

DEMOLISHED MID 1960'S

# PROTECTING

**SPEAKER: MARK LONDON**

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# OUR HERITAGE

## SETTING UP WESTMOUNT'S SYSTEM

PROTECTED 1988



Association historique de Westmount  
Westmount Historical Association



# Setting Up Westmount's System of Heritage Protection

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## Mark London

Former Chairman of the Westmount Planning Advisory Committee  
Formerly the Westmount Architectural and Planning Commission

Westmount Historical Association – March 15, 2019

*[Slide - Title]*

*[Slide - Title Section 1]*

## 1. Introduction

Today, I'll describe how we set up Westmount's system of heritage conservation in the 1980s and 1990s, which, as you'll see, involved a lot more than a single heritage study. This is from my point of view and although I've checked the facts with Peter Trent and Joanne Poirier, it would probably be quite different if they wrote this.

### Back to the Sixties

A lot of what follows seems obvious in retrospect, so to fully appreciate what we were facing when we started, I invite you to put yourselves back into the mindset of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century. People longed for Progress . . . to sweep away the vestiges of the Depression and World War II, and move into a bright, efficient, Modern future.

*[Slide - Plan Voisin]*

Young architects were inspired by abstract glass boxes, stripped of any "nostalgic" trappings of the past. Young planners sought radical new ways to build the city of tomorrow, such as Le Corbusier's Plan Voisin's proposal to replace two square miles of historic Paris neighbourhoods with eighteen cruciform office towers surrounded by broad plazas.

*[Slide - New York World Fair]*

The 1939 New York World Fair presented an optimistic vision of the World of Tomorrow. Archigram envisaged a Plug-In City of futuristic techno-structures. Paul Rudolph proposed megastructures sitting atop the Lower Manhattan Expressway, which Robert Moses's wanted to blast through Washington Square and the rest of Greenwich Village.

### Montreal

*[Slide - Dozois Plan]*

Most inner-city neighbourhoods were considered "slums", to be cleared away, not fixed up. Federally funded urban renewal demolished whole communities, residents be damned, to allow a whole new way of making cities, with expressways and superblocks of tall "towers in a park". Urban ills were to be remedied with a bulldozer, not medicine or a scalpel.

Montreal had its Dozois Plan – Habitations Jeanne-Mance built in 1959. (The photo on the left is the so-called slum that was cleared away.)

*[Slide - PVM and Expo]*

In the Sixties in Montreal, everyone was excited by the Progress and Modernism of Place Ville Marie and Expo 67.

*[Slide - Old Montreal]*

There was a sense that heritage conservation was for Europe; there simply weren't many buildings on this side of the Atlantic worth saving. Preservation here was only for a handful of "historic monuments" such as Old Montreal and a scattering of French Regime buildings such as the Hurtubise House. It was inevitable that all the older streetscapes and neighbourhoods in the rest of the city would sooner or later be swept away and replaced by big, new buildings.

*[Slide - Jane Jacobs]*

Although attitudes started to change when Robert Moses' nemesis, Jane Jacobs, wrote *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* in 1961, it took decades before there was broad public acceptance of her appreciation of vibrant traditional streets and neighbourhoods, and her rejection of urban renewal's modernist vision of towers in concrete plazas, separation of land uses, ill-defined open spaces, and car-oriented transportation infrastructure.

*[Slide - Lambert-Leduc House]*

## Westmount

Here in Westmount, older buildings and neighbourhoods were threatened by growing development pressure from Montreal's downtown expansion to the west. Historic buildings were demolished with little concern.

*[Slide - Bland Report]*

The City of Westmount's efforts to promote urban renewal and accommodate this development – the 1960 Bland Report and the 1967 Sunderland Report – would have virtually wiped out Lower Westmount to make way for massive new construction. The Ville-Marie Expressway cut a swath through the housing below the escarpment. Dorchester Boulevard was widened.

*[Slide - Alexis-Nihon]*

The southern corners of the city were up-zoned, leading to the construction of Alexis-Nihon Plaza and Chateau Maisonneuve. And 4300 de Maisonneuve didn't exactly fit into the neighbourhood.

Building Westmount Square in 1967 involved the demolition of seventy houses and creation of a rather sterile environment of towers on a windswept plaza of white travertine. But at least Mies van der Rohe's project was a fine example of Modern Design and the project didn't touch the small-scale shops and buildings on the east side of Greene Avenue.

Finally, a group of citizens formed the Lower Westmount Citizens' Committee to successfully fight the slum-clearance, urban-renewal plans to demolish their neighbourhood and replace it with high rises.

*[Slide - Prospect House]*

## Moving to Westmount

I'm grateful they did, because a few years later, my sister Eleanor and I moved to Lower Westmount, buying an 1894 greystone duplex on Prospect Street. I was 24 and was working as an architect and planner at Arcop Associates during the day and was active in Save Montreal in my spare time.

This neighbourhood's transition from "slum" to "highly desirable" mirrored the evolution in Westmounters' attitude to older buildings. When I moved there, it was at the earliest stages of gentrification, with a great mix of renters and owners, families and single people of all ages, income levels, and mother tongues. Some old-timers had lived there all their lives. Recent arrivals included American draft dodgers, artists, Europeans, activists, National Film Board types, lots of architects, and other misfits who appreciated this area of inexpensive, run-down Victorian houses close to downtown, unlike the native Montrealers who were fleeing to the suburbs. In other words, a bunch of troublemakers.

*[Slide - Stayner Park]*

At its heart, Stayner Park, had just been created when these activist neighbours started building a "people's park" on an abandoned former school property slated to become a Hydro substation. Alderman and neighbour Douglas Robertson convinced City Council to make it an official park.

*[Slide - St. Stephen's Church]*

Just after I moved there, these same activist neighbours "saved" the historic St. Stephen's Church, by joining the church and then voting down the proposal to close the church and sell the property.

*[Slide - Quinlan Apartments]*

In 1976, a few of us unsuccessfully opposed the proposed demolition of the 1908 greystone Quinlan Apartments on Saint Catherine Street near Kensington, designed by the Maxwell Brothers.

*[Slide - Greene Avenue]*

I was also involved in the fight to "Save Greene Avenue", opposing Mondev Corporation's proposal to add two more towers to Westmount Square on Greene Avenue – on the corners of Ste. Catherine Street and De Maisonneuve. The City's "compromise", raising the zoning limit on the corner of St. Catherine from 6 to 22 storeys to allow one tower, was approved 69 to 55 in a hard-fought zoning referendum.

*[Slide - Westmount City Hall]*

### Joining the APC

In 1981, Westmount Alderman David Carruthers asked me if I'd be interested in filling a vacancy on what was then called the Westmount Architectural and Planning Commission. I was named at the beginning of 1982.

Since 1916, the Commission had reviewed every building permit application affecting a structure's exterior, from new buildings to minor renovations. The Commission was considered somewhat stodgy, made up of senior architects nearing the ends of their careers and very much of the post-War Modernist mindset. They were favourable to well-designed new development and unsympathetic to preservation of anything other than the grandest homes and public buildings.

David wanted me to shake things up.

*[Slide – Commission members]*

My first months on the Commission were pretty lonely. In 1983, things got better when Peter Trent was elected alderman and appointed to be City Council's representative on the Commission. Peter was strongly sympathetic to

conservation and the two of us became a heritage tag team for almost two decades.

I ended up being a member of the Commission for most of the next twenty years, and Chairman for about half that time (1987-1993 and 1998-2001). When Peter became Mayor in 1991, Karin Marks replaced him as Council's representative on the Commission. She was as supportive as Peter had been of the Commission and of heritage conservation efforts.

[Slide - Title Section 2]

## 2. The First Set of Renovation and Construction Guidelines

[Slide - Streetscape School]

### Adopting Renovation Guidelines

At my first Commission meeting, I asked my fellow members what criteria they used to evaluate applications, and suggested that the Commission consider adopting written guidelines. Former Chairman and Member Emeritus Richard Bolton politely explained why this was impossible: every building and every proposal was unique and had to be judged on its own merits. I was too young and polite to argue the point.

We reviewed between one and two dozen applications at each weekly Tuesday morning meeting, which dealt mostly with renovations to existing buildings. After unfolding the drawings of a proposal, the first thing the Commissioners would do was ask how they had dealt with similar applications in the past. If the circumstances were the same, they invariably made a similar decision. I soon realized that they actually *did* have a very extensive set of criteria, they were just not written down.

For the next six months, I quietly took note of all these discussions. Then I organized the unwritten criteria by topic, typed them up, and distributed copies to the other members of the Commission saying, *"You said you didn't have guidelines but I think you do, and here they are."* They read them over and, somewhat reluctantly, agreed to use this as the basis for written guidelines.

[Slide - Streetscape – Clandeboye]

We wanted to avoid having the guidelines be a simplistic formula that could cramp the creativity of good architects or, alternatively, put us in the clutches of a poor but devious designer who'd try to make us to accept an awful project that technically met the guidelines. So we included a statement that although the guidelines generally provided good guidance, respecting all the guidelines did not guarantee approval of an application, while another proposal might be approved even if it didn't respect all the guidelines.

[Slide - Renovation in Westmount - Cover]

We refined the guidelines over the next couple of months, adopted them, and in late 1985, published them as a booklet for applicants: *Renovation in Westmount*. (I was Executive Director of Heritage Montreal by that time and Dinu Bumbaru, who worked with me there, did the illustrations. My Prospect Street neighbour Sue Scott did the graphics and layout.)

[Slide - Renovation in Westmount - Inside]

The renovation guidelines were well received. Then we started working on guidelines for new construction . . . just in time as it turned out.

*[Slide - De Maisonneuve and Clarke – southwest]*

## Legal Quicksand

It turned out that the Commission's legal authority was a lot shakier than the public knew. After decades of widespread municipal corruption, the Quebec government had prohibited any exercise of discretion when issuing building permits. Everything had to be spelled out in zoning and building regulations. If an application met the bylaws, the municipality *had* to issue the permit.

The City Solicitor argued that since the Architectural Commission had been established in Westmount's Charter that long predated the provincial law, we were in the clear. But it was debatable.

*[Slide - Braemar]*

So if an applicant was really insistent, the Commission usually backed off and sought a compromise. That's what happened with the proposal to build four houses on the front grounds of Braemar, on The Boulevard. The Commission and developer settled on three, making sure you could at least glimpse the historic house from the street.

*[Slide - De Maisonneuve and Clarke – southeast]*

Just as we were finishing off the guidelines for new construction, an applicant won a court case about a Commission denial of an application for a new building. The judge's decision mentioned that there were no criteria to guide an applicant, or for the City to use to judge a proposal. I scrambled to finish off the guidelines for new construction over the weekend, the Commission approved them the following Tuesday, and they were adopted by City Council at its next meeting. Our official position was this rectified the legal issue, though we remained cautious about pushing so hard that we'd end up in court.

On the right is an apartment building respecting the guidelines for new construction.

*[Slide - City Hall Tower]*

## Making the APC More User-Friendly

We also worked on improving how the Commission operated.

Every Tuesday morning, Commissioners and staff climbed the stairs to what seemed like a papal enclave in the meeting room on the third floor of the clocktower of City Hall. One by one, we unrolled of architectural plans, figured out and discussed the proposal, and made a decision, which the Building Inspector duly recorded in the minutes, usually either "Approved" or "Denied". In the latter case, the Building Inspector would later give the bad news to the frustrated applicant, struggling to remember what the Commissioners felt was the problem.

We started writing much more explicit minutes, often referring to the guidelines. Instead of just saying "Denied", we deferred consideration of the proposal and

explained what needed to change to get it approved. Often, a revised design was approved the following week.

*[Slide - Priests' Farm]*

In 1984, Alderman Trent convinced City Council to hire a Staff Architect to help analyze the applications, act as interface between applicants and the Commission, and take on a series of long-term planning projects. Joanne Poirier was eventually selected, and turned out to be an excellent choice, as she remained with the City for the next thirty years, rising through the municipal structure to become Director of Urban Planning from 1991 until she retired last year.

Although the review of applications was quite rigorous, we tried to make it as user-friendly and speedy as possible. It really was quite amazing how quickly the City was able to process a building permit application back then. If someone got their application in on a Wednesday afternoon, the Board of Inspections (made up of building, plumbing, fire, and other inspectors who had to sign off on a permit) usually reviewed it at their weekly Thursday meeting. If everything was okay, the item was put on the Commission's agenda that was distributed on Friday, Commissioners could visit properties over the weekend, we'd review it at our Tuesday morning meeting and, if it was approved, the permit could be issued that afternoon. Less than a week from application to permit, with full design review! Those were the good old days.

*[Slide - Riverview]*

### A New Legal Footing

In 1979, the Quebec government adopted the Loi sur l'aménagement et l'urbanisme (Act Respecting Land Use Planning and Development), finally authorizing municipalities to set up systems of project-by-project design review of site planning and architectural design, by creating of Plans d'implantation et intégration architectural (PIIA/SPAI - Site Planning and Architectural Integration Programmes) in designated areas.

We discussed the possibility of designating heritage areas, with extra rules and procedures, only in the most historic parts of the city. However, I was concerned that we not penalize owners of heritage buildings by subjecting them to a more complicated and time-consuming review process. Also, I was afraid that saying that some parts of Westmount had heritage value implied that the rest of the city was expendable. Although the government didn't necessarily intend that this provision be used for an entire city, there was nothing that prohibited it, so we designated all of Westmount, and put the whole design review operation on a sound legal footing.

The Architectural and Planning Commission was renamed the Planning Advisory Committee, as called for in the Quebec legislation, though we kept both names on the letterhead for quite a while.

The Quebec legislation required that the PAC only be advisory, with decisions made by City Council. At first, to expedite the process, we had City Council pre-



authorize the Commission to make decisions that were ratified later by City Council on a monthly basis. In case of a denial, applicants had a right of appeal to Council. We felt that those two provisions respected the requirement for Council approval, but it was a bit of a legal stretch.

This changed in 2009, in response to legal and political concerns, and permits were only issued after Council approved them, which added to the time needed to issue a permit. Council invariably backed up the Commission, in very rare cases asking the Commission to reconsider in light of new information, but never simply overturning the Commission's decision. Council wanted the decisions to be made by professionals and didn't want it turned into a political process that would not only be very time-consuming but would subject the Aldermen into political pressures and negative public reaction.

*[Slide - Title – Section 3]*

### **3. Zoning and Other Regulations**

Just as important as the design review process, are zoning regulations.

Permissive zoning creates unstable neighbourhoods because it's an incentive to tear down existing buildings and replace them with more or bigger structures. Owners figure there was no point in properly maintaining their buildings because, any day now, some big developer would offer them a fortune for their property, and redevelop it.

*[Slide - Streetscape Dorchester]*

Making the zoning conform as closely as possible to the existing built environment you want to preserve not only takes away the incentive to demolish in order to build something bigger, it also ensures that anything that is built harmonizes with the streetscape.

With growing development pressure in Westmount, people increasingly expected to "max out the zoning" by cramming as much floor space as possible within the zoning limits, whether or not it fit into the character of the area. Although the Architectural and Planning Commission could theoretically simply refuse such overdevelopment, this led to great frustration, tense discussions, and for the reasons I just explained, the threat of lawsuits. It's much better if the basic parameters are clearly set out. Why allow six-storey buildings on the south side of Dorchester or Sherbrooke Street if you want to keep the existing two- and three-storey buildings?

In the coming years, as people became increasingly supportive of the idea that most Westmount buildings and streetscapes should be preserved, Peter Trent and I, with the other members of the APC and City staff, reviewed the zoning throughout Westmount. We proposed, and City Council and citizens approved a number of measures reducing the height limits.

*[Slide - Victoria and Sherbrooke]*

The Greene / Ste. Catherine and Victoria / Sherbrooke commercial areas, were largely mostly made up of two- and three-storey buildings of heritage value, but the zoning generally allowed six-storey buildings. Development pressure would



likely eventually have led to all the small buildings and shops being replaced by taller office buildings. It took many years, but we changed the zoning to correspond more closely to the existing building heights. Height limits were also reduced on Dorchester, Gladstone, Hillside, and many other streets to correspond to the existing situation. We also shrunk the extent of commercially zoned land to protect residential areas.

*[Slide - Row Houses Perpendicular to Street]*

Regulations had allowed a developer to buy a property with a single-family house on it, demolish the possibly heritage home, and build a row of attached houses perpendicular to the street. Several fine homes had already fallen and we could see that whole neighbourhoods could be wiped out. We amended the Subdivision Bylaw to allow only one building per lot and require that every new lot front directly on a street.

*[Slide - Aerial of Upper Westmount]*

We addressed the Braemar-type situation and the general threat of large lots being chopped up into tiny lots much smaller than their surroundings with a series of measures to protect large properties. We adopted a provision in the Subdivision Bylaw to increase the minimum frontage and area of a property to be similar to the majority of nearby properties, initially using a formula to calculate the minimum frontage and area. (Any lot had to have 90% of the average frontage and 80% of the average area of other lots within 150 metres along its streetscape).

*[Slide - Zoning Map of Upper and Middle Westmount]*

Subsequently, the City created dozens of sub-zones and, based on a laborious analysis, set minimum frontages and lot sizes for each of them.

*[Slide - Sherbrooke Street]*

To avoid having the pedestrian-friendly small shops replaced by large banks and superstores, we adopted a regulation that limited the width of the frontage of any single ground floor occupancy on a commercial street to 40 feet.

Other measures to enhance of Westmount's character include a prohibition of backlit and neon commercial signs.

*[Slide - Parking Aprons]*

And, after years of agonizing debate, paving over front lawns to create parking aprons was finally prohibited.

*[Title Section 4]*

## **4. The Heritage Study and Second Set of Guidelines**

*[Slide - Stayner]*

Although the first set of building and renovation guidelines was useful, we felt they could better address several issues. Many owners and applicants were simply not aware of how significant their building was, or what specifically defined the character of the building or its streetscape. A homeowner may never have noticed that their house was part of a semi-detached pair or a row of six identical buildings. She or he might not understand why the Commission allowed their friend to use a certain kind of window, but said it wasn't appropriate to their house. Someone trying to respect the guideline of fitting into the streetscape would pick an example from blocks away and with completely different character.

*[Slide - A Heritage to Preserve]*

I worked with Alderman Trent and the Commission on a proposal to carry out a much more extensive heritage study. I said that if you put a red dot on the roof of the top 1% of buildings in Canada with heritage significance, then zoomed in on Westmount, you'd find that almost every building had a red dot on the roof. We had not only a local but a national responsibility to take better care of this heritage.

In April 1986, Alderman Trent convinced Council to approve the study. First, we hired architects Pierre Beaupré and Josette Michaud to do an initial study, which was completed in February 1988. They identified the most exceptional buildings and a selection of buildings of other periods and styles. The results of their study were published in 1991 in the book, *"Westmount: A heritage to preserve"*.

[Slide - Heritage Study Objectives]

Then, we undertook an even more extensive inventory of every single building in Westmount with four objectives:

- Rate each building,
- Identify building ensembles,
- Identify Character Areas and describe their defining characteristics, and
- Revise the guidelines to consider the building's rating, building ensembles, and Character Areas.

We hired architect Amita Marjara who, working under Joanne Poirier's supervision over the coming year, assessed all four thousand buildings, noting their age and defining characteristics such as their overall form, exterior materials, window and door pattern, and other design features.

[Slide - Evaluation Criteria]

The members of the Commission then worked with Amita to rate each building based on a series of evaluation criteria, namely:

- Architectural design (notable architect, style, materials, architectural features, etc.),
- Historic significance (age, association with significant people, events, etc.),
- Contextual value (whether it was a visual landmark, or part of a significant ensemble or streetscape), and
- Building integrity (how much of the original structure was still intact).

[Slide - Different Views of Heritage]

There were different viewpoints about what constitutes heritage value. Former Commission Chairman Richard Bolton's earlier list of heritage buildings was almost all early-20<sup>th</sup>-Century architect-designed public buildings and mansions high up on the hill. The Quebec Ministry of Cultural Affairs general heritage study for the whole province virtually ignored Upper Westmount and included only earlier buildings, notably the turn-of-the-century row houses of lower Westmount. The new inventory was as inclusive as possible.

[Slide - Map - Ratings]

We set up a classification system that reflected shades of grey in heritage significance, classifying buildings into four categories: "I\*" Exceptional, "I" Important, "II" Significant, and "III" Neutral. We originally had a fifth category, Discordant, but there were so few that we just included them in the Neutral

category. Most of the Exceptional and Important buildings had already been researched in the Beaupré et Michaud study; we did additional historical research before adding several buildings to those highest categories.

We also identified Architectural Ensembles, i.e. groups of buildings erected at the same time as part of a single design, ranging from two semi-detached houses to an entire streetscape of similarly designed buildings, seen here with a line joining the buildings of each ensemble.

*[Slide - Map – Character Areas]*

Based on the defining characteristics of the buildings, we divided the city into 39 Character Areas, districts where the buildings and streetscapes had similar characteristics.

*[Slide - Map - Character Area 35]*

For each area, we identified the overall heritage significance and degree of homogeneity. We summarized the area's defining characteristics as well as variations for individual streetscapes within the area. The results were published as a series of maps given out free at City Hall, and now available online.

*[Slide - Revised Guidelines]*

Finally, we revised the original set of renovation and building design guidelines based on the study. Many guidelines were refined so they tied into the building's significance, most strict with the most significant buildings and with increased flexibility going down the levels of importance.

For a new building in a character area with high significance and a high degree of homogeneity, it was especially important that the new building respect the area's characteristics. For example, if all the buildings were stone, the new building should be stone, but if half brick and half stone, it could be either. This consistency was desirable but not as critical in a less significant, more heterogeneous area.

The guidelines also called for consistency in treatment of an architectural ensemble. A change to a porch design might be okay for a freestanding house, but, for a semi-detached house, it would only be permitted if both sides made the change.

*[Slide - Design Review Process]*

## The Design Review Process

The design review process dealt with four factors:

- Preserving the character of existing buildings,
- Fitting into the building ensemble, streetscape, and Character Area,
- Limiting negative impacts on abutters, and
- Promoting good design.

*[Slide - Good and Bad Windows]*

It's not surprising that owners and builders undertaking a renovation or construction project initially focus on their own desires. Often, they simply aren't aware of what is significant about their building and how, say, replacing the original windows with a totally different style would undermine its heritage value. Or they haven't thought about the fact that a rear extension would result an

excessively long, two-storey-high wall right on the property line that would block the sun from and overpower their neighbour's back yard.

Once these issues are brought to their attention in the design review process, applicants were usually happy, or at least reluctantly willing, to revise their project to mitigate negative external impacts. Sometimes, the Commission asked for common-sense changes that an architect had been unsuccessfully trying to convince their client to do, and we'd get a whispered "thank you" from the architect as they left the meeting.

From time to time, however, we had to deal with architects who just damn well wanted to exercise their God-given right to fully express their artistic vision or developers who wanted to max out the floor area, and to hell with heritage, and the surroundings. These were the most difficult applications to deal with, but we'd struggle through and arrive at acceptable designs. The Commission reviewed hundreds of very bad proposals that, fortunately, never saw the light of day.

*[Slide - Storefront and Signage Guideline]*

A good design review process calls for judgement on the part of the reviewing board. For example, the design guideline for Storefronts and Signage calls for signs to fit into the architectural framework of the building.

*[Slide - Signage]*

That made sense in the top two examples. But in the bottom examples, the Commission thought it was a higher priority to avoid covering the glasswork above the doors, so it asked for signs that didn't obscure them. The guidelines were not absolute rules, we also needed flexibility and good judgement.

The Commission focussed on the first three criteria I mentioned, ensuring that the form, scale, and materials respected the building, the streetscape, and abutters. We tried to stay away from the fourth criterion, debating what constituted good design, especially in new buildings. A design review process cannot guarantee excellent design; that's the job of the architect.

*[Slide - Traditional and Modern Building Expression]*

And we were quite open when it came to style. The guidelines explicitly say that it is possible to respect the guidelines with a traditional expression or with a Modern one, as long as they are executed in a coherent way.

*[Slide - Title Section 5]*

## **5. Conclusion**

In the almost twenty years when I was Chairman or Member of the Westmount Architectural and Planning Commission, we reviewed more than 6,000 applications for building permits, mostly renovations to existing houses or the construction of new ones. We also dealt with quite a few bigger projects. I'll mention four.

*[Slide - Westmount Square]*

We wouldn't allow Westmount Square to add a floor to the low office building on St. Catherine or change the plaza paving to black, although we were criticised for letting them put in rather discreet skylights to brighten up the shopping mall.

*[Slide - Greene and St. Catherine]*



Peter and I almost succeeded in getting the corner of Greene and St. Catherine rezoned back down to six storeys, but this was thwarted at the last minute. However, the Commission made sure that there were shops on Greene in a low building element in scale with the street. A new energy code meant the new tower couldn't match the design of the Westmount Square buildings, and the ultimate design was distinctive enough to preserve the legibility of Mies' original vision.

[Slide - The Glen]

At The Glen, we made sure that the grassy slopes were preserved on the corners of the intersection, and scaled back the proposed development around Westmount Station, ensuring that area in front of the station remain an open space.

[Slide - Westmount Library]

And I gave Peter Trent a hard time about the Westmount Library Project in 1994, convincing him to ask for changes to the original design that would have largely ignored the Findlay Building, closing off the original front door on the park and using the Reading Rooms for stacks. The wonderful restoration of the Reading Rooms by Gersovitz Becker Moss is much more appropriate.

[Slide - View from the Lookout]

Over the two decades I was involved with the Commission, we fundamentally changed Westmount's design review process, substantially revised the city's zoning regulations, and helped shepherd an evolution in Westmounters' opinion about older buildings, streetscapes, and neighbourhoods.

When Parks Canada designated most of Westmount as a National Historic District, in 2012, recognized that Westmount *"demonstrates an early and ongoing commitment from the municipality to protect and conserve through restrictive zoning and other planning mechanisms the built and landscape resources that contribute to the harmonious composition of the district."*

I haven't followed how the process has evolved in the seventeen years since I moved to Martha's Vineyard but, reading the Westmount Independent online recently, I see that people talk about revamping the building application and approval process, which is why I thought it was worth coming to explain where the process came from.

I think that the heritage conservation system we set up a generation ago has served Westmount well. After thirty years, it makes sense to review the system. The lists and categorization of buildings should be updated based on better information and more perspectives. For example, with the passage of time, it makes sense to add the most significant Mid-Century Modern buildings. The guidelines could be revised based on decades of use. I hope you will proceed carefully, to avoid jeopardizing a system that is essentially working well

Although it is undoubtedly a pain in the neck for an applicant to go through a design review process and be told what he or she is allowed to do, people want to be protected from having other people mess up their street or neighbourhood, and realize that everyone is best served by having a reasonable set of standards that apply to everyone.

# Protecting Our Heritage: Setting Up Westmount's System

Mark London

Westmount Historical Association  
March 15, 2018

## 1.Introduction

## 2.First Set of Renovation and Construction Guidelines

## 3.Zoning and Other Regulations

## 4.Heritage Study and Second Set of Guidelines

## 5.Conclusion

## Evolving Views of Heritage

*Le Corbusier's Plan  
Voisin for Central  
Paris – 1925*

*Before (above)*



*After (below)*





*The World of Tomorrow  
New York World's Fair, 1939*



*Archigram Plug-In City, 1964*



*Lower Manhattan Expressway  
Paul Rudolph, 1972*

Most older streetscapes and neighbourhoods were “slums”, to be demolished



“Slums” (above left) replaced by Habitations Jeanne-Mance (above right)

Modern Development in Montreal in the Sixties





Preservation was only for the most exceptional historic monuments

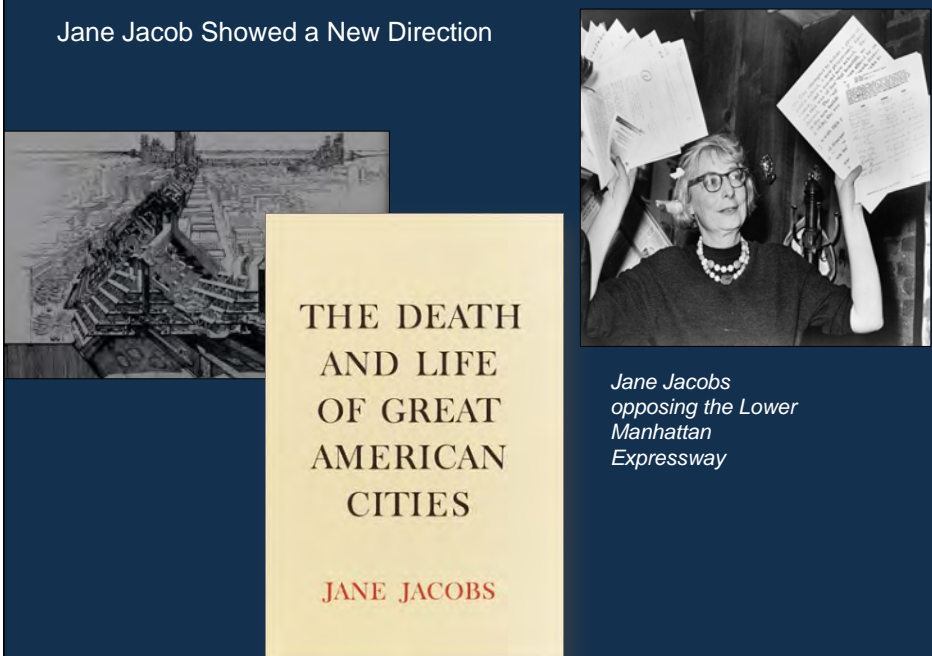
*"Historic Monuments" in Old Montreal (left)*

*Maison Hurtubise (below)*



Jane Jacob Showed a New Direction

*Jane Jacobs opposing the Lower Manhattan Expressway*



THE DEATH AND LIFE OF GREAT AMERICAN CITIES

JANE JACOBS

## Westmount: Modern Development in the Sixties and Seventies



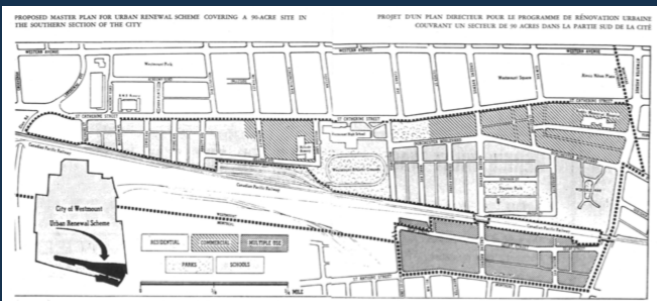
*Lambert-Leduc House on Cote Saint-Antoine and Roslyn (above) demolished in the 1960s.*

*Replaced with row of four houses (right)*



## Bland Report, 1960

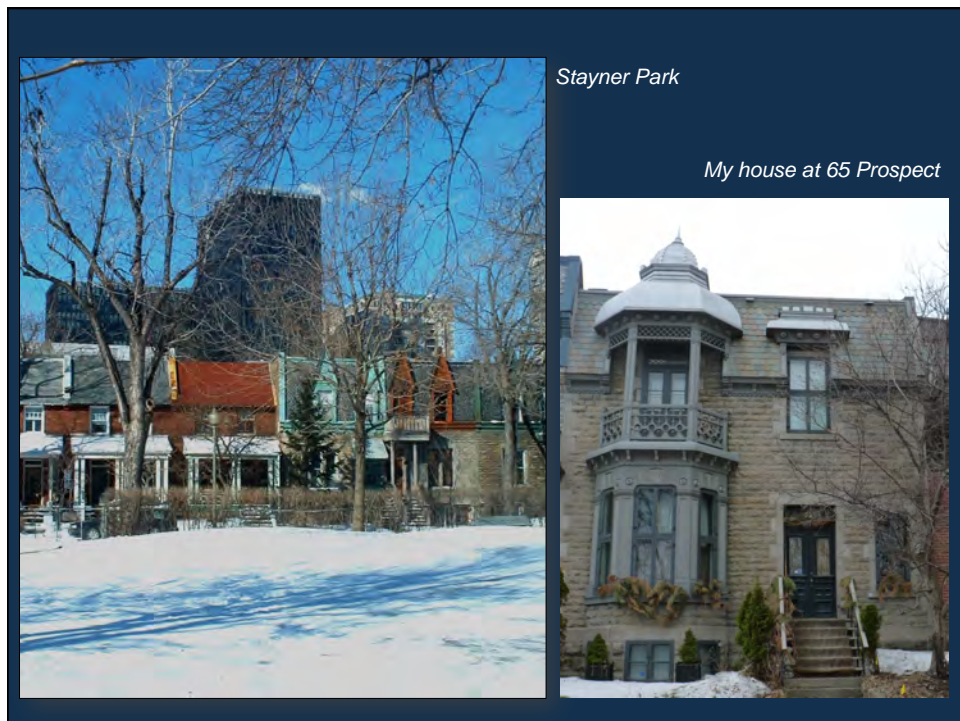
Ville-Marie  
Expressway  
Early 1970s



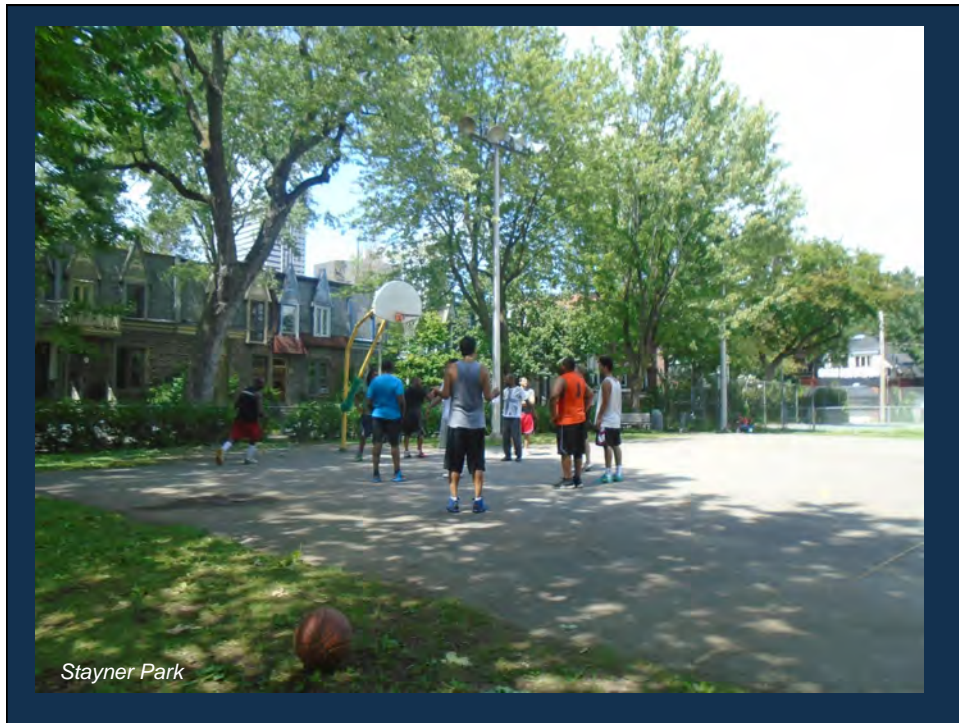
## Westmount Council Approves Plan To Widen Section Of Dorchester Blvd.



Widening of Dorchester, 1967



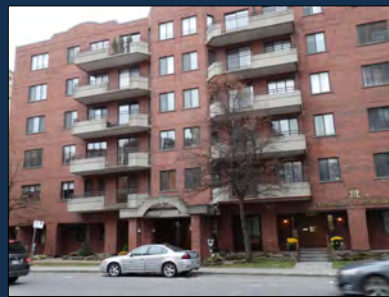








*Quinlan Apartments before and after.*



*Greene Avenue*  
*Miyuki Tanobe*



*Harry Mayerovitch*  
71 years old



*Jean-Louis Lalonde*  
58 years old

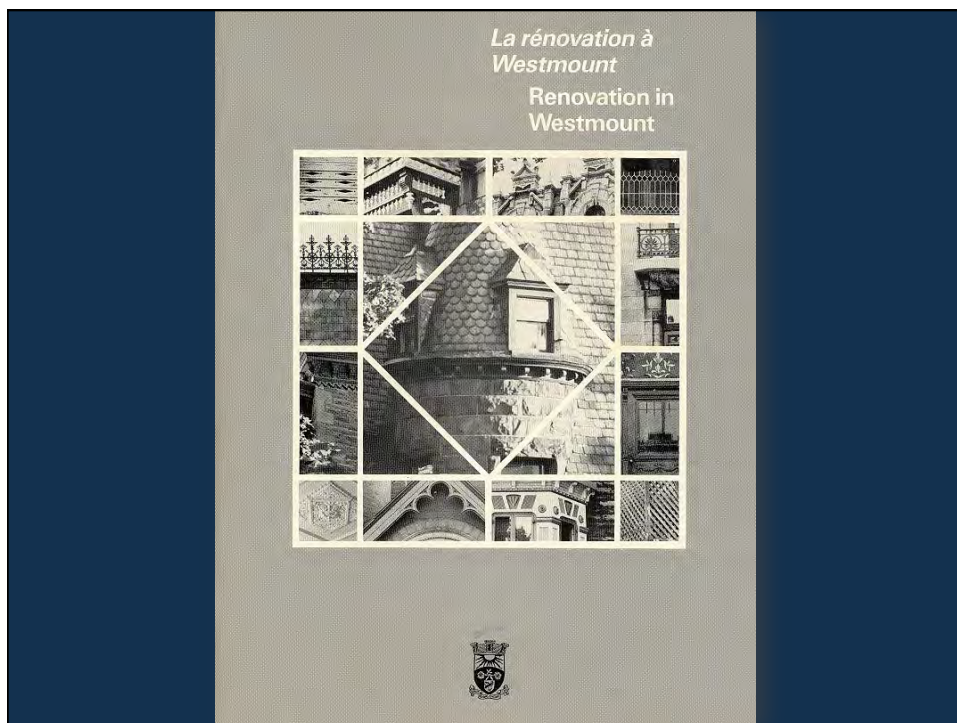
*Mark London*  
34 years old



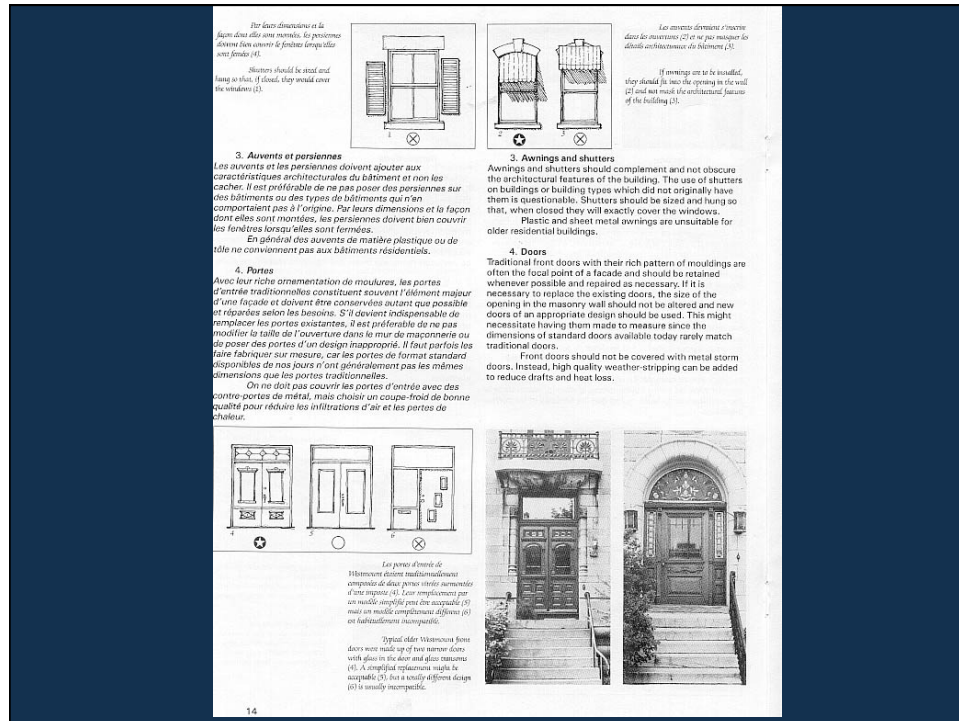
- 1.Introduction
- 2.First Set of Renovation and Construction Guidelines
- 3.Zoning and Other Regulations
- 4.Heritage Study and Second Set of Guidelines
- 5.Conclusion







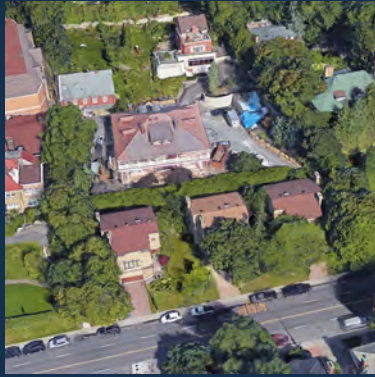




*Before zoning changes and guidelines*  
*De Maisonneuve and Clarke southwest corner*



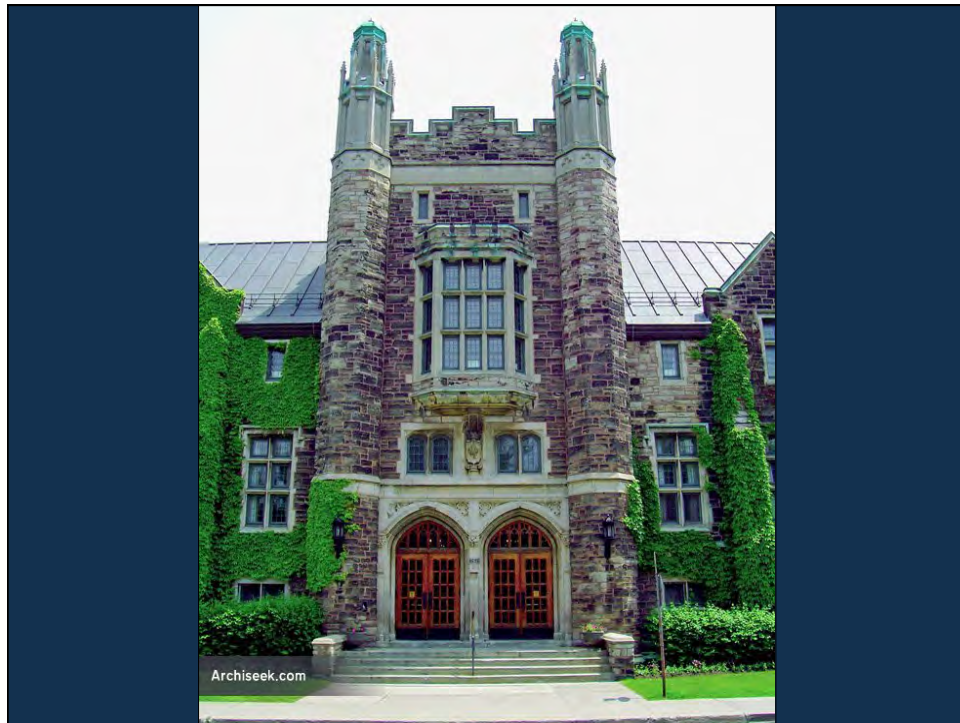
*Braemar*



*After construction guidelines and zoning changes*  
*De Maisonneuve and Clarke southeast corner*









1.Introduction

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*The south side of Dorchester was downzoned from 6-storey to 3-storey*



*To preserve streetscapes of two-and three storey buildings, don't allow six-storey buildings.*



*One house on a property replaced by row houses perpendicular to street.*



*Large Properties in Upper Westmount.*





*Subdivision  
Bylaw  
Sub-zones'  
minimum  
frontages and lot  
areas match  
surroundings*



*Only externally lit signs*

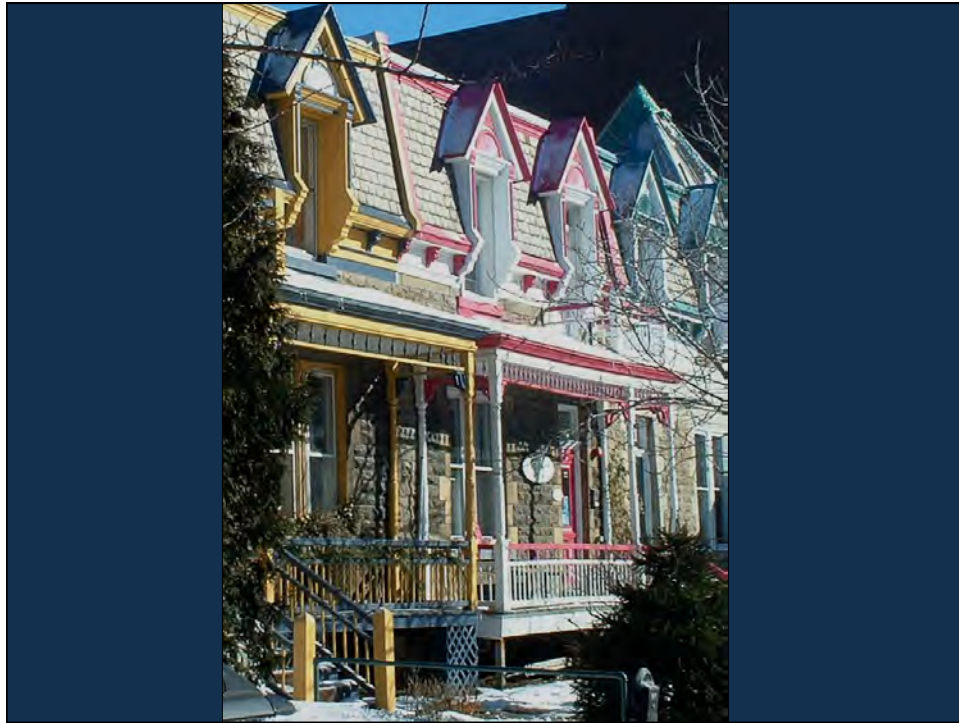


*Prohibition of Parking Aprons*



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A photograph of a large, historic stone building with a prominent archway and a clock tower, set against a dark blue background. The building is made of light-colored stone and has a classical architectural style. The archway is large and ornate, and the clock tower is tall and slender. The scene is captured from a low angle, looking up at the building.

**Westmount:  
a heritage  
to preserve**

*Beaupré Michaud Study*

**Section A  
The entrance to Westmount**

This plan shows the entrance to Westmount, a historic neighborhood in Montreal. The plan includes a detailed map of the area, showing the layout of the streets and the locations of the historic buildings. The map is accompanied by a series of photographs and text that provide a detailed description of the area's history and architecture.

A map of the entrance to Westmount, showing the layout of the streets and the locations of the historic buildings. The map is a detailed line drawing that shows the streets, buildings, and parks of the area. It is a valuable resource for anyone interested in the history and architecture of Westmount.

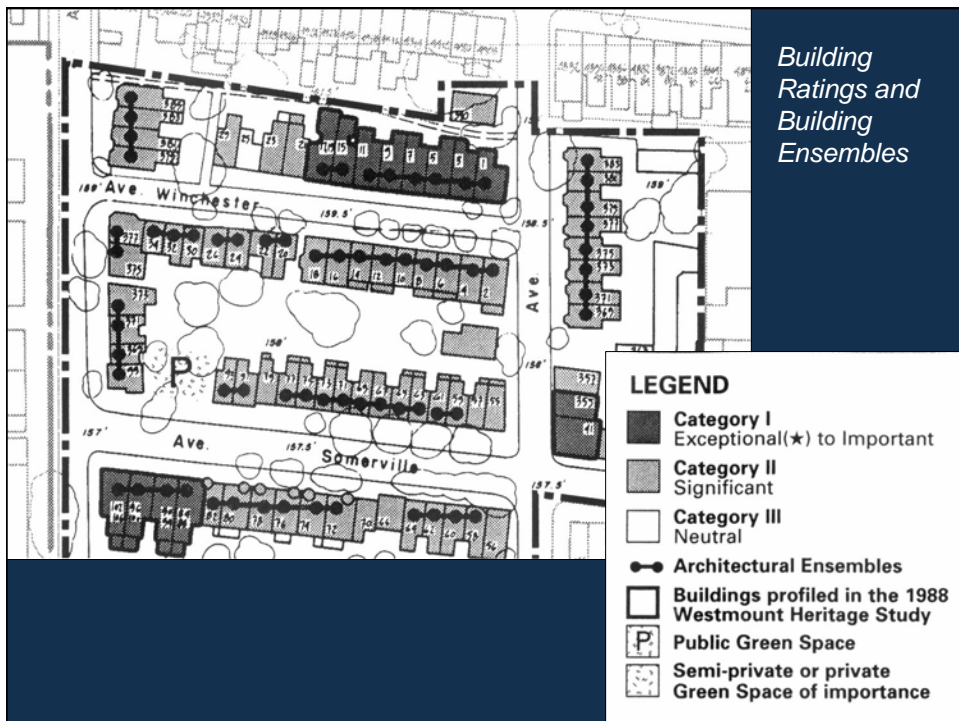
### ***Heritage Study Objectives***

- ***Rate all Buildings***
- ***Identify Building Ensembles***
- ***Identify Character Areas and Defining Characteristics***
- ***Revise the Guidelines***

### ***Criteria for Building Evaluation***

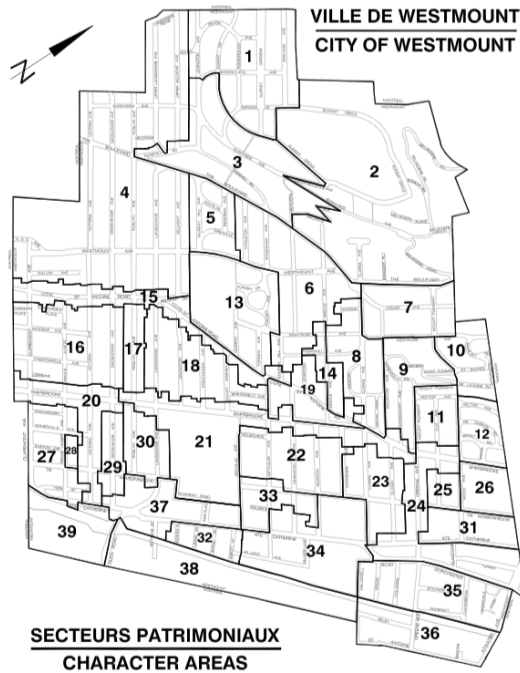
- ***Architectural Design:*** notable architect, style, materials, architectural features, etc.
- ***Historic Significance:*** age, association with significant people, events, etc.
- ***Contextual Value:*** visual landmark or part of a significant ensemble or streetscape
- ***Integrity:*** how much of original structure is still intact

*Different Views of "Heritage"*





## Character Areas



**Character Area 35  
Hallowell-Weredale**

This is a cul-de-sac area at the edge of the escarpment and built on the former St. Joseph field. Here one finds approximately 240 buildings of which the overwhelming majority are attached townhouses, rather luxurious and eclectic on Dorchester Boulevard (built between 1870 and 1890), modest but lively east of Greene Avenue (also built around 1870-1890), and very sensible and unpretentious west of Greene Avenue (built around 1890-1910). This is one of the few developments with paved back lanes in Westmount. On Weredale Park, the old circular driveway to Weredale Estate, one finds somewhat disparate buildings in a quiet green setting.

**LEGEND**

- Category I: Functional or Important
- Category II: High Value
- Category III: Medium Value
- Category IV: Low Value
- Architectural Ensemble
- Buildings included in the 1980 Architectural Inventory Study
- Public Green Space
- Remainder or private Green Space of Importance

**KEY MAP**  
See map of the City of Westmount 1988

### Defining characteristics of Character Area 35 Hallowell-Weredale

The following are some of the defining characteristics applying to whole area.

**Use and typology:** Almost all rings are single family attached houses.

**Siting and orientation:** Virtually all rings are sited 2.5 - 3.5 m from the line, on the same plane and almost always parallel to the street.

**Heights and frontages:** With prior to Dorchester Boulevard and Weredale Park, virtually all buildings are two to three storeys high (average height: 9-15m). The ring frontages are almost always 5.0 - 6.0 m wide.

**Roofs:** Virtually all buildings have flat roofs, two thirds of which are concealed behind decorative sloped roofs, many in the false mansard style. These almost always have either gables or similar projections, or turrets, both of which generally occur above bay windows and bay projections. Dormers, as well as decorative eaves, are also generally present. The remaining flat roofs have parapets in a variety of shapes and styles.

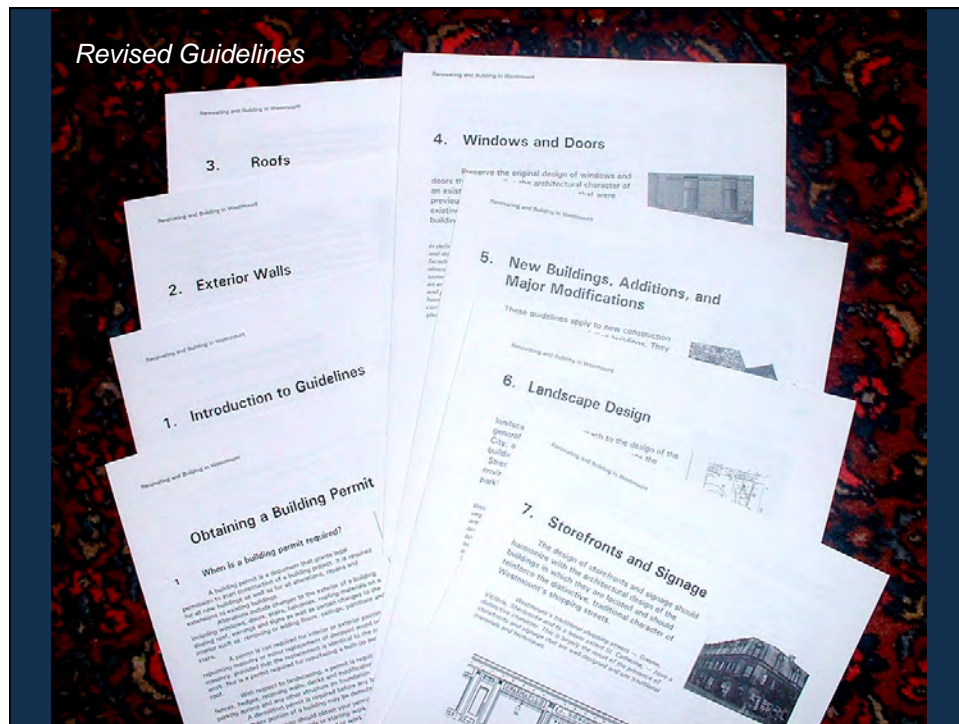
**Facade materials:** The street facades are virtually always either in red brick (53%) or grystone (46%). The brick facades almost always have stone foundations.

The following are defining characteristics of specific streetscapes in addition to those of the whole character area unless otherwise noted.

**Bruce (east side):** Almost all facades are in brick with rusticated stone foundations, lintels and sills. The decorative sloped roofs (50%) have gable projections and the remainder have dentilled cornices below straight parapets. All have two-storey bay windows or bay projections. Entrance doors are almost always single with toplights. Almost all houses have pedimented or sloped wooden canopies above doors.

**Bruce (west side):** All facades are in brick. The decorative sloped roofs either have turrets or gable projections while others have dentilled cornices below straight parapets. All houses have bay windows or bay projections, virtually all two storeys high. Entrance doors are virtually all single with toplights. Balconies, most of which have been modified from wood to metal, are present on three-quarters of the facades. Almost all entrance steps have metal balusters with wooden rails.

**Claudebois (east side):** Almost seventy percent of the facades are in stone. Roofs generally have elaborate parapets and/or cornices at parapet height and the decorative sloped roofs have gable projections. The bay windows are generally two storeys high. The entrance doors are



## ***Design Review Concerns***

- ***Character of the existing building***
- ***Character of the Building Ensemble, streetscape, and Character Area***
- ***Impacts on abutters***
- ***Design***

### *The details count*

*Replacement window that look wrong (left) and correct (right).*

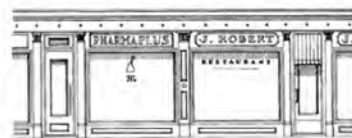


### *Judgment in Interpreting Guidelines*

#### **7. Storefronts and Signage**

The design of storefronts and signage should harmonize with the architectural design of the buildings in which they are located and should reinforce the distinctive, traditional character of Westmount's shopping streets.

Westmount's traditional shopping streets — Greene, Victoria, Sherbrooke and to a lesser extent St. Catherine, — have a distinctive character. This is largely the result of the presence of storefronts and signage that are well-designed and use traditional materials and techniques.



Simple, well-integrated signs (right) help reinforce the character of a building and street and are more effective at communicating a message. The limited and disorderly signs in the bottom illustration are unacceptable.



Signs do fit in architectural framework



Signs don't fit in architectural framework



*Traditional  
Expression  
(left)*



*Modern  
Expression  
(right)*



## 1.Introduction

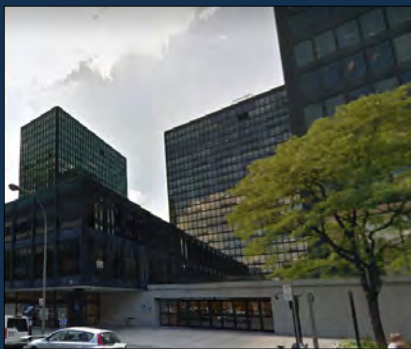
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*Westmount Square*



*Greene and St. Catherine*



*The Glen and Westmount Station  
Preserved grassy slopes*





*Westmount Library*



*Maintained the historic front door on the park*



*Restored the Reading Rooms instead of filling them with stacks*

