

Called 'Accessory Dwelling Units' in By-law 1657

City plans to allow self-contained, separate 'granny flats' in proposed zoning by-law revision

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

City council presented a draft by-law April 14 to amend current zoning and construction bylaws to incorporate provisions for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). This followed a notice of motion March 17.

In general, these ADUs are self-contained units on a residential property where a separate member of the family, for example, can live. They are sometimes known elsewhere as "granny flats." In Westmount, as part of Quebec's enabling legislation enacted in 2024, they are being called Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs).

Under the city's draft By-law 1657 introduced by Councillor Shawn Moss, the city's definition of an ADU is "a self-contained

dwelling unit established within, or attached to, a detached or semi-detached single-family dwelling."

Criteria state that such a unit "must include a minimum of a bathroom, kitchen, a space dedicated to a living area and bedroom which may be designed as an open common space or as separate rooms."

Moss, an architect by profession whose commissionership includes Urban Planning, told the *Independent* the by-law has two advantages:

"It allows Westmount to actively and quickly abate the housing crisis while using existing buildings.

"It also gives an additional revenue source to those who have, for whatever reason, *continued on p. 8*

Colour is returning to the woods



A northern cardinal with a mid-morning snack in its large bill, as seen at Summit Woods April 23. Also on hand were at least one from each of the following species: red-breasted and white-breasted nuthatches, cedar waxwings, brown creepers, pine and yellow-rumped warblers, hairy and downy woodpeckers, ruby-crowned kinglets, black-capped chickadees, and house and chipping sparrows.

PHOTO: RALPH THOMPSON.

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Change nixes collections at library

Agglo ends itinerant hazardous waste collections, directs people to Ecocentres

BY JENNIFER BALL

The city of Westmount informed its residents on April 7 that the Montreal agglomeration – which previously managed biannual hazardous waste (HHW) collections in Westmount – is discontinuing such collections. This change will require Westmount citizens to drive to existing Ecocentres to drop off their corrosive, flammable or toxic detritus.

On April 14, the *Independent* reached out to Mugisha Rutishisha, the director of communications at the city, and while he was not able to determine the exact year that HHW collections started in Westmount, it was in 1989 that the city of Montreal first offered its residents mobile collection services.

So why, after 37 years, has the agglomeration decided to dis- continue them? *continued on p. 8*

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Dogs to be on leash at all times until June 15

Public Security issues ongoing reminders to users of Summit Woods

A “beautiful weekend” April 17-18 resulted in an ongoing reminder from Public Security to all users of Summit Woods to keep on the main trails to avoid stepping on emerging protected spring flora.

Additionally, walkers of dogs, must keep their dogs on leash at all times April 16 to June 15.



PSO Jordan Ciampini having a quick discussion with a dog walker April 23 in Summit Woods. He was also checking dog licences.

PHOTO COURTESY OF WESTMOUNT PUBLIC SECURITY.

At the same time, Public Security carried out a weekend PR blitz that also targeted the need for dogs to have current Westmount licences, including those whose owners do not live here but choose to walk their dogs in the woods (including the path on the former section of Summit Circle).

Somewhat relatedly, John Fretz of Lansdowne asked at the last city council meeting for the city to hold an hour-long public meeting concerning increased protection of the woods, (see separate story, p. 13). – LS

Repeat offender Door-to-door soliciting generates ticket of \$472

A gardening contractor was issued a ticket for \$472 April 11 at 5:25 pm for door-to-door business solicitation, according to Public Security. The man had been warned on other occasions. He was noticed during increased patrols of lanes south of Dorchester.

“Residents have been asking for special attention to the laneways,” explained assistant Public Security director Kim Colquhoun. This includes the area around Stayner Park.

Subaru stranded Clutch fails, sends car onto sidewalk

A car ended up on the sidewalk at the intersection of Mount Pleasant and The Boulevard April 15, Public Security officials said. The incident was reported to have occurred at 8:15 pm.

The Subaru was found half on the sidewalk after the clutch had apparently failed. A tow truck was called remove the vehicle.

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Dodge on March real estate market, p. 14

Pet page, p. 15

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Art: Michèle Atkinson, p. 17

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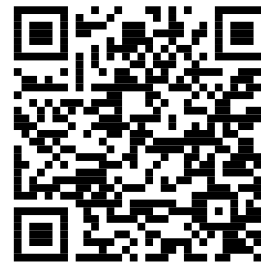


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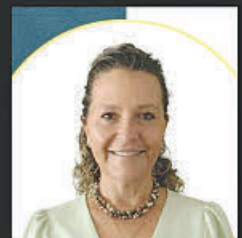
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Police Report

Car thieves make off with two Honda CR-Vs

BY MARTIN C. BARRY

Officers at the Montreal police department's Station 12 on Stanton St. filed reports for two vehicle thefts in Westmount last week.

In the first, which took place during the early morning hours on April 16, a Honda CR-V compact crossover SUV was stolen from a parking spot on Park Place near St. Catherine St.

There were no signs of forced entry, according to Station 12 community rela-

tions officer Cst. Mike Yigit.

But on a more positive note, the vehicle was recovered two days later by the Sûreté du Québec in Dorval on the West Island.

Although the car wasn't equipped with a geolocation device, the SQ officers identified it visually after having read a stolen vehicle report issued by the Montreal police.

Second CR-V stolen

The second reported car theft, overnight on April 22, was also for a Honda CR-V. The owner parked on Côte St. Antoine Rd.

near Strathcona Ave., only to find in the morning that it was missing.

No evidence was left behind on the ground of a forced entry, and the vehicle had not been recovered by last Thursday morning when the owner filed a missing car report.

The Honda CR-V has figured prominently on most-stolen car lists for years. In Quebec, it has regularly ranked in second place, just behind the Toyota RAV4, and just ahead of the Honda Civic.

According to an AI overview of the reasons for the Honda CR-V's popularity with

car thieves, there is a high demand for Honda CR-V parts, it's easy to resell, and it has technical vulnerabilities in its keyless entry systems.

Thieves use signal-boosting "relay attacks" to steal newer models in under five minutes. The CR-V's popularity also makes it a prime target for export, particularly through Canadian ports, from where they are often shipped overseas.

As thieves are known to intercept signals from key fobs stored inside homes to unlock and start vehicles, allowing for quick, high-tech theft, the use of a Faraday box (or something similar), which blocks signals from being copied, is recommended to store keys.

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As seen on Prince Albert near Somerville on April 23.

PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.

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Scouters clean up on summit



Beavers, Cubs and Scouts from Westmount Scouting groups collected several large bags of refuse, recycling and a few treasures in Summit Woods, Sunnyside Park and Père Louis Trempe Nature Reserve on April 19 as part of their annual Earth Day community service in Westmount. "A lot of construction and gardening refuse was cleared from la Reserve naturelle du Père Trempe near the Oratory by the Westmount Park Scouts," said Scouting volunteer Virginia Elliott.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF V. ELLIOTT.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THANK YOU FOR THE GREAT NEW BENCH PLACEMENT!

This is to congratulate the creative minds [at the city] for a small but thoughtful change.

It concerns a replacement of two old benches at the side entrance of the Westmount Library. The benches were in poor condition and badly placed, facing each other in an awkward way.

What we have instead are two new benches on a freshly landscaped space, placed at an angle that is more inviting. This small change makes for a relaxing spot beside the library, which I am sure will be much used and appreciated.

VERA BONDY, SHERBROOKE ST.

FUTURE REPAIRS: WESTMOUNT ROADS REQUIRE IMMEDIATE ATTENTION

I recently wrote (January 20, p. 4) about



Victoria Ave. between Somerville and Sherbrooke on April 24.

the deteriorating condition of our streets in Westmount, and unfortunately, the situation continues to decline. Potholes, cracks, uneven surfaces and faded road signage have become the norm rather than the exception.

It is time for the city to allocate the necessary resources to properly address these deficiencies – not just through temporary fixes, but with a clear, structured plan that prevents us from falling into the same cycle of annual “catch-up” repairs. Reactive maintenance is no longer sufficient; what is needed is a proactive and sustainable approach.

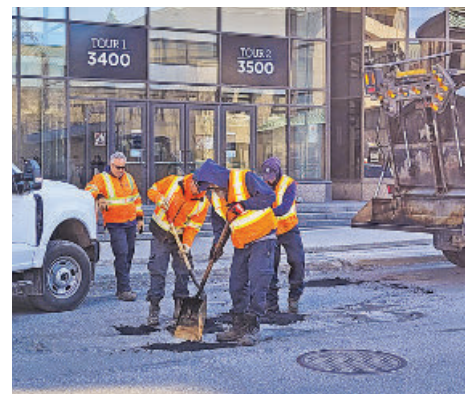
The current state of our roads poses real safety concerns for drivers, cyclists and pedestrians alike. Navigating these conditions is not only frustrating but increasingly hazardous, particularly for those who rely on bicycles as a primary mode of transportation.

Beyond safety, the condition of our infrastructure reflects directly on how our city is managed. Westmount has long been recognized for its high standards and quality of life. At present, however, the roads do not reflect that reputation.

If there is any doubt within city management about the severity of the issue, I would encourage decision-makers to experience it firsthand – by simply driving their personal vehicles through our streets. The reality becomes quite evident.

Our community deserves better. It is time for meaningful action.

JEAN-FRANÇOIS EMMANUEL,
UPPER BELMONT AVE.

RECENT REPAIRS: NOTICING WORK QUALITY

As seen April 21 at 1:46 pm, left, and 7:06 pm.

▲▼ Westmount Public Works, public notices. Concrete inaction, no matter the administration.

NATASHA ARORA, WOOD AVE.

PAST REPAIRS: MINI-POTHOLES ON SHERBROOKE ST. SIDEWALK

► Has anyone else noticed the mini potholes that have emerged this spring on the north sidewalk of Sherbrooke St. between Claremont and Prince Albert avenues? It was only last summer that this section was repaved! How disappointing...

SHELLEY FREEMAN, WINDSOR AVE.

**A RESIDENTIAL POCKET, NOT A PUBLIC PLAYGROUND**

The old train station complex [at the foot of Victoria Ave.] has suddenly become the centre of ambitious ideas, experiments and competing visions of what our community should be. But amid all this enthusiasm, one essential truth is being overlooked: this is not an abstract space. It is a lived environment, surrounded by 16 households whose safety, privacy and daily reality must come first.

At one end of the spectrum are the residents themselves – people who, in this present moment, are asking for something remarkably modest: basic security.

Not grand re-development schemes, not increased foot traffic, not noise or congestion – simply the installation of modern security cameras, remotely monitored, or at the very least, even low-cost deterrents such as updated mock cameras, devices that cost less than a dinner out and could easily be accommodated within the city's existing budget.

These are not excessive demands; they are the minimum measures expected in any responsible urban setting in 2026.

At the other extreme are voices from beyond this immediate area – many of whom would instinctively reject similar developments near their own homes – now

proposing cafés, family centres and other high-traffic social establishments for this site. “Not in my backyard” has quietly become “perhaps in theirs.”

It is worth recalling that, not long ago, even the idea of installing cameras here was met with resistance or indifference. At that time, the safety of local children and families was apparently not considered urgent. Now, suddenly, the same space is being promoted as an ideal destination for increased activity and public gathering.

What has changed? Certainly not the physical constraints of the site.

If the creation of a family hub or café is truly such a valuable and necessary idea, then a reasonable question must be asked: why not locate it in one of the currently under-used or run-down churches in Westmount? These sites are often centrally located, already designed to accommodate gatherings, and importantly, have existing parking and access infrastructure. Such locations would be far better suited to host community-oriented spaces without imposing undue strain on a small residential enclave.

The reality is simple and undeniable: the old train station is bordered by just 16 households and accessed by a narrow, one-way lane. This is not an open urban plaza, nor a transit hub suited for crowds. It is a constrained residential pocket. The intro-

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

duction of businesses or social venues would bring traffic, noise, parking pressures and safety risks that the infrastructure simply cannot support.

If the city is determined to re-imagine the site, then let it do so responsibly and creatively – without imposing additional burdens on those who live there. A meaningful compromise would be to transform the area into a low-impact energy hub: solar panel installations, geothermal systems or even a small-scale data processing facility. Such uses would align with forward-thinking environmental goals and energy security, while ensuring minimal foot traffic and disruption. They would serve the broader public good without sacrificing the well-being of the immediate community.

We must be clear: the 16 households surrounding the old train station are not obstacles to progress. They are citizens whose rights, safety and quality of life deserve protection. Development should not come at their expense.

Failing to protect small communities like this one, sets a precedent that convenience and ambition outweigh fairness and responsibility.

DIANA HERNANDEZ, ST. CATHERINE ST.

Editor's note: Careful readers of this space might have noticed that Diana Hernandez and I often disagree, but I find myself agreeing with her twice in a row (see also April 14, p. 8). For more on my similar views regarding the train station, please see my now semi-ancient piece: "Let's train ourselves to avoid boondoggles" (November 6, 2012, p. 6).

I add another warning to the ones in that column: the two recent councils wasted a lot of time and bandwidth on consultations that went nowhere, most notoriously on "Imagine Westmount 2040" (see April 9, 2024, p. 7) and on Westmount Park in general (see May 25, 2021, p. 1 and note that this consultation was separate, larger in scope and before 2024's quickie, consultation-less renovation of the playground).

Council members: you only have so much time. Don't waste it on pipe dreams regarding the train station, which is cute but has many, many limitations, including regulatory ones due to its proximity to ... a train track. – DP.

GARBAGE SURVEY FAILS TO HAVE 'RETURN TO PAST' OPTION

I have lived Westmount since 1984, and up until two years ago, not only was garbage collection done weekly, but, particularly in Districts 1 and 2, the trash collection companies always removed our garbage from the backs or sides of our homes

rather than having the residents themselves do it.

In what was probably a budgetary consideration, rather than an environmental one, this service has ended, to the detriment and danger of many.

There are a substantial number of seniors living in Westmount. Some have mobility issues, and others have medical conditions that make hauling the garbage from the backs of our homes to the curb extraordinarily difficult, particularly in winter, with snow and ice covering the way.

Compounding this issue is that if garbage were only picked up bi-weekly, those same seniors, myself included, would likely have to carry more weight to the curb, or to make several trips over the ice and snow.

Disappointingly, the survey commissioned by the city does not address this issue, and I would encourage the administration to return to garbage collection as it used to be, namely weekly collection with the garbage bags and containers brought out by the hired contractors, rather than by the citizens themselves.

So much better to spend a few dollars more on this service than to have a mobility or medically challenged resident fall and break a hip, or suffer a heart attack, or worse, all in the name of saving a dollar or two.

ALLEN RUBIN, LEXINGTON AVE.

Editor's note: FYI, the Communauté Métropolitaine de Montréal (CMM) has mandated that no more than 26 yearly garbage pick-ups per year can take place after December 2027 (see March 31, p. 8). In my view, this obscure and opaque body is even less democratic than the more well-known/notorious "agglo" and its *diktats* should be treated with little intellectual respect. Nevertheless, these edicts do exist and council will have to obey them – or find the will to resist or change them, somehow. – DP.

WOOD AVE. AREA RESIDENTS WANT DIRECT DIALOGUE WITH POLICE (1)

As a resident of 1 Wood Ave., I am writing regarding the recent cancellation of the scheduled meeting with Station 12's chief, Marie-Ève Lamarche. This meeting was intended to give residents an opportunity to voice longstanding concerns about persistent disturbances in our neighbourhood – issues that have been disruptive, ongoing and at times intimidating, occurring at all hours of the day and night.

Westmount has long been recognized for its calm and orderly character. That standard has been steadily eroded, and

residents are simply seeking a return to the basic expectation of peaceful enjoyment of our homes and community. In this context, the cancellation of direct engagement with police leadership is both disappointing and troubling, and it risks further undermining confidence that these concerns will be addressed with the seriousness they warrant.

I am therefore calling on Montreal police leadership, including Chief Fady Dagher, to promptly reinstate direct dialogue with residents and to ensure that restoring public order in this area is treated as an immediate and urgent priority.

MARK ADESKY, WOOD AVE.

WOOD AVE. AREA RESIDENTS WANT DIRECT DIALOGUE WITH POLICE (2)

As a resident of Westmount Square, I was both shocked and angered to learn that the long-planned and confirmed meeting with police Station 12's chief, Marie-Ève Lamarche, was abruptly cancelled at the very last minute.

For months, residents in the area have endured ongoing protests that have, at times, crossed the line into intimidation and harassment. Throughout this period, there has been a growing perception that the police have been either unwilling or unable to consistently enforce existing laws, leaving many residents feeling vulnerable and unheard.

It is particularly troubling because Lamarche herself agreed last November to meet with residents, on a date and in a format of her choosing. This was seen as an important opportunity for dialogue, accountability, and reassurance.

While there is now a stated commitment to re-schedule, the absence of a firm date only adds to residents' frustration and uncertainty.

A vague promise to meet at some undefined point in the future is simply not sufficient given the seriousness and duration of these concerns.

Residents deserve not only to be heard, but to feel that their concerns are being taken seriously by those entrusted with public safety.

I urge the appropriate authorities to set a prompt and definitive date for this meeting and to engage meaningfully with the community without further delay.

LORNE MAYERS, WESTMOUNT SQUARE

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IN URBAN PLANNING, VERBS MATTER – A LOT

An open letter to Westmount city council

You intend to adopt draft By-law 1662, for which a public consultation meeting was organized Monday, April 27 [after press time]. The public notice for the meeting said that "the purpose of this draft by-law is to make necessary adjustments to certain verbs, as well as other minor corrections to the wording of certain terms and expressions" in amending By-law 1305.

Well, that sounded exciting, eh? "Make necessary adjustments to certain verbs." Now *that* should have brought out the public in droves on Monday. But that's unlikely – but it should have.

This is because the draft by-law will radically change how By-law 1305, the centre-piece of Westmount's urban planning law, operates. This law was first adopted in 1995, then modified in 2001, when it was baptized By-law 1305.

It has been on our books for over 30 years. The city has won many legal cases defending it and it has become part of Quebec's jurisprudence. Even Parks Canada recognized By-law 1305 as a model in protecting our unique heritage when we were declared a National Historic Site in 2016.

So, where's the problem? In the existing by-law, whenever the verbs "shall," "must," and "should" are used, it means an absolute obligation to do something. By-law 1662 will change this: in many cases, a "must" will become a "should" and any "should" can be ignored if the Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) so desires.

For example, the current By-law 1305 reads: "Land use adjacent to a railway **must** promote the security of the required facilities or construction, and new development projects **must** incorporate measures to reduce the nuisances generated by railway operations."

It will now read: "Land use adjacent to a railway **should** promote the security of the required facilities or construction, and new development projects **should** incorporate measures to reduce the nuisances generated by railway operations."

No one is saying that By-law 1305 is untouchable. Some changes after 30 years are appropriate. But a wholesale evisceration of its powers while calling the rewrite simply "adjustments" to some verbs?

I have to assume that none of you was made aware of this legal *legerdemain*. After all, radically modifying Westmount's principal urban planning tool did not feature in any of your electoral platforms.

PETER F. TRENT, CÔTE ST. ANTOINE RD.
Ed. note: Peter Trent was mayor from 1991 to 2001 and from 2009 to 2017. – DP

'CCSMTL' re-affirms its decision to stay silent regarding news

Regional health authority reviewing Resilience Montreal's request for support

BY JENNIFER BALL

A spokesman for the major regional health and social services authority in Montreal – the Integrated University Health and Social Services Centre of South-Central Montreal (CCSMTL) – says the centre remains in dialogue with Resilience Montreal to explore various possibilities for support and integration with available programs, but is not divulging much more.

History

As the *Independent* reported on March 17 (p. SL-26), the CCSMTL indicated that it was too premature to disclose new funding for Resilience Montreal, something which Resilience's executive director David Chapman said he needed to continue to operate the homeless day shelter.

Chapman had told *La Presse* reporter Eric Martel in October 2025 that the organization needed \$860,000 by March 31 of this year and \$1.7 million for its expenses from October 2025 to October 2026.

Danny Raymond, media relations advisor at the CCSMTL, told the *Independent* on March 3 that letters had been sent on March 2 to the organizations that were

receiving new funding, but "We are [not yet] able to provide any information about their financing" (see March 17, p. SL-26).

No information to come

Resilience rents at its current location of 4000 St. Catherine St., which is partly in Montreal and partly in Westmount. It used to house the Miso restaurant and, before that, a McDonald's.

Westmount By-law 1650, passed at the February 3 city council meeting, put in place a development freeze at that location and the small retail/office building to its west (see March 3, p. 8 and for background, see February 20, 2024, p.18, November 19, 2024, p. 1 and p. 18).

Raymond was asked on April 11 when and whether the new location for the Resilience day shelter at 780 Atwater will open.

He responded, "Concerning the opening, unfortunately we can't tell."

In a follow-up response received on April 20, Raymond indicated that they would not be providing information about financing because, "The CIUSSS du Centre-Sud (CCSMTL) does not publicly com-

ment on the individual financial situations of an organization, especially when the matter is under review or being discussed internally..."

"Community organizations submit projects that are evaluated based on several criteria, including those related to the budget envelope defined by the Ministry of Health and Social Services (MSSS). Priorities are also determined by intersectoral governance in Montreal and the needs of the territory..."

By-law revision, cont'd from p. 1

more house than they currently need, which may allow them to continue living in Westmount."

Moss said he was not aware of what other cities may be doing in this respect, "but I also felt that it was important to have parameters that protect the heritage nature of our existing buildings while still allowing for accessory dwelling units."

Design guidelines are included within the by-law, he noted, adding that accessory dwelling units were also part of his election

"The CIUSSS remains in dialogue with the organizations concerned in order to explore the various possibilities for support and integration with available programs. Following the announcement of additional funding for the Montreal region, some projects from organizations that were not selected during recent calls for projects could be re-considered, subject to the conditions attached to this funding and financial availability."

platform "when the topic of density came up."

A number of criteria in the by-law also include that neither a new door nor balcony to the ADU can be installed on the front of the principal building, that the ADU cannot occupy more than 35 percent of the principal building, and that it must use the principal building's electrical, water and sewer connections.

An introductory summary of the city's by-law states that no other planning by-law may prohibit the establishment of an ADU when certain provisions are met.

Hazardous waste, cont'd from p. 1

"Due to the high costs of processing materials collected during these ... itinerant collections and the time required to organize these one-day events," Rutishisha said, "Ville de Montréal has decided to discontinue itinerant HHW collections and instead focus more on drop-off locations that are available year-round, such as the Ecocentres."

"According to Ville de Montréal, the cost of processing materials collected during itinerant collections are nearly six times higher than those for similar materials collected at Ecocentres."

The lines to drop off items at Ecocentres can be long at certain times of the year (e.g.

spring) and this phenomenon was before the biannual HHW collections were discontinued. Rutishisha was asked if the city was worried that residents will just dump their HHW in the garbage.

"The city will continue to raise public awareness about proper disposal of HHW. Furthermore, updated wait times at the two nearest Ecocentres are available on their website. This could help residents to better plan their visit."

"Additionally, many items like paint, electronics and mercury bulbs can be brought to local depots near Westmount, and batteries are accepted at most municipal buildings."

The ecocentres closest to Westmount are:

- Ecocentre de la Côte des Neiges: 6925 Côte des Neiges Rd,
- Ecocentre LaSalle: 7272 St. Patrick St.

The city of Westmount is currently exploring the possibility of organizing drop-off events for certain non-hazardous items, such as electronics. What about the other items such as paint, cleaners and certain light bulbs?

Rutishisha said, "These items must be brought to the Ecocentre or, depending on the item, to another drop-off site. For more information, we invite residents to visit the city website at westmount.org/collections. Empty aerosols container can also be brought to the small-item recuperation island at the Westmount recreation centre (WRC)."

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In Priests' Farm area

Laneway recycling collection pilot project determined to be a success

BY JENNIFER BALL

The *Independent* received notice from the Environment division of the Public Works department of the city on April 17 that a pilot project on laneway recyclables pick-up has been successful.

The four-month trial commenced in February to assess the feasibility of moving recyclable waste collection from the front of houses to the laneways of the de Casson-Barat-Holton sector, an area also called Priests' Farm due to its former vocation.

After only two and a half months, it was evident that the location would work permanently with the following caveats:

- Any limited space may force trucks to partially drive onto private driveways,
- The collection is impossible if vehicles are parked in the alley, extend beyond private parking spaces or in the event of snow accumulation.

As the *Independent* reported on February 3 (p. 18), District 3 councillor Jeff Shamie and District 6 councillor Paul Levine spearheaded the pilot project and they provided a joint statement on April 22 saying, "This

initiative, which we jointly proposed shortly after being elected last November, allows residents in these lanes to have their recycling collected at the rear of their properties, just as garbage and compost already are, rather than having to wheel large, heavy recycling bins around to the front curb."

The councillors said that resident feedback had been overwhelmingly positive and they collaborated to advance what they say they believed to be a practical, resident-focused improvement to daily life in the neighbourhood – in which both councillors live – saying, "This experience is a strong example of what collaboration can achieve..."

"City council and the city administration were highly supportive from the outset, and their openness to considering new approaches made the success of this project possible. We are pleased that this pilot has demonstrated its value and that residents will continue to benefit from this service on a permanent basis. It reinforces our belief that thoughtful, collaborative initiatives grounded in the lived experience of resident can make a meaningful difference in our community."

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The Legacy Challenge at a glance



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Small homeless encampment moves around southwest



Materials leaning on the inside of the fence enclosing the CP tracks, as seen April 2. This location is west of the old train station at St. Catherine and Victoria.

PHOTO COURTESY OF D. ANDERSON.

A small homeless encampment is moving around southwest Westmount, or several different ones are popping up and disappearing.

Nearby residents told the *Independent* April 23 that, last fall, shelters were put up in the municipal parking lot on the north

side of St. Catherine at Prince Albert and on the south side of St. Catherine near York. They have since disappeared, seemingly as a result of city intervention.

On March 31, a man was observed accessing the CP tracks near its St. Catherine-near-York entrance and placing a tarp



A likely homeless shelter inside the fence enclosing the CP tracks on the south side of St. Catherine St. near Prince Albert, as seen April 23. This new “no trespassing” sign was placed there the same day by CP police, according to a nearby resident.

PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.

there. A large mattress covered with another tarp was observed the next day propped up against the outside of the fence. It was removed by Public Works, according to a nearby resident.

Recently, a homeless man was evicted by the city from its unused train station at the foot of Victoria (see letter, April 14, p. 8) and shelter-making materials appeared for a time between the train tracks and the fence enclosing the CP tracks a little to the west of that landmark.

Further west again from that point, near St. Catherine’s intersection with Prince Albert, an extant shelter was observed by the *Independent* between the fence and the train track on April 23.

“The scale of this goes beyond a few Westmount residents and the issue is becoming a broader community safety and security concern, which needs to be taken seriously and acted upon quickly,” said resident Diana Anderson to the *Independent*. – WI.

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Psychologist Ariza's 'Masochistic Brain' book explores our emotions

BY MARTIN C. BARRY

A Westmount-based clinical psychologist has just published a book that he hopes may help individuals and couples better understand their emotional patterns, while developing healthier ways of relating to themselves and others.

The Masochistic Brain: Breaking Free from Self-Inflicted Pain and Unwanted Circumstances explores themes such as anxiety, anger, emotional regulation and relationship patterns.

Ten years after he started to write down his ideas, Javier Ariza's psychology-based book (written, he says, for the general public as well for professionals in the field) combines clinical insight with narrative and reflection.

At its core, the book explores the idea that people don't suffer only because of what happens to them, but also because of how their minds continue to interpret, replay and react to experiences. Over time, patterns become automatic, he contends, shaping how we see ourselves, others and the world around us.

"I introduce the concept of the 'masochistic brain' to describe this phenomenon, not as a mind that seeks pain, but as one

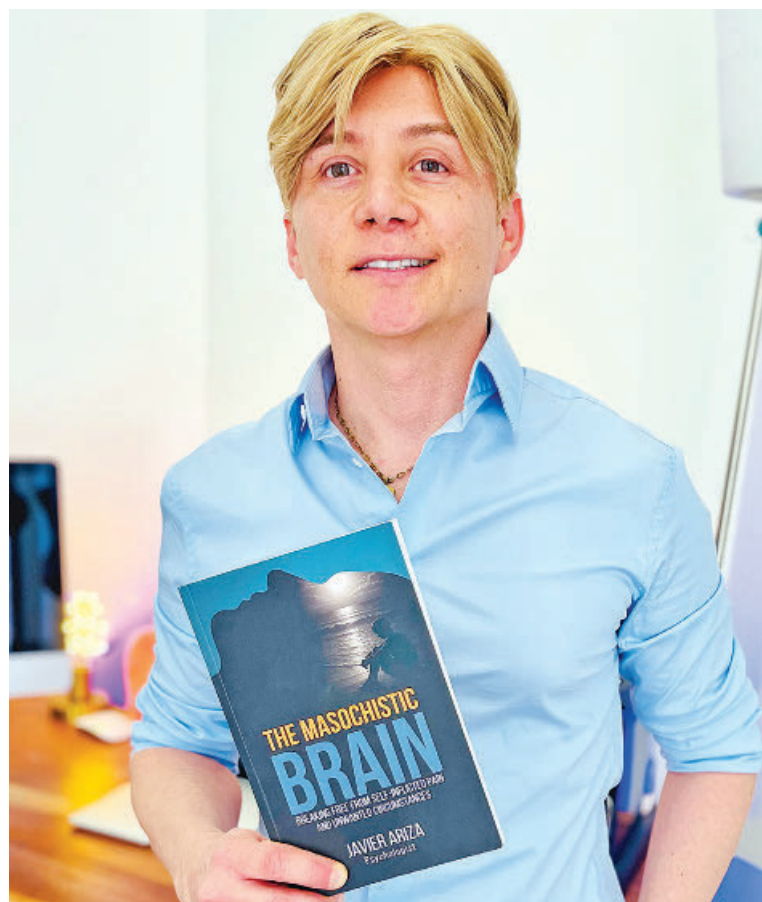
that unconsciously repeats familiar patterns of suffering, even when they are no longer helpful," Ariza said in an interview with the *Independent* at his St. Catherine St. office.

Rather than being written as a purely academic text, he said he wrote *The Masochistic Brain* as a therapeutic narrative addressed to a fictional character named "P," who represents the universal human experience.

"This format allows readers to recognize themselves in the story, reflect on their own emotional patterns and experience what a therapeutic process can feel like," said Ariza.

He said the book is the result of "a clinical journey" he took as a clinical psychologist, with the intention of making psychological insight more human and accessible.

He said its narrative and



structure were designed to support readers who may struggle with an attention deficit (including those with ADHD), allowing them to engage with the material in a more flexible, reflective and approachable way.

With a good number of Westmount residents among his clients, Ariza believes a significant number of Westmounters will be able to benefit from his book.

"Westmount is a community known for its high-achieving, driven and intellectually engaged population," he said, noting that although these are strengths, they can sometimes also generate internal stresses that can be relieved through the methods he suggests.

The book (issued by Universal Publishers USA) is available through a number of online platforms, including Amazon.

◀ Westmount clinical psychologist Javier Ariza, seen here with his new book at his St. Catherine St. office on April 18.



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City: Clarifying urban planning by-laws

City moves to provide council with ‘discretionary’ power

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

In an effort to provide “more consistent documentation and clearer decision framework” regarding urban planning permits, city council April 14 tabled By-law 1662 amending By-law 1305. In this, a key change, Councillor Jonathan Chomski told the *Independent*, “is replacing the word ‘must’ by ‘should.’ This, he says, “allows flexibility where context warrants it.”

This was to be presented at a public consultation meeting April 27 at 7 pm at city hall, after press time.

It was among other changes initiated on the recommendation of the Urban Planning department and legal advisors to

ensure the by-law operates as “a discretionary framework,” Chomski add. “This reflects the reality that these files often involve professional judgment rather than a single correct answer.”

As well, he points out, the Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) recommendations “are not always unanimous. They exist within a broader discretionary system that requires decisions to be made based on the specific facts and context of each application.”

They also reflect “a deliberate effort by council to approach urban planning decisions with a high degree of diligence and care,” and to understand these individual decisions within “that broader context.”

‘What’s happening?’ Public meeting requested

Ongoing needs, updated master plan cited for Summit Woods

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

An advocate for creating an updated master plan for the city’s Summit Woods is seeking a special informal public meeting with the current council and parks staff to discuss ongoing plans for 2026.

John Fretz of Lansdowne had raised the issue at the start of the council question period meeting April 14 after delivering a letter on the issue in advance to Mayor Michael Stern and later sending a copy to the *Independent* (see April 21, p. 5).

Among initiatives for spring 2026 that had been outlined to Fretz before the election by outgoing councillor Mary Gallery were targeting “invasive species control based on a completed inventory and ecological priorities” as well as continued trail stabilization and forest protection work guided by data collected in 2025.

“We had been promised a master plan for Summit Woods. Then came the election. Things fizzled.”

Following up last week, Fretz told the *Independent* it turned out that the city’s forestry engineer had started with Public Works only last year “so maybe he is not fully apprised of the situation,” which would be “a major reason for having a public meeting” now.

“It’s spring. What is happening?”

Fenced off

At the moment, he said, “Public Works has fenced off certain redundant trails but



A recent migrant to Summit Woods having wintered in the southern USA: a yellow-rumped warbler on April 23. It is a solitary bird that spends most of its time high in the tree tops consuming small insects. PHOTO: RALPH THOMPSON.

nothing beyond that.”

Among continuing needs, he states, are the “narrowing of ever-widening paths,” the spreading of wood chips on muddy stretches, erosion control, removal of invasive growth and re-planting where needed.”

Fretz had been a member of the city of Westmount’s Summit Woods Advisory Committee for some eight years (see story on a walk through Summit Woods, June 21, 2022, p. 6).



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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 March 2026. Because they are not final registered sales, the addresses cannot be made public, but give a good idea of current trends in local real estate activity. The graph at right offers a picture of these trends over time.

The Westmount real estate market showed signs of a comeback in March this year, with an extra seven sales added to the 11 previously reported sales in February list and 14 more in March to make this the hottest first-quarter market since 2021 and 2022, the peak pandemic years.

The number of days to sell, according to agents, dropped by half – from 124 days in January to 62 days in March, and in fact the median fell off from 75 in January to 20 days last month.

Four buyers in January paid full asking price for property, two more paid the full asking price and three others actually bid above asking in February, with only one more in March, but that went for more

March sales: Hottest first quarter since pandemic

than seven percent over asking.

The March market averaged 5.1 percent above the new 2026 valuations, with only three posted for less than that figure and only one for minus-double digits, at -21.18 percent.

All of the rest ranged between 0.09 and 15.93 percent, except for two, at 42 percent and 38 percent; the 42-percent mark-up belonged to a Victoria village house that sold for \$1,385,000, the lowest-priced sale of the month, despite the high mark-up.

The top price went for a mid-level house that sold for \$2,985,000, meaning that none of the high-priced sales that we have written about recently – \$8 million in January, \$5.7 million in February – were replicated on the March list. So, with only two price brackets to deal with, it is quite surprising to see eight of the sales at or above \$2 million, only six below that mark.

Whole duplexes popular

Two of the 14 residential sales in March were full duplexes, meaning there have been three duplexes sold this year, a product that has been gaining in popularity (one other, sold in February, was converted to a huge single-family dwelling several years ago, but the duplex classification remains in city records).

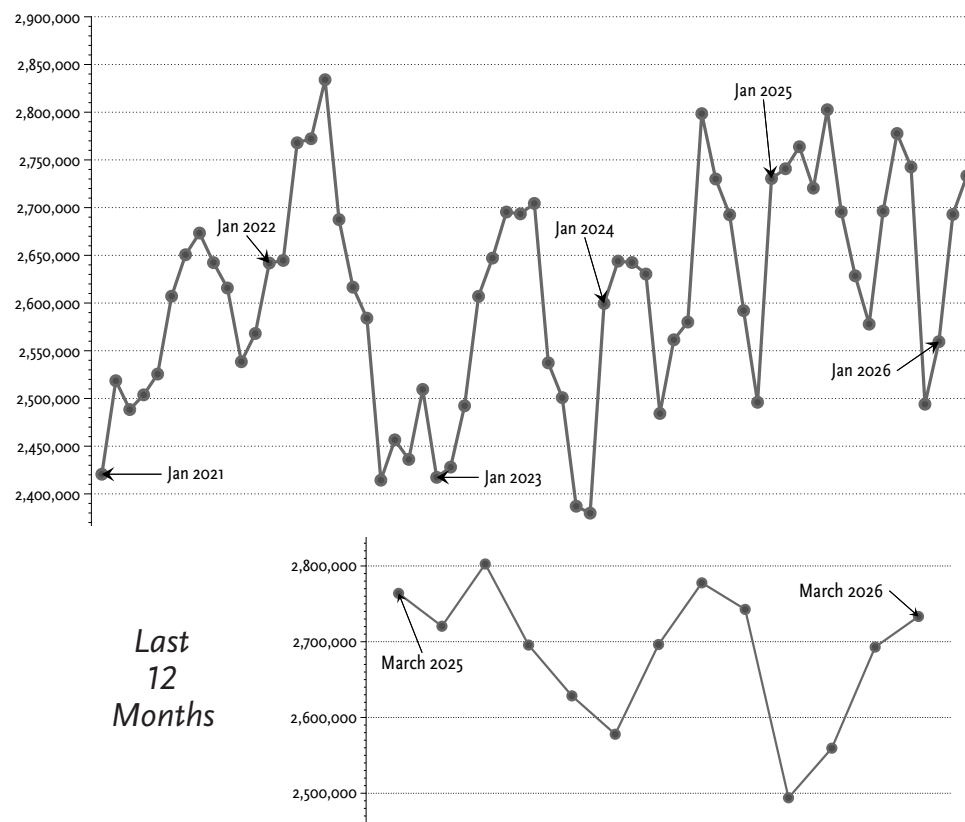
While we have had three duplexes selling so far this year and seven in all of 2025, only two duplexes sold in 2024. Most of Westmount's duplexes, of course, have been converted to condominiums or undivided co-ownership.

Condos

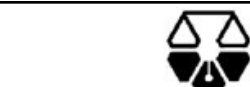
And speaking of condominiums, the popularity that is evident in the one- and two-family market has not been replicated at least for the first three months: one sale in January, two in February, one in March.

One involved a luxury condominium on Greene Ave. that sold above \$3 million. The other two sold for less than \$1 million each, and the average mark-up of the four

Average adjusted price for 'typical' Westmount house, by month, January 2021 to March 2026, based on accepted offer dates



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was 4.2 percent; the range of the four went from -26 percent to +22 percent, so there is hardly a pattern to the market.

Westmount adjacent, rentals

Adjacent-Westmount, too, seems to have had a tough start to 2026, with house sales in every district having an average price:valuation ratio below parity; in fact, all six of the sales in NDG east of Décarie Blvd. sold underwater, as did four of the five sales in Côte des Neiges south of Queen Mary Rd. and three of five just east of the city limits.

Westmount rentals are somewhat slow-

er than last year, with agents posting six house rentals through mid-April this year, compared to 10 for the same time last year. The six have rates from \$3,400 to \$9,980 per month; another 16 houses are listed to rent for rates as high as \$20,000.

Listings to sell climbed from 120 to 125 in the past month, ranging in asking price from \$1,350,000 to \$21,800,000.

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LYSANNE FOWLER



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Tuxy & Tout Beau, bonded in black-tie



9 Lives

LYSANNE FOWLER



Tuxy is on the left, a handsome black-and-white tuxedo male who is very affectionate with people and enjoys his string toys and scratch pad.

Tout Beau is on the right, Tuxy's companion, who is bonded to him quite adorably. She is a sleepy, cuddly girl until she becomes an energetic feather-toy swatter.

These beautiful sweeties are both in foster care for the Cause4Paws volunteer cat rescue group. The foster family reports that they enjoy their quiet home environment and fall into the routine very easily. They are both healthy, a bit over four years old, up to date with their inoculations and sterilized. Tuxy has a spot of asthma and has a little inhaler for this when needed.

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VERONICA REDGRAVE

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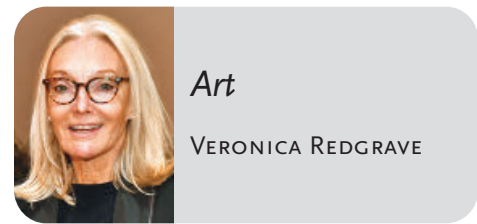
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Atkinson's ensembles study effect of memory, perception



Art

VERONICA REDGRAVE



In Between by artist Michèle Atkinson at the Victoria Hall gallery is a thoroughly thoughtful show. More than that: it is a series of conversations.

Groupings of her clay figures mirror their counterpart paintings on the wall. Working in clay, encaustic and oil, the artist is inspired by thoughts on absence and presence.

Old family photos led her to consider how “memory and perception blur reality.” Creating a “studio feel,” Gallery curator Ève-Catherine Champoux placed the beginnings – the artist’s sketchbooks – in one corner. Here guests can see the process from drawings to exhibited expressions.

At the gallery entrance, a video describes the artist’s artistic process. Her glazed stoneware “*petites sculptures*” are lovely odes to the century-old tradition of small statues, although “I will always be a painter,” she explained.

Her favourite is a work inspired by a dog she saw at the Westmount Park dog run.

“Intuitively, I added the child and the narrative completely changed. One is present; the other is passing.” Her sister, Clare Fawcette, wrote an accompanying poem. Opening eve attracted a crowd of admirers including Paul Levine, Westmount city councillor.

Early in her career, Michèle studied painting and drawing at Westmount’s Visual Art Centre. Her talent has been exhibited in Quebec and Ontario galleries as well as in international art fairs including Hong Kong. Celebrating her show, a special evening is being held on May 7 at 7 pm.

Michèle Atkinson will talk about the inspiration that led to *In Between*. She will guide a short tour of her works and discuss her creative process with Champoux. Refreshments will be served.

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Durnford's Jehane Benoît book explores life of 'Canada's Julia Child'

BY MARTIN C. BARRY

Westmount documentary filmmaker Megan Durnford was in an upbeat mood early this month after learning her newly-published graphic novel on Canadian cuisine icon Jehane Benoît was already making waves and was hopefully on its way to becoming a bestseller.

Durnford, whose documentaries have explored funeral rites for forgotten people as well as the habits of obsessive lawn-keepers, wrote the text, dialogue and historical notes for the book, *Jehane Benoît*, with Stéphane Lemardelé contributing the artwork.

Released in French late last month by Les éditions La Presse, an English-language version is planned, although as of last week a publisher had yet to be announced.

Although Jehane Benoît became an icon of mid-20th century Canadian culture through her 30 cookbooks – as well as a 1960s Steinberg's grocery chain campaign that raised Benoît's image even higher – there is also a Westmount connection.

Those Westmounters familiar perhaps with architectural landmarks throughout the city may be interested to know that Jehane Benoît lived in the turreted three-story red brick multi-unit building at the



Megan Durnford, pictured here on April 9, holds a copy of her newly-published graphic novel on Canadian cuisine icon Jehane Benoît, who was also a Westmounter.

southeast corner of Church Hill Ave. and Côte St. Antoine Rd. from 1952 to 1968 (see "1-3 Church Hill: Many lives/streets/legal structures lived," March 19, 2024, p. SL-28.)

While doing extensive research for the book, Durnford approached the Westmount Historical Association to confirm a rumour that Jehane Benoît had lived there during the 1950s with her husband Bernard. One of the illustrated scenes in



1-3 Church Hill on April 23.

PHOTO: RALPH THOMPSON.

the book takes place at the residence (the exterior is pictured) in 1954.

Westmount born and bred

According to a 2019 CBC profile of Jehane Benoît that referred to her as "Canada's Julia Child," Benoît actually grew up in Westmount and her grandfather was a connoisseur of fine food.

"Everyone's heard of Jehane Benoît – everybody, both English and French – but

very few people know anything about her life," Durnford said in an interview with the *Independent*.

Ever the enterprising freelancer, she said she decided to take a leap into creating a graphic novel (something about which she initially knew nothing) after reading an article six years ago in *Le Devoir* that said there was an increasing reader interest in graphic novels dealing with food and wine.

"I love reading graphic novels and I also love cooking – so I set myself this challenge," she said, while adding that the actual work with Stéphane Lemardelé (who lives in Sutton in the Eastern Townships) finally got under way around two years ago.

According to Durnford, media interest in the book has been strong across the country. "The publicist is literally run off his feet trying to keep up with interview requests," she said.

With all that said, Durnford is preparing to follow up on the success of her first graphic novel with a second one that will probably also be biographical. "Because it's been doing so well, there is no question that I am absolutely excited about creating another," she said.

◀Benoît Rd. in Sutton, Quebec was so named during the 1969-77 mayoralty of Jehane Benoît's husband, Bernard, known locally as "Barney." From approximately 1956 to 1998, the Benoîts and their daughter owned two neighbouring farms and raised sheep under the "Noirmouton" name.

PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.

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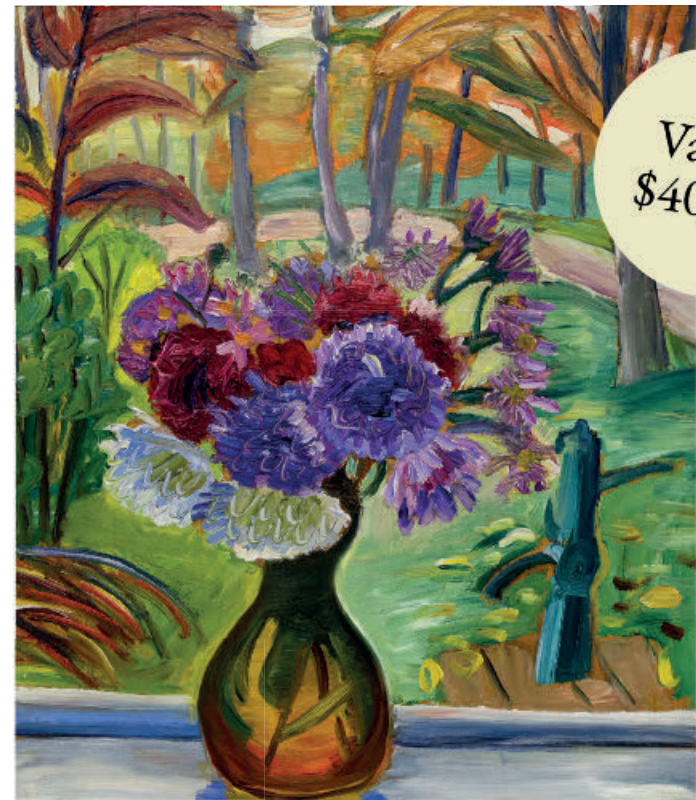
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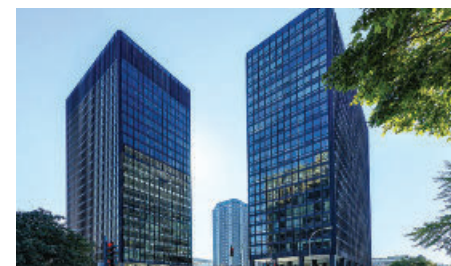
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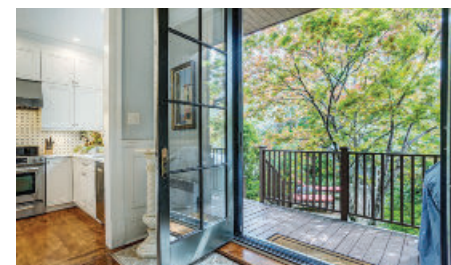
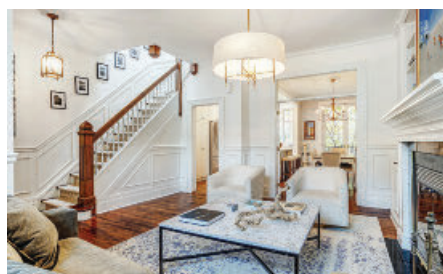
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