

Welcome of the teams and presentation of the site's challenges by Vincent PRUVOST and Laurie LOISON

Vincent Pruvost and Laurie Loison welcomed

the teams on site at the Berlioz / Branly intersection, providing an overview of the area and its key issues. They used the surrounding urban landscape to illustrate their remarks:

- To position Les Ormes as a demonstrator of new ways of building upon the existing, combining the preservation of the suburban fabric with the engagement of local residents to envision the neighborhood differently.
 - To raise awareness among candidates about the ongoing transformation and its urban, landscape, and living quality implications, encouraging a 360° view of the area.
 - To warn about the sound environment caused by traffic along Avenue Berlioz, which connects to the A3 motorway and leaves little room for alternative mobility.
 - To highlight the beginnings of an urban polarity formed around the local commercial activity (supermarket, bakery).
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Site Visit

Stop 1 – Intersection of Avenue Berlioz and Rue de la Libre Pensée – former supermarket entrance

- Focus on the nascent urban polarity and amenities of the neighborhood.
- Explanation of the current densification logic via small-scale housing units, sometimes through self-promotion, maximizing the local zoning rules (PLU). Some developments are led by local property owners. It's noted that successive PLU revisions under previous administrations have enabled densification with little regard for existing urban character.
- Attention is drawn to the poor quality of public spaces, which impacts neighborhood socialization. The predominantly car-oriented layout (street widths, traffic, parking) does not encourage encounters.
- Vincent Pruvost highlights the symbolic toponymy: Rue de la Libre Pensée (Free Thought Street) reflects the political and engaged history of Les Ormes.

Stop 2 – Rue de la Libre Pensée – Eclectic nature of densification

- Vertical densification of individual homes with varying quality.
- Example of small collective housing currently under redevelopment on the corner of Rue de la Libre Pensée and Rue Racine.

Stop 3 – Rue des Laborieux – Green footpath

- The only pedestrian path revealing the rear of bordering plots.
- Reference to the neighborhood's agricultural legacy, including former market gardens and narrow strip parcels.
- The footpath suggests a potential for enriching the public space network and promoting soft, safe mobility (greening, pedestrianization, social areas).

Stop 4 – Rue Arago – Near the A3 motorway

- Urban renewal project extending deep into restructured strip parcels, made possible by zoning rule changes before 2020.
- Pruvost draws attention to visible renewal examples: collective housing densification, exterior thermal insulation (ETI) renovations that dilute architectural identity, degraded adjacent single-family housing.
- Marc ELFASSY points out the boundary formed by the noise barrier along the A3, which split the Grands Champs area. Consideration has been given to covering the trench motorway to restore urban continuity. Candidates are encouraged to integrate this long-term projection.

Stop 5 – Avenue Branly – Near Passage Michelet

- This dead end used to be a pedestrian alley easing movement through the neighborhood, avoiding major traffic arteries.
- Candidates are invited to consider the need for permeability and peaceful, comfortable mobility across the neighborhood.

Stop 6 – Northern area – Access ramp to the motorway

- Laurie Loison highlights the neighborhood's role as a transit zone with direct access to the A3, leading to high vehicular flows through Les Ormes.

Stop 7 – Public square near the T1 extension site

- Pruvost underlines the rarity of social public spaces, reminding that this square emerged thanks to resident mobilization.
- Loison presents the T1 tramway extension and the pre-project context: a flyover once severed two parts of Romainville. The extension is accompanied by a development plan called *"Plant first, build sometimes,"* aiming to create a public park reconnecting neighborhoods and providing residents with spaces for cooling, gathering, and revitalization.
- Pruvost notes that local elected officials successfully opposed a logistics platform planned near the motorway junction.
- The "T1 surroundings master plan" approved in 2023 sets out transformation guidelines. Loison encourages candidates to align with these future developments.
- Candidates are also made aware of the square's location on the "schoolchildren's path" to La Fraternité public school. Les Ormes lacks public facilities, and this path is unsafe due to narrow sidewalks and heavy traffic during school hours.

Stop 8 – Impasse des Oseraies

- Another example of a potentially walkable path turned into a dead end due to recent collective housing construction.
- Candidates note the presence of an open café.

Stop 9 – Rue des Oseraies / Rue des Ormes intersection

- Densification project on the former Wipelec industrial site, with a history of significant pollution and a legal case initiated by local residents.
- The environmental and health concerns led to avoidance behavior around the site.
- Rue des Ormes, once dubbed "the Champs-Élysées," now presents a degraded, eclectic character due to neglected houses, precarious housing, and signs of over-division (multiple mailboxes suggesting slumlord practices).
- This deterioration may be linked to the Wipelec redevelopment project.

Stop 10 – Villa Buffon

- Pruvost calls attention to living nature, the proximity of this edge area to the future park, and the unclear public/private status of paths.

Stop 11 – Tramway construction site

- Loison outlines the progress of the T1 line extension (delivered by 2028), which will connect Romainville to metro line 11, RER E, and northern Seine-Saint-Denis.
- The tramway infrastructure is accompanied by a landscaped avenue restoring pedestrian, cycling, and public transport connections across former motorway wastelands.

Stop 12 – Avenue Berlioz

- Pruvost and Loison present publicly-owned land parcels and remind of the operational challenges of dealing with fragmented private ownership.
- The stop also highlights the elevated position of the neighborhood (with views of Montreuil and Bagnolet) and its rare tree-lined streets.

Stop 13 – Rue des Oseraies – Entrance to the Wipelec area

- Pruvost reiterates the negative impact of the Wipelec project on the neighborhood. Public health experts have confirmed the high pollution levels, and nearby streets have suffered from urban decline.

Q&A Session at City Hall

Opening remarks from elected officials and Est Ensemble

The Mayor expressed his enthusiasm for including the Romainville site in this European competition session. He emphasized that since the new municipal team took office, they have fought to put urban planning and public policy at the service of the residents and the territory.

He contextualized the urban dynamics of the European site:

- A mismatch between strong demographic growth over the past 20 years and the provision of public services.
- A sociological shift caused by rising land pressure in the Parisian inner ring and increasing property prices, resulting in the exclusion of vulnerable populations and strong social contrasts.

The Mayor framed the challenge as one of **reconciling market dynamics with inclusive public policy and urbanism**, maintaining social and functional diversity in line with community needs. He stressed the **lack of shared, green, and refreshing spaces**.

He mentioned that half of the term has been spent bringing coherence to the large urban project of the Horloge ZAC. Romainville's suburban fabric is seen as a valuable asset with potential for thoughtful transformation—**not imitation nor fossilization**.

The Les Ormes neighborhood embodies all these challenges. The Mayor calls on **collective intelligence** to guide renewal rather than leaving it to market forces.

Romainville stands out due to its **solidarity and civic empowerment**, with the only French city over 10,000 residents electing a citizen-led list in 2020 (25 out of 27 had no prior mandates).

He urges teams to empower residents early on, as was done in the Gagarine district initiative (cf. video: <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7308472788191731712/>).

Deputy Mayor for Urban Planning – Summary

The Deputy Mayor for Urban Planning takes over by summarizing the uniqueness of the neighborhood and the cracks it presents (both physical and metaphorical). He also highlights the sound environment and the deteriorated pedestrian paths caused by heavy car traffic, the numerous construction sites within the project area, and the narrow sidewalks that hinder movement. He describes the ongoing renewal dynamics as a “permanent transition” that has been ongoing for 40 years, which can tend to wear down political goodwill. He agrees with the Mayor of Romainville in emphasizing the innovative nature of the urban renewal approach in the Gagarine neighborhood.

The Deputy Mayor also stresses the need to restore spaces for sociability. With spring's arrival comes a new season in the neighborhood—barbecues in the gardens of detached houses, an opportunity to revive neighborly bonds in Les Ormes and foster community spirit, especially since the area lacks nearby public spaces, apart from a playground in the northern part of the neighborhood. Louama Mestrot supports this point, once again emphasizing the importance of enhancing public spaces in the area.

In connection with the topic of sociable spaces, the Deputy Mayor for Green Spaces mentions that the green space ratio per inhabitant is lower than that of Paris and below the WHO threshold. He illustrates this with the COVID situation: residents living in apartment buildings couldn't go outside for fresh air, due to the lack of accessible green spaces.

The Deputy Mayor responsible for the Trois Communes neighborhood adds that it's important for residents to identify as citizens of Romainville. Currently, locals tend to orient themselves toward neighboring Montreuil. One indicator: children from the neighborhood are increasingly enrolled in private schools outside the area, avoiding Les Ormes. As a result, the Fraternité public school is seeing a drop in the number of classes, despite the population growth in the neighborhood.

Laurie Loison concludes by saying that Romainville is a laboratory for future public policies. The transformation of the urban renewal approach in Gagarine is a prime example. The Les Ormes neighborhood could also become a testing ground for suburban areas. Long overlooked in urban, landscape, and architectural terms—with very limited land control due to the high number of individual landowners—Les Ormes embodies the urban renewal challenges of tomorrow. The ideas emerging from the design competition could inspire many areas of public policy.

Q&A Session

Q1 – Can you give an example of successful public space redevelopment that has improved sociability?

The neighborhood's delegate mentions that during construction on Metro Line 11, the road to the market was closed off, allowing residents to reclaim the space, especially the market area.

The Deputy Mayor for Green Spaces and Quality of Life adds that a community café in the lobby of the Pavillon Cultural Center has created a new social space.

Elected officials challenge the candidates to consider how cultural venues can become central community hubs.

Q2 – What is the timeline for Tramway 1?

Construction is scheduled to finish by late 2025, with service beginning mid-2028.

Q3 – What were the outcomes of the workshops concerning the A3 highway surroundings?

Workshops with Montreuil officials focused on how to "soften" this major infrastructure. One proposal that caught the attention of the Deputy Mayor for Mobility was reducing the speed limit to 70 km/h—a measure already being tested on the A4 exiting Paris.

He also warns candidates about pollution from fine particles near the interchange, noting that covering the highway would be the most effective solution. However, a pacification project for the A3 between Bagnolet and Romainville is not currently planned. Candidates are encouraged to consider the existing infrastructure in their proposals.

Q4 – Are there grants for homeowners to renovate deteriorating buildings?

Laurie Loison explains that national renovation grants are available for private homeowners. The Local Energy and Climate Agency (ALEC) can assist with financial planning, but not design.

The city notes a rise in external thermal renovations (ITE) that standardize façades and often lack quality, promoted aggressively by contractors with low-cost offers.

Q5 – There was mention of a well in the neighborhood. How should water issues be addressed generally?

Old, unusable wells were present but have been sealed off. The area's clay soil retains water well. Water management could be explored further—it could benefit both residents and the city, particularly for green space maintenance.

Q6 – Regarding the development project on Wipelec land, has a court decision been made?

Not yet.

Q7 – Can you provide more information about pollution levels?

Candidates are invited to consult documents available at this link:

[Pollution Reports – Site WIPELEC, Romainville](#)

Q8 – Have there been other recent citizen-led initiatives like the square built by parents?

Not at the moment. The city encourages candidates to collaborate with residents for inspiration.

Q9 – Can you clarify the number of vacant homes, reasons, and the city’s strategy?

According to INSEE (2021), the vacancy rate is 5.5%—a structurally low level that allows fluidity in the housing market. The city is monitoring the rise of short-term rentals linked to Metro Line 11. A strategic response is being developed and should be ready within a year.

Q10 – Are the many urban studies on the neighborhood accessible?

Some studies relate to the highway infrastructure project or the demolition of the overpass. Not all are useful for candidates. The most insightful ones will be scanned and shared on the European platform.

Q11 – How do you reconcile preserving the suburban character while accommodating new residents?

The city emphasizes addressing public facility needs while resisting speculative logic. The Intercommunal Local Urban Plan (PLUi) limits building footprints to prevent over-density. The PAPAG (temporary urban renewal zone) tool can pause development operations. New arrivals must be better anticipated.

Q12 – How do you explain potential property value loss to residents relying on it? How can acceptance be fostered?

Vincent Pruvost discusses how land speculation affects residents’ urban vision—whether to put down roots or speculate. Introducing democratic processes can help defuse the financialization of land. The city notes the aging population and suggests that raising awareness among seniors could prevent sales to private developers. Engaging long-time residents could tap into the neighborhood’s memory and guide its future.

Q13 – Can the outcome of the competition itself be a method?

Yes, candidates are free to propose any approach. Laurie Loison emphasizes that the competition could inspire future participatory methods. She encourages focusing on specific themes—sociology, design, landscape, participation, urban polarization, etc. The city is open to all perspectives.