

Future of 'work' greenhouses under study, decision soon

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

What's to become of the city's production, or work, greenhouses now that the main construction contract has been awarded to rehabilitate the heritage conservatory and frog pond portion of the complex? (See story January 12, p. 1.)

The question was being asked last week by passers-by concerned over the way the greenhouses remain fenced off, with windows broken and in an apparent state of deterioration. This can be viewed from the lanes that run between the senior tennis courts in Westmount Park and the back of

the greenhouses, library, Victoria Hall and Manoir Westmount seniors' residence.

"It looks like a derelict building that soon won't be salvable. It's a disgrace to Westmount," said one.

"They are so far gone that the city probably won't have much choice but to tear them down," said another.

But maybe not, city director general Benoit Hurtubise told the *Independent* last week. "There's a separate study under way and a possibility of recuperating the one that is used as an *atelier*" by the gardening staff.

The study is looking at the condition of the work greenhouses and their future use now that the city no longer grows most of its own plants for parks and buildings' flower beds. It now purchases most of what is needed.

Councillor Cynthia Lul- continued on p. 15

Snow, snow-woman, snow-bear arrive in town



"Be aware of bear in Westmount Park!" said parents Marie Hélène Foucault and John MacDonald about the creation of sons Benjamin and Tristan (left). On a less dangerous note, Willow Ave. resident Sebastian Saba told us: "My daughter and I decided to make a seven-foot snow-woman with a big heart, and lipstick and make-up."

PHOTOS COURTESY OF M. H. FOUCAULT AND S. SABA.

LETTERS:

Westmount Park refurbishment • Côte bike path • Outdoor benches • Dog feces

See p. 16-7

Council looks to summer

City seeks requirements for new Stayner Park splash pad

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

At the same time as city council approved rules for the new toboggan run in Westmount Park December 7, it was also planning ahead for a new splash pad in Stayner Park.

A tender for \$77,608 including taxes was awarded to Shellex Consulting Group for

preparation of a design for the new splash pad and tender documents for its replacement. The mandate was described as the conforming bid that obtained the best score.

Replacing city's first splash pad

"This splash pad was actually our first and had continued on p. 22

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City adds \$4,500 to swell total to \$7,000

PSU's holiday food drive delivers to 35+ families



From left, PSO Julie Noiret and PSO Jason Souza on December 16, delivery day of the holiday food “baskets.” Sgt. Tina Lanzon, centre, at Public Security headquarters on Stanton St. where the boxes were prepared. Assistant director Kimberley Colquhoun, right, coordinated the deliveries.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE CITY OF WESTMOUNT.

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

Public Security's holiday food drive collected \$2,500 in cash donations and enough non-perishable food to fill 85 large boxes for 35 families totaling 64 persons, Councillor Anitra Bostock announced at the city council meeting December 21. These were delivered December 16.

An additional unexpected donation from the city of \$4,500 boosted the amount to \$7,000, assistant Public Security director Kimberley Colquhoun said last week. This was the amount the city intended to spend on its Christmas party for employees' children, which was cancelled because of the pandemic.

The total donations enabled the purchase of 20 turkeys as well as hams, chickens and one roast of beef, as requested.

A total of 19 gifts for kids, also as requested, were wrapped and distributed along with gift cards from Metro, Pharma-

prix and Jean Coutu.

“It was a huge team effort,” Bostock said.

“Phenomenal,” added Mayor Christina Smith, though no mention was made at the time of the city's contribution.

“Residents really stepped up to provide so much this year in recognition of the hardships many people are going through over COVID,” Colquhoun told the *Independent*.

The recipients, mostly living in Westmount, were referred by the local CLSC.

Many extras, tailored to individual needs, were added to the deliveries, she said. Some seniors on the list received special requests such as yogurt, a plum pudding and face cloths. Prepared meals were also provided for a woman just arriving home from hospital. All the shopping was carried out by Colquhoun and a couple of other officers.

“We've been able to do things a little differently this year,” she explained.

This included an additional special delivery to the 25 seniors who signed up to receive the Public Security's “Good Morning Westmount” calls. These were gifts of pre-planted lily kits for growing at home “which, we've heard, have already been started.”

As well some cash and gift cards have been put aside to provide a supplemental donation for the 35 families in January or February “when times are getting tough.”

So much non-perishable food was collected that some was given to Resilience Montreal, the day shelter at 4000 St. Catherine at the former site of Miso and McDonald's restaurants across from Cabot Square.

This time, the holiday campaign took place within the confines of COVID-19 restrictions, and excluded the usual significant kick-off from donated admissions to the Artisans' Festival and the usually accessible donation bins placed in many municipal buildings as well as at several city events including employee parties.

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December real estate, p. 20

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In Conversation: Actor-author
Jessica B. Hill, p. 18

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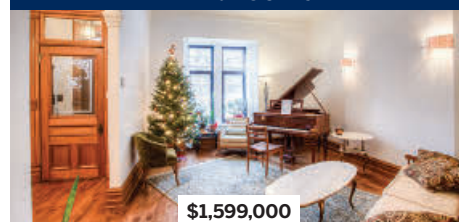
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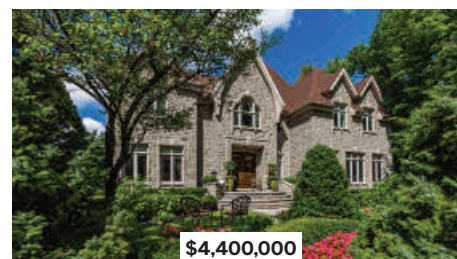


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Buyers breathe new life into dormant Selby Condo project

By Martin C. Barry

A multi-unit residential project in lower Westmount, with roots going back at least two decades although it seemed abandoned in recent years, may finally be on track once again after being purchased from the original developer.

As reported by the Montreal daily *La Presse* in early January, the Selby Condos building on St. Antoine St. has been acquired by Pur Immobilia and Batimo for \$18.1 million, according to the deed of purchase.

The complex, which was once a home base for Dawson College and originally a pharmaceutical factory built in 1926, was owned by Roland Hakim, who conducted extensive renovations and additions on the main building facing out on St. Antoine.

Since the year 2000, when Hakim first acquired the abandoned campus from Dawson College, he redeveloped interior areas, built massive penthouses on the roof and implemented a geothermal heating



Seen here on Jan. 14 facing west along Saint Antoine St., the former Jardins Westmount/Selby Condos building has been acquired from its previous owner by new investors.

and cooling system.

His project was promoted as Les Jardins Westmount as well as Selby Condos at various times.

A spokesperson for Pur Immobilia told the daily that its hope is to convert the main building into rental apartments, but to demolish two adjoining pavilions at the rear as they are not considered to be architecturally important.

Rents are expected to range from \$2,200 to \$2,500 per month for a 1,000 square foot unit, the equivalent of a 4 1/2 room apartment. The main building is expected to contain 126 apartment units.

After demolition of the older buildings, a second phase of development is expected to add another 200 units, with construction expected to begin around the middle of 2022.

The *Independent* tried to reach out last week to the new owners by voice mail and e-mail, but we had not received a reply by our deadline.

Cookbook author Capatina: ‘Fat is back!’



Lee Capatina on Victoria Ave. January 15.

PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.

Westmounter Lee Capatina has just published a new cookbook, *Eat Good Fat*, with Penguin Random House Canada. “Fat is back!” according to the website of her company, Lee’s Provisions.

“We have finally realized what our ancestors knew all along – that fats are in-

credibly healthy and nutritious. As a result, everyone is looking for ways to eat good fats as part of a healthy lifestyle. Most of us are not eating nearly enough good fats and could benefit from radically increasing them in our diets.”

Temporary ‘tunnel’ opens for Weredale Park road



The Weredale “tunnel” on January 15.

PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.

The city announced the opening of the Weredale Park “tunnel” to vehicles on its website December 18. The tunnel is to keep pieces of the building at Dorchester and Weredale’s western/entrance arm (left) from falling onto cars or pedestrians.

The city is in conflict with the owner of the building over its maintenance. After the hoarding tunnel was built in June, it

was immediately judged non-conforming and closed to vehicles (see “New Weredale ‘tunnel’ non-conforming,” June 16, 2020 p. 17).

Its opening means that the city has been able to remove a pair of temporary traffic lights installed to regulate an interim two-way use of the eastern/exit arm of Weredale.

LOOKING FORWARD TO 2021

As we continue to deal with the challenges of this pandemic, my priority remains the health and safety of my clients and the community. Harnessing the power of technology is more important than ever in order to ensure a healthy and successful 2021.

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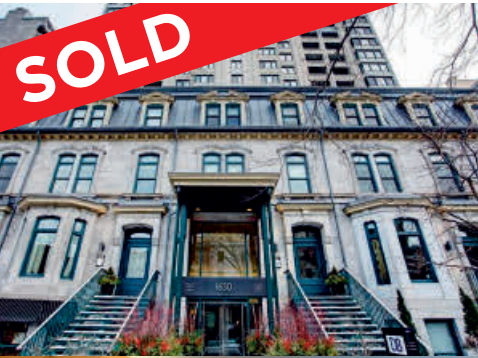
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New Urban Planning position filled Rogers to head permits, inspections & applications

By LAUREEN SWEENEY

City council appointed Christopher Rogers December 21 to a newly created position of division head for Permits, Inspections and Applications. Rogers, who has worked with the city for 15 years, had been chief inspector heading the department's Board of Inspections.

"He is a longstanding, well-liked employee," said Councillor Conrad Peart, urban planning commissioner for permits and architecture. "Congratulations on this well-deserved promotion," added Mayor Christina Smith.

In his new position, Rogers becomes a member of the city's management team, according to city director general Benoit Hurtubise.

"I'm super proud to be given this honour," Rogers told the *Independent*.

While he had more or less been filling the same function since appointed chief inspector several years ago, the management aspect meant he had been wearing two hats.

"We were all working to over 100-percent capacity."

In his new position, "I'll now be overseeing all the Urban Planning files and I'll be able to put more effort into the permit process."

His new position is part of the Urban Planning department's restructuring as proposed by former director Tom Flies before his departure at the end of July, Hurtubise said, adding that there would be more announcements in this regard.

This restructuring and expansion was one of the increased expenditures highlighted in the city's 2021 budget speech.

"In order to better serve its residents, council has approved additional human resources (some \$552,000)," stated Council-



Christopher Rogers in 2016.

lor Kathleen Kez. These involve five new Urban Planning positions to generate a new urban plan that will integrate new by-laws "adapted to the new needs of the city."

The additional positions are included in the city's overall remuneration of \$25.6 million this year, an increase of some \$1.37 million or 5.7 percent, she explained.

We welcome your letters

We welcome your letters but reserve the right to choose and edit them. Please limit to 300 words and submit before Friday 10 am to be considered for publication the following week.
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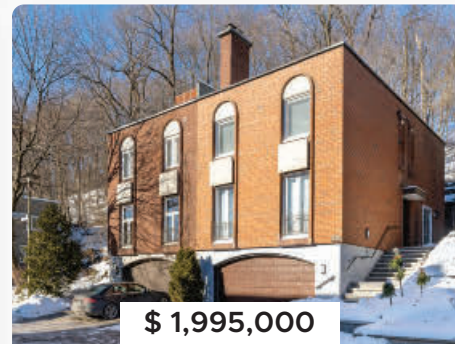
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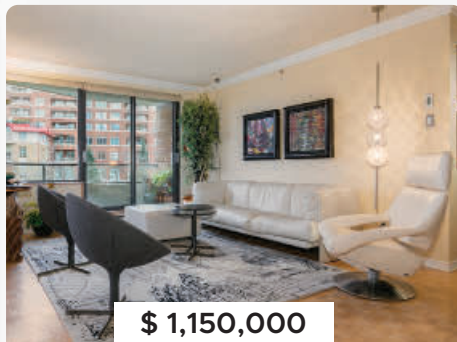
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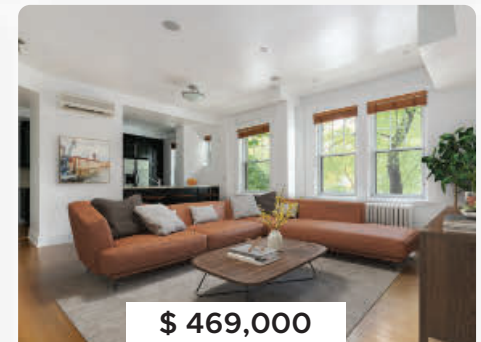
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Police Report

Police say Shaar graffiti suspect may have mental health problems

By Martin C. Barry

An official at Station 12 on Stanton St. has confirmed to the *Independent* that a suspect who allegedly painted anti-Semitic graffiti on the main doors at Congregation Shaar Hashomayim last week made statements during his arrest suggesting he was mentally ill.

As widely reported since last week, the suspect, identified as 28-year-old Adam Riga, faces charges after spray-painted swastikas January 13 on the Kensington Ave. synagogue, as well as threatening to set fire to the building.

He was ordered to undergo a mental health assessment while being arraigned in court the following day.

According to Station 12 community relations officer Adalbert Pimentel, the suspect was first spotted on Kensington during the early afternoon on the day of the incident. Security staff saw him outside smoking what appeared to be cannabis and made an initial

call to 9-1-1.

“A minute later, there was a second call, when the same individual started putting graffiti on the doors of the synagogue,” Pimentel added. The security staff quickly detained the suspect until the arrival of po-



The doors of the Congregation Shaar Hashomayim synagogue at 9 am the day after (January 14) showing the swastika graffiti already removed.

PHOTO: RALPH THOMPSON.

lice. The police response was also quick, as Station 12 is only two blocks away.

“The police officers, when they got there, noticed that the suspect was there, and there was heinous graffiti, as well as paint cans and other items,” Pimentel said.

He said Riga was asked by the police what he was doing, and he made certain declarations in response. However, Pimentel said he could not reveal what those statements were, as they part of the evidence to be presented in court.

But Pimentel suggested that, based on what the suspect told the police, “they determined there were some mental health issues, which was confirmed by family members,” said Pimentel.

He said that among the items seized from the suspect were a canister of an unspecified fuel and several containers of aerosol paint.

Alexis Nihon break-in

According to the crime incident log kept at Station 12, there were two break-ins on Westmount’s ter-

ritory in recent weeks.

The first, around 7:55 pm on January 8, was at Alexis Nihon Plaza where an electronics and communications gear kiosk was broken into and a few items of merchandise were stolen.

Although the kiosk was closed at the time, security personnel noticed that a lock on a glass display case had been forced and that merchandise items were missing.

However, the police investigators have a good chance of identifying the perpetrator as there were several security cameras pointed at the scene.

Locker/TV break-in

The second break-in, believed to have taken place sometime between the mid-afternoon on January 8 and the late night of January 11, was at a storage locker in an apartment building at the corner of de Maisonneuve Blvd. and Clarke Ave.

On January 11, the owner of the locker noticed that the lock had been forced. It was an easy task for the perpetrator, as the locker frame was made of flimsy wood. The only item of property stolen was an old television, Pimentel said.

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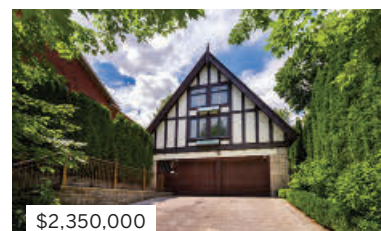
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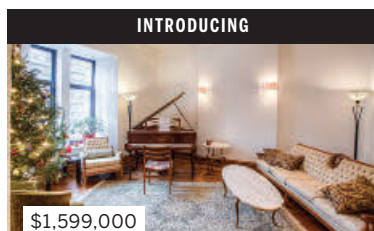
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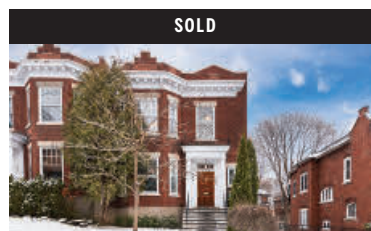


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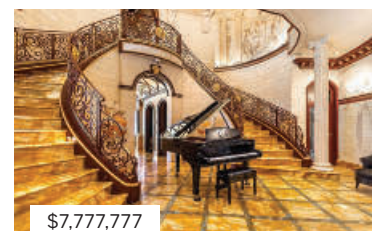
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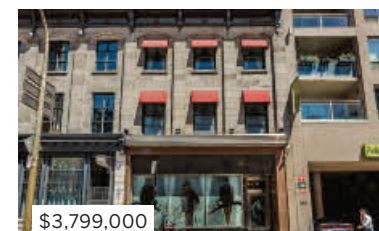
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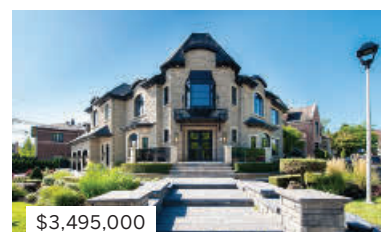


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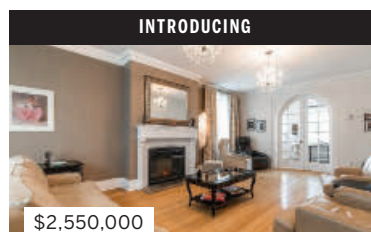
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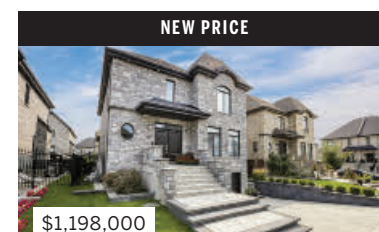
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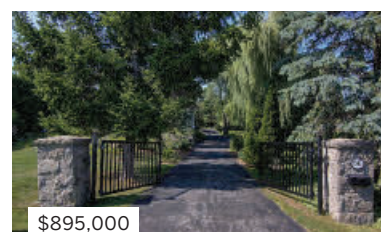
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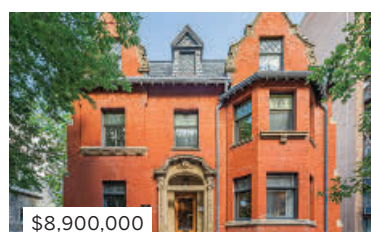


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Great location, Côte-St-Luc
BED: 3 BATH: 2 MLS 18616306

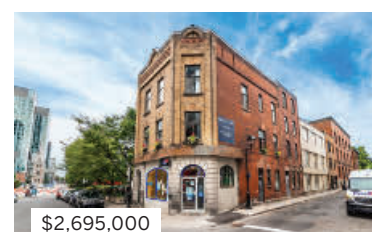
Saul Ciecha* 514.941.6248



\$8,900,000

1514dr-penfield.com/, Ville-Marie
12,270 sq.ft. LOT: 15,036 sq.ft. MLS 15340499

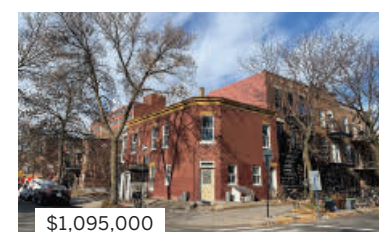
Herbert Ratsch†† 819.429.9019



\$2,695,000

Rare corner 5-plex, Old Montreal
MLS 9571794

Danny Naami* 514.629.1000



\$1,095,000

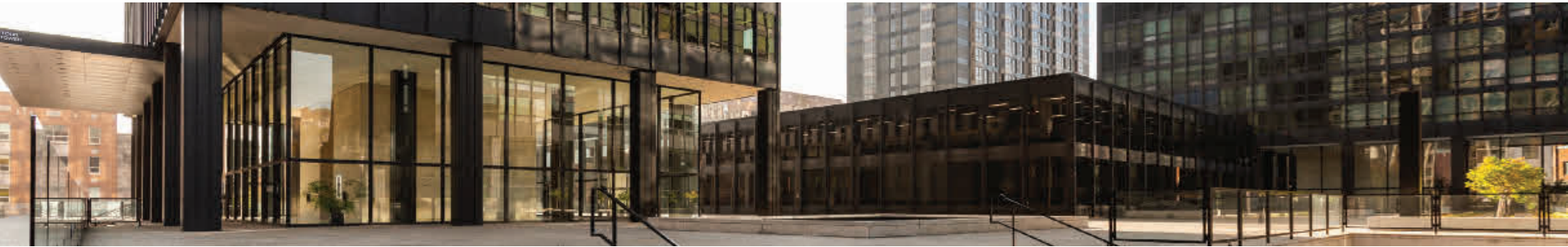
Strategic lot, Mile-Ex
MLS 24625823

Sandy Naami* 514.581.1012

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GOLDEN SQUARE MILE WESTMOUNT WEST ISLAND LAVAL MONT-TREMBLANT LAC-BROME QUEBEC CITY TORONTO VANCOUVER

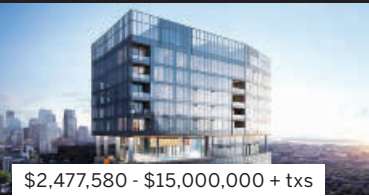
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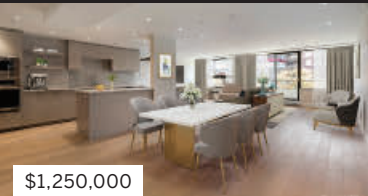
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\$2,477,580 - \$15,000,000 + txs

1111 Atwater, Westmount
SALES GALLERY: 2307 René-Lévesque West
Cyrille Girard* **514.582.2810**

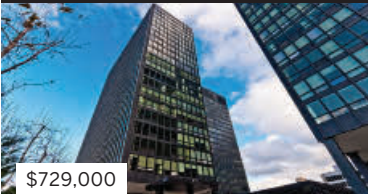
INTRODUCING



\$1,250,000

Stunning 1511 ft² condo, Westmount
BED: 2 BATH: 2 GAR: 1 MLS 16596137
Karen Karpman* **514.497.8218**

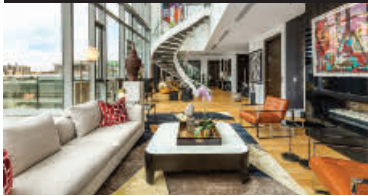
INTRODUCING



\$729,000


Turnkey & furnished, Westmount
BED: 1 BATH: 1 GAR: 1 MLS 12375036
Barbara Baudinet** **514.825.9890**

SOLD



\$2,979,000

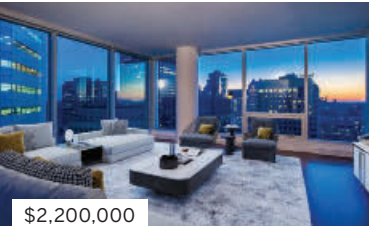
Ritz Residences, Golden Square Mile
BED: 3 BATH: 4+1 GAR: 2
Kaufman Group† **514.379.1333**



\$2,979,000


Grand living, Ville-Marie
BED: 3 BATH: 3 GAR: 4 MLS 19983041
Louise Latreille* **514.577.2009**

« CONDOS »



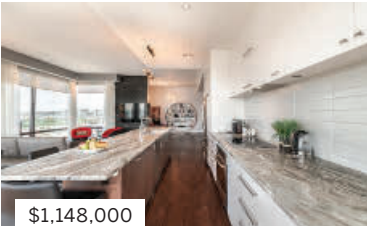
\$2,200,000

Massive double unit, Ville-Marie
BED: 3+1 BATH: 3 GAR: 1 MLS 25166195
JJ Jacobs** **514.817.7020**



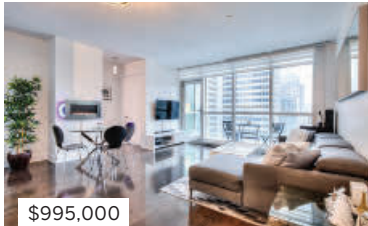
\$1,250,000

Spectacular corner unit, Golden Square Mile
BED: 3 BATH: 2 GAR: 1 MLS 14260387
Gabriel Pliva^ **514.923.5383**



\$1,148,000


Superb Penthouse, Nuns' Island
BED: 3 BATH: 2 GAR: 2 MLS 22866403
Cassian Bopp^ **514.952.9115**



\$995,000

Gorgeous condo, Ville-Marie
BED: 2 BATH: 2 GAR: 1 MLS 27702051
Saguy Elbaz* **514.892.7653**

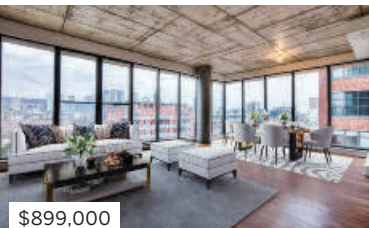
RECENTLY REDUCED



\$899,000

Gorgeous corner Penthouse, Ville-Marie
BED: 1 BATH: 1+1 GAR: 2 MLS 13849717
Monique Assouline* **514.219.5897**

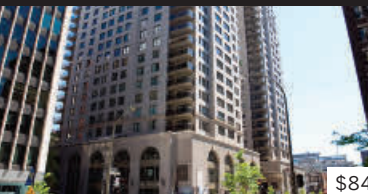
« CONDOS »



\$899,000

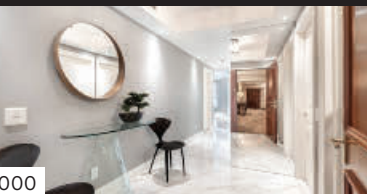
Gorgeous corner unit, Sud-Ouest
BED: 2 BATH: 2 GAR: 1 MLS 10381218
Géraldine Libraty* **514.962.5563**

INTRODUCING



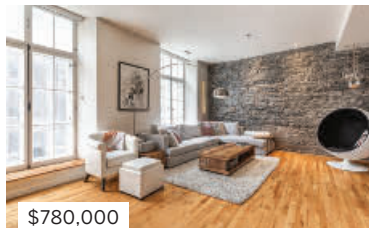
\$840,000

Beautiful corner unit with balcony, Golden Square Mile
BED: 2 BATH: 2 GAR: 1 MLS 21258150
Phyllis A. Tellier** **514.924.4062**



\$799,000

Cours Mount-Royal, Ville-Marie
BED: 2 BATH: 2+1 GAR: 1 MLS 24356646
Jessica Lombard* **514.476.9700**
Elizabeth Cox* **514.577.2737**




\$780,000

Magnificent condo, Old Montreal
BED: 2 BATH: 1 MLS 14387168
Sophie Le Guerrier* **514.655.0773**

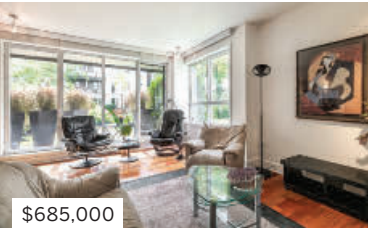
« CONDOS »

COUNTRY PROPERTIES/LAND »



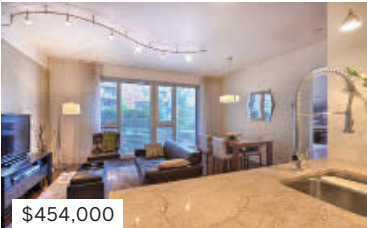
\$695,000

Waterfront condo, Ville-Marie
BED: 1 BATH: 1 GAR: 1 MLS 10303158
Monica Genest* **514.400.0280**
Victoria Marinacci*




\$685,000

Magnificent condo, Ville-Marie
BED: 2 BATH: 2 GAR: 1 MLS 19027958
Vincent Chaput* **514.264.3555**



\$454,000

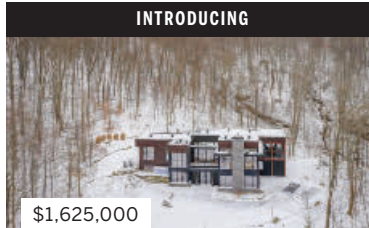
Solano with terrace, Old Montreal
BED: 1 BATH: 1 GAR: 1 MLS 12431684
Roger Quirion** **514.246.2017**



\$2,995,000

Luxury country house, Magog
BED: 4 BATH: 5 MLS 14694381
Marie-Piers Barsalou** **450.577.0272**
Johanne Meunier* **514.926.5626**

INTRODUCING



\$1,625,000

Ultimate retreat, Sutton
BED: 3 BATH: 2 MLS 12369478
Marie-Josée Rouleau* **514.660.6682**

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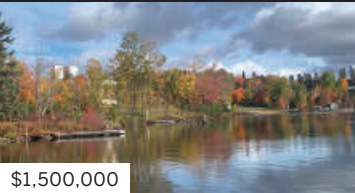
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« COUNTRY PROPERTIES/LAND »

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\$1,500,000

Lot, Ste-Marguerite-du-Lac-Masson
MLS 19420182
Jill Shpritsner 514.691.0800**



\$1,398,000

13-acre estate, Morin-Heights
BED: 5 BATH: 4+1 MLS 24233638
Melanie Clarke* 450.694.0678



\$1,388,000

Great family compound, Ste-Adèle
Main house & guesthouse MLS 9353001
Dino Cafaro* 514.898.7722



\$1,375,000

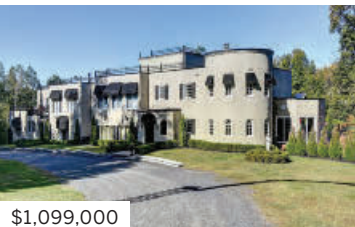
Spa/resort at home, Sainte-Adèle
BED: 4 BATH: 3+1 MLS 23263857
Stéphane Larrivée* 514.809.8466



\$1,150,000

Cozy waterfront, Nomingue
BED: 4 BATH: 2+1 MLS 22322897
Lynne Leclair* 514.570.8998

« COUNTRY PROPERTIES/LAND »



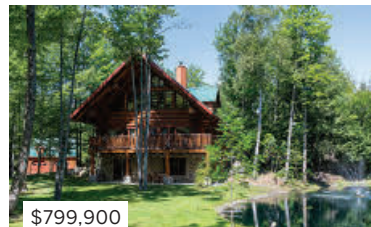
\$1,099,000

Massive family estate, Sainte-Adèle
BED: 4 BATH: 5+2 MLS 18287113
Marsha Hanna* 819.425.0619



\$850,000

Boat access paradise, Barkmere
BED: 5 BATH: 1+1 MLS 15450656
Cody Ratcliffe 819.429.1834



\$799,900

20-acre estate, Sherbrooke
BED: 4 BATH: 2 MLS 11717851
Marie-Josée Hotte 819.560.2111**
Andréanne Rousseau^ 819.578.0633



\$775,000

Quick occupancy, Mont-Tremblant
BED: 4 BATH: 3+1 MLS 19520377
Rachelle Demers* 514.378.8630



\$379,000 + txs

Superb cottage, Labelle
BED: 4 BATH: 2 MLS 27048948
Raymond Dalbec 819.425.4568**

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Be there for yourself the way you're there for others



You are always there when your loved ones are going through difficult times. But don't forget about yourself—solutions exist to help you feel better.

The current situation may cause you distress. Experiencing various levels of anxiety in some spheres of life is normal. When this happens, you may find it more challenging to deal with your thoughts, emotions, behaviour and relationships with others. Most people succeed in adapting, but listening to your needs is vital. **Don't hesitate to do whatever is necessary to help yourself.**

Take care of yourself

- Rely on your personal strengths and have confidence in your abilities.
- Remind yourself of the winning strategies you used in the past to overcome difficulties. There is no one-size-fits-all solution! Each and every one of us must take steps to foster our own well-being.
- Enjoy life's little pleasures, such as listening to music, taking a warm bath, reading, exercising, etc.
- If you live close to nature, make the most of it. Breathe deeply and slowly as you walk.
- Learn to delegate, and allow others to help you.
- Ask for help when you feel overwhelmed. **It is not a sign of weakness, but rather a sign of strength when you are strong enough to do what is necessary to help yourself.**
- Lend a hand in your community in a way that respects your personal limits and public health directives. By helping others, you can improve their wellness and your own as well.
- Think about what has meaning and value for you. Reflect on the important things in your life that you can hold onto in hard times.
- Reduce the stressors in your life.
- While it is important to stay informed, limit the amount of time spent reading about COVID-19. Information overload can increase stress and anxiety, and even cause depression.



The *Getting Better My Way* digital tool

Getting Better My Way is a digital self-management tool for emotional health. If you are experiencing stress, anxiety or distress, this tool can help improve your well-being by identifying practical things you can do to feel better. Learn more at [Québec.ca/Gettingbetter](https://Quebec.ca/Gettingbetter)



Give voice to your feelings

- Keep in mind that having a range of emotions is normal. Feelings play an important role in life, and it is essential to experience them without passing judgment.
- Use words to express what you are going through. Do you feel alone? Are you worried?
- Allow yourself to share your feelings with a trusted friend or family member. It might also be helpful to write down how you're feeling or call a helpline. Find what works for you!
- Those closest to you may not necessarily be able to "read" you. Express your feelings.
- Leave space in your life for your feelings and those of your loved ones.



Make judicious use of social media

- Use critical thinking before sharing something on social media. Ill-advised information can have harmful effects and be detrimental to everyone's efforts in these times.
- Use social media to share positive actions.
- Watch videos that make you smile.



Choose healthy living habits

- Try to keep to a routine for eating, resting, sleeping and other daily activities.
- Take time to eat well.
- Go to bed at an hour that lets you get enough sleep.
- Be physically active on a regular basis, while complying with public health directives.
- Reduce your consumption of stimulants like coffee, tea, soft drinks, energy beverages, chocolate, etc.
- Drink lots of water.
- Lower your alcohol, drug and tobacco consumption, or simply say no to them entirely. The same goes for gambling.

Help and resources

We are all going through unprecedented times that can intensify our emotional reactions. For example, you might feel greater fatigue or have fears that you can't shake, or even have trouble just dealing with the day-to-day. Focus on these signs of a problem and, as soon as you can, contact resources that can help you to better manage your feelings and develop new coping strategies.

• Info-Social 811

Info-Social 811 is a free and confidential telephone consultation service available 24/7

• Regroupement des services d'intervention de crise du Québec

Provides 24/7 referral services for people in distress (French): centredecrise.ca/listecentres

• Suicide prevention crisis helpline

Crisis helpline that provides suicide prevention services 24/7: 1 866 APPELLE (277-3553)

For a host of other helpful resources, visit Quebec.ca/gettingbetter

Quebec.ca/Gettingbetter

 **Info-Social 811**

Québec 



All three sides of the work greenhouses behind Victoria Hall have broken windows. As seen January 13: north side (above), south side (bottom left) and west side (bottom right), plus at least one other on the south side not shown.

PHOTOS: INDEPENDENT.





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An aerial view of the greenhouse complex from October 2020, looking south from above the library and Victoria Hall parking areas.

The photo shows many missing panes in the roofs of the greenhouses.

The “heritage” greenhouse or conservatory, scheduled to be rebuilt this year (see “\$5.7M contract awarded to rebuild heritage greenhouses,” January 12, p. 1), is at lower left (northeast corner of site). The “work” greenhouses – four major north-south buildings off of an east-west one – are at top right (southwest corner). Using Google maps, the *Independent* estimates the footprint of the work greenhouses to be 123 feet by 116, or approximately one third of an acre.

The red-brick building at top left is the 1995 addition to the Westmount Public Library. The roof of Victoria Hall is at bottom right.

PHOTO: RALPH THOMPSON.

Greenhouses, cont'd. from p. 1

ham, whose commissionership includes parks, said the potting shed does appear to be in the best shape.

A lot will depend on how much space the staff will need to maintain the exotic plants in the heritage greenhouse and to work with plants purchased for exhibition purposes, she explained.

“My hope is to refurbish or keep the foundations and rebuild at least some of them,” she said.

A report on their condition is expected soon since a decision would have to be made before the work starts on the conservatory.

Former mayor Karin Marks, who lives across the street on Lansdowne, suggested two ways in which the greenhouses might

be saved as a community resource and re-used, even paying for their own rehabilitation over time.

How about salvaging them for educational purposes, she proposed, citing one scenario that has been voiced by Lulham. She recalled the days when school children were given a small plant grown in the greenhouses and instructed how to keep it over the summer.

Another idea from Marks is for residents or others to grow food for the community, or even for the city to rent them out to an enterprise such as Lufa Farms. She cited how successfully the Café Mouton is operating at the Westmount recreation centre.

Denis Biro, another resident, questioned why the work greenhouses have not

been protected from water infiltration since their closure to the public in 2015 along with the conservatory.

“It comes down to a lack of regular maintenance of city buildings,” he said, pointing out how this contributed to the costly work now required to the conservatory after its wooden portions and those holding the glass panes in place had deteriorated, leading to its required closure.

Another resident suggested tearing down the greenhouses and using the space for an indoor pool, but Hurtubise said that had already been considered but the area was found to be too small.

Biro’s ongoing concerns about the lack of maintaining city buildings over the years were acknowledged by Mayor Christina Smith when he expressed his concerns

over the condition of brick work at the roof of the 1995 addition to the library (which has since been covered with a protective tarpaulin, see story June 18, 2019, p. 6).

In the last three years, the city’s record capital works budgets have paid special attention to injecting money into the upgrading of municipal buildings without borrowing to do so. This year’s is for \$27.2 million, with almost \$10 million allocated to major work on buildings.

As well, the city’s operating budget for this year projects an increase in regular building repair and maintenance for all city buildings from \$1,676,800 to \$1,862,300, according to Councillor Kathleen Kez, finance commissioner.

See also photos on p. 14.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CHANGE CÔTE BIKE PATH'S DIRECTION

I may have a solution to the unfortunate situation on the Côte St. Antoine bike path where cyclists are constantly driving the wrong way. It seems as if cyclists find the hill adjacent to King George Park too difficult to handle. Why not make this bike path one way in an easterly direction and the Westmount Ave. bike path one way from east to west? This would allow cyclists to ride down the Côte St. Antoine bike path, which they are doing anyway, contrary to the signage and the law.

TIM CARSLY, BARAT RD.

Editor's note: Without endorsing (or criticizing) the status quo, I think one of the rationales for the Côte St. Antoine bike path being one way west was so that cyclists would not (legally) go downhill at potentially very high speeds. – DP.

KEEP THE BENCHES, PLEASE

While I can understand your reasoning* regarding terrasses on Victoria and elsewhere in Westmount [in your December 8, p. 12 editor's note], what about benches? Their removal was a Westmount decision, nothing to do with the provincial red alert. There is absolutely nowhere to sit now and have a coffee. Especially missed are those benches located near cafés and stores that provide take-out such as on Victoria and in the Prince Albert

plaza. I asked the city twice about this and was told that the issue is snow removal. Nonetheless I was told that the administration was figuring out a way put back some benches and not cause snow removal problems. Well, it's been two weeks now [as of December 10] and nothing has been done.

Soon enough, there will be no sitting outside, so why the delay? Surely it doesn't take that long to figure it out. It's almost like we are being punished for daring to try to get some minimal pleasure having a coffee even if it means sitting outside in the freezing cold, not to mention while also trying to support our local merchants.

DEANA SILVERSTONE, GROSVENOR AVE.

*For clarity, my editor's note attempted to explain to the reader the facts about provincial and municipal *terrasse* regulations. There was no "reasoning" of mine in it, nor did I endorse (or criticize) those requirements. – DP.

NO DOG EXCREMENT, PLEASE

My wife and I have always liked the back-to-nature Summit Circle pedestrian way, especially since they corrected the issue with large gravel on the path that used to make walking there somewhat cumbersome.

Now, while we would prefer the outlook to view out on to the Laurentian hills as opposed to the Notre Dame/Côte des Neiges

cemetery, it is still a nice idea to have an outlook.

However, just today, as we approached the outlook, guess what caught our eye? No, not the graffiti, which unfortunately is always in many places. No, there was this neat, large, dark brown pile nestled against the wall of the outlook. Upon closer examination it was DOG EXCREMENT!!!

Now we can understand, given that dogs can be left loose in the park, that yes, it may be difficult to always catch things. But this is obviously just sheer laziness or a totally ignorant attitude. I mean, there are very clear signs at both ends of the path.

Do we have to put in cameras to monitor the path?

ALFRED EDEL, VICTORIA AVE.

PEDESTRIANS, CYCLISTS SHOULD BE SAFE

Recently, this newspaper has published several letters that have tended to criticize drivers or cyclists. In our opinion, people behind the wheel of a car or on a bike are not good or bad. Choosing to drive does not necessarily mean the driver is uncaring about the environment. Many drivers are also cyclists and most cyclists are also drivers. Residents choose their mode of transportation on a particular day for reasons they consider legitimate.

Our pedestrian and cycling association wants to help ensure that Westmount residents have the choice to walk or cycle safely – something that unfortunately is not the case at this time.

While Westmount has sidewalks on both sides of every street, they are sometimes slippery in winter, making it particularly difficult for seniors to walk safely. As

for cycling, Westmount currently has few bike paths and only the de Maisonneuve and the Glen paths are protected by plastic posts in summer, as opposed to year-round concrete protection found on some bike paths in Montreal.

Without protection, most residents do not feel safe cycling around our city and few parents allow their children to cycle to school. As cities around the world have demonstrated, once authorities provide safe infrastructure, residents use it. By the way, cycling up Westmount's hills is easy with increasingly popular electric-assisted bikes.

Faced with abundant space to drive and park, occasionally slippery sidewalks in winter and scarce bike paths year-round, it is not surprising that most residents choose to drive (solo 90 percent of the time). We feel the city should provide better snow cleaning and more protected bike paths so residents can choose their preferred mode of transportation.

While our association encourages both walking and cycling, since the start of COVID, we have focussed on walking. In the spring, we urged the city to provide social distancing corridors and recently we asked the city to keep streets like de Maisonneuve safe for residents wanting to walk while social distancing, until COVID is no longer a threat. This winter, we are monitoring the safety of sidewalks, because so many residents, especially seniors, need to get out for a walk. The city has committed to further improving sidewalk snow cleaning so we are trying to help the city achieve that goal.

DAN LAMBERT, ASSOCIATION
OF PEDESTRIANS AND CYCLISTS
OF WESTMOUNT (APCW)

WESTMOUNT INDEPENDENT

We are Westmount

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LETTERS: We welcome your letters but reserve the right to choose and edit them. Please limit them to 300 words and submit before Friday 10 am to be considered for publication the following week. Please check your letter carefully as we may be unable to make subsequently submitted changes. Letter writers should not expect to be published in every issue, or in back-to-back issues, or repeatedly in the same season or on the same topic. Please include your name and street for publication (or borough or municipality if you do not live in Westmount), but not your address (unless you want it published).

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9 Lives

LYSANNE FOWLER

Exquisite, stunning, beautiful. Yes, it is all in the eyes of the beholder, so behold sweetness as well. So affectionate, so cuddly with purrs for all.

Lady Misty is in need of a caring family right now and there is no time to lose. She is comfortable at the Montreal SPCA cattery but she needs a home as soon as possible.

Misty is very healthy, yet at 14 years of youth, is



Lady Misty

best in a loving family and not in a shelter. She is very healthy, up to date on her inoculations, spayed, and microchipped. Misty is declawed on all four feet, so she is an indoor cat only.

Her identification number is 46394694 and you can refer to it when you visit the Montreal SPCA website at www.sPCA.com

and fill out the adoption application for her on the attached link. Once submitted, you will then be contacted within 24 hours for a telephone interview, followed by a visit by appointment at the SPCA.

Your neighbour,
Lysanne

Views on refurbishment plans for Westmount Park

FOCUS ON NEEDS

The letter of December 8 (p. 10) from Wanda Potrykus concerning the proposed re-development and re-design of Westmount Park really hit the various nails on their heads.

I completely agree with every point in her letter.

With respect to the surface material for the walkways, one key issue for consideration is the particular needs of people, especially the rapidly increasing number of seniors who use mobility aids. Also many need a smooth, even and/or seamless surface for ease of walking.

Planners should keep uppermost in mind what is primarily needed in our noisy urban environment: a natural space for safe quiet contemplation and walking with a variety of greenery, pleasing sight lines and ease of access.

All other uses are secondary.

EDITH KATZ, OLIVIER AVE.

NEW EAST-WEST PATH FOR WESTMOUNT PARK? WHERE?

It is really nice that Councillor Cynthia Ludham called the editor of the *Independent* ("Great news: East-west foot path planned for Westmount Park," December 8, p. 7) about the creation of a straight east/west pedestrian path through the park, but the diagram from the Stantec presentation that she sent and that you reproduced simply won't fit.

A path directly south of the existing bike path (aside from the potential danger of pedestrians on the path being hit by eager cyclists) would require moving the fence along the soccer field and possibly even the corner of the tennis courts plus levelling the land north of the Westmount recreation centre.

I can't wait till next fall to elect a new council that actually knows the park and focusses on maintaining it – not just expensive new projects (spend, spend, spend).

What needs doing now is maintaining the existing paths – the condition of the ones at the entrance to the new skating rink and outside the (new) expensive stairs to the side door of the library are just two examples of the lack of adequate maintenance.

Then, of course, there is the editor's personal favourite path problem – the slope in the path just west of the gazebo always covered with dangerous ice.

Repairing these issues is far more important than spending \$5+ million on the "historic" (1927?) greenhouse and all the other "improvements" proposed in the new park plan.

It is long past time for a change on council.

JO LAPIERRE, METCALFE AVE.

Editor's reply: I would guess that various changes would be needed to fit the city's planned path through and, in my view, the trickiest bottleneck is between the dog run and the tennis courts. Is it possible? Dunno, but if engineers can do it, they can do it. My original idea, though, was to work more with what is already there on the north-of-the-bike-path pedestrian route: "I am not an engineer, but I see a straighter route [than the status quo] even if other park landmarks remain where they are, and an even straighter one if the dog run is moved north towards Sherbrooke a bit and the gazebo moved out of the way. And I think the memorial trees can be avoided" (December 1, p. 11). – DP.

DON'T LIMIT ACCESS DURING PANDEMIC

Without going into all the details described by other readers, I would like to strongly protest any major changes and disruptions to Westmount Park whilst we are dealing with a pandemic that requires the accessibility of all of our green space.

While there are many individual wishes for this park, we have to remember we are using taxpayer funding for this. Put the money back in the pot for other, more necessary ventures. Just because it's in the budget doesn't mean it has to be spent in haste. Just please take good care of what already exists.

LYNDA TAYLOR, STRATHCONA AVE.

NO TO COSTLY, SUPERFLUOUS CHANGES

Kudos to letter writer Wanda Potrykus for her eloquent and detailed analysis of everything that's wrong with the plan for refurbishment of Westmount Park (December 8, p. 10).

Many readers will agree with the list of unnecessary, costly and superfluous changes, such as illuminated trees and fountain, and a pointless bridge to nowhere.

An illusory "consultation," supposedly to discover what citizens wanted to change or improve about the park was held last February. I, along with many others, attended that session. I recall no-one asking for bridges or illuminated trees and, yet, here they are. I suspect that this *faux* consultation was merely window-dressing to make an already preconceived project more palatable.

As Ms. Potrykus points out, one of the main deficits identified by participants was poor maintenance, particularly of pedestrian pathways, poor snow clearance and lack of attention to vegetation. As she surmises, this plan "does not address our needs, but will cost us plenty."

Two other letter writers brought attention to questionable and inappropriate park plans including the one for Prince Albert Park where the new children's play area seems particularly user-unfriendly to small children, being exposed to full blistering sun in the summer now that the large tree that shaded the area has been sacrificed.

Since consultants don't use our parks, why don't we have a Park User's Committee that could do a much more practical and real-world job advising on usage and modifications? As one of the letter-writers summed up: "It's a shame to waste taxpayers' money on unnecessary and hideous changes." Amen to that.

There is however, a glimmer of hope. If we go by recent history, council will decide in two or three years that it wants to make more changes – possibly back to the current version? After all, it's only taxpayers' money. The consultants will certainly be on board.

MAVIS YOUNG, MELVILLE AVE.

KEEP IT SIMPLE

After reviewing the proposals for the enhancement of Westmount Park, here are a few observations. My initial thought is that we already have a great park.

The park's design was inspired by the landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, following the existing topography to create a natural and scenic landscape with a rural feel – like a nature park. It has hills, trees, interesting twists and turns, water features, a pond and numerous other elements.

The current park is required to serve a diverse audience consisting of nature lovers, children, picnickers, tennis players, dog walkers, cyclists, sports enthusiasts, as well as hosting various municipal functions. That's quite a task.

To be successful, I believe that all users

need a great deal of respect and tolerance for both the park and the other users.

The recent user survey showed that over 50 percent of users go to the park to relax, be with friends or enjoy nature (I have removed "go to library" and "go to work" from the calculation). To me, this is the *essential finding* of the survey and should be the guiding principle for any future modifications.

The bike path and the dog run seem to have settled in nicely. However, the bike path should be boldly re-labelled and fixed with "traffic calming devices" to make it a low-speed bike path, instead of a high-speed throughway. Yield signs in favour of pedestrians should also be installed.

Its current design allows good separation between pedestrians and cyclists. The proposed new (pedestrian/bike) configuration could invite accidents, aside from being a costly undertaking, and for what purpose? I see it as a costly "make-work" project. It took me only three minutes and twenty seconds to walk from Melville to Westmount Park United Church on the existing pedestrian path.

I also feel that the open field near the Westmount recreation centre (the green roof) does not need any intervention. We need natural open space and breathing room, without filling up every empty spot.

There is a question about future user volume. We have seen the impact of increased user numbers this past year. The city will need to invest more heavily in manpower, clean-up and communications to control the crowds. Any high-profile park enhancements may well draw in more users, which ultimately has a downside.

By all means make the necessary improvements – but with care. The more complexity we add, the more costly maintenance will be required.

And a final word on cost; consultants are paid to generate lots of ideas – but we, the taxpayers, have to pay the bill.

Please keep it simple and natural.

GARY IKEMAN, ST. CATHERINE ST.

Hitchcock, a beagle in need



Westmount A-dog-tions

LYSANNE FOWLER

Hitchcock needs love again. He has been saddened by the loss of his favourite human, with whom he was for the last seven years.

This youthful and beagle eight-year-old, whose warm eyes, keen nose and velvety ears

continued on p. 18



Hill: Actor-author of ‘Shakespeare’s & Bassano’s’ *The Dark Lady*



In Conversation

HEATHER BLACK

In March 2020, Jessica Hill was rehearsing the role as Lady Anne opposite Colm Feore in *Richard III* when the lockdown

closed the Stratford Festival. Returning to Westmount, the actress wrote *The Dark Lady*, performed at an outdoor theatre last summer.

Recently, I spoke to Hill about the play’s continuing evolution.

Dramatic interlude

A graduate in English drama Studies from McGill University and Dawson’s

Dome Theatre, Hill has performed at Stratford Festival since 2014. This work was “a dream come true” for the actress, who visited the festival with her high school English class and performed Shakespeare in Westmount Park with Repercussion Theatre. As to her favourite Stratford roles, she mentioned Antipholus in *The Comedy of Errors* as well as Bess and Anne Boleyn in *Mother’s Daughter*.

For Stratford’s 2020 season, Hill was cast as Helena in *All’s Well That Ends Well*. “I was delighted to portray the heroine,” she commented. In preparation for that role, Hill reread Shakespeare’s Dark Lady sonnets (127-154) and became intrigued by the change in tone. “I was struck by rage and jealousy in some of the final sonnets,” she said.

Although the theatre’s 2020 season was cancelled, Hill was invited to perform at the outdoor Here for Now Theatre Festival, also in Stratford, Ontario. “When the producer phoned, I had nothing,” she said. “But my first thought was to do a reading of the Dark Lady sonnets.” Further research on Shakespeare’s love interest led to London-born Emilia Bassano (1569-1645), whom some people identify as the actual “Dark Lady.”

“I became fascinated with her,” the actor commented. “She was one of the first Englishwomen to be published as a poet.”

Ongoing drama

Impressed with Bassano’s book, Hill

commented, “I identified with her desire to be known for her work.” Describing it as “a feminine version of the Biblical stories,” the actor added some of verses to the reading. First performed in July, Hill played Bassano opposite Rylan Wilkie as Shakespeare. Although social distancing reduced audience size, she was pleased with the sold-out performances.

Interest from the Stratford Festival led to a bursary to develop the first draft of *The Dark Lady* as full-length play.

“It will be more on Emilia’s life,” she said. “She was mistress to the lord chamberlain, a key patron of Shakespeare’s acting troupe.” Further research on her life also revealed parallels with many of his plays.

“The Bassanos were from a town near Venice and were court musicians to Henry VIII, Mary Tudor, Elizabeth I and James I,” Hill continued. “Emilia knew court life well.” While some scholars believe Bassano authored Shakespeare’s plays, Hill commented: “I like to think of Emilia and William as collaborators.”

Actress and playwright

Hill credits her success to Stratford Festival’s Birmingham Conservatory program where she trained, performed and was an understudy. “I was fortunate to work with actors with many years of experience. They became my mentors,” she commented. As for *The Dark Lady*, Hill said, “It’s almost complete!”



Jessica B. Hill in Westmount Park.

A-dog-tions, cont’d. from p. 17

are memorable, is pure joy and keen on everyone.

He is now in foster care for the Gerdy’s Rescues & Adoptions volunteer animal rescue group, and it would be wonderful if you could give this sweet fellow a chance at a loving home in your family. He is a couple-with-a-house-and-fenced-yard type of beagle, keen on other dogs when on leash.

This happy little guy is neutered, up to date on his vaccinations, housetrained and will be microchipped. If you would like to refer to the Gerdy’s Rescues & Adoptions website to see more photographs of him and find out more about him, please go to www.gerdysrescue.org and refer to Hitchcock’s adoption profile. Please enquire about him at info@gerdysrescue.org if you feel he is yours to love.

Your neighbour, Lysanne

BUILDING PERMITS What’s permitted

City council approves 10 building permits Dec. 7, refuses 1

The following 10 requests for demolition, exterior construction, alteration and renovation were approved at the December 7 meeting of the city council. There was one refusal.

Approved

- 619 Sydenham:** at a Category I house, to build a pool in the side yard;
- 4924 Sherbrooke:** at a Category I building, to install new signs;
- 10 Willow:** to build a pool in the rear yard and do landscaping;
- 628 Victoria:** to do landscaping work in the rear yard and make modifications to the rear deck and rear basement access;
- 570 Victoria:** to replace windows provided they are like the originals;
- 151 Hillside:** at St. Andrew’s pre-school, to create a new window opening on the rear façade;
- 500 Wood:** to replace two garage doors;
- 728 Upper Roslyn:** to replace guard rails,

demolish storage place under the balcony and replace covering of the solarium;

95 Arlington: to replace a door on the rear façade;

7 Springfield: to create a new patio door opening and to block an existing window on the rear façade.

Refused

3186 The Boulevard: to re-confirm by separate resolution based on By-law 1305 the previous refusal of a permit November 16 to install a stone cladding on the foundation walls of the residence and garage for which the work was begun without a permit and for which the project was seen and judged twice to be unacceptable as based on section 2.2 of the guidelines entitled *Renovating and Building* in Westmount on changes to the exterior walls of existing buildings.



ECOWatch

HEATHER BLACK

Although the survey deadline has passed, it is still possible to comment on Stantec's design proposals with regard to Westmount's sustainability mission. Do recommendations meet "the needs of current generations without compromising future generations and other species"? And look to the future and ask: Do concepts reflect our pandemic lessons and trends in park redesign?

Environmental issues

The first lesson is: reduce air pollution – a predictor of COVID-19 deaths (Wu 2020). In hard-hit New York, one Brooklyn library created a natural-habitat garden along the street for environmental education as well as to provide an area for patrons to read or converse. In contrast, Stantec's additional – and unnecessary – sidewalk south and east of the clay/senior tennis courts reduces oxygen-producing vegetation as well as bench areas.

Second: reduce noise pollution as Canadians – now 39 percent – work from

Westmount Park revitalization: Make it natural

home or parks. Designers responded with added vegetation to create privacy pockets and absorb sound, which, at 10 decibels – traffic, loud music or barking dogs, increases blood pressure (Antza, 2020). Last summer, the grassy plateau between the pond and playground was used for work, study or quiet conversation. However this area is slated for events rather than the school yard in front of Westmount Park School – a past site for food trucks and Family Day fun.

Third: reduce viral contagion – and winter influenza – by social distancing (Wiese, 2020). To improve public health – another sustainability goal – designers are planting hedge mazes to encourage both walking and social distancing. In comparison Stantec's proposed sidewalk – south of the bike path – not only removes flowering crabapple trees or conifers but also forces pedestrians in front of Westmount Park Church to cross in front of cyclists.

Trend to more nature

The fourth pandemic lesson confirms the importance of time in nature – a weekly 30-minute visit (Shanahan, 2016) – on health. The sound of songbirds in particular restores attention and contributes

to stress recovery (Radcliffe, 2013). However as Stantec's proposed event area and elevated footbridge would impact nesting sites along the pond, these concepts conflict with our mission to not "compromise other species."

The fifth pandemic trend – learning in nature – supports our sustainability goal to encourage "mindfulness towards the environment." While re-wilding the pond adds to citizen perception of biodiversity and increases well-being (Gascon, 2017), Stantec's elevated lagoon footbridge blocks views of the falls. Also the proposed green-roof garden is too small to promote knowledge of butterflies, birds, and native or naturalized plants.

The importance of smell – and sensory gardens – is our sixth pandemic lesson. As olfactory loss – a COVID-19 symptom – is also a biomarker of autism and Alzheimer's, the current trend is to plant sensory gardens in schoolyards and seniors' residences. Unlike coloured lights, a scented "inter-generational" garden between the pond and playground would add a beautiful – and educational – "wow factor." A scented – and rainbow – garden is also a cultural nod to the park's original Beaux Arts style.

A missed opportunity

With the exception of a naturalized pond, Stantec's design concepts fail to reflect Westmount's sustainability goals, pandemic legacy or important trends in park design. However with citizen advocacy – and inspired landscaping – young and old may yet hear the warblers or smell the roses on their walk through Westmount Park.

See the comment section at engage.westmount.org or sign the online pronature, care2 petition.



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December sales: Back to the peak?



Real Estate

ANDY DODGE

Note: The following article relates to offers to purchase Westmount residential dwellings that were reported by local real estate agents as having been accepted in December 2020. Because they are not final registered sales, the addresses cannot be made public, but give a good idea of current trends in local real estate activity. The graph at right offers a picture of these trends over time.

The value of the “typical” Westmount house skipped past the \$2.4-million mark on its way to a full recovery from the COVID-19 slump and heading for new heights, along with the market elsewhere in the Montreal area.

December sales were somewhat tame in comparison to other recent months, which boasted sales of \$5 million, \$7 million and even \$11 million. Individual prices in December ranged from \$1,475,000 to \$2,650,000, but the average mark-up over valuation was 35.2 percent, the highest monthly average this year. Nothing in Westmount has sold below \$1 million

since August, when a small house on Abbott Ave. sold for \$889,000, one of only four houses to sell last year below the \$1-million mark. Of seven sales in December, one sold just under municipal valuation while another went for more than double its 2020 tax value.

While we still expect some late postings for December, it is fair to say that the year was influenced heavily by the pandemic: only three Westmount sales were posted in April, which is normally one of the busiest months of the year, but then agents recorded 17 and 20 sales in August and September, respectively, when normally only 11 or 12 sales (per month) are posted. The tally right now says there were 133 sales last year, compared to 138 the year before. There were 136 sales in 2013 and a paltry 97 in 1994 (leading up to the second provincial referendum) but most of the other yearly totals in recent decades were much higher, between 150 and 200 per year.

Condos

Westmount’s condominium market hit a stall in December, with no condo re-sales posted by local agents, though there was one more purchase of a condo now under construction at 1111 Atwater Ave., where the Montreal Children’s Hospital used to be.

The fourth quarter of 2020 tallied seven condo (re)sales while the average for the previous four years was 12.5 sales. Still, the average adjusted price of condos in 2020 was \$1,268,300, up 16 percent from 2019, even though volume dropped from 57 in 2019 to only 33 in 2020. So even if fewer buyers are looking for condos these days, they still are willing to pay handsomely for them.

NDG & rentals

Volume was down in every section of adjacent-Westmount last year, especially eastern NDG where 21 sales were posted compared to 37 in 2019. Though the re-

Average adjusted price for ‘typical’ Westmount house, by month, January 2015 to December 2020, based on accepted offer dates



spective samples are quite small, in general it is fair to say that prices were up compared to the previous year.

With the holiday season, the number of available house listings in Westmount plummeted from 78 in mid-December to 51 in mid-January, especially houses priced between \$1 and \$2 million, whose number dropped from 57 to 38. No new house rentals were reported in December; for the year there were 41 houses rented for anywhere from \$2,864 to \$20,000 per month,

down slightly from the 43 houses rented in 2019.

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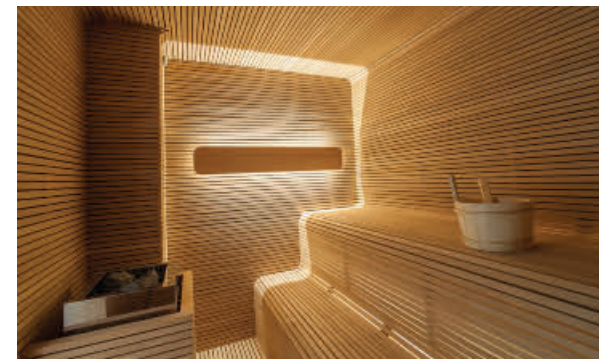
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Return to Retail

VERONICA REDGRAVE

This series began as coverage of Westmount retailers’ adaptations and stories during and after the initial, spring lockdown occasioned by COVID-19. Unfortunately, we are now in another lockdown, but we hope the information remains helpful and inspiring to our readers.

Nina Dyson, right, has captured European flair. The owner of Emma was not only dressed *du jour* the day I visited, but her boutique’s collection of finery was fashion at its best. Totally on trend, her sweater (Philosophy) sported embroidery and her black “gaucho pants were vegan leather.”

Added plus? “They are washable.” She kept warm with tights from Wolford, the line that also offers body suits and premiering “totally biodegradable pieces.” The shop’s dresses, skirts, pants and shirts fit perfectly (pun intended) to this season’s pulse.

Luckily her fall/winter 2020 collection was ordered many months ago.

“Very strong so far have been sweaters, but with a unique touch. Our clients want

Greene Ave.’s Boutique Emma

a relaxed look but with style.” Some of these are covetable like the Barrie sweater from Scotland. The sleeve detail was in-

spired by that country’s thistle plant! During the initial spring COVID lockdown, Dyson spoke with clients via video and de-



livered items to their doors. And to “stay sane, my store manager Laurence Miranda and I frequently changed the window décor, adding colour and fun to cheer up the street.”

Among Emma’s stylish offerings are the much-loved Valentino RED line; German designer Dorothy Schumacher, and Italian Herno coats, famed for their technology. Herno is renowned for their svelte “puffy” coats that are thin, but *über*-cozy. Popular are French designer Vanessa Bruno’s pieces twinkling with discreet touches of metallic thread, perfect to sparkle during a Zoom meeting.

In addition, for those needing a quick me-gift, iittala Finnish vases, their shapes recalling fjords, are perfect for a bouquet, and the shop’s velvet-silk eye masks are lavender-soaked night soothers.

Knowing that Dyson “loves colour,” I was not surprised to see a Greek-blue alpaca coat popping against the black puffers and a pair of classic leather gloves in look-at-me red.

I’m throwing away my grey woolen mittens.

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The Stayner Park splash pad on January 18, with 1111 Atwater rising in the background. PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.

Stayner splash pad, cont’d. from p. 1 reached the end of its life,” explains Councillor Cynthia Lulham, whose commissioner-ship includes parks.

She estimates the play feature was installed more than 20 years ago around the same time as a hose system had been set up in the former Melville pond in Westmount Park. As a result, replacement components for the Stayner pad are no longer

available.

The professional services contract calls for a survey of the area, validation of the existing installations and the availability of water and sewer connections.

Also required are three different design and cost options as well as landscape designs, assistance during the tendering phase and onsite execution of the project once that tender is awarded.

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Life is beautiful, as is MTL



Retail Review

VERONICA REDGRAVE

Westmount's newest shop is delicious! La Vie est Belle is a co-op founded by Byron Ruiz, working with his wife Christine Harries and partners Mancuso and Della Foresta.

And it works. There were already two locations – Vaudreuil and Old Montreal with this one at Sherbrooke and Claremont being the third.

"We aim to re-invent healthy comfort food," explains Ruiz. Their pizza (fabulous!) has a gluten-free cauliflower crust and "we add edible flowers to our salads." The beer offered is organic, and their smoothies are based on soy milk.

The co-op has partnered with firms renowned for their approach to food: La Panthère Verte, Cantor ("for our kosher products"), Les Chefs du Jardin and MTL Bagel, where famous baker/owner Glen Spence has created his famed bagel assortment.

La Vie est Belle offers MTL Bagel's plain, whole wheat, pumpernickel, sesame, poppy, cinnamon-raisin and blueberry bagels, delivered daily. Light and airy, the welcoming space offers bright floral-patterned banquettes, perky against the industrial flooring and tree silhouettes softly stenciled on the wall.

The shop's window has a large QR sign (one of those machine-readable bar-code-esque squares). Passers-by need only click on it with their smart phones and the menu pops up. One has the choice to order "ASAP" or "Later On." The pick-up counter is manned by staff in smart branded T-shirt-apron-cap uniforms. For morning pick-me-ups, espresso coffee and mouth-watering croissants and pastries are offered. And, yes, La Vie est Belle offers hamburgers.

"We made the bagel hole smaller to hold the patties – half plant-based and half meat."

Bagels also make an entrance as chips. "And I have a new dessert planned, using day-old bagels to create a South American-style bread pudding," says Ruiz, who is from Venezuela.

Ever hopeful – as we all are! – Ruiz has already planned his summer terrace,



Zoé Decarie, and Melvin and Byron Ruiz.

which will extend onto the sidewalk and seat 16. Perusing the menu for my order, I wonder how one could ever refuse a salad called "Maya mystique"? And, speaking of comfort food, their mac & cheese grabs my vote. One of the menu choices is "All You Avo Wanted" ...which one could really say about this new Westmount site.

Dreaming of the outdoor terrace, and mask-less times, we quickly snapped a photo outdoors.

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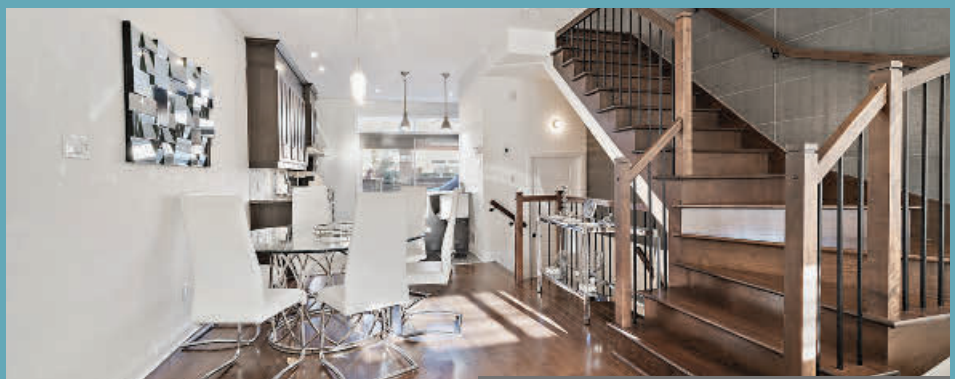
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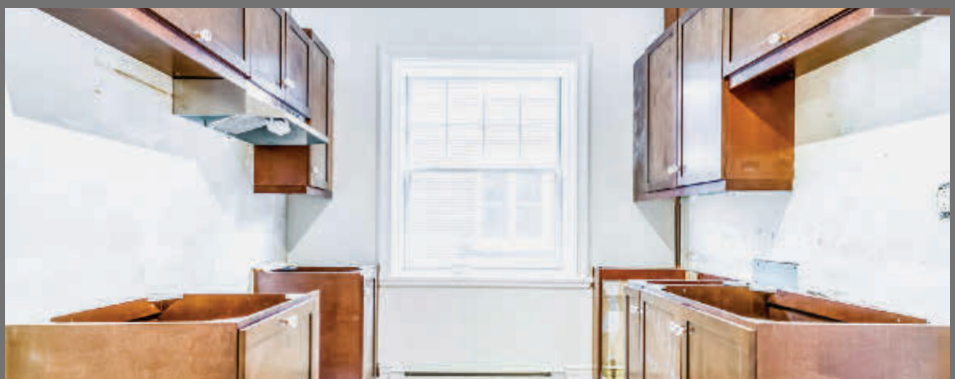
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