

Comments due August 25

City launches consultation on minor exemptions by-law

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

Residents have until August 25 to submit written comments on the city's latest urban planning by-law: this one to "regularize" minor exemptions already carried out that do not comply with current by-laws on zoning or subdivision.

Such a by-law has been sought after by some in Westmount's past as a tool long provided by many municipalities to establish an exemption procedure, sometimes referred to as a derogations by-law.

"It's been a long time coming," said Councillor Conrad Peart at the council meeting August 2 in moving the first draft of the by-law for which the process of written comments replaces the pre-pandemic process of a public meeting.

Westmount, as a 99-percent built-up

city, means that certain aspects of zoning needs "don't always comply with by-laws," Peart explained. In some cases, the city issues notices of tolerance for "tiny little quirks."

Under the proposed by-law, however, an applicant may be able to have one of these quirks "regularized" to comply with by-laws. Examples might include front stairs built according to codes that precede newer by-laws that now jeopardize efforts to replace them.

"There has been no mechanism to address this," Peart explained as urban planning commissioner for permits and architecture. "We will be using this tool sparingly, subject to a public review at a council meeting. It gives the city tools for better outcomes. The key word is "minor," he emphasized. *continued on p. 18*

Stanley Cup visits Gentile restaurant



Westmount Independent sales consultant Arleen Candiotti, left, and her daughter, Jill Candiotti, right, flank Tampa Bay Lightning hockey player Alex Killorn and the Stanley Cup at Café Gentile on St. Catherine east of Greene August 13. Killorn grew up in Beaconsfield and is friends with Candiotti's son, Adam, and Gentile co-owner Anthony Gentile. For another photo, see p. 14.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ARLEEN CANDIOTTI.

Iconic orange butterfly needs milkweed

Council commits to initiatives to protect the 'monarch'

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

An incentive launched in 2015 for Westmounters to help protect the dwindling iconic orange-and-black monarch butterfly was renewed in a city council resolution August 2.

In the resolution, the city committed along with other municipalities to help restore the butterfly's habitat and reproduc-

tion needs through the planting of milkweed. The tri-nation initiative (Canada, US and Mexico) is promoted in Canada by the Suzuki foundation.

A 90-percent decline in monarchs over some 20 years has been attributed to the disappearance of milkweed through the spraying of crops and climate change. It's on milkweed that the monarchs lay their eggs *continued on p. 9*

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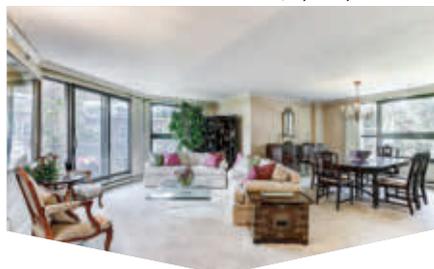


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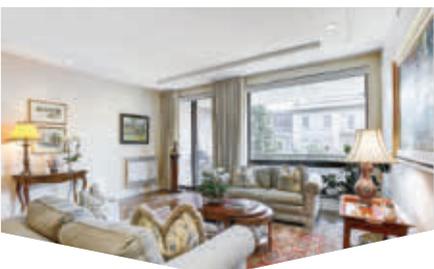
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Universal accessibility needs, recommendations

2021 'action plan' tabled by council August 2, now posted

BY LAUREN SWEENEY

The city's annual Action Plan for Universal Accessibility was tabled at the council meeting August 2, providing a report on the city's actions in 2020 and looking ahead to goals for 2021. This report was previously called the Action Plan Concerning Persons with Disabilities.

Compared with many other years, this latest version appears in a modified, easy-to-read table format listing obstacles leading to goals, responsibilities, proposed measures and timetables for each.

"Discussions and recommendations from the city's Accessibility Advisory Committee will be reflected in next year's action plan, however, as its report to the council has not yet been submitted," explains Maureen Lafrenière of the city's communications division.

This committee report "is just recently finalized and will be presented at the council's next general committee meeting, September 9," according to Councillor Marina Brzeski, commissioner of sustainability and accessibility.



The eastern entrance to the Westmount recreation centre on August 13, which included a ramp from inception. Opened in 2013, it is the city's newest building, with most major ones being built before the era of routine disabled access.

PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.

The creation of this advisory committee had been identified as a priority in the city's 2020 action report based on the recommendation of the Office des personnes handicapées du Québec in 2019, which requires municipalities with populations over 15,000 to prepare an annual action plan.

Obstacles identified

Among the obstacles listed for 2021 are difficult physical access to some businesses and stores as well as the need to sensitize some municipal employees to the needs of some people living with disabilities, those having difficulty navigating the city website or lacking electronic communication.

The goal here, it explains, is to educate merchants and employees, maintain the library's offering of online events, continue city distribution of printed material and offer open-house sessions in the parks, as Public Security has been doing. Absent,

however, is the mention of priority efforts by Public Security over COVID to assist the city's aging population in everyday shopping and check-in needs.

Also not mentioned was a lack of routine measures to correct cracks and uneven pavement in sidewalks, especially in well-used areas.

Measures to ensure specially adapted playground equipment continue to be phased in, as with an accessible splash pad in Stayner Park this summer, and accessible equipment in Somerville tot lot and Devon Park.

Installations in Prince Albert Park in 2020 were completed in spring 2021.

While some measures have been delayed or postponed owing to the pandemic, the report states, these included public consultation meetings for the Imagine Westmount 2040 initiative, described as "a relatively rare opportunity" for the public to participate in building the future community, which

could be a channel for greater accessibility.

4,500 affected

In a demographic profile of the city, the action plan estimates that four of every 10 persons have a disability of some severity. "From this data, we can extrapolate that more than 4,500 Westmounters live with some kind of disability without counting parents' use of a stroller or persons whose mobility is temporarily limited."

A list of the city's 11 departments describes ways in which each provides services tailored to universal accessibility.

The report is described in the introduction from Mayor Christina Smith as the city's "strategy" for reducing barriers to the full participation of persons with disabilities in social, professional and educational life.

The pandemic, she adds, "has shone a light on the vulnerability of certain groups, particularly the elderly population and persons with disabilities."

The full report may be found on the city's website at Community Life/accessibility. A list of accessible buildings in Westmount in 2020 is also posted.

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Dodge on July real estate market: Up!, p. 18

Pet Page, p. 20

City views: Kalya Joy Lavalée's new food delivery service, p. 21

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EDITORIAL

Vaccination & vaccine certificates? Yes – Digital, internal passports? No

The provincial government wants to barcode you

The provincial government's vaccine passport plan for access to restaurants, bars and gyms via QR codes and a reading "app" is so bad that it is hard to even be polite about it.

For clarity, I am for vaccination and not against vaccine certificates (as Mohammed Adam wisely advises us to return to calling them in his *Ottawa Citizen* piece, "No one raised a fuss about vaccine certificates until we called them 'passports'"). In enclosed environments, it is very reasonable to ask people to show that they are in a low-risk group (the vaccinated) and not a high-risk one (the unvaccinated).

Indeed, the provincial government is, in my view, being too timid by not requiring proof of vaccination on all of its own premises (e.g. schools, colleges, universities, public transit, work sites), those it closely regulates (e.g. private schools, colleges and universities), and for its own employees and on-site contractors.

Do you want to make people safe and drive vaccinations to a herd-immunity-causing 90+ percent? Require vaccination in those places and by all of those people. If people can't take jerry cans of gasoline onto buses and airplanes (where they are likely, but not certain, to cause issues), why

can they take their unvaccinated bodies? Haven't we all seen what issues unvaccinated people are very likely to create, both when there was no vaccine and among the unvaccinated in places right now like the American South?

My issue is with the digital panopticon that the provincial government is creating, unnecessarily. If this app were *the only way* to get us out of the pandemic, then maybe I would go along. A normal St. Patrick's Day might be worth it.

But there is no rational connection between a barcode on our phones or persons and vaccination or proof of it. And there is an easy way to provide proof of vaccination without the Big Brother program currently under development – for deployment very, very soon, i.e. September 1.

Dumb is better

All the provincial government would have to do is use its existing address list, photos of us that it has for medicare cards and drivers' licences and 1950s plastic card technology to issue "dumb technology" vaccination certificates/cards to the vaccinated. The whole capability already exists for medicare cards and drivers' licences.

Another easy or interim solution:

require the paper vaccination record received at vaccination sites with a photo ID.

What would be the advantage? There would be no app to track, or potentially track, people's movements. Remember trying to get into bars when you looked under age? What did you do? You showed ID. There was no scanning. No list. No potential for record keeping and tracking by anyone, much less a government.

Consider also the entity that is pushing this latest digital con. Let's face it, the government of the province of Quebec has, at best, a passing interest in human freedom and a long history of egregious abuse of rights under all three currently major provincial parties. These are the last people whom we should be trusting with information about our movements.

The hack is inevitable

And don't forget hackers! As people have learned over the quarter century of the mass market internet's existence, the internet is written in ink. Who knows who will be able to access the information, or when, or for what purpose, including ones not currently contemplated. And do you trust the provincial government to correctly code the QR code? What is embedded in it? Do you read QR?

Hacking has many aspects. For instance, we are already talking about the spectre of

counterfeit QR codes. What is easier to fake: black-and-white QR pixels, or a plastic card with anti-counterfeit measures?

(The endless faith that people have in the digital world continues to amaze me. Something is always getting hacked: governments, companies, people's accounts. A fellow student once asked my high school physics teacher what happens when an unstoppable force meets an immovable object. The teacher replied that neither of these things existed. There is *always* more force that can be applied or weight that can be added. Likewise, there will *always* eventually be a hack that is one ounce more advanced than a given security system. The internet will never be secure. For many applications, dumb technology is the way to go. You can't hack a momentarily flashed ID.)

And what about Americans and other foreigners? And rest-of-Canada Canadians? And the burden of a compulsory software program on restaurants, bars and gyms?

And then there's the precedent, which is a major issue. Once we have an internal, digital passport in one instance, who's to say it won't be implemented again in another, "super important" context? Let your imagination run wild.

The politicians sure do.

David Price is the editor of the Independent.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THANKS FOR THE HELP!

I am an 85-year-old woman. On Monday the 5th of August, as I was finishing my daily afternoon walk, I turned on de Maisonneuve Blvd. near my home and because of the construction, the sidewalks being treacherous, I decided to leave the sidewalk and walk in the middle of the street. I tripped and landed hard on my face.

The first person who came to my rescue was a young person who identified herself as a physician. She asked me some basic questions to make sure I did not have a concussion.

Also a young man by the name of Kevin, I believe, was the one who called the ambulance. While waiting for the ambulance,

as I was extremely uncomfortable lying down, I asked whether I could sit up. Kevin sat me up and put his knee against my back to give me support. They both stayed with me until the ambulance came. People were stopping by to ask whether they could help.

Once the ambulance arrived, I was impressed with the staff's care. They were respectful and very professional. Arriving at the Verdun Hospital, I was treated efficiently and with kindness. All the tests necessary were done and I am happy to report that I only broke my nose and had to have stitches on it and my lips.

The reasons that I felt I wanted to share this experience with your readers are: (A) to offer my thanks to the kind people who looked after me and (B) to emphasize how lucky I am to live in a place where people are exceptionally kind and helpful, especially in a medical emergency.

ANDRÉE PRENDERGAST, KENSINGTON AVE.

Letters on Westmount Park!

And a reply from the mayor
See p. 16

The dog-and-cat days of summer



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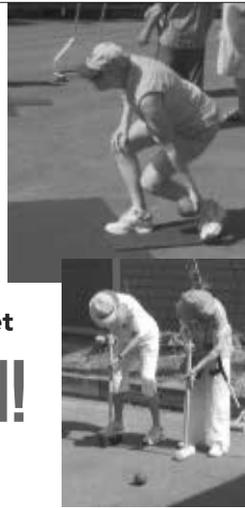


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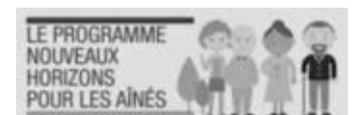
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Monarch, cont'd. from p. 1

and on which the hatching caterpillars feed as the monarchs migrate to and from Canada and Mexico.

“Municipalities have a crucial role to play in the recovery of this species,” Councillor Cynthia Lulham read from the council resolution pledging to make Westmount “a monarch-friendly city.”

Among the city’s achievements listed so far are the planting of milkweed in retention basins, at the community gardens, pollinator plants in Westmount Park and making milkweed available at the library’s seed lending library for planting by residents in their own gardens (see story May 12, 2015).

Milkweed seeds have been available



Councillor Cynthia Lulham on horseback in January 2020 riding up to the monarch reserve.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF C. LULHAM.

through the seed lending library at Westmount Public Library but now will only be received in the spring in the large quantity required, according to assistant library director Anne-Marie Lacombe. The library will be participating in the city’s program, she confirmed.

Visiting the winter refuge

While Lulham did not mention it at the meeting, she recalled afterward how she had visited the Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Refuge in the central highlands of Mexico in January 2020. This is one of the butterfly’s winter shelters in that country, to which they migrate through three generations before returning “home” again over another three.

“It’s very high up,” Lulham said of accessing the refuge. “You can walk but we drove to a parking lot, continued on foot and then rode horseback to the refuge where the monarchs congregate on the fir trees they like. It was a forest of orange that was just phenomenal,” she said.



A tree in the reserve full of the monarchs.

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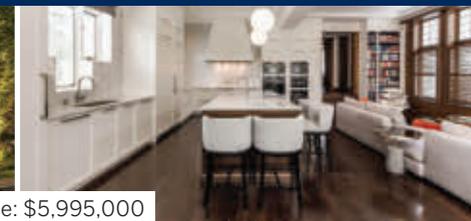
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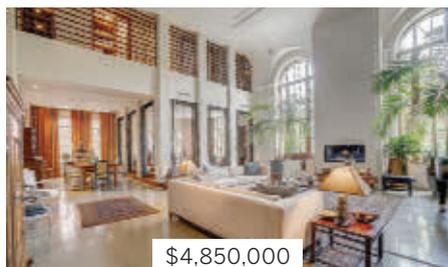
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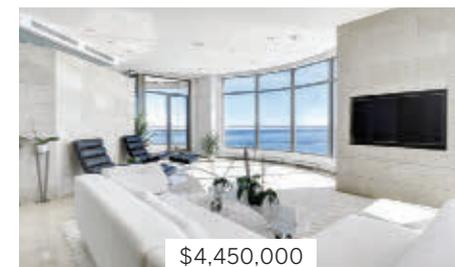
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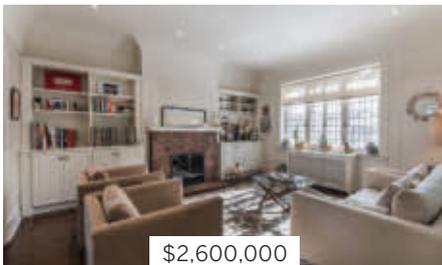
Spectacular corner unit with views of the mountain and the museum. MLS 18740099



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GOLDEN SQUARE MILE

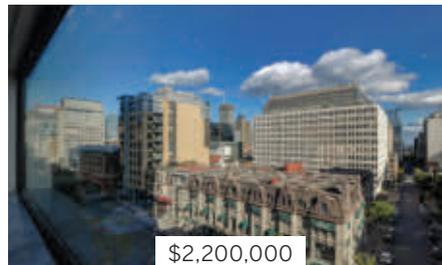
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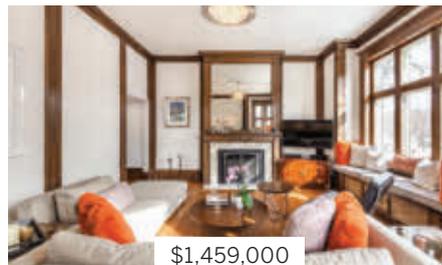
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Lord Stanley's cup visits Westmount



Co-owner Anna-Marie Gentile, left, Tampa Bay Lightning hockey player Alex Killorn, third from left, co-owner Anthony Gentile, top left, and staff and friends August 13 at Café Gentile on St. Catherine. See p. 1 for another photo.

PHOTO: ARLEEN CANDIOTTI.



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BUILDING PERMITS What's permitted

Council approves 7 permit requests July 19

The following 7 requests for demolition, exterior construction, alteration and renovation were approved at the June 5 meeting of the city council. There were no refusals.

These permit requests approved or rejected by city council are those that have been recommended or not by the Planning Advisory Committee (PAC), and apply to architecture and location. The issuance of the permit itself after this approval is not automatic or immediate. Often, additional

technical aspects must be checked, clarified and/or remedied as required by the city's urban planning department.

Approved

49 York: at a Category I house, landscaping at the rear including modification of the parking to coordinate with the adjacent property;

351 Redfern: to replace windows;

344 Victoria: to install commercial signage;

491 Mount Pleasant: to replace windows and a garage door as proposed given that the existing ones are not part of the original architecture of the building;

1120 Greene: at a Category I house, to replace a door on the rear façade;

50 Aberdeen: at a Category I house, to replace two doors and windows on the rear façade;

93 Somerville: to replace windows.

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Dr. Traoré takes over as new executive-director at Centre Greene

BY MARTIN C. BARRY

With the arrival of a new executive-director at Centre Greene, the board and staff at the community centre are preparing to implement part of a three-year plan that will see the community centre establish closer links to organizations outside Westmount, while still serving Westmounters' needs.

Diahara Traoré, who started work around a month ago, has stepped into a position that was vacated by Beth Symansky, who left earlier this year to become manager of national programs at HelpAge Canada.

While saying the Centre Greene board wants to continue along the same path followed for the past few years, Traoré added, "Where the board wants to go now is also to do more outreach towards different communities. So, yes more outreach within the city of Westmount, but also providing some services beyond. So, the idea is that Centre Greene at this stage would like to have some kind of impact beyond the city of Westmount, reach out to other organizations, partner with other organizations throughout Montreal."

Traoré has started work just as Centre



Centre Greene's new executive-director, Diahara Traoré, is seen here on the front steps of the Greene Ave. community centre.

Greene is trying to regain some of its footing following the many challenges that came into play early last year with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The biggest challenge at the moment we are facing is that we first have to re-start the programs that are the staples of Centre Greene," she said, noting that these consist primarily of the Seniors Lunch, some seniors' fitness activities, Tumbling Tots for toddlers and parents and after-school pro-

gramming.

She said Centre Greene will be resuming these activities gradually, although with a reduced number of participants and with special COVID sanitary measures in place.

Since 2019, the Centre Greene board and staff have been carrying out an extensive round of renovations that is being completed this year.

The hope now is that groups and organizations in surrounding communities will

agree to come and begin using the centre's renovated facilities as an important staging base for their activities.

Originally from the African nation of Ivory Coast, where she grew up, Diahara Traoré migrated to the US at the age of 18. After attending Slippery Rock University in Pennsylvania, where she obtained a B.A. (2000), she received an MA (2006) from McGill University, followed by a Ph.D. in sociology (2014) at the University of Quebec in Montreal (UQAM).

Having done some studies in journalism, she also worked for a few years as a staff writer and reporter at a Connecticut daily, although she eventually decided that her true calling was in social activism and leadership of community groups.

Jane Wightman, who chairs the board of Centre Greene, said the board members took their time choosing a new executive-director, but were particularly impressed with Traoré.

"She's come with a very interesting background and has an incredibly wide range of experience," she said, noting that Diahara is trilingual (English, French and Bambara).. "We really took our time and we feel very fortunate in having her as our new executive-director."



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VIEWS ON WESTMOUNT PARK

DISAPPOINTED WITH CITY'S 'WALK IN THE PARK'

We are disappointed but not surprised by the city's brochure titled "A Walk in the Park." In response to requests that the public be provided with detailed information about the park project and that a full and fair consultation process be implemented, the council has chosen to produce a promotional pamphlet (which at best fails to inform and at worst appears designed to mislead) and circulated it during the summer while a significant portion of the population is away on vacation.

The one-page questionnaire is provided with a deadline to respond of August 20 and has no place for comments. A "final report" is scheduled for September. Surely the council does not intend to use this as a pretext to justify the adoption of the project prior to the upcoming election? *

As others have already pointed out, a full and fair process of consultation must include informing the public of the details of the planned changes, the costs of implementing them and the disruptions that would be caused to the park during the three years (likely more) estimated for their implementation. It should provide a forum for in-person questions, comments and discussion. This brochure and questionnaire clearly do not qualify.

The main issues raised in the initial in-person sessions of November 2019 related to the need for improved maintenance and supervision of the park and the quality of the playing fields; however the proposed project appears to be a collection of showy ideas for pointless changes originating with Stantec, a multinational consulting firm with no knowledge or understanding of the community or the park, which council has accepted and supported without question or critical analysis. Many have expressed their dismay, pointing out the many flaws in these proposals, but council has shown no interest in the opinions of its constituents, however thoughtful and informed.

For many years, council has failed to find the initiative or funds to perform basic maintenance. Now it has the time and funds for this unnecessary and overblown project, and it is using the results of its failures of maintenance as a justification. Much of what is proposed is clearly not necessary (or desirable) and any valid objectives can surely be achieved with work done on a more modest scale, as and when required.

It seems that the council has already decided on a project that will leave no part of the park untouched and that it is rushing to its adoption, as is, using COVID restric-

tions to avoid any effective consultation or debate concerning the stated objectives or their implementation.

Council has not provided information concerning their own input or any objective evaluation (if any) made by them (or by experts unrelated to Stantec), no cost/benefit analysis, no feasibility studies, no indication that they have considered making adjustments taking into account the costs and the disruptions resulting from effectively turning the park into a construction site for (at the very least) three years.

The pandemic has shown the importance of the park to the community. To deprive the population of access** to this resource for three years or more is unconscionable. There is no substitute available.

Why is the council so eager to proceed with this unnecessary, expensive and disruptive project in the face of a clear lack of support and strongly negative reaction from many users of the park? Why is the council so reluctant to implement a full and fair process of review and consultation? Why the rush to implement? Why not delay until in-person meetings and consultations are possible?

Westmount Park is exceptionally well designed for its purpose and it has evolved naturally in response to the needs and wishes of generations of users. How can the council be so confident that its "vision" (or, more accurately, Stantec's) is an improvement? Why do they think they have the right to unilaterally impose this "vision" making unnecessary and disruptive (and, in the opinion of many, unattractive) changes to every aspect of the park, in the face of strong objections from those who use and love it? How can a council that decided that it was essential to preserve the nature and character of our heritage greenhouse turn around and impose major changes to the nature and character of the heritage park in which it is situated?

In any case, the question should not be "Are the Stantec proposals, when summarized in a manner most likely to appeal to an uninformed reader, acceptable?" It should be, for each element of the proposals, "Is it necessary?", "Is it desirable?" "Is it worth implementing when you consider the cost and the fact that our park will be an inaccessible construction site for many years to come?" "Are the stated objectives desirable?" "Does the proposal reflect the best approach to achieving any valid objective?"

Fortunately, there will be an election in November and we urge all Westmount residents to make it clear to the candidates that they cannot and will not vote for anyone who supports this project, or the coun-

cil's current approach to its implementation.

CAROL HOLLAND, MELVILLE AVE. & 90 other signatories (see an extra p. 25 that is only on the pdf of this week's issue on the *Independent's* website for full list)

Editor's notes: * The city has said that the new council elected in November will decide on the nature and extent of any renovations. See for example, May 25, p. 8, bottom right, under the turn headline "Survey results."

** As I wrote last week, the city's plan is to do any work in phases. See August 10, p. 6, bottom right. – DP.

MAYOR'S RESPONSE

Mayor Christina Smith was forwarded the above letter prior to publication by a would-be signatory (not by the Independent) and it was on the Facebook page of the Westmount Municipal Association for a short time. She submitted the following reply.

While we will eventually have no choice but to proceed with restoring Westmount Park due to safety and infrastructure concerns, we are still at the consultation phase of the project. Plans are far from being finalized and will be determined by the next Westmount city council, which will be elected in November.

The current council has for some time been seeking the input of residents on this major project, and our latest effort is a questionnaire attached to a brochure entitled "A Walk in the Park." From the input we have received to date, it is clear, however, that misinformation is circulating, and I thought that it would be helpful to provide Westmounters with background information about the initiative.

The context

Westmount Park is one of the jewels of our city, and city council is committed to preserving and enhancing it. But the park is showing its age. The pond is beyond repair and needs to be replaced. Otherwise, we will no longer legally be allowed to use it because it leaks too much water, and we must make it more sustainable. The pathways are cracked, and last year we had to put down asphalt in the height of the pandemic so that they would be safe. The splashpad is not universally accessible. The jungle gym needs updating, and there is a demand for more play structures and swings. The list goes on and on.

Our approach

Faced with the need to make a major investment in the park, which is exceptionally well designed and loved by so many, the city decided to seek community

input to ensure we developed a cohesive plan that met your priorities and needs. After a tendering process, Stantec was hired. As a result of a first round of consultation, Stantec developed proposals that were then shared at an online consultation meeting. We have been frustrated by the low participation rate, which could stem from COVID fatigue or an inadequate understanding of the maintenance, restoration and infrastructure upgrades required to preserve one of the landmarks of our city. For this reason, we have distributed the brochure described above, and I urge all residents to share their views with us. Stantec will then review the input and prepare its report this fall. In the interim, please rest assured that I have and will continue to read every single comment that has been submitted. I encourage you to send in your responses. Westmount Park is important to all of us, and we need to hear from you.

Moving forward

COVID has been tough on so many and highlighted the importance of our parks and greenspaces. I wish to reassure all Westmounters and, contrary to what has been speculated, Westmount Park will not be closed for three years. Furthermore, we have no plan for a reduction in green space, indeed the goal is to increase green space and the number of trees.

My council takes pride in having invested more, year after year, in infrastructure. This is critical if future generations are to enjoy the same quality of life as we do. While I am in favour of investing in Westmount Park to ensure it is a park for everyone and accessible to all, it will be the responsibility of the incoming council to determine the path forward. The proposed timeline in the brochure would be that the incoming council would engage a landscape architecture firm through tender. This firm would prepare the design proposal that would be the result of further consultation.

I know that people are stressed, but I hope you can find the time to share your ideas and thoughts on the park, to benefit generations to come. – CS.

WILL WESTMOUNT PARK INSANITY GO FORWARD UNCHECKED?

I was about to fill out the latest mini (one could say miniscule) survey (only eight questions, to be answered by emojis!) concerning the proposed "enhancement" of Westmount Park and decided I should first watch the November 18 public presentation of the plan.

It takes over an hour but re-focused me

VIEWS ON WESTMOUNT PARK

on an issue that I raised in a letter in your January 19, 2021 issue (p. 17) – the proposal to create a new pedestrian path beside the existing bike path. At 48 minutes, the YouTube presentation shows this dual-path proposal – with measurements. These add up to seven meters, which is just under 23 feet. Clearing a space of this dimension would involve cutting down 17 mature trees, moving at least five street lamps, building what is called “a landscaped terrace” on the north side (where these trees are) as well as possibly having to move parts of the soccer field fence, the dog run and/or tennis court.

Question: At what cost?

The November YouTube presentation ends with Cynthia Lulham saying Stantec would be providing a “cost breakdown” of their plans in January 2021. What happened to that? The only aspect of this overall plan that seems popular is the re-design of the lagoon. The latest mini-survey says council approval* of a final report is expected in September 2021 with various projects going to tender at the beginning of 2022.

Is all this insanity going to go forward unchecked?

JO LAPIERRE, METCALFE AVE.

Editor's note: * I think this is when a final

report will be received from Stantec, not approved as an action by council. The city has said that the new council elected in November will decide on the nature and extent of any renovations. See for example, May 25, 2021, p. 8. – DP.

NO WALK IN THE PARK

I am compelled to express my outrage at this simplistic, costly and tacky PR exercise entitled “A Walk in the Park” aimed at keeping the park refurbishment project alive.

It is sorely lacking in anything that resembles information or transparency, for that matter. It contains a one-page multiple-choice questionnaire that requires a response by August 20 (when half the municipality is away).

It is indeed ironic that the brochure's title is also a euphemism for that which is facile. This project, or persuading us of its merits, will be no walk in the park.

Back to basics. Why persist with this overly ambitious project? It makes no sense to spend all this money messing with a beautifully designed, beautifully proportioned park. It makes even less sense to take it away from us in these times for what will inevitably be more than three years.

The only thing wrong with this much-loved park is how disgracefully it has been neglected. And now it is under threat from an administration that would interfere with its aesthetic integrity. In the run-up to an election, the council has seriously misjudged the contentiousness of this ill-conceived project as well as the problematic allocation of taxpayer dollars. Three questions must be asked: What happened to the democratic process in the form of genuine consultation? Why does this project need to be approved* before the election? And lastly, who will truly benefit from it, apart from whoever gets what would be a most lucrative contract?

MAXINE CUTTLER, LANSDOWNE AVE.

Editor's note: * The city has said that the

new council elected in November will decide on the nature and extent of any renovations. See for example, May 25, p. 8, bottom right, under the turn headline “Survey results.” – DP.

BROCHURE LEAVES MANY QUESTIONS UNANSWERED

The [Westmount Park] project has gone from concept to “shovel ready” in a very short time. It's now apparent that many citizens are opposed to its scope. Westmount Park has been neglected for decades and above all needs proper maintenance, not “skyways.”

Despite the availability of computer graphics, the “A Walk in the Park” brochure has no representation of the overall project. There is a picture of a Washington globe lamppost [on a page entitled “Modernize the technical equipment”], so presumably they will be torn out, to be replaced with what? The vague word “sustainable” occurs in the picture's caption.

As a boy of 10, I regretted some of the changes resulting from the improvement project of 1964. The sailing pond lost its granite fountain at the corner of Melville [and Sherbrooke], complete with basins for horses and dogs (it had been dry for years), and the main lagoon was radically modified from the Depression-era version that had a path all the way around. The 1964 waterfall [near the tennis courts] is surely the antithesis of anything from Olmsted's plans. It also prevents walking around the lagoon and draws the eye to an unhappy corner with chain-link fencing, bare earth, and the back of the comfort station.

Also in 1964 the Victorian bandstand was demolished.

Removal of the Depression-era stone bridge in 1964 was a mistake since it also entailed deeply excavating converging paths that flood and create ice and deep water in spring.

As for the east-west axis, the current arrangement encourages eastbound pedes-

trians to use the bike path. Probably parallel, separate paths are needed for pedestrians and cyclists respectively. If the lagoon leaks, that needs to be addressed.

The park's soaring elms of my childhood are long gone but I hope the city will above all invoke Olmsted's principle to “consult the genius of the place” and avoid bowing to fashion. But better maintenance is needed.

DAVID NERCESSIAN, IRVINE AVE.

Sleep-deprived driver generates call to Public Security

A man was found August 10 with his head slumped over the steering wheel of a car facing 3228 The Boulevard, Public Security officials said. While the car was legally parked, the engine was running and a call from a resident at 1:54 pm stated the driver appeared unresponsive.

When patrollers responded they could not rouse the man but found him breathing, apparently passed out either from a medical condition or alcohol. Urgences Santé and police were summoned. When they arrived at 2:06 pm, the man came to, claimed he had had only two hours sleep and was escorted to an ambulance to be checked out.

At 2:42 pm, it was concluded that he was suffering an extreme case of fatigue and was told to leave his car on site. No details were reported on his age or residency.

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. email us at: editor@westmountindependent.com

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July sales: Higher and higher



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 July 2021. 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.

Prices moved higher and sales volume so far this year is the strongest it has been in the past four years, but the Westmount real estate market is suffering from lack of supply. As houses get sold, there is no new inventory to replace them, thus forcing prices even higher as buyers resign themselves to paying more and more for the privilege of owning a house in Westmount.

The value of Westmount's average house jumped \$50,000 in the space of a month, rising steadily for the past year to \$2,650,000 since suffering from the initial uncertainty of the pandemic. As families became more home-oriented and buyers opted for that extra bedroom to be an office or rec room, those options turned into cold cash.

Meantime, the number of available listings dropped from 85 to 66, mainly in the \$1-to-\$2-million category where the listings dropped from 24 to 11. No doubt many owners took their houses off the market

for the summer, and may re-list them in September, perhaps for even higher prices.

The eight July house sales ranged from \$1,500,000 to \$5,800,000, only three of which were over \$2 million, and though the average was \$2,469,000, the median price was \$1,965,000. The average mark-up over municipal evaluation was 26.1 percent, down from the previous month, but not enough to stop the upward flow of prices.

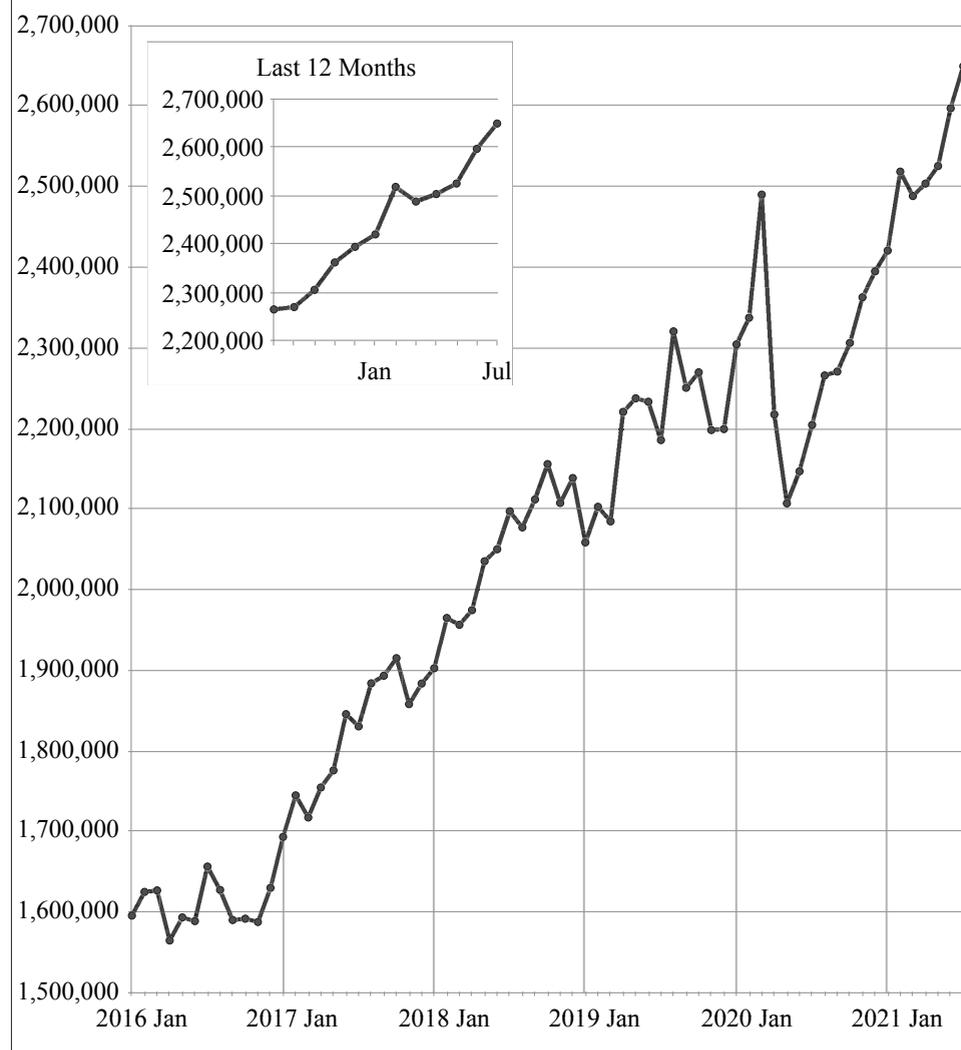
Condos

The average mark-up was actually higher for the four condominium sales posted in July, at 37 percent, way up from the 22.5-percent level in the previous quarter. Whether this means interest in condos is improving remains to be seen; the four all sold in a fairly tight range of mark-ups, between 30 and 41 percent, while they ranged in price from \$475,000 to \$1,308,000.

Rentals

One more house was rented in July, bringing the total number of rentals this year to 32, compared to 21 rental postings at the same time last year, though that was still part of the pandemic "pause," which had affected the real estate market generally. Of the 32 rented this year, four were for more than \$10,000 per month. While the number of sale listings still available has dropped dramatically, so, too, did it drop among rentals, particularly from the early spring months when 24 houses were available; the summertime offers only 11 houses for rent, in a range from \$3,000 to \$20,000 per month.

Average adjusted price for 'typical' Westmount house, by month, January 2016 to July 2021, based on accepted offer dates



Consultation, cont'd. from p. 1

The by-law can be consulted on the city's website under resident zone/legal services/public notices.

Good news: Escobar

After the draft by-law was tabled, architect and Westmount resident Miguel Escobar told the *Independent* that "I think it is good news for all citizens." Otherwise, "just to modify a small thing you had to ask for a zoning change that would affect a large swath of houses."

It was a request he had made at the council meeting of October 7, 2019 as a way the city council could resolve the location of a heat pump in his back yard installed by contractors during a number of renovations that city inspectors maintained should be repositioned. This would put it in the middle of the small back yard.

Peart, at the time had said that such a by-law was "something under discussion"

but not actually being addressed at that time while the city's by-laws were being updated (see story October 29, 2019, p. 5).

In another case, such a by-law could have helped the city "regularize" the use of a condominium as a rental unit at 4140 Sherbrooke, it had been explained by former urban planning director Tom Flies at the time. Instead, it had to go through a lengthy SCAOPI process for non-conforming properties (see story May 7, 2019, p. 1).

Fast forward to last week, Escobar quickly sent off his comments on the new by-law, suggesting that it should also cover proposed work as well as after the fact. "Municipal laws are not perfect and cannot be applied across the board to all properties and situations," he wrote.

► Architect and Grosvenor Ave. resident Miguel Escobar asks city council in 2019 to enact a minor exemptions by-law as have many other municipalities.



Comité Spécial
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sur la politique linguistique
on Linguistic Policy

LANGUAGE EQUALITY IS UNDER THREAT IN QUEBEC AND CANADA

The Task Force has been founded to stop Canada's Bill C-32 and Quebec's Bill 96.

- Bills C-32 and 96:
- End Official bilingualism in Canada as we know it
 - Undermine minority language communities
 - Strip all Quebecers of their human rights

We are an outlet for concerned Quebecers and Canadians to stand up against Bill C-32 and 96.

We need to stop these Bills because:

1. They restructure our federation and Constitution in fundamental and illegitimate ways
2. The bills surgically excise the English language from Quebec
3. The bills are detrimental to all Quebecers' basic human rights
4. They are detrimental to a bilingual Canada and an English-speaking Quebec

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- Up to \$90,000 in fines for your business
- All legal documents must be drafted in French, even while doing business outside Quebec
- You must buy a home or cottage in French-language documents only
- Seizure of your cell phone and computer for a hypothetical violation
- Your children may be refused access to the CEGEP of their choice based on their linguistic background
- Declaration of a "Quebec nation", defining Quebecers solely by the French language, in our 1867 Constitution

Please find out more here: www.protectourrights.ca

1. Join the Task Force and find your Chapter here: www.protectourrights.ca/volunteer
2. Please donate to our fundraiser, we receive no public funding: www.gofund.me/fd22c6ea
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PET PAGE

20 – August 17, 2021



9 Lives

LYSANNE FOWLER

Julie so pretty

pink nose and huge gold tone eyes.

Julie is two years old, very healthy, up to date with her inoculations, spayed and microchipped.

Please refer to her identification number 48362458 when you visit the Montreal SPCA website at www.sPCA.com and fill out the adoption application for adorable Julie on the attached link. Once submitted, you will then be contacted for a telephone interview, followed by a visit by appointment at the SPCA.

Your neighbour, Lysanne

Here is young Julie, most affectionate, as you can see from this photograph of her arriving at the Montreal SPCA cattery in her carrier. No matter what is happening, Miss Julie is very keen on having her face cuddled.

What a delightful beauty, with her contrasting soft black-and-white coat, candy



Titan is no longer a sled dog



*Westmount
A-dog-tions*

LYSANNE FOWLER

Look at this handsome fellow, just the best and brightest. Titan was a sled dog, was rescued and is now at the Montreal SPCA for his chance at a better-than-better doggy life. Yes, in a normal loving family, with a proper dog bed in a home in our neighbourhood.

He is tall, black and white, with huge brown eyes that say so much. Every small thing is important to a dog that did not have what we take for granted for our spoiled pooches, so this is your chance to reach out for him. He likes other dogs, would enjoy being in a home with another as he was in a group environment.

Titan is healthy, up to date with his inoculations, neutered and microchipped. Please refer to his identification number 47528217 when you visit the SPCA website at www.sPCA.com and fill out the adoption application for Titan on the attached link. Once submitted, you will then be contacted for a telephone interview, followed by a visit by appointment at the SPCA.

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City Views

VERONICA REDGRAVE

The (Kalya) Joy (Lavalée) of bringing people food



While getting a passport photo at Westmount Square (yes, hope springs eternal!), I noticed a young woman selling a large glass jar of layered salad ingredients to a friend. Curious as ever, I asked what she was delivering. And thus I discovered yet another Westmount entrepreneur. It turned out that Kalya Joy Lavalée has launched a new service.

How did you get started?

I've always been fascinated with glass jars and would pack my lunches in them – often layering the ingredients. People would constantly ask me where I purchased my food. When I told them that I made it myself, I started getting asked if they could pay me to meal-prepare for them. It took off from there and grew by word of mouth.

I soon launched my website, plantbasedjoy.ca, where clients can review the new menu every Wednesday at noon under “Shop.” Orders are placed through Instagram or email by Friday at 3 pm for delivery on Sunday. I have also started catering.

What is your “menu”?

My meals range from a variety of salads, soups, stews, curries, pastas, breakfasts and desserts. My desserts are primarily “raw” and are never made with artificial ingredients, flavours or sugars. I don't use traditional sugars, replacing them with maple syrup, dates, banana, and sometimes applesauce or coconut sugar. The goal of my meals is to be as healthy as possible while not sacrificing flavour. For this reason, I very rarely cook with oil.

Do you grow all your own ingredients?

I don't grow all my own ingredients. However I do have a garden in the summer where I source most of leafy greens, herbs, beans, tomatoes, cucumbers and peppers, and carrots, pears and apples in the later months. I have two pear trees and one apple tree. I also try to buy organic, bio and local whenever possible.

Do you pick up the “used” jars?

Yes – all jars can be returned and I encourage my customers to return their jars. They do receive a perk as well – 10 small jars returned earn a free breakfast and 10 tall jars returned earn a free “main.” Other than some baked goods, sandwiches and breakfasts, I deliver most meals in jars.

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KAUFMANN de SUISSE

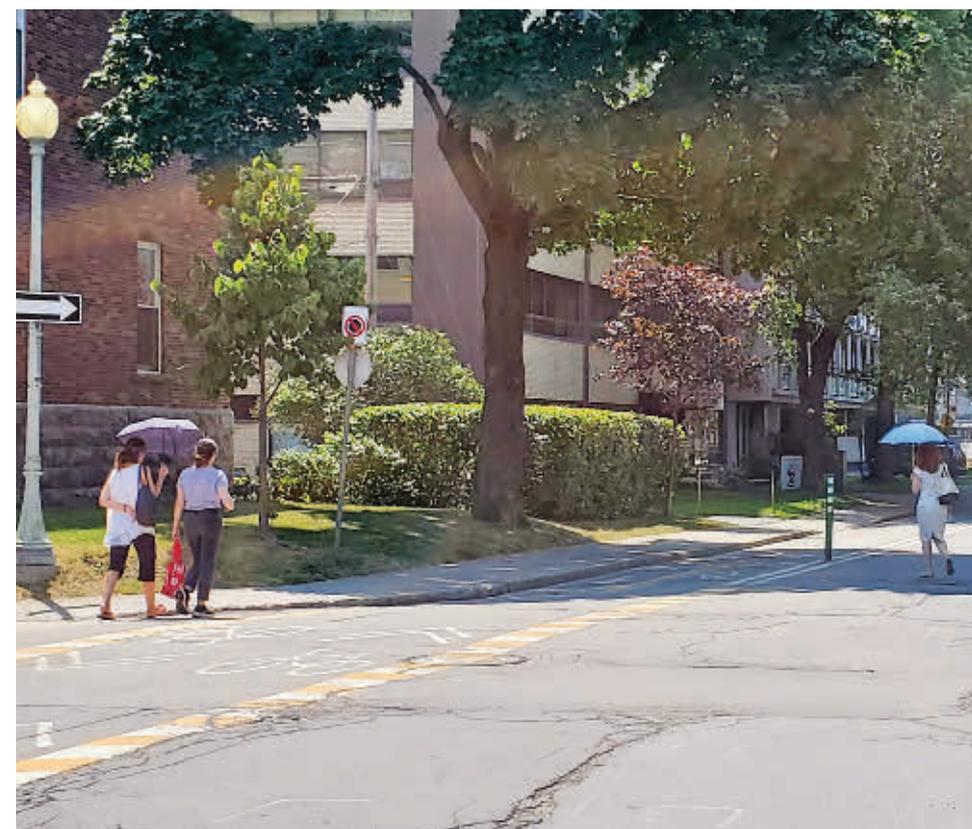
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Heat! Sunshine! Parasols!



Pedestrians with parasols are not a common sight in Canada, and August 10 was the first time that the *Independent* noticed two separate user groups in close proximity, as seen at Prince Albert and de Maisonneuve.

PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.

Even statues need showers in this heat



This statue on Sherbrooke between Greene and Elm was getting a “shower” August 13. Many years ago, the figures were nude, which would have made the shower easier, until neo-Victorian coverings were placed over their private parts.

PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.

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Ticket for excessive noise

A call to Public Security for excessive noise and yelling on Edgehill August 8 ended with a ticket issued for \$152, department officials said. The call was received at 10:47 pm. When officers responded, they confirmed the complaint and found the noise coming from a party on the roof terrace of a garage. Several cars were found in the driveway. When no one could be reached from calls to the home or a doorbell, they called up to the deck, eventually saying that a ticket would be issued to the owner of the house to which someone was heard to laugh.

Tickets issued for alcohol in Westmount Park

Two 16-year-olds were ticketed \$71 each August 3 when a group was found drinking and smoking in the middle of Westmount Park near “the maze” at 10:05 pm, Public Security officials said. Police were called and as the group dispersed, the two were caught. They were identified as young men, one a resident of Westmount, the other of the city of Montreal. The tickets were issued for possessing alcohol in a park.

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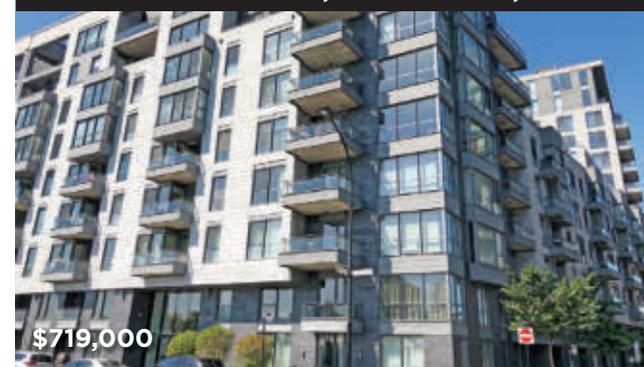
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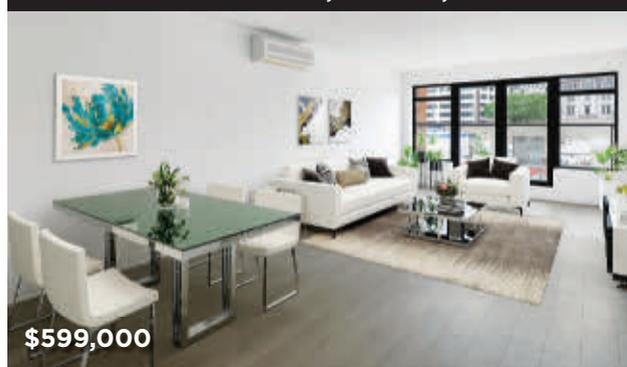
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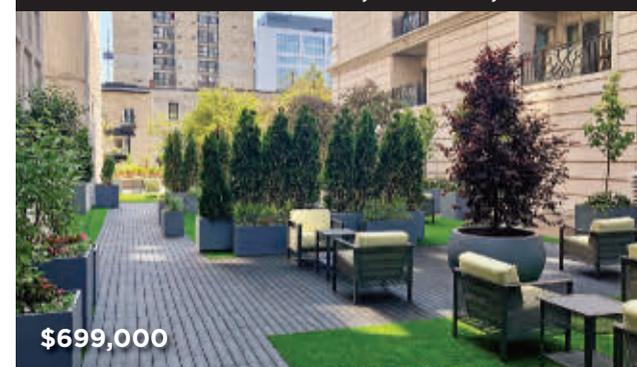
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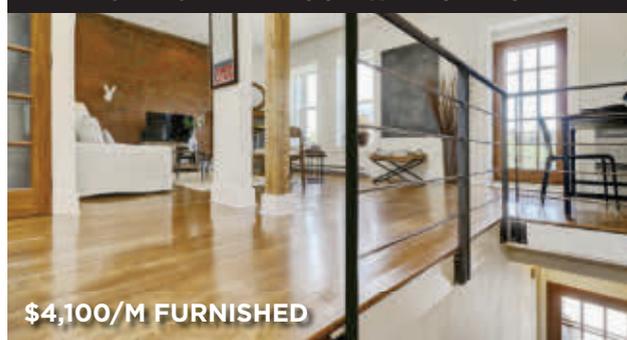
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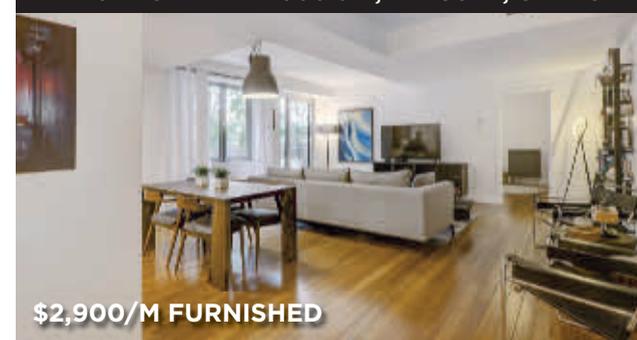
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 Joan McCordick, Abbott Ave.
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 Judith Drake Mann, Victoria Ave.
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