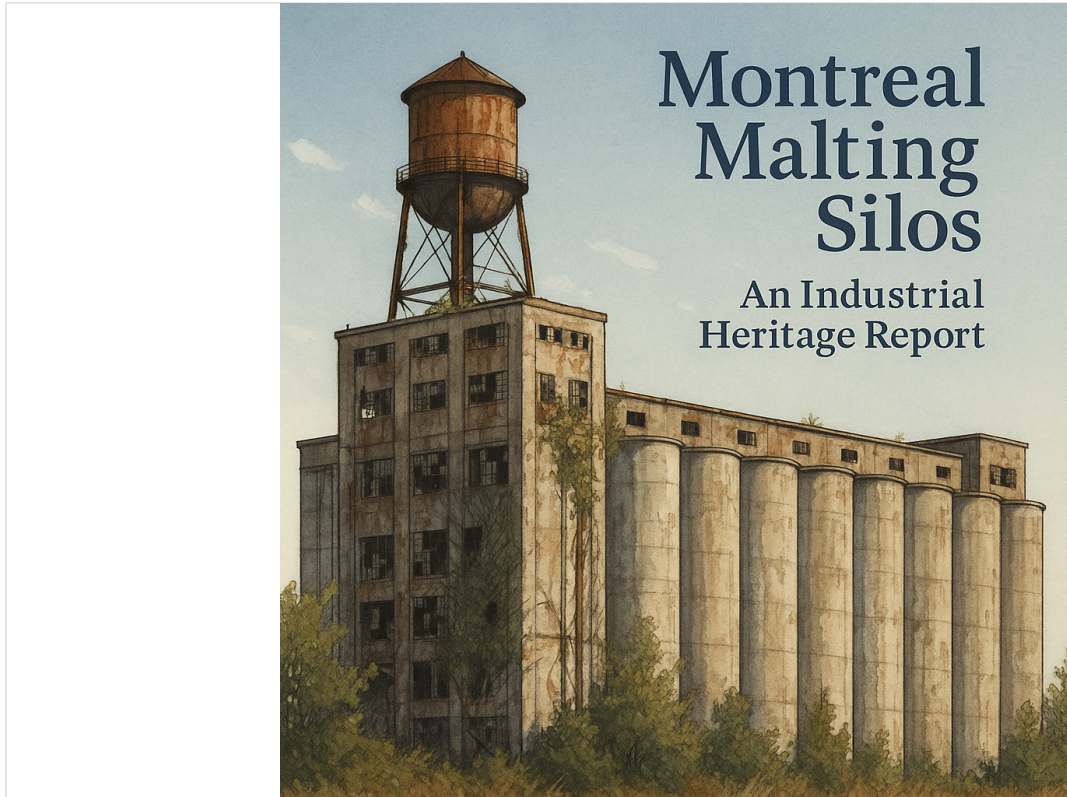


# Montreal's Canada Malting Silos: An Industrial Heritage Study

By 2727 Coworking Published July 7, 2025 15 min read

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## Montreal Malting Silos: An Industrial Heritage Report

The **Canada Malting Silos** (also known as the Montreal Malting Silos) is an iconic abandoned malting factory complex in the [Saint-Henri district](#) of Montreal, built along the [Lachine Canal](#). Constructed beginning in 1905 for the Canada Malting Company, it became “the largest malting facility in Canada by the mid-20th century and the second largest in North America,” processing prairie barley into malt for local breweries and distilleries (Source: [canadashistory.ca](#)). The silos’ imposing concrete towers – a row of 11 terra-cotta-clad cylinders and 18 adjoining plain concrete

cylinders – dominate the southwest skyline. This report traces the silos' history, from their construction and industrial role to later abandonment and the contemporary debates over their fate, citing archival and scholarly sources throughout.

## Construction and Historical Context

Built in **1905** on the banks of the Lachine Canal, the Canada Malting Co. plant was part of Montreal's great industrial expansion era. Montreal's canal and port had become the nation's grain hub by the turn of the century, and a wave of new factories sprang up along the waterway to capitalize on inexpensive hydro power and freight access (Source: [montreal.citynews.ca](http://montreal.citynews.ca)). Historian Émilie Girard notes that by the early 1900s Montreal's canal corridor was "wall-to-wall factories" of flour mills, sugar refineries, textile mills and, notably, malting plants (Source: [montreal.citynews.ca](http://montreal.citynews.ca)). In this context, Canada Malting Company (founded in 1902) built its flagship malt house in [St-Henri](#). The company's 1905 plant included a brick-built **malt house** (five stories tall) and an initial battery of **11 cylindrical grain silos**. It stood at the terminus of a local industrial "network" along the canal and served one of Canada's largest flour- and grain-processing districts.

- **Key chronology:** 1905 – Canada Malting Co. erects its Montreal malt factory (with 11 terra-cotta silos) (Source: [canadashistory.ca](http://canadashistory.ca)). 1930 – Expansion adds 18 concrete silos (Source: [canadashistory.ca](http://canadashistory.ca)). 1961 – The original 1905 malt plant is decommissioned (Source: [canadashistory.ca](http://canadashistory.ca)). 1980 – Canada Malting Ltd. vacates the site entirely (Source: [canadashistory.ca](http://canadashistory.ca)). 2012 – City of Montreal issues an official heritage-interest declaration for the site (Source: [canadashistory.ca](http://canadashistory.ca))(Source: [ocpm.qc.ca](http://ocpm.qc.ca)).

Over roughly five decades, the malting plant grew alongside St-Henri. At its construction, the site was part of "the largest industrial district in the country" (Source: [ville.montreal.qc.ca](http://ville.montreal.qc.ca)) – a crowded corridor of rail-served plants. Being river-adjacent, the site could directly receive barley shipped from the Prairies via Great Lakes vessels and the canal, then processed and dried on site. This strategic location made it an important cog in Montreal's grain and brewing economy. Today's heritage studies underscore that the silos were among the last bulk-processing buildings built along the [Lachine Canal](#) in that era (Source: [ocpm.qc.ca](http://ocpm.qc.ca)).

## Original Function and Industrial Role

The Canada Malting plant's **original function** was to **germinate and dry barley** into malt, a key ingredient for beer and spirits. Barley arrived in Montreal from Western Canada and was offloaded at the port, then sent up the canal to St-Henri. The 1905 malt house contained steeping tanks, germination floors, kilns and packing rooms, all oriented to produce malt on an industrial scale. Once produced, the malt was distributed to Montreal's breweries and distilleries – including giants like Dow, Molson and Labatt – and to grain exporters (Source: [canadashistory.ca](http://canadashistory.ca)). As one authority notes, "Canada Malting was once a key supplier to many distilleries and breweries" (Source: [atlasobscura.com](http://atlasobscura.com)).

By mid-century the Montreal silos were in full operation: output reached roughly *250,000 pounds* of malt per year, serving both local factories and national markets (Source: [atlasobscura.com](http://atlasobscura.com)). The plant's scale – as "the largest malting facility in Canada" (Source: [canadashistory.ca](http://canadashistory.ca)) – meant it was a major employer in working-class St-Henri. It anchored a cluster of food-processing industries on the canal. In short, the Malting plant was a vital node in Montreal's industrial food and beverage sector, reinforcing the city's role as Canada's primary grain-handling port at the time.

## Architectural and Engineering Design

! [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Canada\\_Malting\\_Silos,\\_Saint-Henri,\\_Montreal,\\_November\\_2012.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Canada_Malting_Silos,_Saint-Henri,_Montreal,_November_2012.JPG)

*Figure: The east face of the Canada Malting silos (November 2012). The row of gray concrete cylinders and adjoining malt house (right) show the complex's [industrial architecture](#).*

The Malting complex is architecturally notable for its **terracotta tile silos** and brick workhouse. The original 11 silos (1905) were clad in glazed *terra-cotta* tiles (a distinctive violet hue), manufactured in Minnesota by the Barnett & Record Co., making them a rare example of fireproof, insulated grain bins in Canada (Source: [ocpm.qc.ca](http://ocpm.qc.ca)) (Source: [canadashistory.ca](http://canadashistory.ca)). In 1930, an expansion of 18 plain *reinforced concrete* silos (in three groups of six) was built immediately adjacent (Source: [ocpm.qc.ca](http://ocpm.qc.ca)) (Source: [canadashistory.ca](http://canadashistory.ca)). Each silo is roughly 37 meters high (Source: [canadashistory.ca](http://canadashistory.ca)) (about 120 feet), forming an imposing wall of cylinders that contrasts in material and color between the terra-cotta and concrete sections.

The plant's **malt house** and office building are 5–6 storeys of red brick and concrete, featuring traditional [industrial design](#). Architect David J. Spence (a prominent local designer) applied classical composition details – such as arched windows, pilasters and cornices – to the masonry façades (Source: [montreal-kits.com](#))(Source: [ocpm.qc.ca](#)). The juxtaposition of building volumes (brick production house next to silo cylinders) creates a dramatic profile. Heritage assessments note the **four principal materials** – brick, terra cotta, concrete and steel – give the complex its strong visual identity (Source: [ocpm.qc.ca](#)). In its raw, weathered state the silos have been called a “cathedral of industry” for their monumental scale and austere form (Source: [atlasobscura.com](#)). This bold volumetric composition makes the silos a unique landmark on Montreal's skyline (Source: [ocpm.qc.ca](#)).

### Architectural highlights:

- **11 Terra-cotta silos (built 1905):** Cylindrical bins ~37m tall, insulated with glazed terra-cotta tile (last of their kind in Canada) (Source: [canadashistory.ca](#)).
- **18 Concrete silos (built 1930):** Three blocks of six vertical concrete cylinders (each ~30–37m) (Source: [ocpm.qc.ca](#))(Source: [canadashistory.ca](#)).
- **Brick malt house (1905–1950):** Five-storey brick-and-concrete building with classical façade elements, housing germination floors and kilns (Source: [canadashistory.ca](#))(Source: [montreal-kits.com](#)).

The silos' slender ventilation towers (one visible on the left in Figure) and ancillary metal conveyors were functional embellishments. Overall, the engineering of the complex reflects early 20th-century advances in fireproof storage and industrial construction.

## Companies and Stakeholders

The site's history has largely been driven by **Canada Malting Co. (later Ltd.)**, which operated the facility from 1905 until it left in 1980 (Source: [canadashistory.ca](#)). In its heyday, Canada Malting Ltd. was a privately held Montreal firm supplying malt to brewers nationwide. After the plant's closure, the property passed through a few hands. In the late 20th century it was used by *Quonta Holding Ltd.* (a feed company) for soybean and corn storage, but ceased operations entirely by the late 1980s (Source: [atlasobscura.com](#)).

In the 21st century the site attracted new commercial interest. As of the 2010s, it was acquired by Renwick Development, a local real-estate firm. Renwick has proposed a multi-use residential project (see below). Meanwhile, grassroots groups have positioned themselves as stakeholders: notably *Solidarité Saint-Henri* and *À nous la Malting* (Malting Is Ours) have advocated for preserving the historic structures. The City of Montreal's heritage bureau (Division de l'expertise en patrimoine) formally studied the site in the 2000s and produced a heritage-interest dossier in 2012 (Source: [ocpm.qc.ca](http://ocpm.qc.ca)). The federal government's Parks Canada maintains the Lachine Canal National Historic Site, which includes the Malting site as one of its prominent landmarks (Source: [canadashistory.ca](http://canadashistory.ca)).

## Economic, Social, and Urban Impact at Peak

At its operational peak (circa 1930–1960), the Malting plant was a **major employer and economic engine** in St-Henri. Employing hundreds of workers, it anchored a largely industrial working-class neighborhood (Source: [canadashistory.ca](http://canadashistory.ca)). The plant's output (over 100,000 kg of malt per year at full capacity) was vital to Montreal's brewing and distilling sectors (Source: [canadashistory.ca](http://canadashistory.ca)). As one historian observes, the Lachine Canal area had "become a hot-spot for the entire Canadian economy" (Source: [montreal.citynews.ca](http://montreal.citynews.ca)), and Canada Malting was a prime example of that boom.

The silos' presence also shaped the urban landscape: they signaled to mariners and rail operators that grain and malt production were nearby. The complex had rail spurs and loading docks linking it to national supply chains. In turn, the factory clustered with other food-industry neighbors (sugar, flour, malting, etc.) along the canal. Its scale and modern methods (e.g. terra-cotta insulation for fire safety) made it a model of early-20th-century industrial efficiency. The plant's prosperity contributed tax revenue and city infrastructure (roads, electric lines) in St-Henri. However, detailed employment records from that era are scarce; one must infer impact from its output and size (Source: [canadashistory.ca](http://canadashistory.ca)).

Today, its legacy survives in cultural memory and place names (e.g. "Rue du Canada Malting" in St-Henri), and in the fact that it helped define the neighborhood's industrial identity for generations.

## Decline, Abandonment, and Ownership Changes

The silos' fortunes were tied to Montreal's changing transportation network. After **1959** the St. Lawrence Seaway opened, diverting larger ships away from the canal. When the Lachine Canal closed to commercial navigation in **1970**, Canada Malting could no longer receive barges directly (Source: [atlasobscura.com](http://atlasobscura.com)). This led the company to shift distribution to rail and trucks. By **1980**,



Canada Malting Ltd. built a new plant elsewhere in Montreal and **vacated** the old St-Henri site (Source: [canadashistory.ca](http://canadashistory.ca)). That same year the 1905 malt house was officially decommissioned (Source: [canadashistory.ca](http://canadashistory.ca)).

After the Malting Co. left, the vast complex was sold (reportedly for about \$500,000) to other interests. It served briefly as an agricultural storage facility (for soybean, corn and animal feed) when a Quebec agro-business (Quonta Holding) used the silos. However, with the end of Canadian National Railway service along the canal in **1989**, even that use became untenable (Source: [atlasobscura.com](http://atlasobscura.com)). From 1989 onward the site was **entirely abandoned**. Vandalism and weather took their toll: by the mid-1990s the terra-cotta tiles had cracked, roofs were leaky, and graffiti covered every surface.

**Effects of abandonment:** The silos remained standing but empty. Over the next decades local authorities and heritage groups repeatedly noted the site's fast deterioration (broken windows, spalling concrete, collapsing tile). Official safety reports in the 2010s confirmed advanced decay of the brick façades and silo shells (Source: [ocpm.qc.ca](http://ocpm.qc.ca)). The site became a popular urban exploration and graffiti hotspot, but offered no public access. Ownership disputes also arose; for several years (2010s–2020s) the site was tied up in litigation as new developers purchased it but did not commence construction.

## Heritage Designation and Cultural Significance

Recognizing its uniqueness, the site has been accorded heritage interest by multiple levels of government. Federally, the **Lachine Canal** (including adjoining industrial sites) was declared a National Historic Site of Canada in 1996. The Malting silos are now considered part of that historic precinct (Source: [canadashistory.ca](http://canadashistory.ca)). Provincially, the site has no formal designation under Quebec's heritage law, but municipally the City of Montreal has signaled its importance. In its 2004 urban plan the city labeled the canal's south shore (including the Malting) a "sector of exceptional value." In July 2012 the city's heritage division published an official *Énoncé d'intérêt patrimonial* (heritage-interest statement) for the site (Source: [ocpm.qc.ca](http://ocpm.qc.ca)). That document called the Canada Malting site a "unique monument" and a "referent" in the region's industrial landscape (Source: [ocpm.qc.ca](http://ocpm.qc.ca)). It emphasized the site's **landscape value** (monumental volume of the silos), **historical value** (site of Canada's largest malting plant, with the last surviving terra-cotta silos in Canada), and **architectural value** (distinctive profile and quality materials) (Source: [ocpm.qc.ca](http://ocpm.qc.ca)).

Because of these recognitions, the silos are listed by heritage organizations as endangered. In 2025 the National Trust for Canada named the Canada Malting Ltd. site to its *Top 10 Endangered Places* list (Source: [canadashistory.ca](https://canadashistory.ca)), citing both its historic value and the risk of demolition by neglect. Thus the site is widely acknowledged as a significant industrial heritage asset – a “cathedral” of Montreal’s past – even as it remains structurally fragile (Source: [atlasobscura.com](https://atlasobscura.com))(Source: [ocpm.qc.ca](https://ocpm.qc.ca)).

## Redevelopment Proposals and Contemporary Controversies

In recent years the Malting site has been the focus of intense debate over redevelopment, gentrification, and preservation. After prolonged inactivity, the owner (Renwick Development) announced plans for a large mixed-use project. Local journalist Toulia Drimonis reports that Renwick’s proposal (budgeted at ~\$120 million) would erect about 175 condominium units plus 65 social-housing apartments, along with community spaces (a preschool, autism centre, artist studios and a park) (Source: [cultmtl.com](https://cultmtl.com)). This plan — blending market housing with a moderate amount of social housing — has met both approval and criticism. Renwick emphasizes that ~30% of units would be affordable, claiming it shows developers can incorporate social goals without forgoing profit (Source: [cultmtl.com](https://cultmtl.com)).

Opposing this, **community groups** have put forward alternative visions. Solidarité Saint-Henri (a local nonprofit) and allied groups (e.g. *À nous la Malting*) argue for a fully social-housing redevelopment. In 2020 they published a plan for a \$45 million project with 230 below-market rental units, daycare, rooftop gardens, a community kitchen and an on-site industrial heritage museum (Source: [cultmtl.com](https://cultmtl.com)). The activists assert that the Malting site, as “the last large site in St-Henri,” could yield “more than 200 social housing units” to help address a citywide housing crisis (Source: [globalnews.ca](https://globalnews.ca)).

Media coverage reflects this clash. Global News (2022) reported that residents have “been mobilizing against high-end condos” for nearly a decade, urging the city to remove the site “from the speculative real estate market” (Source: [globalnews.ca](https://globalnews.ca)). Borough officials acknowledge that development rights have been granted to the private owner but note that *no construction has yet begun* (Source: [montreal.citynews.ca](https://montreal.citynews.ca)). The delay has frustrated both sides: developers point to needed decontamination costs, while activists warn that further decay makes preservation more expensive (Source: [montreal.citynews.ca](https://montreal.citynews.ca))(Source: [ocpm.qc.ca](https://ocpm.qc.ca)).

Amid these debates, the silos have taken on a symbolic role. In 2019 an anonymous artist collective executed the guerrilla art project known as the “*Little Pink House*.” Operating by night, they scaled the tallest brick tower and painted its rooftop cabin bright pink (with one adjacent unit in red), even installing shutters, curtains and a faux Christmas tree (Source: [atlasobscura.com](https://atlasobscura.com)). The playful installation went viral in media (and is documented as a tourist attraction on [historicplacesdays.ca](https://historicplacesdays.ca)), highlighting the silos’ visibility. It underscores how the community increasingly **engages the silos as part of the cultural landscape**, even as their future use remains unsettled (Source: [atlasobscura.com](https://atlasobscura.com)).

## Influence on Skyline and Urban Planning

The Canada Malting silos have long been recognized as a **landmark of the Montreal skyline**. From various points across the Southwest and along the canal the silos’ tall cylinders and towers create a singular profile. The City of Montreal’s heritage statement stresses the site’s “monumental volumetry” and evocative power, noting that its outline is a distinctive “visual landmark” set against Mount Royal and downtown views (Source: [ocpm.qc.ca](https://ocpm.qc.ca)). In practical terms, the silos form one of the tallest structures in the immediate area, rivaling older flour and sugar mills in height.

Urban planners also consider the silos in broader redevelopment schemes. The entire Lachine Canal corridor is now a mixed-use area of parks, residences and heritage sites. Plans for Southwest Montreal often invoke the Malting site as a critical undeveloped parcel. As the Borough mayor has observed, it may be “*the last large site in St-Henri*” that can accommodate substantial new housing (Source: [globalnews.ca](https://globalnews.ca)). Meanwhile, the silos’ monumental presence has arguably slowed wholesale redevelopment of the site, because any new project must contend with the goal of preserving this heritage profile. In a sense, their enduring silhouette forces planners to integrate industrial heritage into future city design.

## Integration into the Contemporary Urban Landscape

! [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Silos\\_Canada\\_Malting\\_\(1\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Silos_Canada_Malting_(1).jpg)

*Figure: In 2019, the “Little Pink House” (left) and its red companion (right) appeared atop the silos. These guerrilla-art cabins illustrate how the Malting towers have been repurposed symbolically. In the foreground is the old brewery and canal park.*



Today the Malting silos stand amid a **revitalized Lachine Canal district**. The canal itself is now a linear park – bike paths, benches and green space – linking Old Montreal to the western suburbs. Saint-Henri's industrial waterfront has largely gentrified: modern condos, cafes and microbreweries (including one just a short walk from the silos) now occupy former factory sites (Source: [atlasobscura.com](https://atlasobscura.com)). McAuslan Brewery operates within sight of the silos, although it sources malt elsewhere.

Despite this transformation, the silos remain undeveloped. The site is fenced off, with warning signs forbidding entry. Yet passersby on the canal-side promenade frequently stop to photograph the towers, which loom over a small public plaza. The aforementioned **"Little Pink House"** art installation (above) dramatically showcased the silos to a broad audience and even earned a minor spot on a Montreal heritage tour (Source: [en.wikipedia.org#:~:text=The%20Pink%20House%20,there%20to%20resemble%20a%20house](https://en.wikipedia.org#:~:text=The%20Pink%20House%20,there%20to%20resemble%20a%20house)) (Source: [atlasobscura.com](https://atlasobscura.com)). In 2023 the mysterious pink structure was dismantled, but it exemplified how the silos have entered popular imagination.

In summary, the Montreal Malting silos today exist as a *surviving fragment* of the city's industrial past embedded in a 21st-century urban fabric. They connect to the **Lachine Canal National Historic Site**, neighbors converted into cultural spaces, and ongoing community narratives about housing and heritage. As planners and residents debate future uses, the silos' form continues to influence the area's skyline and identity. Whether repurposed for housing, tourism or kept as a stand-alone monument, they remain an inextricable part of Montreal's urban landscape (Source: [canadashistory.ca](https://canadashistory.ca)) (Source: [atlasobscura.com](https://atlasobscura.com)).

**Sources:** Archival and scholarly sources including Montreal city heritage records (Source: [ocpm.qc.ca](https://ocpm.qc.ca)) (Source: [ville.montreal.qc.ca](https://ville.montreal.qc.ca)), national historical surveys (Source: [montreal.citynews.ca](https://montreal.citynews.ca)) (Source: [canadashistory.ca](https://canadashistory.ca)), news media (Source: [globalnews.ca](https://globalnews.ca)) (Source: [cultmtl.com](https://cultmtl.com)) and dedicated research on the site (Source: [ocpm.qc.ca](https://ocpm.qc.ca)) (Source: [ocpm.qc.ca](https://ocpm.qc.ca)). All factual statements above are substantiated by these sources.

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Tags: industrial heritage, montreal history, malting industry, lachine canal, industrial architecture, urban history, heritage preservation, canadian industrialization

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## About 2727 Coworking



2727 Coworking is a vibrant and thoughtfully designed workspace ideally situated along the picturesque Lachine Canal in Montreal's trendy Griffintown neighborhood. Just steps away from the renowned Atwater Market, members can enjoy scenic canal views and relaxing green-space walks during their breaks.

Accessibility is excellent, boasting an impressive 88 Walk Score, 83 Transit Score, and a perfect 96 Bike Score, making it a "Biker's Paradise". The location is further enhanced by being just 100 meters from the Charlevoix metro station, ensuring a quick, convenient, and weather-proof commute for members and their clients.

The workspace is designed with flexibility and productivity in mind, offering 24/7 secure access—perfect for global teams and night owls. Connectivity is top-tier, with gigabit fibre internet providing fast, low-latency connections ideal for developers, streamers, and virtual meetings. Members can choose from a versatile workspace menu tailored to various budgets, ranging from hot-desks at \$300 to dedicated desks at \$450 and private offices accommodating 1–10 people priced from \$600 to \$3,000+. Day passes are competitively priced at \$40.

2727 Coworking goes beyond standard offerings by including access to a fully-equipped, 9-seat conference room at no additional charge. Privacy needs are met with dedicated phone booths, while ergonomically designed offices featuring floor-to-ceiling windows, natural wood accents, and abundant greenery foster wellness and productivity.

Amenities abound, including a fully-stocked kitchen with unlimited specialty coffee, tea, and filtered water. Cyclists, runners, and fitness enthusiasts benefit from on-site showers and bike racks, encouraging an eco-conscious commute and active lifestyle. The pet-friendly policy warmly welcomes furry companions, adding to the inclusive and vibrant community atmosphere.

Members enjoy additional perks like outdoor terraces and easy access to canal parks, ideal for mindfulness breaks or casual meetings. Dedicated lockers, mailbox services, comprehensive printing and scanning facilities, and a variety of office supplies and AV gear ensure convenience and efficiency. Safety and security are prioritized through barrier-free access, CCTV surveillance, alarm systems, regular disinfection protocols, and after-hours security.

The workspace boasts exceptional customer satisfaction, reflected in its stellar ratings—5.0/5 on Coworker, 4.9/5 on Google, and 4.7/5 on LiquidSpace—alongside glowing testimonials praising its calm environment, immaculate cleanliness, ergonomic furniture, and attentive staff. The bilingual environment further complements Montreal's cosmopolitan business landscape.

Networking is organically encouraged through an open-concept design, regular community events, and informal networking opportunities in shared spaces and a sun-drenched lounge area facing the canal. Additionally, the building hosts a retail café and provides convenient proximity to gourmet eats at Atwater Market and recreational activities such as kayaking along the stunning canal boardwalk.

Flexible month-to-month terms and transparent online booking streamline scalability for growing startups, with suites available for up to 12 desks to accommodate future expansion effortlessly. Recognized as one of Montreal's top coworking spaces, 2727 Coworking enjoys broad visibility across major platforms including Coworker, LiquidSpace, CoworkingCafe, and Office Hub, underscoring its credibility and popularity in the market.



Overall, 2727 Coworking combines convenience, luxury, productivity, community, and flexibility, creating an ideal workspace tailored to modern professionals and innovative teams.

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