

*BBC NEWS (11/04/07)*

Second Life ploy for Paris garden

A Paris residents' association is using the virtual world of Second Life to get the town hall to press on with plans to redevelop a central area of the city.

Residents have until 1 June to suggest ideas for a new garden for Les Halles in the centre of the French capital.

Mayor Bertrand Delanoë revealed plans in 2004 to revamp the area.

Les Halles was the central wholesale market for the Paris region until the 1970s when it was razed to the ground to make way for a shopping centre.

It is also a major underground hub and redevelopment plans for the area include renovating the garden.

But local residents' association Accomplir (Accomplish) says residents have not been consulted over the gardens which they say are at the heart of local life.

Virtual reward

The association is urging locals to come up with their own ideas for the area's gardens and post them in the online world of Second Life, where people create virtual doubles of themselves called avatars.

Accomplir will shortlist five of the best projects, which will then be displayed on an island in Second Life.

The winner will be announced at the end of June and receive a reward of 275,000 Linden dollars (785 euros, £530), the currency used in Second Life.

Accomplir will then go to the town hall with the winning idea, aiming to put pressure on officials to speed up the redevelopment process.

"We are hoping to get things moving, given that the consultation process is not going forward with the Paris town hall and the architect David Mangin," Accomplir's Vice-President Gilles Pourbaix told a trade magazine.

The competition was launched earlier this month.

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<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/europe/6544377.stm>

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