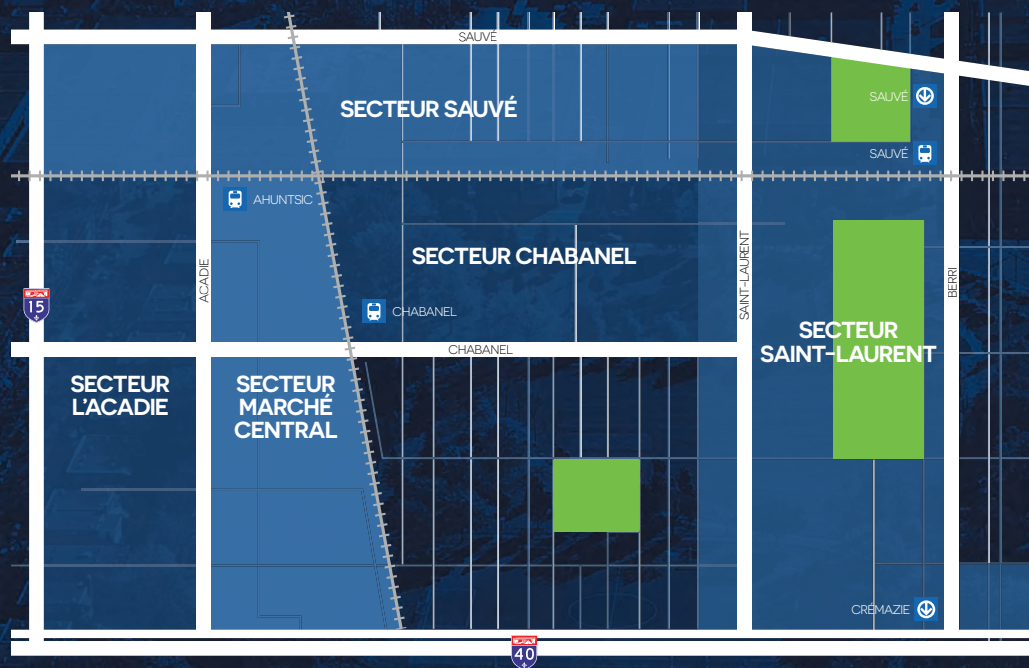
Delia De Gasperis
CGS Québec Inc.

Hélène Veilleux
SDC District Central

Johanne Valiquette
SDC District Central



To learn more about what
the SDC can do for you,
contact a member of our team!



Thank you to our partners

SDC
DISTRICT
CENTRAL



555, Chabanel West Suite R-02A
Montreal, Quebec H2N 2H7
514 379-3232
info@district-central.ca
district-central.ca

For a copy of the
Activity Report in
French, visit the
SDC District Central
website.

Montréal

Ahuntsic-Cartierville
Montréal