

PMI® Case Study

QUARTIER INTERNATIONAL DE MONTRÉAL:

2005 PMI Project of the Year

The Quartier International de Montréal (QIM) was a massive urban revitalization project that comprehensively restructured a large portion of Montreal's city center from the ground up.

The QIM team used standard project management techniques to coordinate the project's many complex activities, plan for risks, and accommodate last-minute changes to the project plan by the City of Montreal. As a result, the QIM project was completed within budget and schedule, and was lauded with international accolades.

Background

Montreal is an industry hub in North America that frequently plays host to the business, tourist and international communities. It features a large business district and the Old Montreal town center, and between these two sectors ran an expressway that was not only unattractive, but impeded the potentially lucrative flow of pedestrian traffic.

The QIM project's goal was to revitalize these two areas by covering the expressway to create 27 additional hectares of land for business, cultural and pedestrian use—increasing traffic and revenue for both the quarter and the city.

The QIM sought to accomplish two things:

1. restore communication between two city sectors vital to tourism and economic development; and
2. revitalize an entire sector, making it a prestigious international district showcasing Montreal's new dynamism and know-how.

Project initiatives included the following:

- cover expressway;
- overhaul sewer and aqueduct system;
- reconstruct roads and sidewalks;
- restore Victoria Square;
- create a new public square: Place Jean-Paul Riopelle;
- plant more than 500 mature trees;
- develop and install unique urban fixtures;
- integrate new public art and sculpture and restore existing works; and
- add 1.3 km to the existing indoor pedestrian network, consolidating it for a total of 33 km.

The team was to complete the project within a five-year timeframe.

Challenges

This project was comprised of many smaller projects, requiring the QIM team to integrate and coordinate activities as diverse as renovating sewer systems and commissioning public art. In addition, the team had to conduct these activities in one of the most trafficked zones of the city, which hosts many international events. In fact, the convention center in this area ranks third in North America for staging international conventions.

Because the QIM project affected a high density area of the city, community support was particularly important. Road closures and obstructions resulting from work in progress, affecting traffic flow and adjacent businesses, made it necessary—for the good of the project—to cultivate and maintain community goodwill.

Montreal's notoriously harsh winter climate posed yet another challenge. Many of the project activities had to take the weather into consideration in scheduling.

Solutions

In order to confront these challenges and effectively execute the project, the QIM team applied standard project management practices. This enabled them deliver a product on-time and on-budget, while surpassing the expectations of each of the stakeholders.

The QIM had a tight deadline, a limited budget, and was executed in an environment where unpredictable factors could affect plans. The QIM project team used project management techniques in developing the plan to allow for the inevitable changes that come with a project of this scope and complexity. For example, the City of Montreal modified the project from an original request to replace 30 percent of the infrastructure in the sector, to replacing more than 75 percent of the infrastructure. Once changes were incorporated into the schedule, the project remained on track.

The project's urban location meant the area had to remain open for business while the project was underway. Project management techniques helped the team identify the challenges this posed, determine methods for confronting those challenges, and build those methods into the project plan.

The work was divided into four sections, each representing development from the ground up:

1. underground infrastructure;
2. basement and ground level infrastructure;
3. aesthetic additions; and
4. real estate development.

Each phase had built in flexibility to accommodate unforeseen changes. This enabled the project to meet stakeholder needs at the time of the request, mitigating the possibility for complaints.

Project management techniques also ensured all activities met quality standards. The QIM team created an outline of its principles for an urban revitalization project as part of its quality management initiatives. This technique provided a point of reference as well as a benchmarking tool throughout the life cycle of the project. The team also included quality provisions in the contractors' and employees' mandates, and required that all professionals produce prototypes for original deliverables and conduct external testing for all stages of construction, helping the team XXX potential problems. Maintaining quality as a priority at the outset helped to avoid costly backtracking brought about by change requests, addenda to plans, litigation or late fees.

Several human resource management techniques were implemented to encourage quality work and support employee morale, such as the establishment of a professional development committee. This encouraged employees to seek opportunities to expand their skills and marketability. As a result, one team member became certified in mediation, another completed his Project Management Professional (PMP®) certification, while another obtained an MBA. Employee satisfaction was particularly high, evidenced by the zero percent turnover rate in the QIM internal team.

The size of the project necessitated a comprehensive plan to initiate and maintain effective communications with investors, employees, contractors, local business owners, local workers and other stakeholders, including:

- a Web site providing access to the project's progress;

- weekly newsletters to keep stakeholders apprised of project developments;
- a mobile exhibit displayed around the quarter;
- an informational DVD explaining disruption causes to tenants, and alerting them to future developments; and
- daylong team meetings once a week devoted to solving technical problems.

The project's size, including a large amount of heavy construction, made risk management of particular concern. The project team instituted several measures to help mitigate the risks associated with the QIM project, including an exploratory dig.

The underground infrastructure in the area had not been sufficiently documented, so the dig was commissioned to identify the location of urban infrastructure, any archeological potential and soil contamination. The latter constituted a significant risk to the project, the team included provisions in the risk management budget in anticipation of potential problems.

Procurement contracts included mediation and arbitration clauses to create a framework for disputes. This would help avoid making compromises that would not benefit the project. Arbitration techniques were based on those developed by Roger Fisher, of the Harvard Negotiation Project, and the works on emotional intelligence by David C. McClelland and Daniel Goleman, both of Harvard.

Results

Thanks to the strong adherence to budget, public and private partners almost completely realized their return on investment. The only budget increases came from modifications initiated by the City of Montreal.

A survey conducted by QIM management in summer 2004 revealed a high level of satisfaction among users of the new space and facilities. They were impressed with the landscaping and the addition of trees. District businesses and visitors were also very satisfied with the project, expressing appreciation for the new public squares to gather with colleagues and friends or for relaxation.

Key Achievements

- The team completed the QIM project under budget, leaving surpluses for any project improvements that might be necessary in the future.

- This \$90 million (US) project avoided any litigation or claims, rare for a project of this size and complexity.
- The City of Montreal gave the QIM a 100 percent satisfaction rate.
- The project received 17 awards, including the Prix Metropolis, Mention spéciale METROPOLIS, in Berlin 2005, the Industrial design prize in 2003 from the International Exhibition of Inventions of Geneva and, of course, the 2005 PMI Project of the Year award