

WESTMOUNT INDEPENDENT

Weekly, Vol. 15 No. 5b

We are Westmount

May 11, 2021

Many ups and downs over COVID year

City's 2020 results show new rise in surplus to \$9.8M

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

The city ended last year with an operating surplus of \$9.8 million, according to the financial results tabled at the city council meeting May 3. This was \$1.3 million more than had been forecasted.

This increase brings the total amount of the city's accumulated surplus to \$27.6 million. Of this, \$9.9 million remains unappropriated while the remainder has been appropriated to a number of projects. These include such items as a debt reserve of \$9.3 million, pay-as-you go for capital works projects of \$10.9 million and \$4.2 million for rehabilitation of the heritage greenhouses.

Despite a year highlighted by the uncertain impact of increased expenses and reduced revenues resulting from the first nine months of COVID, the surplus resulted from two unexpected sources of revenue, Councillor Kathleen Kez told the council meeting as finance commissioner.

These included booming real estate sales that brought in \$12.8 million from the welcome tax, fully \$5 million more than budgeted, and a one-time pandemic grant from Quebec of \$4.2 million.

The 2020 surplus "probably will be all appropriated when we see where it will be needed," Kez later told the *Independent*.

A more detailed look at the 2020 budget results *continued on p. 11*

Forget 'Men at work' – Boys at work!



On April 25, young boys whose families live on Abbott and Irvine avenues "decided to help city workers" by filling in some potholes in the laneway between the streets. "They told me that the recipe is a secret magic formula!" wrote Debbie Beitel, grandmother to Elijah and Isaac, adding that Elijah had exclaimed at one point: "Debbie, the mix is actually hardening!" The work – seven layers over two hours in one case – and picture posing continued the next week, including May 2, the date of this photo. From left: Benjamin, Elijah, Tristan and Isaac. Not pictured: participant Dean.

PHOTO COURTESY OF D. BEITEL.

Susan Lloyd (Leduc)

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HONESTY INTEGRITY RESULTS

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More work approved to reconfigure Somerville tot lot

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

A reconfiguration of the Somerville tot lot was approved by city council May 3 under a contract awarded to Les Entreprises Rose Neige (9190-8673 Québec inc.) at a maximum amount of \$193,695. It was the lowest conforming bid of four, which were topped by a quote of \$286,142.

This comes on the heels of a contract

for new play equipment for the tot lot awarded March 15 at a total cost of \$85,250 (see story March 23, Spotlight, p. RE-4).

"This is the second half of the project," said Councillor Cynthia Lulham, whose commissionership includes parks. While no timeline is known yet, she explained, it is expected the playground will be open as quickly as possible and in time for the summer.

continued on p. 6

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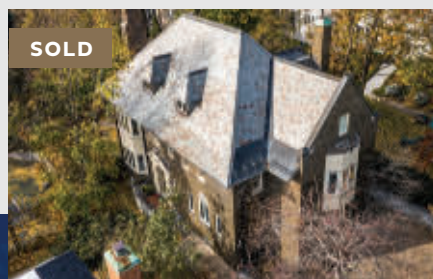
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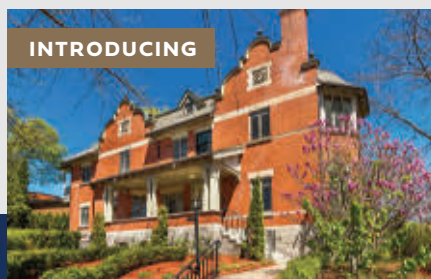
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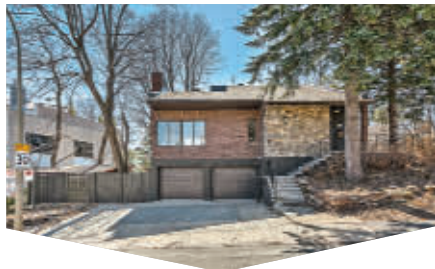
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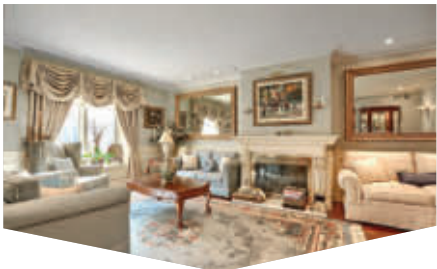
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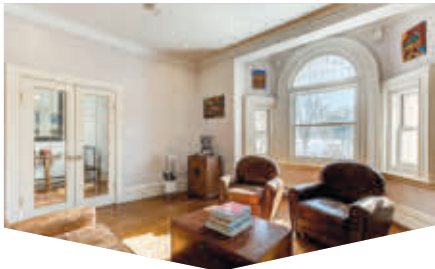
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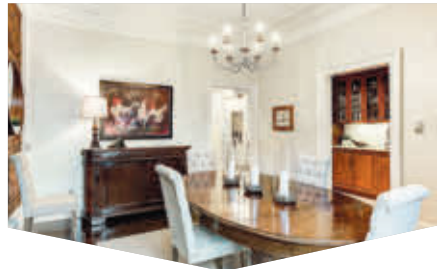
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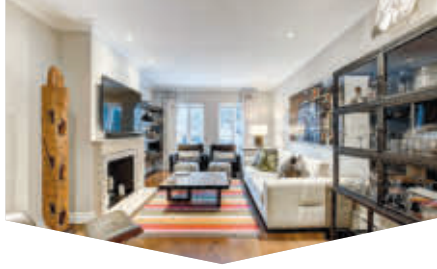
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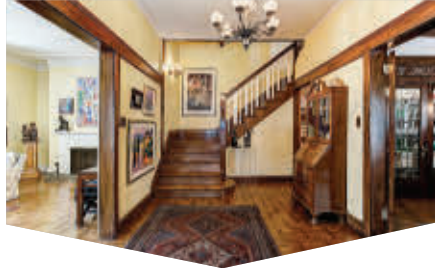
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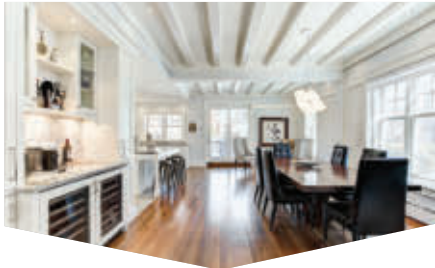
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ROCHELLE CANTOR

In Prince Albert Park

Cat rescue from tree attracts 30 to 40 neighbours

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

As some 30 to 40 residents from around Prince Albert Park watched May 2, an expert in animal rescue managed to bring down a small cat stuck in a park tree near the corner of Prince Albert and Windsor.

The small orange-and-white pet was believed to have been in the tree for several hours, said Judy Martin, who was among those witnessing the rescue. She took a number of photos in case the owners might want them though she says she does not know who they are.

The cat was handed over to a young girl aged about 7 or 8 when it was brought down, Martin said. She had been in tears much of the time.

The well-equipped rescuer, a representative of Sauvetage Animal Rescue, “certainly seemed to know what he was doing,” Martin said. The cat is often seen being walked around the area on a leash, according to her.

Firefighters and other emergency per-

sonnel no longer rescue cats from trees, mainly because of the danger they risk when handling a scared animal.



A representative of Sauvetage Animal Rescue managed to bring this Westmount cat down to its owner.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JUDY MARTIN.

Police Report, p. 14

Pet Page, p. 11

Social Notes: Place des Arts' 'Future Stars' coming, p. 13

Spotlight

on Real Estate section

After p. 8:

Residents work with developer, city over '4898', p. SL-3

New heating for Westmount Public Library, p. SL-6



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New Stayner Park splash pad increases in size by 26 sq. meters



A rendering of the greenlighted splash pad for Stayner Park.

ILLUSTRATION COURTESY OF THE CITY OF WESTMOUNT.

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

Reconstruction of the splash pad in Stayner Park at a total cost of \$374,153, including taxes, was approved May 3 by city council. The contract awarded to Ventec Inc. was the lowest conforming bid of two, the higher one being \$450,000.

“There have been a lot of complaints that the current splash pad no longer works so we’re putting in one like Prince Albert Park’s,” said Councillor Cynthia Lulham whose commissionership includes parks. The work is to be done “in the next few weeks.”

The contract includes demolition of the existing splash pad, excavation, disposal and transportation of soils, abandonment of the existing water and sewer connection, and the installation of new services.

Also required are a new electrical connection and drainage system as well as a new foundation and concrete surface for the splash pad, whose area will increase from 84 square meters to 110 square meters.

The work involves installing the splash pad’s 12 ground jets, a “cabinet,” a per-

meable pathway, the supply and installation of concrete bases for five benches as well as one combined recycling and garbage can. Landscaping and planting are also included.

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Cell phone found

A cell phone was found Sunday, May 2 at about 4:30 pm on the grass near the lower portion of the western path in King George (Murray) Park. It was handed in to Westmount Public Security.



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Montreal fire dept. told to ‘stop work’ on Westmount firehall renovations

By Martin C. Barry

The city of Westmount has issued a stop-work order for renovations started by the Montreal fire department last month at the No. 76 firehall on Stanton St.

This comes after the fire department began the work without informing the city of Westmount, and after Montreal fire dept. officials admitted they didn't know the building belongs to the city.

A knowledgeable source told the *Independent* that the work began on April 19 to lower the fire truck garage floor by two inches so that a new \$2.2-million ladder and platform truck could more easily be



Seen here on May 6 is the garage entrance to the Westmount firehall on Stanton St., where the city of Westmount has issued a stop-work order for renovations undertaken without informing the city.

backed into the three-bay garage.

“It was supposed to be a 10-day operation, but they ran into a multitude of complications,” said the source.

The source said the crew carrying out the work on behalf of the fire department seemed not to know exactly what they were doing.

However, eventually they tore up asphalt in front of the building, then replaced and compacted it. Still, the outcome wasn't good.

“Now our truck doesn't fit into the station,” said the source. “And as of yesterday [May 5], the city of Westmount shut down the work because the city of Montreal never sent an engineer nor demanded a building permit to do any of these renovations.”

Duncan Campbell, the city of Westmount's interim director-general, described the situation as a “misunderstanding,” although he confirmed that fire department officials weren't aware that Westmount owns the building.

He said the work was carried out after the Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail (CNESST), a provincial agency that oversees worker safety issues, had pointed out

shortcomings in truck entranceways at several firehalls in Montreal, including Westmount's.

“In our case, unlike the other fire stations that are being modified, we own the fire station – it's not a city of Montreal fire station,” he said.

“Unfortunately, the people who run the fire department were not aware of this. It's been 20 years since the demerger, and they did not realize that we own the fire station and the building, and it's rented to the fire department at no cost annually.”

Campbell said that when the fire department undertook the work, “we were not advised” and it “started unbeknownst to us.” He said they didn't even seem to be aware the building had a basement.

“When they were breaking up the floor, I think they ended up going into the base-

ment, because they probably weren't aware that there was a basement,” he said.

He noted that it's not just the fire department that is housed in the building. The Westmount Public Security department is also there, as is the Montreal police department's Station 12.

“So, we issued a stop-work on it until such time as we understand what they're planning to do and we have a better understanding,” he said. He said a construction permit won't be required since it is a municipal building.

“However, they do need to let us know what they're doing and what the work entails, and we were not given that information. We want to make sure that everything's done according to our satisfaction so that the integrity of the building is not jeopardized.”

Financially where we stand



Councillor's column

KATHLEEN KEZ
DISTRICT 8

The city of Westmount's financial statements were once again audited by the firm Raymond Chabot Grant Thornton and a “clear opinion” was given. There were no discrepancies found and the financial results present an accurate picture of the city's financial position as at December 31, 2020.

The firm evaluated fraud and risk, as well as reviewed internal controls in accordance with public sector accounting standards. Fortunately, the audit confirmed that we are in a very healthy financial position.

I am pleased to report that as at December 31, 2020, Westmount was in a net financial asset position, meaning its financial assets were higher than its financial liabilities by \$31 million, an increase of \$7 million over the previous year. The total

net worth of the city, if we include non-financial assets (buildings, sewers, machinery, equipment etc.) is \$218 million compared to \$205 million in 2019.

The audited statements confirmed an operating surplus of \$9.7 million, which is very close to what was originally projected last fall in the amount of \$8.5 million. The surplus was mainly the result of two extraordinary items that could not have been anticipated. The first being an unexpected increase of \$5.7 million in transfer duties (the sale of 4300 de Maisonneuve apartment complex alone amassed an amount of \$3.8 million) over budget and the second being a provincial grant amounting to \$4.2 million to help reduce the financial impact of the pandemic for 2020 and 2021.

Had it not been for these two revenue items, we would be finding ourselves in a deficit situation of roughly \$200,000. Regarding deficits, in general, as municipalities cannot carry a deficit from one year to the next, it would have to be made up the following year with a balanced budget by either increasing revenues or cutting expenses or a combination of both.

Somerville tot lot, cont'd. from p.1

The work includes demolition and disposal of the existing fence, play equipment and vegetation, levelling and site drainage, supply and installation of a new Renaissance-style black-metal fence, and the supply and installation of a uni-paved pathway.

The supply and installation of a water fountain, benches and picnic table is also included as well as the supply and planting

of shrubs and flowers.

All surfacing in the new play area is to be wood “fibar,” which meets requirements for accessibility as well as safety, Lulham explained.

A paved pathway will be installed around the perimeter of the play space to facilitate easier access for persons with limited mobility or for persons with a baby carriage.

WESTMOUNT INDEPENDENT

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Poetry published Amouzegar, Le Plane pass on the karma

Camilia Amouzegar, a graduate of The Study writing under the pen name Camilia Raven, has published a book of poetry called *PASS IT ON (For Good Karma)* with Pegasus Publishers. Amouzegar "strongly identifies as a Westmouter" and has "always first and foremost considered herself a poet." She and friend/illustrator Victoria Le Plane, a Marianopolis alumna, collaborated on the book, which a press release describes as "a handbook of short poems and illustrations, infused with their own wry humour and sarcastic rapport, as a palatable guide through difficult situations for the modern reader."

Amouzegar is currently at law school at the University of Leicester in the UK.

150 more trees to be planted this spring under new city contract

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

Replacing many of the city's trees that have been removed due to age and disease or for safety reasons will take place this spring under a contract awarded by city council May 3 for a maximum of \$178,671, including taxes.

This went to Les entreprises Rose Neige (9190-8673 Quebec Inc.) which submitted the lowest conforming bid, the highest being listed at \$201,033.

A total of 150 trees are to be planted under this contract, said Councillor Cynthia Lulham in moving the resolution. This follows an earlier contract this year to take down 133 trees and 179 stumps, "so we're ahead of the game. We are planning to plant more in the fall."

Last year, 325 were reported planted while 176 were taken down.

Brzeski launches virtual office appointments on Wed. pm

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

District 5 councillor Marina Brzeski announced at the city council meeting May 3 that she would hold virtual "office hours" by Zoom on Wednesdays from 4 and 5 pm. This is a way to connect with constituents during the continued closure of city hall over the pandemic. These were to start May 5.

Modelled on the idea of District 4 Councillor Conrad Peart (see story February 9, p. 3), she said anyone wishing to address concerns with her should sign up and wait their turn to speak about the district or topics related to her commissionership of sustainability and universal accessibility.

Signing up can be done through the city's website under Council/Brzeski and clicking on the blue bar beside her photo to book a virtual appointment.

Cllr. Peart's experience

Peart summed up his experiences last week saying that "a slight majority" of the issues from his callers related to questions about the permit process, while some residents wanted to discuss issues that were particular to District 4 and others brought up those "that could be of interest to all Westmouters."

He said that though "relatively low in attendance, I am still very pleased to be able to offer this additional channel for interaction with our residents."

If his Thursday afternoon time slot "is not a match for all schedules, I am certainly open to shifting or adding slots, if required. All feedback is both solicited and

welcomed," he explained.

"In any case, I intend to continue with these drop-in sessions for the foreseeable future. It's wonderful to be hearing from new or familiar voices across our community."

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LYSANNE FOWLER

Lucky number Seven?

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Please do not hesitate to contact Gerdy's Rescues & Adoptions at its email info@gerdysrescue.org to find out more about Seven.

Your neighbour,
Lysanne



9 Lives

LYSANNE FOWLER

Majestic Goose

Rescues & Adoptions at their email address info@gerdysrescue.org for more information on his adoption.

Your neighbour, Lysanne

Yes, he draws your eyes back to this photograph of him, presenting such dignity and composure in his demeanor.

Goose is worth every moment of your attention. He is the most stunning long-haired black cat that I have seen in a long time, with the sculptural features and strong presence of a regal feline. Such a defined nose, striking gold-tone eyes – just mesmerizing.

He is in foster care for Gerdy's Rescues & Adoptions at the moment, and he is available to join a family that is keen on a young, playful, affectionate fellow to keep their days filled with laughter and affection. Goose is two years young, up to date with his inoculations, neutered and microchipped. Please do not hesitate to contact the dedicated volunteers at Gerdy's



Surplus, cont'd. from p. 1

shows the highest amount of city expenditures went to pay for its Montreal agglomeration shared services of \$59.9 million plus another \$1 million for regional services to the Montreal Metropolitan Community.

Of the \$51.8 million spent on local operations, the highest amount of \$22.2 million went to employee remuneration (but \$2 million below budget) followed by \$13.3 million in total departmental expenses (\$1.5 million less than budgeted) and \$10.1 million in pay-as-you-go (PAYG) toward the capital works budget.

This PAYG amount was some \$11 million less than the budget, which resulted in the city's attempts to reduce spending where it could due to the uncertainty of the pandemic.

Included was postponing the \$4-million reconstruction of Sunnyside and work on the municipal garages.

Ups and downs

There were many other ups and downs.

In fact, revenue from Sports and Recreation activities fell to \$505,103 from a budgeted \$1.5 million while spending in

this area was \$837,369 compared to the \$1.1 million budgeted.

Revenue from the library and community events at Victoria Hall, whose buildings have been closed due the pandemic dropped to \$43,731 from the budgeted amount of \$131,000

Revenue from parking meters and permits budgeted at \$2.4 million was almost \$1 million less while tickets and fines generated only \$1.2 million of the \$2 million projected.

On the other hand, most departmental expenditures declined slightly compared

to the budget in most cases, except notably a small increase in spending for Public Security, a front-line service due to COVID. There was also an additional budget line titled "public health safety, COVID -19" whose spending was \$332,942.

This amount included such items as masks, cleaning supplies and other equipment.

Both the city's 2020 audited financial statement and the financial results can be found on its website under Resident zone/taxation and valuation/finances and budgets.

Dear neighbours,

Le Groupe Maurice and Énergir wish to advise you that work will be undertaken **during the month of May** on de Maisonneuve Boulevard West; specifically, in front of the construction site of the LIZ residence.

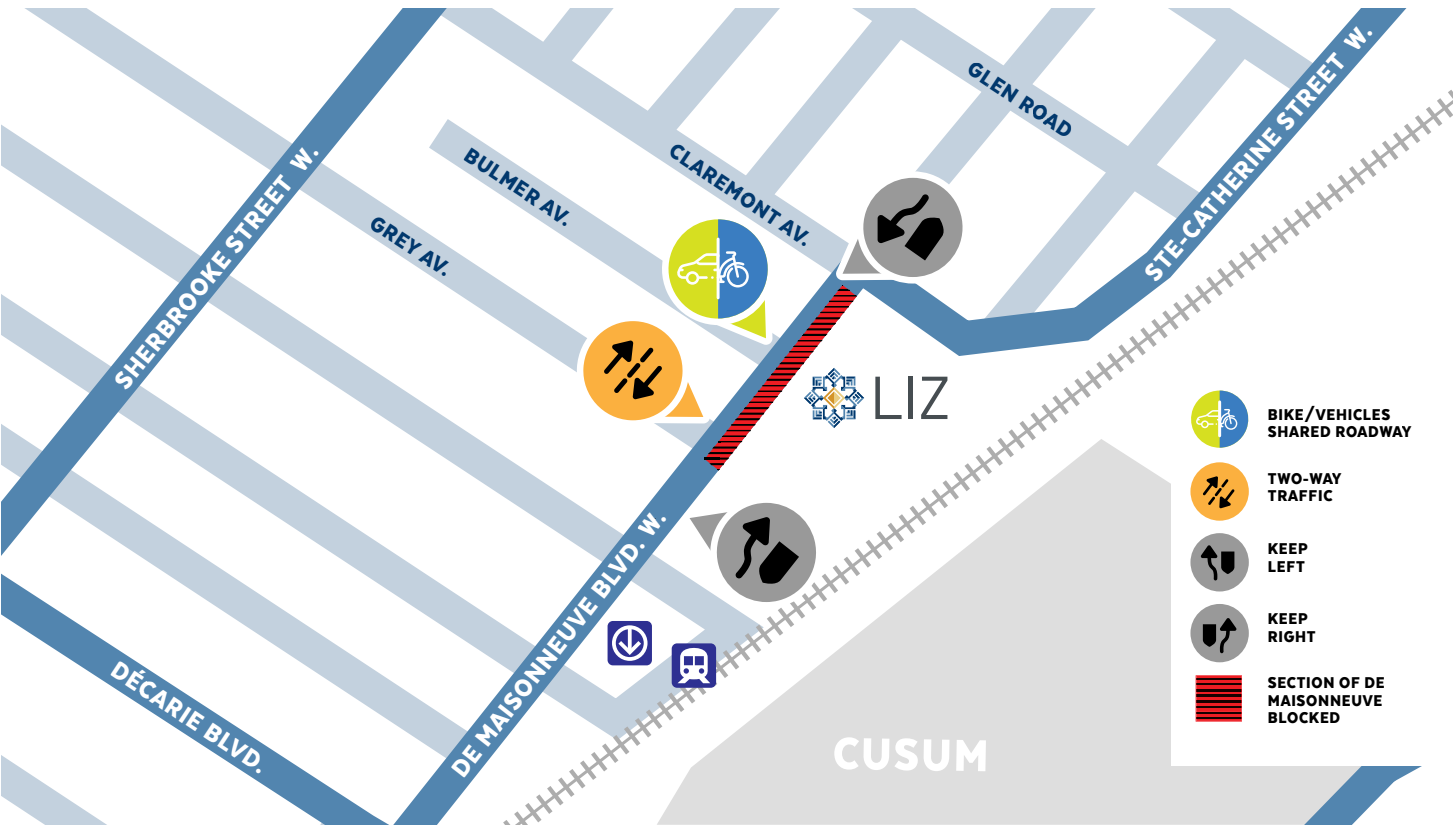
The work by Énergir will **last approximately 7 days** and require a detour (approx. 100 metres) of east and west traffic along de Maisonneuve Boulevard West between Grey and Claremont avenues.

In addition, posts located on the bike path between Bulmer and Claremont avenues will be temporarily removed and the bike path will be reconfigured to share the roadway with other vehicles. Although flaggers will be on-site (cones during off-hours) to ease traffic, cyclists and motorists alike are asked to be extra cautious and courteous in the construction area.

Please note that this type of work may reveal unforeseen events, which can result in additional disruptions beyond our control.

Below is a summary of the work to come and the corresponding traffic plan.

WORKS		
APPROXIMATE DATES OF WORK: May 2021	CREW WORKING HOURS: 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.	WORK DESCRIPTION: Upgrading of the natural gas main belonging to Énergir to enable the sewer connection for the LIZ project.



Rest assured that we'll be keeping you updated regarding the next stages of construction. Groupe Maurice thanks you for your patience and understanding. We welcome any comments you may have at: info@residenceliz.com. To learn more about LIZ, visit : legroupemaurice.com/LIZ



Social Notes

VERONICA REDGRAVE

Place des Arts reaches out, despite pandemic

edition of the Future Stars' Grand Premiere.

Westmounters involved are co-chairs Sylvie Chagnon (Lallemand) and Jacques Marchand (LCI Education), along with Sandra Chartrand (Fondation Sandra et Alain Bouchard).

Local res Nancy Cleman (Lapointe Rosenstein Marchand Melançon) and Barbara Seal join organizing committee members Marc *continued on p. 14*

Due to a certain lingering "situation" (we know what that is) organizations have had to be innovative in creating their fund-raising events. One successful approach will happen on June 1 when the Fondation de la Place des Arts will webcast the 10th



Jacques Marchand, Sandra Chartrand and Sylvie Chagnon, taken at Théâtre Maisonneuve during the Future Stars' Grand Premiere June 4, 2019.



Valérie Milot.



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Sarah Oulousian.

Social notes, cont'd. from p. 13

Blondeau, Frédérique Cardinal (Fondation de la Place des Arts), Johanne Champoux, Amélie Fortier-Cyr (L'Oréal Canada), Normand Laprise, (Restaurant Toqué!), Catherine Samson (Caisse de dépôt et de placement du Québec) and Louise Sicuro (Culture pour tous).

Internationally renowned harpist Valérie Milot is the artistic director of the show. Among the exceptionally talented

artists performing are the virtuoso cellist Stéphane Tétrault and 17-year old pianist prodigy Sarah Oulousian.

Tickets range from \$500 (access to the show and the virtual meeting with some of the artists) to packaged sponsorships (\$2,500 and over) for two to 24 people. They include a gourmet box from Signé Toqué for two people and a bottle of wine delivered at home, a virtual cocktail in a private room with their guests, access to the show and to a live discussion with the artistic director following the show.

Orders placed after May 14 will not include the meal. In case June 1 is an inconvenient time to watch the show, ticket holders can access it online until June 10.

Funds raised will allow the Fondation to support Place des Arts' outreach and education programs, maintained this year despite the performing arts being on hiatus. Each year, high school students from less privileged backgrounds and newcomers to Montreal are invited to attend the show free of charge. Details are at placedesarts.com.



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Police Report

Police arrest bike thief who stole out of parking garages

By MARTIN C. BARRY

After the reported theft late last month of a bicycle from an apartment building garage at de Maisonneuve and Grosvenor, officers at the Montreal police's Station 12 say they have arrested a suspect involved in several incidents where there was a similar *modus operandi*.

"Over the last couple of weeks, there's been a few thefts of bikes from inside garages at various buildings on our territory," said Station 12 community relations officer Adalbert Pimentel.

As previously reported by the *Independent*, on April 27 around 4 pm an intruder unlawfully entered the garage of an apartment building at the corner of Grosvenor Ave. and de Maisonneuve Blvd. where he stole a Triban-brand bicycle.

On May 5 around 12:45 pm, a suspect was seen on the video security monitoring system of an apartment building on de Maisonneuve Blvd. leaving through the garage door with a bicycle.

In a curious twist on this latest incident, around 1 pm that day, the owner of the stolen bicycle saw his bike, which had distinctive markings, being driven by a stranger near the corner of Sherbrooke and Victoria and decided to approach him.

When confronted, according to Pimentel, the man who was on the bike denied any wrongdoing, but immediately abandoned the bicycle and took off running. Pimentel said the investigators from Station 12 were able to find images of the confrontation captured by security cameras in the area and identified the suspect.

Then on May 6, an apartment building employee identified the man on the stolen bike as the same individual seen entering the garage.

"Basically, his MO was that as soon as a car goes into the garage, he would follow it in to get access to the garage," said Pimentel, adding that the suspect also habitually would head towards the garage's bicycle parking area where he would cut bike locks.

An arrest was made last week and the suspect now faces charges, including illegal entry onto private property and possession of illegal tools used for committing burglaries.

Kiosk robbed

An electronics kiosk in Alexis Nihon Plaza that hadn't yet opened for the day was robbed around 8 am on May 5 of a memory card and a connection cable after an intruder broke into one of the business's display case.

The incident was captured on security cameras. The suspect is seen in the video forcing a display case glass window open, stealing the items, after which he leaves.

COVID fines to be issued at repeat address

After a published report in the *Independent* regarding an early morning police intervention on April 4 about a noisy party at a home on St. Catherine near Melville, Montreal police and Westmount Public Security responded again to the same address around 12:30 am on May 6 following another complaint.

"An anonymous call was received about noise, and when they got there they noticed there was a party going on," said Pimentel, noting that the police estimated there were around 70 people present in the dwelling, despite current COVID-19 regulations forbidding large gatherings.

Pimentel acknowledged that the same sort of incident had previously been logged by Station 12 at the same address. While a knock at the door went unanswered at first, one of the group inside reportedly told the responding officers that they needed a warrant if they wanted to be let in.

Doing their due diligence, the responding officers obtained a warrant around 4 am, when they finally entered the dwelling. None of the occupants was seen to be wearing face masks to protect against COVID-19 transmission.

All were identified, added Pimentel, and fines will be imposed on everyone at the gathering, pending approval by the Quebec public prosecutor's office.



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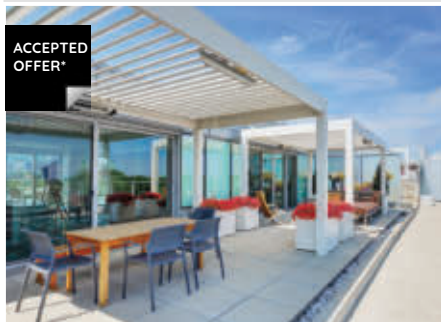


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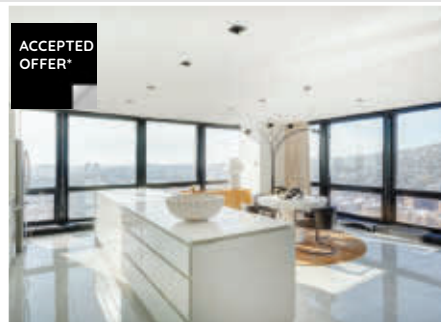


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MLS : 16812402

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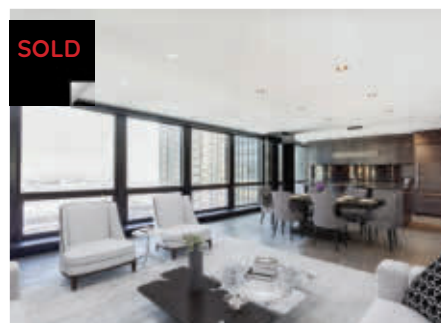


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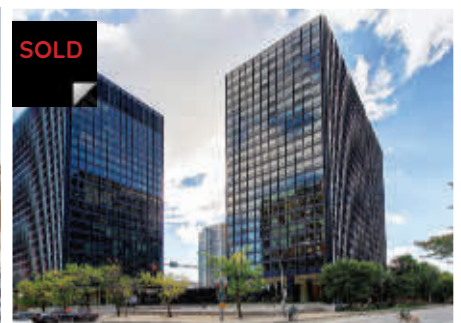


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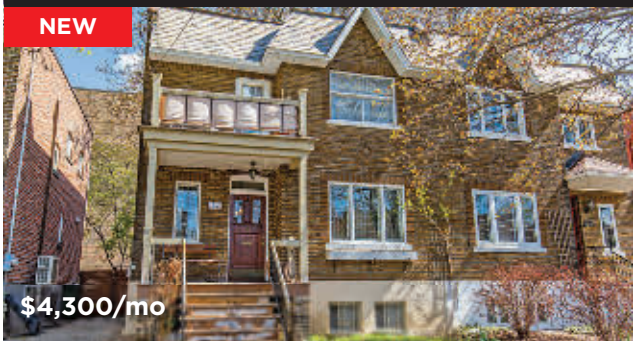
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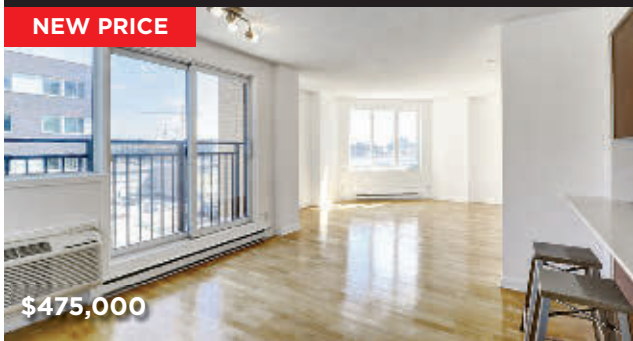


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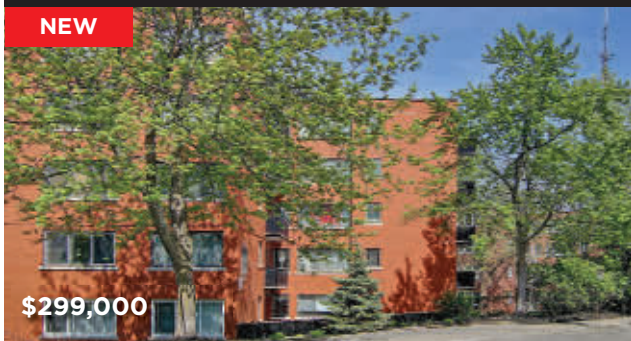


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