

For use until, and after, park is 're-designed'

## New Westmount Park play structures to replace condemned 2017 ones

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

City council April 19 authorized the purchase of new playground equipment for children aged 18 months to 5 years for use in Westmount Park. This is to replace the 2017 yellow-and-red plastic slide-and-ramp structures that have been described as being unsafe.

The new structures are "interactive and challenging for little children," according

Curious about effect of inflation, pandemic on opticians, optometrists?

See p. 24

to Anna Polspoel, horticulture and arboriculture technical officer in Public Works. She said that the current equipment had been condemned.

With "accessibility aspects," the new structures include a slide, tree house, rope climbing and playhouse, which form a "coherent" design when paired with the play equipment already in use for 5-to 12-year-olds. Four musical "flowers" will also be installed, whose pedals create different musical notes when struck with a small hammer.

The playground's shock-absorbing material will remain wood chips.

The contract was ..... awarded last week to continued on p. 25

## Cleaning up on Earth Day



April 22 was Earth Day and the city invited Westmounters to meet outside the library at 1 pm, rain or shine, to help clean up Westmount Park. As if to remind everyone that it was a day to think about the environment, there was an enigmatic gust of cold wind; a few hailstones fell from the sky, then drops of rain; then some dark ominous clouds appeared and finally a little sunshine. Councillor Jeff Shamie (left) thanked everyone for coming. Public Works environment technician Patricia Racette (yellow jacket) asked the small group to look under hedges for litter that might be out of sight. Racette also handed out sturdy work gloves and pick-up sticks. The group dispersed in all directions after two hours.

PHOTO: RALPH THOMPSON.

To be re-shingled 26 years later...

## Council approves roof work for lawn bowling clubhouse

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

A new shingle roof for the city's lawn bowling clubhouse is to be undertaken according to a tender for the work awarded at the council meeting April 19 at a maximum amount of \$71,256 including taxes.

The contract went to Couverture Montreal-Nord, the lowest of nine bids, the highest being \$280,920.

While the resolution for the work referred to it as "rehabilitation" of the roof and this was described at the meeting as "repairs," Mayor Christina Smith, later told the *Independent* that details of the work referred to it as a "restoration" of the roof involving replacement of the membrane and shingles.

The work has a start ..... date in June, city officials continued on p. 7

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# Fender-bender on Grosvenor deploys air bags, cracks windshield

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

Public safety officers were called by fire-fighters to a traffic accident on Clarke at de Maisonneuve April 20, after which one of two cars had to be towed, Public Security officials said.

No injuries were reported.

Described as a “fender-bender,” one car, a Mercedes, was reported to have stopped suddenly when a squirrel ran in front of it. This resulted in it being hit from behind by a Toyota Corolla.

The impact deployed two of the Corolla’s air bags, damaged the front end and cracked the windshield.

Officers remained on the scene while a tow truck arrived and Public Works crews cleaned up debris.

## Three teens ticketed in Stayner comfort station

Three teenaged girls were caught and ticketed April 19 for smoking cannabis in the comfort station at Stayner Park, Public Security officials said. One, aged 15, lived in Westmount. The other two, 17, were

non-residents.

The three were filmed on the city’s surveillance camera at 12:58 pm, which showed a joint being passed around. When officers arrived, they could smell a strong odour of pot.

They ticketed the trio on the spot for \$79 each and advised their parents.

## Branch falls, damages house on Grosvenor

The bannister and front doorway of a house on Grosvenor near de Maisonneuve was found damaged April 19 by a tree branch that had fallen, according to Public Security officials.

When officers were called to the house at 8 am, they found the front window had been cracked as well. The branch was believed to have been brought down from a city tree by the earlier weather mix of snow and slush.

## Curfew tickets issued to teens in Murray Park

A call to Public Security at 2:05 am April 17 stated that people were smoking in King George (Murray) Park after the midnight curfew time.

When officers arrived at 2:07, they found and intercepted three young men on the roof of the comfort station, department officials said.

The three, aged 16 and 17, were issued \$71 tickets for breaking the city’s parks curfew. Two were reported to be Westmount residents.

As well, it was reported that this was “not the first time” that two of the group had been ticketed for park offences.

With the onset of milder weather, residents are reminded that there is a curfew in city parks between midnight and 5 am.

## They Say ...

**They Say ...** The Real Estate market is quiet in the summer.

**Fact:** 19% of property sales take place in June, July and August as compared with 24% for the months of March, April and May.\* Buyers are house hunting now for summer occupancy. If you are thinking of selling, you need to know this.

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\*Based on sales of 2021, Greater Montreal Real Estate Board



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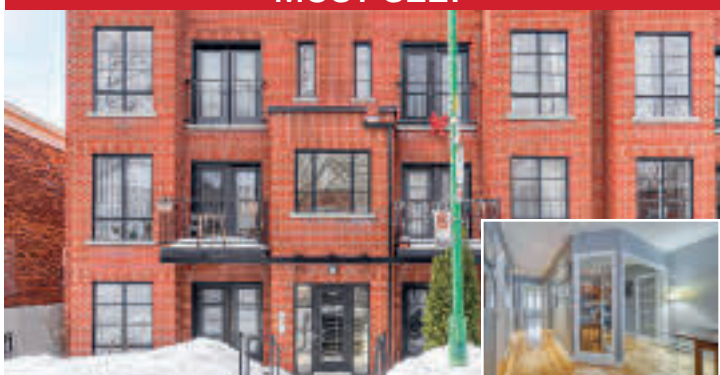
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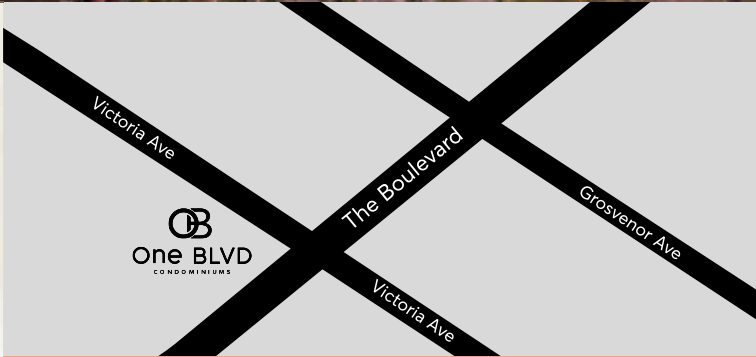
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Dumping alleged to be genesis of two-year problem – recent garbage picked up week of April 11

# Resident Corning: Greene/Olivier alley ‘thoroughly disgusting’

By JENNIFER BALL

The alley between Greene Ave. and Olivier Ave. south of Sherbrooke is half commercial (east side), half residential (west side) and “thoroughly disgusting” according to Olivier home owner Olivia Corning. “I started putting rat traps in our backyard,” Corning said. “There is a service that comes and picks up the garbage for the commercial stores on Greene Ave., but they wouldn’t pick up [the garbage that was allegedly dumped] because it is on the residential side. The residential garbage company is not picking it up either and I think they are not because it is too disgusting.” Risuke Pilon is an urban planning in-

spector in the Urban Planning department of the city of Westmount and Corning said she has been in touch with him since 2020 about the recurring problem. “Mr. Pilon asked me several times to contact them when the garbage was not being picked up,” Corning said. Their last communication was the week of April 4 with a promise to have it cleared up by the end of that week, she said. It was cleared up a week later, Corning said. Christopher Rogers, division manager for permits, inspections and applications at the city, spoke to the *Independent* on April 20. “We appreciate the calls from the residents. It’s really not something we discourage,” he said. “There are problematic

areas, where people know what they can get away with it. What I’m thinking is that maybe someone took advantage of the fact that there was a vacancy and, you know, kind of dumped things.” Would garbage be picked up quickly should the issue happen again? “It should be within the week,” Rogers said. “If [the residential garbage collectors] see that there’s a large amount of garbage, they will make sure that the contractor is aware that it needs to be picked up.”



The lane between Greene Ave. and Olivier Ave. on April 12, looking south to de Maisonneuve.



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**Lawn bowling club roof, cont'd from p. 1**  
said, and is expected to last four to six weeks.

The roof was last replaced in 1996 when the clubhouse, located adjacent to city hall, was entirely rebuilt as a replica of the original 1902 building. Its demolition and reconstruction had been part of a Canada-Quebec infrastructure grant of \$3.8 million, which included the creation of an underground electrical substation beneath the clubhouse.

**New clubhouse 'highlight' of 1996 capital works program**

By the end of 1996, the clubhouse and roof were installed, according to the city's annual report, which described the entire project as a "highlight" of the year's capital works program.

The creation of the new Côte St. Antoine substation, it stated, provided Hydro Westmount with additional feeder circuits from Hydro Quebec's Poste Maisonneuve to serve customers in the northern part of the city.

**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](mailto:editor@westmountindependent.com)



The south side of roof of the lawn bowling clubhouse on April 20.



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WHAT ABOUT THE DENTAL PATIENTS?

Re “Local dentists skeptical about federal Liberal-NDP dental plan” (April 12, p. 21), I was dismayed to see the interview with two dentists, but no interview with any of the intended beneficiaries of the plan.

The views represented show a lack of perspective and empathy with those who would benefit from a government dental insurance plan. Why didn't the *Independent* interview a single mother whose income is far below \$70,000? Or a low-income senior? It is not, after all, dentists for whom the dental insurance program is being designed. One would do well to recall that in 1960 doctors and the Canadian Medical Association also opposed all publicly funded health care.

Will the government's plan be perfect? No, of course not. Will it be easy to implement? Probably not. Will it be costly? Most definitely.

None of those, however, are good reasons to not attempt to put in place a dental insurance plan for those Canadians with the greatest need: low-income Canadians without a current dental insurance plan.

Yes, of course there are problems. As pointed out, government dental plans tend to cover only certain procedures. But one could argue that it is better for a patient to have an extraction than suffer through an

abscess without treatment and end up at a hospital emergency room.

And, yes, we need to find solutions to the shortage of dentists and other dental care workers, however, continuing to allow the third of the population that does not have dental insurance to go without is not an option.

At the beginning of the pandemic, there was a lot of talk about social justice, essential workers, not letting anyone fall through the cracks... Talk is cheap.

Unfortunately, we have not moved beyond talk and nothing has been done to start to correct the growing divide between the haves and have-nots in our society. Expanding our universal health care plan to finally include dental care will be a much-welcomed first step.

KATHERINE HOPE, ROSLYN AVE.

A WALK IN WESTMOUNT'S SUMMIT WOODS

A spring nature walk will be held to explore the harbingers of spring at Summit Woods. The walk is for people of all ages. There's so much to hear and to see: bell-wort, bloodroot, False Solomon's seal, trout lilies, also (hopefully) mourning cloak butterflies, migratory birds and, if we're lucky, an orange salamander. Many other species will also brighten our walk.

At the start of the trail, there is a small expanse of False Solomon's seal,



Côte St. Antoine near Forden.

threatened by invasive species like tuberous goutweed and poison ivy. We'll see how they are faring.

Most wildflowers grow along the sides of trail where there is sunlight. Some species are spreading into the woods where tree felling has created sunnier conditions that help wildflowers flourish. For example, there is an exciting new splash of bellwort's trumpet flowers.

Generally, wherever there are wildflowers, they are battling fast-spreading invasives such as the (disarmingly beautiful) wild carrot, which runs right up against and displaces these resplendent indigenous flowers.

I was a long-standing member of the Summit Woods Advisory Committee (SWAC) and will be pleased to lead the walk.

Maxine Cuttler, a local artist will be with us to offer drawing materials and, if necessary, guidance to anyone who wants to try their hand at sketching.

The details are as follows:

Saturday, April 30, 10 am. Duration about 45 minutes...rain or shine!

The walk will start at the southwest corner of Summit Circle and Summit Crescent (the entrance that leads past the hut) and will cross to the nature board.

Please confirm with John by email: supermolto@sympatico.ca or at 514.939.5670. Please remember, touch with your eyes only. See you there!

JOHN FRETZ, LANSDOWNE AVE.

DANGEROUS BOLLARDS, BLACKTOP

This (see photo above) is dangerous. Fix it!

RON DIAMOND, DOWNTOWN

EVEN MORE PHOTO RADAR, PLEASE!

I support the writer on Hallowell St. who suggested (“More photo radar,” April 5, p. 11) that the photo radar mentioned in the city council's request to the province be extended westward. I live on the corner of Abbott and St. Catherine and believe photo radar should be extended to Lansdowne Ave.

This section includes Westmount High School and the newly re-opened Westmount Park School, an elementary school. We should be more watchful of our youth in these school zones.

TONY LAYTON, ABBOTT AVE.

**Editor's note:** For clarity, the city and resident proposals to date have been about photo radar on the 136/720 highway, but presumably photo radar could go anywhere. – DP.

UKRAINE SHOULD SUFFER NO COMPARISON

The suffering to which we bear daily witness in Ukraine should suffer no comparison. What's the point of Rabbi Scheier's remarks about his ancestors fleeing Ukraine as refugees with “...no one waiting on the other side of the border to help them, feed

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

them, to give them clothes”?

Comparison is the thief of joy, it is said. Is it misery's thief, too?

HOWARD GREENFIELD, HILLSIDE AVE.

**Editor's reply:** Rabbi Scheier is free to explain his remarks, but I took it as an attempt to do better, not in anger or bitterness, but out of empathy. – DP.

### MAPLE LEAF IN BAD CONDITION, AGAIN

Re: Canadian flag at Westmount Park elementary school

Since the beginning of COVID-19, I have walked more than 500 times past the front entrance of Westmount Park elementary school.

Until recently, the Canadian flag was hanging at half-staff, torn and twisted in an unsightly manner around the flag pole. Hardly a salute to Canada.

Recently, this situation was improved as a result of efforts that were described in the *Independent*. However, this improvement was short lived and for the last two weeks the condition of our cherished flag has reverted to its badly mounted condition.

Hopefully, those responsible will again take the necessary action to restore our

precious Maple Leaf to its proper display.

TOM ROGERS, DE MAISONNEUVE BLVD.

### THANKS, CLLR. ARONSON, FOR CARING ABOUT PROCESS

I want to thank District 7 councillor Matt Aronson for his position regarding the re-configuration project on Lexington Ave.

It is important that cities follow established processes to promote fairness and respect democratic values.

Councillor Aronson showed both independence and respect for process on this particular issue.

It is important that diverse perspectives on the part of our representatives be heard and considered.

LEA KATSANIS, IRVINE AVE.

### WHEN WAS THE LEXINGTON PROJECT DRAWN UP?

The city of Westmount would have us believe that it consulted with the residents of Lexington Ave. via a survey distributed on December 16 concerning its reconstruction.

They would similarly have us believe that following the deadline for the survey submission (January 14), they took all com-

ments into consideration and designed the Lexington Project, in its entirety, between January 14 and the presentation of the project to the public on March 10.

Considering the myriad of details involved in the Lexington plan, the civil engineering, the studies, the architectural planning, the consultants who worked on the project and the very detailed multi-page presentation that was made in March, as well as overwhelming survey responses to maintain existing parking and to eliminate sidewalk “bump-outs,” it becomes very clear [to me] that the entire Lexington project was planned many months in advance of the so-called “consultation” with the residents.

The survey, it turns out, has given the illusion of a collaborative and consultative approach when, in reality, the plans were likely well under way prior to the survey being delivered and were imposed on the residents, with little consultation or consideration.

ALLEN RUBIN, LEXINGTON AVE.

### STREET FURNITURE WOULD LEAD TO MORE DRUGS

David and Joan are 100 percent accurate [in their opposition to street furniture on

de Maisonneuve between Atwater and Wood] (see letter, April 19, p. 6). What a way to ruin and trash this street! And to make drugs accessible to the Dawson students! Walking by, I have watched drugs being exchanged and sold, and marijuana cigarettes shared. It is frightening and disgusting and it stinks.

Whatever is the mayor and city council thinking of? They are *dead wrong*.

Great idea to place benches along the route to Westmount Park!

SUSAN STROMBERG STEIN, WOOD AVE.

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Two council questioners focus on glass

# Can city change pick-up contract, set up glass recycling?

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

Two questions to city council April 19 dealt with previous issues of recycling. Both were submitted remotely to the hybrid meeting, attended in person by only one member of the public, who did not ask a question.

The first, pertaining to glass, came from Alain Forget of Anwoth, asking whether the city might revisit the contract it has with Ricova for collecting recycling, given recent news reports of “questionable practices” including glass being sent to landfill.

Mayor Christina Smith said the city also found the reports “worrisome and troublesome.”

The contract to which he referred, however, was a Montreal one, whereas Westmount’s was for the transport of material for recycling and had been awarded to the lowest conforming bidder.

“I don’t have much news for you,” she added.

The question of glass was again raised

by Richard Dufour, also of Anwoth, who asked whether Westmount would “take the initiative” to set up its own system this year for recycling while awaiting a Quebec program set for 2023.

**Westmount-only system?  
Significant cost**

Mayor Smith said that for a city of its size, this would be a significant cost for Westmount. Councillor Matt Aronson, whose commissionership includes sustainability, thanked residents for bringing such issues forward but had no additional comments.

Among issues related to the recycling of glass have been how industry can re-use various colours and types of bottles in order to keep it from disposal in landfill.

Issues related to Ricova had also been raised at council meetings by Denis Biro of Burton (see story March 22, p. 7).

Biro recently told the *Independent* he had never heard back from the city as he had been told he would.

Tenders being opened last week

# Lexington: *fait accompli*? resident asks council



Looking north on Lexington towards St. Joseph’s Oratory on April 25, with Shorncliffe rising to the right and Devon in the background at left.

PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

The consultation process, its timing and reason for proceeding with a re-design on Lexington were raised at the city council meeting April 19 by Jewel Lowenstein, a longtime resident of the street.

Questioning whether or not there had been “sufficient time” for the city to have considered and incorporated residents’ comments into the final design, she later suggested to the *Independent* that the plan had already been a “*fait accompli*.” Resident Allen Rubin has made a similar argument in a letter to the editor (p. 9).

Mayor Christina Smith assured her that comments had been considered as well as discussions with residents over the first two phases of the underground work to update the water and sewer networks undertaken in 2020 and 2021 as well as explanations from Councillor Conrad Peart, commissioner of urban planning.

The plan for this summer’s re-paving

phase approved by the council March 21 after a public consultation Zoom presentation March 10, called for narrowing the intersection at Sunnyside, widening the sidewalks on both sides of Lexington, removing parking from one side of the street and creating in its place a new row of trees (see story March 29, p. 1).

**Looking ahead**

The street was last re-built 20 years ago and now is being designed to meet current road standards and foresight for the future,” Peart explained.

“I thought the point was to slow traffic,” Lowenstein asked, stating the street did not have much traffic but had two parking lanes.

Mayor Smith later told the *Independent* that tenders for the work were to be opened last week for evaluation after the three-year project work had already been delayed at the start over objections from some residents.

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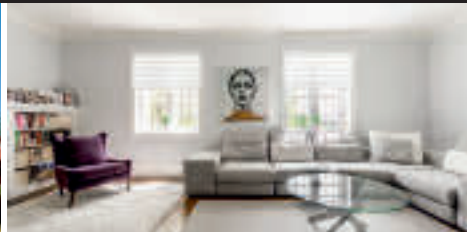
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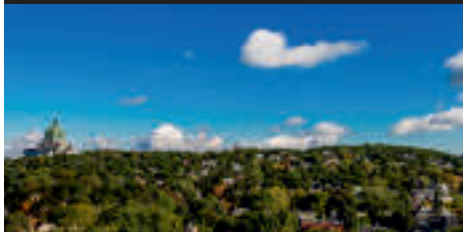
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Source: Centris.ca & Christina Miller Group data @ April 01, 2022

## DEAR NEIGHBOURS,

The Christina Miller Group prides itself on bringing you relevant statistical information about the Westmount Market. Trends show that Westmount remains a place where people want to live, work and play. The last ten years have seen the **median price of a single family home increase by 50%**.

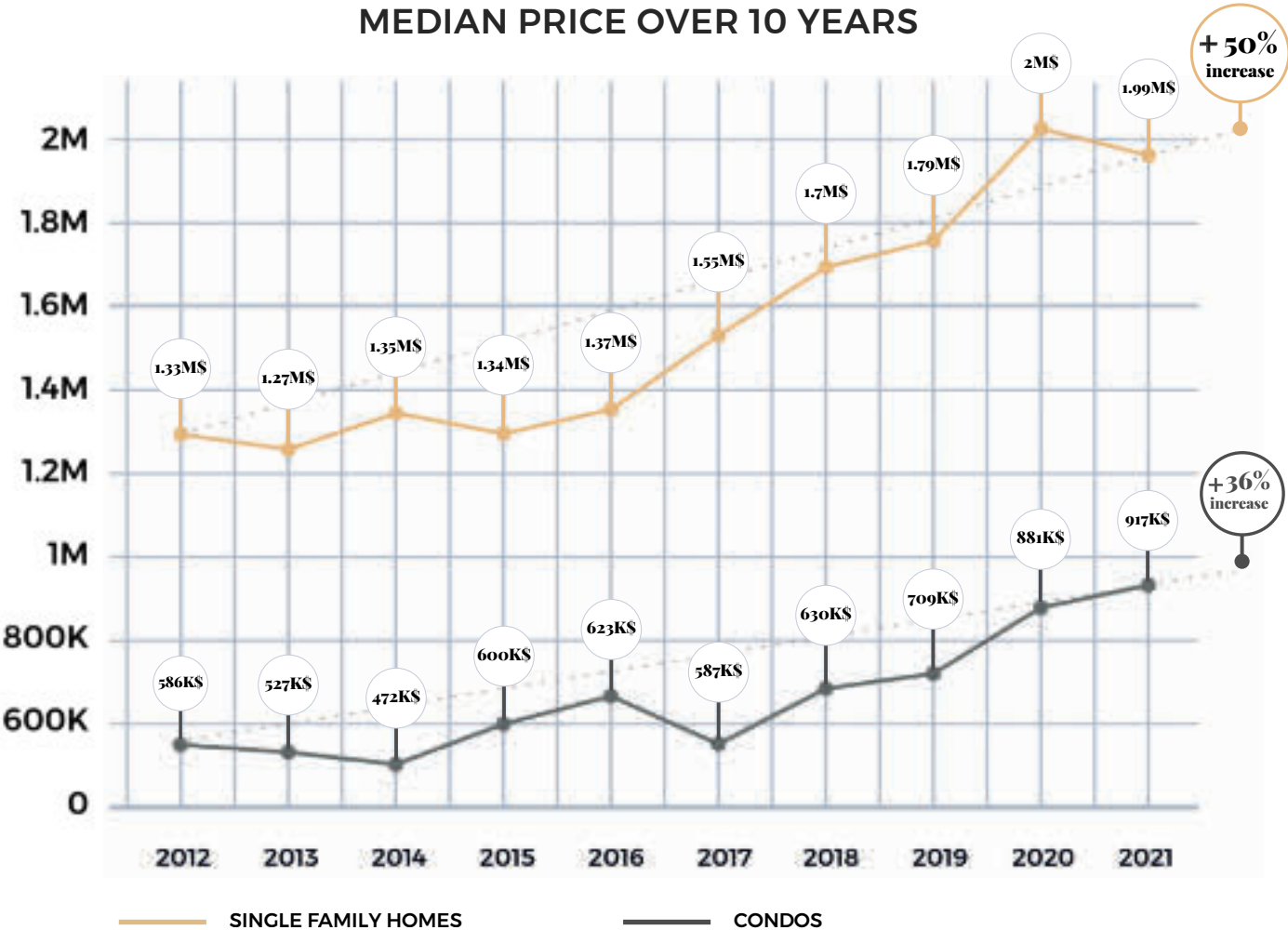
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### MEDIAN PRICE OVER 10 YEARS





# Q1 FIVE YEAR REVIEW

*In the last 5 years the median price of single family homes has consistently increased and today at the end of March 2022, sits at \$2,350M. Condos have also performed well with the exception of a dip at the height of the pandemic. Today's median price of a condo \$1,019M.*

## MEDIAN PRICE

SINGLE FAMILY HOMES		CONDOS	
Q1 2018	\$1,725,000	Q1 2018	\$490,000
Q1 2019	\$1,860,000	Q1 2019	\$685,000
Q1 2020	\$1,924,500	Q1 2020	\$815,000
Q1 2021	\$2,055,000	Q1 2021	\$700,000
Q1 2022	\$2,350,000	Q1 2022	\$1,019,000
Q1 FIVE YEAR TREND			

## AVG. DAYS ON MARKET

SINGLE FAMILY HOMES		CONDOS	
Q1 2018	82	Q1 2018	77
Q1 2019	93	Q1 2019	85
Q1 2020	113	Q1 2020	94
Q1 2021	66	Q1 2021	117
Q1 2022	76	Q1 2022	119
Q1 FIVE YEAR TREND			

## SALES VOLUME

SINGLE FAMILY HOMES		CONDOS	
Q1 2018	\$54,823,000	Q1 2018	\$11,321,650
Q1 2019	\$75,431,960	Q1 2019	\$13,795,500
Q1 2020	\$66,535,000	Q1 2020	\$14,952,500
Q1 2021	\$76,422,486	Q1 2021	\$12,138,000
Q1 2022	\$98,417,500	Q1 2022	\$17,588,500
Q1 FIVE YEAR TREND			

## NUMBER OF LISTINGS SOLD

SINGLE FAMILY HOMES		CONDOS	
Q1 2018	29	Q1 2018	19
Q1 2019	35	Q1 2019	18
Q1 2020	34	Q1 2020	15
Q1 2021	37	Q1 2021	13
Q1 2022	37	Q1 2022	16
Q1 FIVE YEAR TREND			

## NEW LISTINGS

SINGLE FAMILY HOMES		CONDOS	
Q1 2018	64	Q1 2018	28
Q1 2019	63	Q1 2019	30
Q1 2020	54	Q1 2020	27
Q1 2021	57	Q1 2021	28
Q1 2022	64	Q1 2022	37
Q1 FIVE YEAR TREND			



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## Electricity back on, ahead of expectations Stonehurst tenants question management's reaction to fire

By JENNIFER BALL

Electricity is back on at the Stonehurst Apartments, where there was an electrical fire the morning of April 14. The fire started in the garage and was contained quickly (see April 19, p. 19). A resident had expressed concern to the *Independent* that the electricity would be off for an extended time, but it was back on April 16.

On the other hand, safety concerns have now been raised by tenants in a three-page letter to building management dated April 18.

The tenants are critical of the handling of the blaze in the letter to Randy Swartz, director of finance for the building's representative Barry Feinstein. She also handles renewal negotiations for tenants. Montreal's property roll lists "Succession [estate of] Morris Feinstein" as the owner.

A tenant who preferred not to be named was surprised that "we have not heard anything from Barry or Randy since this happened."

### Alarms did go off

Among other things, the letter says: "Most sobering is, at a critical stage of the crisis, several residents were unaware of it, even though the alarms went off and the fire trucks were in front of the building. In

one case, a fireman surprised the residents on the top floor when he knocked and told them to evacuate.

"Another tenant's departure was ensured by a neighbour who knew that they had hearing problems and took responsibility for banging on their door.... But, nonetheless, no one was deputized to ensure everyone had left, or to take a count of who was present outside and who was not..."

"Had your team engaged in serious communication with the residents, you would have discovered that after the event, at four days and counting, there is a palpable sense of vulnerability and uncertainty. Yet nothing has been done to make your income-producing tenants feel valued and respected."

The tenants also requested a full electrical inspection of the building including the elevator. "Is the building's wiring up to code? Given the age of the building, this is a consideration," they asked.

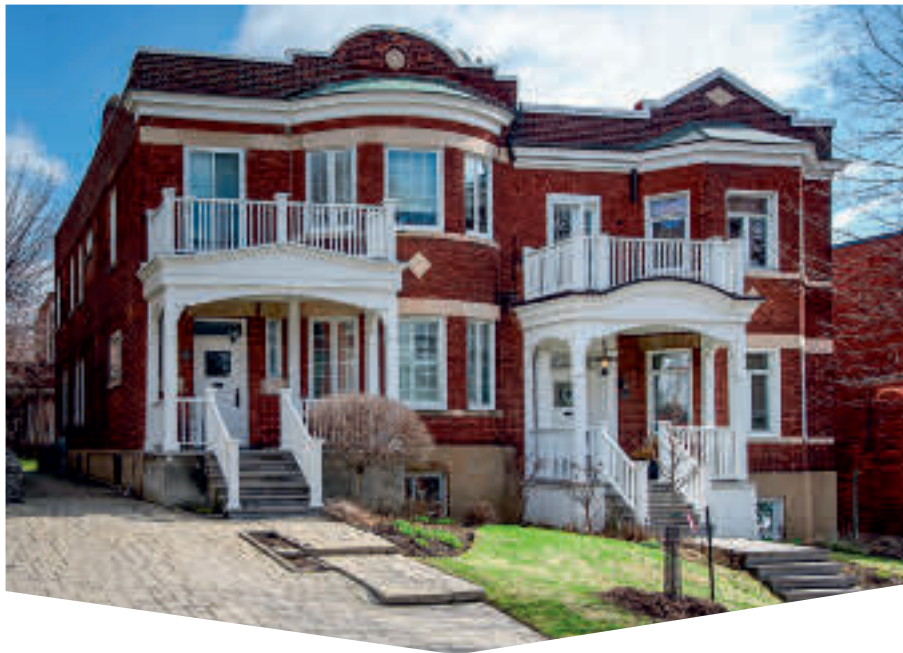
The *Independent* spoke with Swartz on April 21, but she declined to comment.

As for the apartments at Stonehurst, they're still being cleaned. I am "trying to get rid of all the soot in the stairwells and in the laundry," said a tenant. "We had to do a major clean-up in our apartment, especially in our kitchen where all the smoke came up, but other than that, it is okay."



The basement of 4200 Sherbrooke after a post-fire clean-up, as seen April 21.





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Police Report

# An ounce of prevention stops a grandparent fraud

By Martin C. Barry

Community relations staff at the Montreal police department's Station 12 say the *Westmount Independent's* recent coverage of a fraud wave committed against local senior citizens has helped raise awareness of the problem – while stopping at least one such incident in its tracks.

According to community relations officer Adalbert Pimentel, a bank branch at the corner of Sherbrooke St. and Victoria Ave. contacted the Stanton St. station last week after a female client in her eighties tried to withdraw several thousand dollars under circumstances regarded as suspicious.

Crime incident reports issued by Station 12 over the last few months have shown a significant increase in various types of frauds, including "grandparent" scams in which the perpetrators repeatedly have contacted retired Westmounters.

Typically, the caller claims to represent or to be a grandchild who is in legal trouble somewhere outside Canada, and in immediate need of financial assistance to be bailed out of jail.

Many victims end up being persuaded to go to their bank and withdraw a large sum of money, which is then picked up at their address by an ac-

complice, who vanishes without a trace, unless the police have been informed and become involved.

Pimentel said the bank branch's staff had recently been made more aware of the problem after reading the *Independent's* coverage of grandparent scams over the past few months, as well as from Station 12 foot patrol officers who've been visiting bank branches.

He said that after describing to the client the circumstances that led bank staffers to believe she was being victimized, "she was totally shocked and surprised" to learn she might be the victim of a very persuasive form of fraud.

The bank called police at Station 12, and of-ficers went to the branch, where they met the client and told her the bank was trying to protect her assets. They then reached out to a next of kin, who agreed to intervene and provide additional support.

Pimentel said the intervention was "a perfect example of what an ounce of prevention is worth. Police investigations are long and expensive, and you don't always get the desired results, and in the meantime, the victim's money is lost. Prevention is definitely the key here. We're very happy with this outcome."

## Wrong way on de Mais.



This car was photographed going the wrong way on de Maisonneuve between Prince Albert and Victoria March 25.

PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.

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He was born in Quebec City in 1943. He graduated in 1966 from the Ontario College of Art and Design. Simard was elected to be a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts in 1981, the very year that he had his first of 5 exhibitions with us at our original family art gallery, the Galerie Walter Klinkhoff.



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# Centre Greene launches A.C.T. Project against racism, discrimination

By MARTIN C. BARRY

Centre Greene is launching a community engagement initiative against racism and discrimination through a program focusing on theatre and the creative arts, using a subsidy obtained from the city of Montreal and the Quebec government.

Centre Greene's A.C.T. Project (Art, Creation, Transformation) was one of 38 projects approved to receive more than \$5 million in subsidies from Montreal and the Quebec ministry of Immigration, Francization and Integration for the next two years.

More than 50 participants are expected to take part in the program, beginning with arts workshops that start on May 7. The workshops will revolve around the issues of racism, discrimination and collective measures that can be taken to overcome them.

During an announcement and presentation of the program at Centre Greene on April 13, executive-director Diahara Traoré said the main objectives are to give voice to racialized and immigrant people.

Guidance will be provided by an advisory committee composed mainly of immigrants and "racialized" people who will assist, inform and evaluate the project's con-



As seen here on April 13 at Centre Greene are, from left, Michael Derix, office assistant at Centre Greene; Mauro Pea, director of the Red Coalition, director at Bienvenue à NDG and ACT project advisory committee member; Heather Hodges, head of programs at Centre Greene; Yazan Charif, ACT Project lead; Diahara Traoré, executive director of Centre Greene; Sophie Cram, building operations manager at Centre Greene and Natalie Doyle, planning consulting at the city of Montreal's new arrivals integration centre.

tent and activities.

Forum theatre, a theatrical medium created by the late Brazilian dramatist Augusto Boal to involve communities in the expression of social inequalities and collective action against oppression, will be the basis for theatrical workshops every two weeks starting next September, leading ultimately to a staged performance.

During the arts workshops, participants will be able to express their experiences of discrimination, their solidarity or their feel-

ings regarding the values of social inclusion.

Traoré said the program aims to raise awareness among non-racialized people and non-immigrants of the realities of racism and discrimination through "community conversations" facilitated and enriched by resource people.

### New direction for Centre Greene

While Centre Greene has almost always focused on being a venue for recreational and cultural programs, Traoré acknowl-

edged that the A.C.T. Project is somewhat of a departure in a new direction.

"Arts and art hives have always existed at Centre Greene, but we know that there are also theatre classes happening in this building," she said.


"And so we thought that since the community know us for that, how could we use that to kind of build more awareness around racism and discrimination?"

Traoré said she was surprised when Centre Greene's application to the city of Montreal was accepted – especially since the centre is located in the city of Westmount.

However, she said they successfully argued in their application that the clients for the A.C.T. Project would be a mix of residents from Westmount, St. Henri and Little Burgundy.

Jane Wightman, chairman of Centre Greene's board of directors, said the A.C.T. Project should prove to be valuable, not only to racialized and immigrant people, but also to those who may not previously have experienced racism or discrimination.

"The community will not have experienced the traumas," she said during the April 13 presentation. "But part of this is also about education and the whole idea of how we can really change."



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# Westmount Park United revives ‘prayer labyrinth’ tradition

By MARTIN C. BARRY

The prayer labyrinth, an early Christian worship tradition that has been largely forgotten for centuries, is being revived at Westmount Park United Church.

After two years of being mostly cut off from one another during the COVID pandemic, Westmount Park United’s members recently decided the time had come to undertake a project that would encourage people to get out, while hopefully also cultivating introspection.

Perhaps the world’s most famous example of a prayer labyrinth is the one that was laid out more than eight centuries ago on the floor of Chartres Cathedral in medieval France.

Westmount Park United’s version is based on the labyrinth found on the floor at Chartres Cathedral. The pattern is on a large sheet of sewn-together canvases.

More recently in Montreal, members of Rosedale United Church in NDG created a stone prayer labyrinth on the Terrebonne Ave. church’s outdoor grounds, where it remains to this day even though the building is under new ownership.

“Happily, as things return to normal, we hope more people can discover what labyrinth- .....

*continued on p. 23*



Nikita Eaton-Lusignan, animator of the prayer labyrinth at Westmount Park United Church, is seen here on Sunday, April 10 while using the labyrinth on the floor in the church’s main sanctuary.

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9 Lives

LYSANNE FOWLER

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Betsy is an affectionate and playful one-year-old, very sweet and pretty. Her lovely white fur is gleaming against her tabby brown-and-grey mask and cape-and-tail fashion statement, contrasting with her precious pink nose and huge gold-tone eyes.

Betsy is presently at the Montreal SPCA cattery, available for a family to bring her home to cuddle with her and enjoy her



### *Prayer labyrinth, cont'd from p. 20*

walking can bring them,” said Westmount Park United pastor Neil Whitehouse, who also helped create the Rosedale United labyrinth.

“It is truly a powerful grounding experience, more accessible than other forms of meditation, because people are moving forward as they discover a new state of mind.”

### *Meditation while walking*

According to Nikita Eaton-Lusignan, Westmount Park United’s labyrinth animator, labyrinths pre-date Christianity, although Christians adapted them to their faith.

She said it was Rev. Neil’s idea to import the tradition here.

Having used the church’s labyrinth herself, she described the experience as a form of meditation undertaken while walking.

“For me personally, I find that it’s helpful because I have trouble sitting down and

meditating,” said Eaton-Lusignan. “If your body is in motion, it kind of helps with the flow of your thoughts. But it affects people in so many different ways.”

For some people, she suggested the labyrinth’s circular pattern, leading gradually to the centre, becomes a powerful symbol of what life is all about.

“Almost as soon as you start, you find yourself right next to the centre, and then you end up going much further away. It kind of teases you that way, which replicates a lot of life journeys. It’s a good metaphor.”

While Westmount Park United’s prayer labyrinth has been set up inside up to now, she said they are thinking of taking it outdoors on a few occasions this summer for an open-air meditation experience. The prayer labyrinth can be experienced on Sunday afternoons from 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm.



Westmount  
A-dog-tions

LYSANNE FOWLER

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Whole bag of frames swiped in March from Optik Avenue

Opticians, optometrists need high-tech machines & parts, skilled people

By JENNIFER BALL

In the last two years, retailers have faced a raft of new pandemic-related challenges, but old risks have not disappeared, including shoplifting. One such incident occurred in March at Optik Avenue on St. Catherine St. near Greene, according to Michael Toulch, co-owner with Earl Asimov, formerly of Vision 21/20.

“We have now installed a buzzer on the door to let customers in because a thief came in and cleared as many glasses as he could into a bag. When my staff tried to intervene, he pushed them off and then he ran into the nearby Metro station,” Toulch said.

Opticians vs. optometrists

Opticians are technicians who fit eyeglasses, contact lenses, and other vision-correcting devices. Optometrists examine, diagnose, and treat patients’ eyes. Optik Avenue employs both.

The business offers retail services (luxury eyewear, transition lenses, contact lenses) and eye exams, which screen for glaucoma, cataracts and treat common eye infections such as conjunctivitis.



Michael Toulch, left, co-owner of Optik Avenue, Catherine St. and Wood Ave., on April 15. The store of optician Alain Assedo, Sherbrooke St. and Claremont Ave. on March 18.



It also offers eye-imaging technology, including optical coherence tomography (OCT), which is a non-invasive diagnostic instrument used for imaging the retina. It has the ability to detect problems in the eye prior to any symptoms being present in the patient.

It is these large, expensive machines that is causing Toulch the most concern during the sixth wave of the pandemic, he said. This at the same time that the manufacturing world has been facing a global shortage of semiconductors.

“I can call eye-frame companies and get frames. They have not run out of inventory yet, but where I am affected is there’s equipment that I would like to buy. There’s a problem with massive inflation and also delays because it’s all electronic. It is not an immediate problem, unless one of my machines breaks and then that would be a big problem,” Toulch said.

“Then there is our lab equipment. We grind the glasses ourselves. It is expensive and it is very electronic and high-tech. For

the equipment side of things, you can call suppliers and they are laughing at your request [for service or replacement parts]. ‘Take a ticket and wait, we will get back to you.’”

‘Handy person’ keeps machines running

Alain Assedo, the eponymous owner of the Sherbrooke St. and Crescent St. stores, indicated that he has not had any major issues with his store’s diagnostic machines. “I do have someone that I know who is like a handy person – he’s been doing this for years – making minor repairs. But no major parts or things have had to be ordered yet.”

Even if the machines never break down, though, Assedo is aware that there is real competition to find and retain trained optometrists to operate them. “There are only two schools in Quebec that train eye-care specialists, so there are not that many that graduate every year, the University of Montreal for optometry and there is CEGEP Édouard-Montpetit for opticians.

“It’s very hard to get your hands on an optician and optometrist, never mind a good one. It might even be a little bit harder since the pandemic, with people moving around more, but it has always been a problem in the industry.”

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**Westmount Park, cont'd from p. 1**

Tessier Récréo-Parc at its proposed amount of \$95,598 including tax credits, and a maximum of \$104,692, including taxes.

**Which park?**

While the council resolution mentioned only the purchase of new playground equipment, city officials later confirmed it was destined for use in Westmount Park.

This project was not mentioned in the city's capital works budget, though new playground equipment for Devon Park was (see story January 11, p. 4).

During last year's consultations on refurbishing Westmount Park, Mayor Christina Smith frequently stated that its playgrounds were an important consideration.

She said last week that, after the recent purchase, the new equipment structures could continue to be used in any "re-design" of the park, wording used in general committee reports tabled at the city council meeting.



A 3D visual of the structures that will be installed in the smaller kids' playground area. The musical "flowers" are at the lower left.

ILLUSTRATION COURTESY OF THE CITY OF WESTMOUNT.

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Shown April 20, the current play structure for younger children that has been condemned for safety reasons and is to be replaced.



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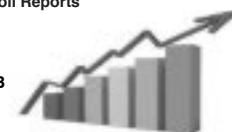


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*Before ....  
and after*

City council has just approved a two-year, \$2.3-million contract to repair the windows of city hall (see April 5, p. 3 for details), as seen above on April 4. Work on the building's roof, seen below April 2, was finished last year.

PHOTOS: RALPH THOMPSON.





## Retail Review

VERONICA REDGRAVE

# Divine pasta in the heart of Westmount

column), I was thrilled to find Paradiso Pasta Divina/Pâtes Divines. In fact, I was there on opening day, April 20.

The proud team hails from some of Montreal's most famed foodie destinations. Lindsay German (manager) worked at Taverne on the Square; sister Kira Ger-

man at Nora Gray, and Will Weston at Joe Beef.

Kira and Will are co-chefs and also worked with Lindsay at Monkland Tavern.

Now they have a charming site on Westmount's Victoria Ave. The shop offers a nice – and not too cluttered – range of balsamic vinegars (two- and five-year vintages) as well as olive oils, sardines and great jars of sauces and olives. (If you bring back your washed jar you get \$1 off your next purchase.)

### Choose pasta!

My choice was easy. The home-made frozen pasta (lasagna with ricotta and spinach) took only an hour in the oven before wafting its alluring addictive aroma.

There is a daily lunch special. Fresh pasta served hot with bread (from neighbour-up-the-street Franquette) and a drink, it is available for take-out from 11:30 am to 3:30 pm.

Sadly, the day I went, it was past pick-up time. And anyway, the Agnolotti had sold out.

There are wonderful packages with great graphics, Siciliana Limonata and Orangiata; Scout (Canadian sea food).

Pasta choices and sauces are made fresh daily, which means the pasta cooks quickly,

unlike the dried boxed varieties.

And is super delicious. Eat it the Italian way, using only your fork. Strands hanging? Pasta is cooked *al dente*. If it rolls around the fork, it's overcooked, I was told in Rome.

*Buon appetito!*

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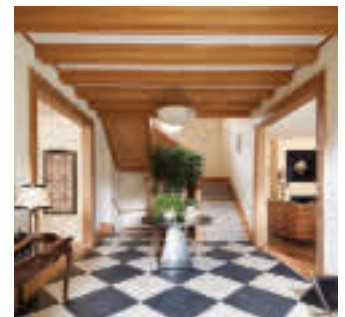
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City Views

VERONICA REDGRAVE

Going to Rome? Brush up on your Italian. Take a *conversazione* course at the Istituto Italiano di cultura. (Classes, all levels, start May 23 by the way.) Or, next fall, learn at Concordia University, which offers auditing for seniors – a unique proposition.

Markets

Porta Portese, Mercato di Campagna Amica, Mercato di Testaccio, Campo de' Fiori, Mercato Monti and Nuova Mercato Esquilino.

Public transport. Bus & metro

Either buy daily bus passes at a *tabaccheria* (look for a big “T” outside the shop) or a *mensile* – monthly, if you are there long enough. (*Nota bene*: If you use your daily one-time ticket, make sure you stamp it for each trip. Sometimes officials check. There is a fine if you don't!)

At the bus stops, sign boards list directions and stops. They aren't always announced on the bus, however, so I remembered how many stops I had before I got off by using Google Maps.

Rome calling: Why? Where? What? When? Who?



Once upon a time...

Be prepared (again). Sometimes buses arrive on time. Sometimes they don't. Sometimes the bus pass stamp machine is broken. Enjoy. It's Rome.

Westmount Public Library

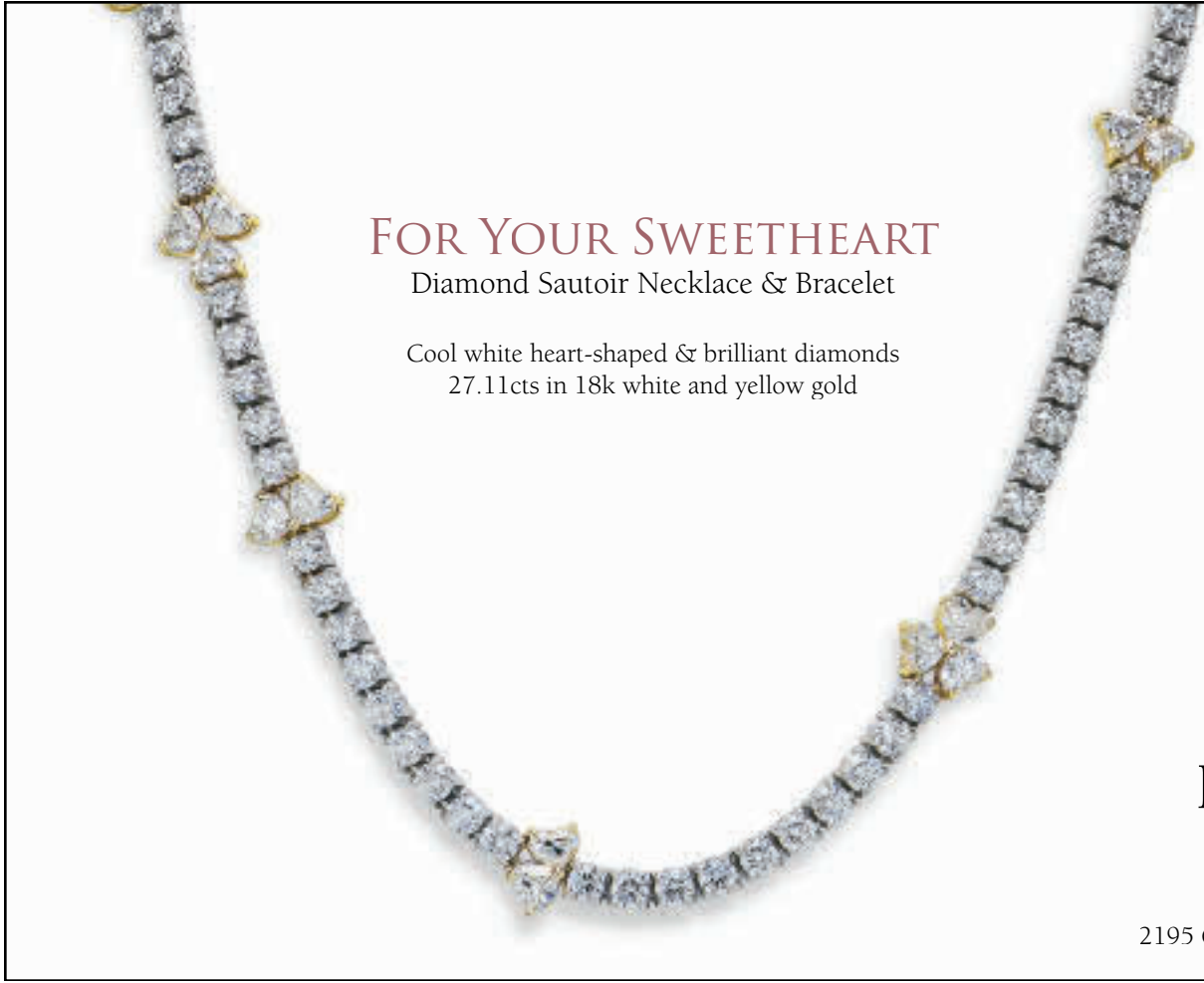
Check out the latest Lonely Planet and other guidebooks.

Aldrovandi Residence

This is a lovely old building in a residential area full of embassies, so it's far quieter than *al centro* with 24-hour scooters! Tranquil trees outside your window house lots of birds. Includes mini-apartment with little kitchenette, buffet breakfast, daily room cleaning, tv and internet. Pool opens in June. (Rooms facing pool-side are quieter). Elevator. Facing Borghese Gardens. Most of the staff speaks some English. When you book, you can ask their car service to collect you at the airport (€55). [aldrovandiresidence.it](http://aldrovandiresidence.it)

Borghese Gardens. Rome's lungs


Take a picnic. Admire the 19th century water clock. There is a charming little lake where you can rent boats. Kids will love to observe the ducks and turtles. Read in the shade. A map tells you ..... how to walk to the piazzas. *continued on p. 30*




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Borghese Gardens offers the very old and the very new.

## Rhinoceros gallery

The Fondazione Alda Fendi is behind this cutting-edge space. Worth the hike. One can go up to the roof and while sipping to watch the sun set.

## Roman forum

Wander amidst bits of broken columns. Admire the mighty arch of Constantine. Like everywhere in Rome, it is advisable to buy tickets online. Tuesday to Sunday, 11 am to midnight. [Parocolosseo.it](http://Parocolosseo.it)

## Vatican Museums & Galleries

You'll know that you're near the Vatican.

## Michelangelos

Vatican; Piazza del Campidoglio; Basilicas S. Pietro in Vincoli and Santa Maria Sopra Minerva.

## Baths of Caracalla

The sheer size of the structures amaze. As do the marvellous mosaics. Book online. [coopculture.it/it/poi/terme-di-caracalla](http://coopculture.it/it/poi/terme-di-caracalla)

## Bernini and Borromini

Rival geniuses. Their architectural masterpieces anchor *piazas* with fountains and churches. Bernini's famed Baroque sculpted baldachin is over the high altar at St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican. Boromini's lovely Sant'Ivo alla Sapienza. Take a guided bus tour, or use a map and walk.

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Obviously the list can be endless. But we end here. *Buon viaggio!*

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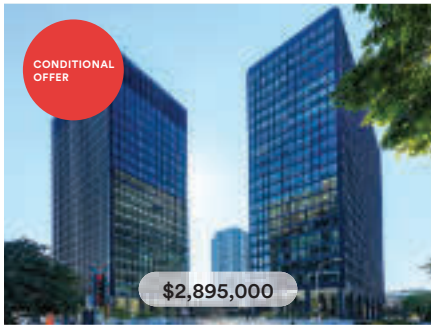
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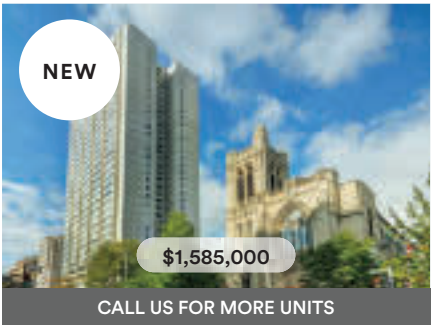
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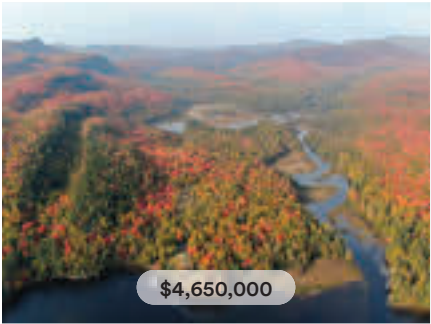
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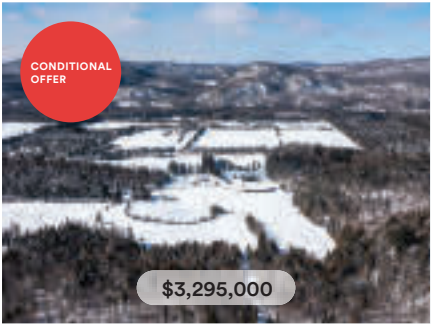
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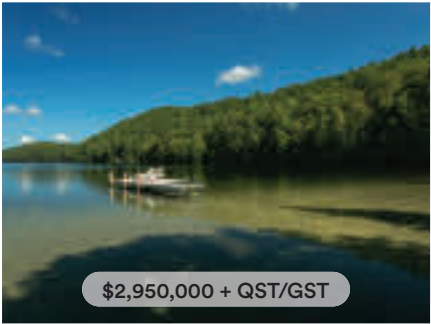
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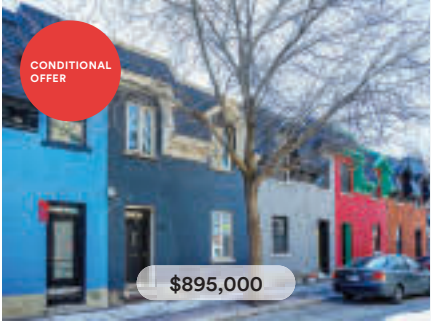
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