URBAN DISPLAY MODULES

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INTRODUCTION

The network of public display modules used by the City of Montréal is one of the key components of its system to help tourists and Montrealers find their way around the city. The design and strategic positioning of the modules immediately attracts people's attention, proving the usefulness of maps as visual media in the city. The success of the network has made it a fixture on the Montréal landscape.

BACKGROUND

Urban display modules are one of the elements of urban furniture that add to the functionality of a street and to its aesthetic appeal. The high cost of installing them, however, is increasingly driving public authorities to form partnerships with the private sector. The City of Montréal, accordingly, reached a partnership agreement in the early 90s to meet its need for means of displaying tourist and public information and maps.

Under this agreement, a private-sector firm assumes the costs of manufacturing, installing and maintaining the network. The City, for its part, allows its partner to occupy this public property, under very strict conditions governing visibility, safety, traffic, etc. In return it receives royalties from the advertising revenue, allowing it to develop its public information network and update it with new technologies.

DEVELOPMENT AND DESCRIPTION OF THE NETWORK

The pillars for the modules were first installed in 1993, making it possible to efficiently serve strategic downtown locations. The locations were carefully chosen, keeping in mind the daily traffic of 500,000 pedestrians downtown (tourists and shoppers) and the visibility of the advertising surfaces. Over the years, the network has been extended to all neighbourhoods in the city, offering a new way of communicating community and social information. The network of urban display modules has grown steadily since it was first implemented, and now comprises more than 375 round, triangular or two-sided modules and as many maps. There are also 75 advertising spaces for institutional promotion available to the City of Montréal.

IMPACT

The commercial agreement and the by-laws adopted have made it possible to take an intelligent approach to urban displays and to avoid visual pollution. The cartographic product, developed to high graphic standards, is an important part of the city's services to welcome tourists, and helps to generate a series of spin-off products (Website, over 5 million copies of publications distributed, etc.). In fact, the City of Montréal won first prize in North America for the best maps on a municipal Website. The operation has been a success in financial terms, too. The private-sector partner is satisfied with the income it earns though the agreement and is fielding more and more requests for

advertising space. The City, for its part, is able to successfully meet the need for public information for tourists, and earns royalties essential for further development of the product.

CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

The positive experience and expertise developed by the City of Montréal have prompted many other cities, some in other countries, to implement this urban display system.

The maps developed are now being used on new information networks, including the Internet, the Urban Navigator and the IPSAT terminals (public information, signage, displays and transactions system) installed in Montréal's underground city. The underground city covers 35 km, linking 20 shopping centres and 2,000 stores, making it the world's largest underground network.