



Case study

A magical and unforgettable winter 2022 in Montréal: MK Illumination lights up the city's downtown core and leaves people in awe!

Several initiatives have been undertaken in recent years to revitalize downtown Montréal. But in 2022, after more than two years of the pandemic, what downtown Montréal needed was a jolt, and MK Illumination Canada, along with others, was given the privilege of delivering it! The local MK Illumination team was honoured to be given this mandate, and did everything in its power not to miss the mark.

And it was right on target! Large animals representing Quebec's fauna shone through the winter gloom, glittering arches and a shining bridge pierced the darkness, shooting stars fell from the sky, a fountain spouted light, dozens of decorated lampposts lightened the mood and hundreds of trees donned a dress studded with lights to light up the way for passers-by.

This unique visual experience was awe-inspiring, and it will continue to bring smiles and warm memories since this light show will be a fixture

of downtown Montréal for many years to come, delighting locals and international tourists alike.

« Our metropolis and its downtown core are attracting more visitors than ever from all over the world. »

Glenn Castanheira,
Executive Director SDC Montréal Centre-Ville

Here's a brief look at how this exceptional project came about.

In November 2022, when the project that MK Illumination had been entrusted with began to take shape in downtown Montréal, the health crisis that had shaken the planet since March 2020 was beginning to run its course. But the pandemic only exacerbated the sharp decline in traffic that downtown Montréal was experiencing in 2022,

which had begun long before the COVID-19 virus hit. At the end of 2020, due largely to the containment measures enforced by the Quebec government, 28% of commercial space in downtown Montréal was vacant, as reported in the Journal Métro on February 18, 2021. In the same article, the author quotes Jean-Marc Fournier, President and CEO of the Urban Development Institute of Quebec: “[TRANSLATION] There are more people who want to leave than people who want to come [to downtown]. And that’s obviously a cause for concern.” Fortunately, in an effort to revitalize the downtown core, the Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan Montreal introduced the Relaunch MTL movement in the fall of 2020. This mobilizing effort resulted, among other things, in 11 sectoral action plans and over a hundred priority courses of action. The Quebec government took advantage of its November 2020 economic update to announce an investment of \$50 million over two years to “revitalize downtown areas,” an amount that was increased by \$25 million in the summer of 2021. This is where MK Illumination Canada came in. Following investments in Quebec’s tourism revival and, more specifically, the \$10 million allocated to revitalizing downtown Montréal, the local MK Illumination team was given the ambitious mandate to breathe new life into the heart of the city. Rekindling the sparkle in the eyes of Montrealers and tourists, and setting every gaze ablaze was going to be no small task!

Mandate

On paper, the mandate seemed pretty straightforward. MK Illumination Canada was asked to create a customized, high-calibre, fairytale-like atmosphere using illuminated décor to enhance the downtown area’s appeal to its entire community, including office staff, customers, local and international tourists, residential and commercial landlords and tenants, and so on.

But in reality, this mandate required the expertise of seasoned creative professionals, and MK Illumination Canada’s local team was already hard

at work to present a bold neighbourhood lighting proposal that would enable downtown Montréal to capitalize on the company’s international experience in major locations such as Stockholm, Shanghai, Toronto, Berlin and New York.

12.7 km of string lights

Proposal

The Montréal team at MK Illumination Canada rose to the challenge with flying colours. And it was a tall order! They had to illuminate 18 locations, work with key urban structures, such as lampposts on major roads, decorate a hundred trees with artistic lighting, and install free-standing 3D structures representing Quebec wildlife. Not only did each element of the proposal have to be executed with creativity and meticulousness, but the team had to ensure that all the proposed elements





were consistent and cohesive in order to create a seamless artistic signature across the entire territory.

And for good measure, the proposal also had to fit in with the area's rich architecture and heritage, and blend in well with the characteristics of the neighbourhood!

495 000
light points

By the beginning of winter 2022, MK Illumination Canada had accomplished the mission. In the end, more than half a million LED lights were used, 32 free-standing 3D light structures were erected, 173 trees were trimmed and twinkled, and 172 lampposts were illuminated.

In terms of energy consumption, the 12.7 km of string lights are equivalent to 7.5 dryers running for an hour. In addition, all the LED bulbs used in the project are rated IP67, one of the highest in the industry. This certifies that they are waterproof and dustproof.

Results

In August 2023, the trend in downtown traffic was finally reversed, as Glenn Castanheira, Executive Director of the business development corporation (SDC) Montréal Centre-Ville, noted: "[TRANSLATION] Our metropolis and its downtown core are attracting more visitors than ever from all over the world." And it would appear that the illumination of major monuments of the city's historic heritage, such as the arches of Christ Church Cathedral, and the addition of the urban forest animals played a major role in the resurgence of downtown traffic. Among all the actions taken to revive the downtown area, the assortment of dazzling décor and light structures lining the city's main thoroughfares undoubtedly helped to bring people back to the downtown core and gently awaken the dormant city.

32 3D structures
173 trees
172 lampposts

Public, clientele and tourists

The results of a survey conducted by the firm 'l'Observateur' and commissioned by SDC Montréal centre-ville show that four out of five people (80%) randomly surveyed downtown in winter 2023 said they had noticed the lighting installations. Among them, 91% said they highly or very highly enjoyed the initiative, and 63% said they would like to see more of them in the coming seasons.

Business owners

As for business owners, and again according to the same survey, 71% said they had noticed the lighting installations. Among them, 71% said that they highly or very highly enjoyed the initiative, and 62% said they would like to see more of them in the coming seasons.

Traffic meters located in the downtown Montréal area showed a significant increase in daily traffic (25% more than during the same period the previous year). MK Illumination Canada is convinced that its project contributed to providing a bright, attractive, entertaining and fun experience for the downtown area's varied clientele.

Conclusion : what they said!

"[TRANSLATION] With this lighting, we're going to create a new and unique experience that will make our downtown area even more vibrant." – Pierre Fitzgibbon, Minister of Economy, Innovation and Energy, Minister Responsible for Regional Economic Development, Minister Responsible for the Metropolis and the Montréal Region



"[TRANSLATION] The Chamber and its partners have been working together for over two years to revitalize the downtown area. Today, our analyses tell us that we're on the right track, with 87% of downtown workers going in to the office every week. We know that the creative initiatives we've supported are having a very positive impact on the attractiveness of the downtown area [...]. We're pleased to contribute to the Moments lumineux du cœur de l'île and to provide workers with this exciting offering that will brighten up the winter months. I applaud Minister Fitzgibbon's leadership and the commitment of all those involved in lighting up our downtown core." – Michel Leblanc, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan Montréal

"[TRANSLATION] Montréal is a world-class northern metropolis. It's important for the Ville de Montréal to celebrate this northern character and associate it with a cultural offering that's accessible to the general public and tourists alike." – Valérie

Plante, mayor of Montréal and Ville-Marie borough

“[TRANSLATION] The numbers don’t lie: the main reason our downtown core attracts so many people is because it offers a unique experience. With delegations from all over the world visiting our downtown area in search of inspiration, and our know-how being called on to help revitalize some of the world’s greatest downtown areas, it’s only natural that we should put this expertise to good use right here at home.” – Glenn Castanheira, Executive Director of SDC Montréal Centre-Ville

“[TRANSLATION] We’re very pleased to see that there’s a strong desire to continue the collaborative summer initiatives into the winter season to keep the downtown area alive and attractive.” – Monique Simard, Chair of the Board of Directors of the Quartier des Spectacles Partnership

“[TRANSLATION] The winter offering is back in full force with innovative tourism products, and Tourisme Montréal is delighted to showcase the city’s attractions to its own players.” – Manuela Goya, Vice-President, Development of the Destination and Public Affairs, Tourisme Montréal

Sources :

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Satisfaction survey conducted on-site with downtown visitors and an opinion and satisfaction survey with merchants (March 2023), carried out by the firm 'l'Observateur' commissioned by SDC Montréal Centre-ville. Data collected and synthesized by SDC Montréal Centre-ville.





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