

Airport looking at night flight path over west end

Aiming at Meadowbrook. Another reason not to build homes on former golf course, conservationists say

CHERYL CORNACCHIA, The Gazette Published: Thursday, February 21, 2008

The prospect of a new night flight path out of Pierre Elliott Trudeau International Airport over Montreal's west end has added a new variable to the longstanding controversy over the development of the Meadowbrook golf course.

Representatives of Montreal's Green Coalition and Les Amis de Meadowbrook say a new flight path that would follow Highway 20 to the CP railyards in Lachine before heading south is raising new concerns about development of the golf course.

The flight path is intended for nighttime use, between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m., the conservationists say. That means any new homes on the 57-hectare golf course site would be right underneath the ascending jets.

Avrom Shtern said he will update residents about the flight path and other Meadowbrook issues at a public meeting tonight at the Montreal West town hall.

"It's another reason not to develop Meadowbrook," said Shtern, the Green Coalition's transportation critic and a member of Les Amis de Meadowbrook, a group that has been fighting for 20 years to preserve the golf course.

Yesterday, Marie-Anyk Côté, an official with Transport Canada at Trudeau airport, confirmed that authorities are looking at a new flight path east over the Lachine rail yards, and then south over the Mercier Bridge.

"It's the relative scarcity of residential development along this corridor that makes it an option for us; it's an option that we are looking at," Côté said.

However, there are renewed concerns about residential development on Meadowbrook as a result of recent meetings among officials of the borough of Lachine, the city of Montreal and Groupe Pacific, the owner of the golf course since 2006.

No plans have been formally announced but the Lachine portion of the course (the other half is in Côte St. Luc) is zoned residential for 1,200 housing units or more.

What impact the flight path would have on Meadowbrook or its development, Montreal West Mayor Campbell Stuart said he couldn't say.

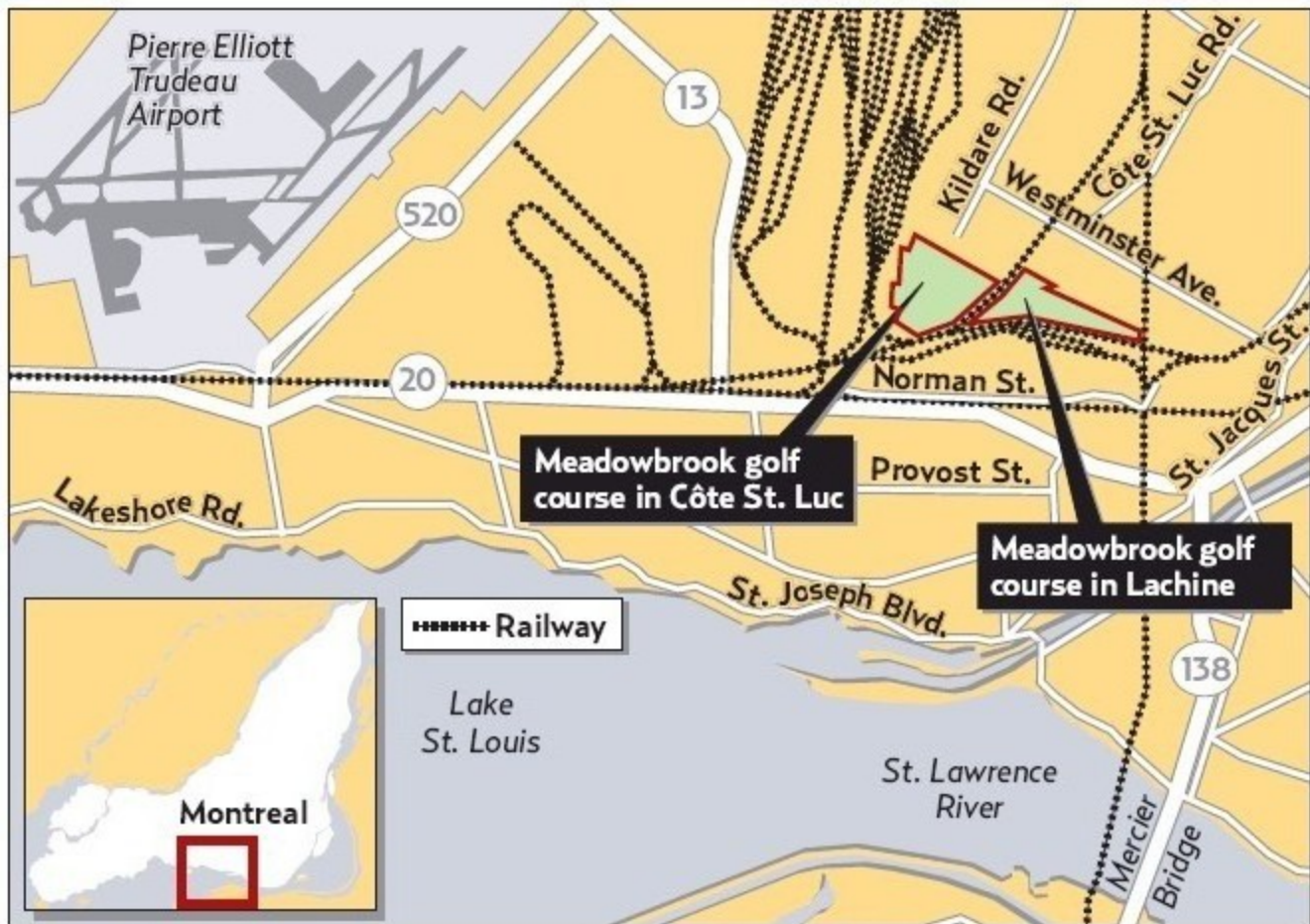
However, he did say he was unhappy he and other municipal leaders have not yet been consulted by Aéroports de Montréal about rerouting planes over the Highway 20-Norman St. corridor.

"It will have a very real impact on residents," Stuart said. "It's going to make a lot of people unhappy." Côte St. Luc councillor Dida Berku said the flight path is "an added issue" in the fight to keep Meadowbrook as a green space but stressed not a "critical issue." "The arguments are still strong for the green space that was originally designed by the railway to be a buffer zone to the railyards and line," Berku said.

Berku is to speak at tonight's meeting in Montreal West, which is expected to bring together several environmental groups from across Greater Montreal.

These groups are calling for the golf course to be incorporated into the St. Jacques Escarpment, one of Montreal's 10 recognized ecoterritories.

They want to see the golf course kept as green space, if not returned to its wild state as a regional park where birds, animals and Montrealers could mingle.



THE GAZETTE

Night flights leaving Dorval airport could travel east along a corridor over Norman St. and Meadowbrook golf course before veering south over the Mercier Bridge.