
Requalifying Heritage: From Urgency to Opportunity

Executive Summary of Héritage Montréal's
Work and Recommendations on Heritage
Requalification



HÉRITAGE
MONTRÉAL

Executive Summary

Saint-Clément de Viauville Church, located in the former Cité de Maisonneuve, an area of exceptional heritage value in Mercier-Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, Montreal.
Photo: Daniel Ligiardi

Last religious service: 2019



Most of tomorrow's-built environment already exists. While development long relied on new construction, it now depends on our ability to work with what already stands. The requalification of Quebec's built heritage is also emerging as a priority for the province's future. Against a backdrop of an aging real estate stock and socio-ecological transition, the task is no longer just to protect buildings of interest, but to care for our built environment and ensure the longevity of our infrastructure and sites of interests by keeping them active, adapted, and in use. From this point of view, heritage is no longer something to merely preserve: it is a lever for action and an opportunity to sustainably transform the places we live in.

Yet the work carried out by Héritage Montréal points to a major finding: the task of requalifying existing buildings faces significant structural obstacles rooted in several frameworks — regulatory, financial, administrative, and professional — that remain largely designed for new construction and poorly suited to transforming what already exists.

Four major fields of action emerge: codes and standards, financing, procedures, and expertise.



The former Côte-Saint-Paul City Hall, located within a heritage site in Montreal.
Photo: Anthony Plagnes Payá

Vacant: 2012

Key findings

01 CODES AND STANDARDS

Codes designed for new construction, for which the application to existing buildings requires work that is heavy, costly, and sometimes incompatible with conservation.

02 FINANCING

Mechanisms poorly suited to requalification projects, particularly in the early stages (studies, acquisition), owing to their long timelines and perceived level of risk.

03 PROCEDURES

Processes that are complex, poorly coordinated, and unpredictable — designed to regulate demolition more than to facilitate transformation.

04 EXPERTISE

Training and recognition of the specific skills required to work on existing buildings remain insufficient, along with a shortage of new talent in certain specialized trades.

Direction and ways forward

→ **Adapt regulatory frameworks to the realities of existing buildings**, notably by facilitating the use of equivalent measures and developing specific provisions.

→ **Establish an appropriate financial ecosystem**, including dedicated funds, tax incentives, and risk-sharing mechanisms covering the entire project cycle.

→ **Simplify and better coordinate procedures**, by improving alignment among stakeholders and developing early-stage support mechanisms.

→ **Strengthen expertise through training**, recognition of skills, and support for knowledge transmission.

Conclusion

The requalification of built heritage is a significant undertaking for the coming decades. It calls for a coordinated transformation of existing frameworks so that existing buildings become a lever rather than a constraint for sustainable development, land use, and the vitality of our communities.

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→ <https://numerique.banq.qc.ca/patrimoine/details/52327/5411020>

→ <https://www.heritagemontreal.org/en/2026/05/requalification-of-built-heritage-heritage-montreal-releases-a-reference-document/>

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