

\$800k project Westmount High stairs re-open

The front stairs of Westmount High are open again. They have been under construction since August 2021. The *Independent* noticed them at least temporarily open in September, but the “official” re-opening was late last month.

“Besides new steps, steel columns were reinforced, curtain-wall windows replaced and new front entrance doors installed. New handrails were also added on the stairways. Total construction costs will exceed \$800,000,” said a press release from the English Montreal School Board (EMSB) November 30.

“The timing for the completion of this work was excellent, given the fact Westmount High School is celebrating its 150th anniversary,” EMSB director general Nick Katalifos is quoted as saying. He also thanked project manager Mariana Osorio and her team, who were responsible for the project.

Westmount High School is presently home to 810 students, according to the release.

► Top, the *Independent's* first photo of the work-site, from August 18, 2021 and, right, students on the refurbished steps the week of November 21, 2022. BOTTOM PHOTO COURTESY OF EMSB.



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cause all of the condo units are in the city Montreal, “the only portion that is on the territory of Westmount is the entrance hall. In order to tax this common area, it is the city of Westmount’s legal obligation to transmit a property tax bill to all the units that own this common area. Due to the small portion of this common area, it would cost (administration fees, printing and delivery fees, etc.) more to transmit these property tax bills to each unit than the amount to be collected.”

Long before the city approved a building permit for the small Westmount section diagonally straddling the property line, it was reported that Hydro Westmount would not be supplying electricity to the building as it had done to the former Montreal Children’s Hospital before its demolition. This is because the electrical entry to the site had already been re-located in Montreal (see story in February 26, 2019, p. 8).

Challenges, compromises

Westmount’s approval of a building permit eventually issued May 6, 2019, encountered many challenges and compromises because of the small triangular wedge located in Westmount.

“It has been a very complicated file,” Councillor Conrad Peart explained at the time as commissioner of urban planning (see story May 14, 2019).

The Westmount address to the building leads directly to this small corner portion for which it is now understood the city will renounce issuing tax bills and providing services.

► This site plan from 2019 by MSDL architects shows the lot in Westmount (#4 143 243) and how the Westmount-downtown border cuts through the preserved nurses’ building at the bottom left corner of the block, as well through a nine-storey portion of the now under construction Tower 1 at the top left of the block. Border, north-pointing arrow and street names added by *Independent*.

