

December 6, 2024

Mr. Frédéric Neault
Director, Urban Planning
City of Westmount

Dear Mr. Neault,

Re: Westmount Southeast Redevelopment

The Atwater Library and Computer Centre – founded in 1828 as the Montreal Mechanics' Institution – has served for almost two centuries as a vibrant community hub devoted to providing educational resources. Our 1920 landmark building, located in the heart of Westmount's Southeast, bustles with activities: digital literacy workshops and courses, information sessions on personal finances and estate planning, job skills training, lunchtime lectures and concerts, writing workshops, book discussions, arts and crafts and exhibitions. In our already densely populated sector, we are a "third place" – a location outside of home or work where people can connect or relax.

Our beautiful heritage building is designated *Category 1* by the City of Westmount, and a *National Historic Site* by the Government of Canada. Over the past decade we have invested \$5 million – two-thirds of it from private donors – to conserve and upgrade the building. Improvements include an elevator and accessible entrance, a restored auditorium equipped with an AV system for livestreaming, and a transformed bookshop and art display area. In sum, we are a shining success story of heritage conservation for community benefit. Our efforts are aligned with the City of Westmount's goal of being "a leader in heritage conservation," to quote the city's website.

The Atwater Library and Computer Centre is eager to contribute to the planning of Westmount's Southeast Sector and has been pleased to participate in consultation meetings organized by Lemay. We actively support the Special Planning Program's stated goals of greening, improving mobility and connectivity, encouraging animation and strengthening community life.

However, we are concerned that development pressures resulting from a loosening of height restrictions in the immediate vicinity could threaten our magnificent heritage building. A residential tower of 25 storeys on the south side of St. Catherine Street, just a few feet away from our building, was on a large-scale Lemay drawing at the November 14th consultation at Victoria Hall. Such a high-rise would not only overshadow our building but also jeopardize its structural integrity.

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While we fully support the need to revitalize the neighbourhood, we urge Westmount not to repeat the mistakes of Griffintown. We believe it is essential that any new construction in Southeast Westmount respect the heritage value and importance of this gem that is the Atwater Library and Computer Centre. We respectfully request that the planning process embrace our institution as an anchor for enhancing our sector and involve our representatives in recalibrating the project.

Yours sincerely,



Bruce D. Bolton
President



Lynn Verge
Executive Director

Cc Mayor and Councillors
City of Westmount

Mme Julie Bergeron
Lemay

News Media