

Westmount Parks and Green Spaces

A Guided Tour



City of Westmount



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A Landscape to Discover !



Alii nullo quaerente vultus severitate adsimulata patrimonia sua in inensum extollunt, cultorum ut puta feracium multiplicantes annuos fructus, quae a primo ad ultimum solem se abunde iactitant possidere, ignorantes profecto maiores suos, per quos ita magnitudo Romana porrigitur, non divitiis eluxisse sed per bella saevissima, nec opibus nec victu nec indumentorum vilitate gregariis militibus discrepantes opposita cuncta superasse virtute.

Isdem diebus Apollinaris Domitiani gener, paulo ante agens palatii Caesaris curam, ad Mesopotamiam missus a socero per militares numeros immodice scrutabatur, an quaedam altiora meditantis iam Galli secreta susceperint scripta, qui conpertis Antiochiae gestis per minorem Armeniam lapsus Constantinopolim petit exindeque per protectores retractus artissime tenebatur.

Enjoy !

Horticultural Advisory Comitte

A tour of the City by sector

The circuit

Westmount's landscape is strongly defined by Mount Royal; the uneven topography, striking views of the city and shape of Westmount's summit are all part of its character.

This mountainous terrain offers ever-varying and distinctive landscapes. Through this guided tour of the City's parks, you will discover three types of landscape – mountain, slope and plateau – and the features of each. A map is provided to help you explore the splendid green spaces found in each sector. Equally fascinating is the history of these green spaces and the commitment to preserving such heritage that made and still makes Westmount an uncommon district.



Map of the sectors



1

The mountain

2

The slope

3

The plateau

The mountain

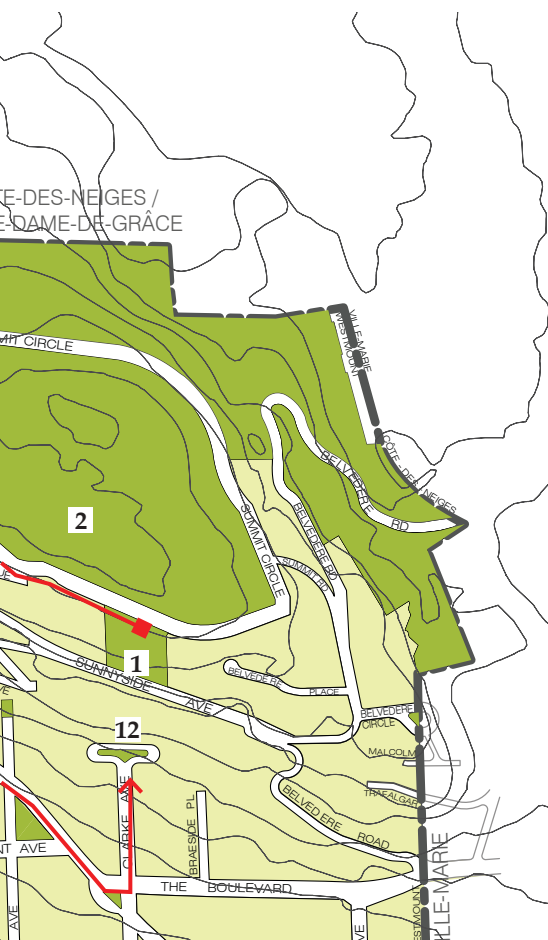




Sector profile

This segment encompasses the summit area of Westmount, one of Mount Royal's three peaks. Here, the slopes are at their steepest, providing some of the most spectacular panoramic vistas of Montreal and the St-Lawrence River.

Despite the relatively late development of this sector, it is home to some of the City's oldest parks. These green spaces, along with the numerous public staircases found in this area, enhance the pedestrian cachet of the whole area. Additionally, the urban forest that covers the highest part of the terrain is protected as a natural reserve.





1. Sunnyside Park and Lookout

Acquired by the City of Westmount in 1898, the construction and landscaping of the lookout, staircases and park were carried out during the 1930s. A major refurbishing of this park took place as recently as 2007. The small stand of trees in Sunnyside Park could be said to be an extension of the Summit Park forest. From the terrace of the Lookout, striking views of the City make this spot a favourite of Westmounters and many others.

2. Summit Park

See the following page for a full description of the park.

3. Surrey Gardens

This green space, gently nestled in the middle of the former Westmount Golf Club, includes the typical elements found in 'Garden Suburb'-style developments. A unique space for contemplation, it offers a spectacular view of the dome of Saint Joseph's Oratory.





4 and 6 to 11. Public Stairs and Ramps

Whether tucked into narrow corridors between residences or located in the middle of open green spaces, public staircases offer surprises and hidden treasures. The oldest stairs, dating back to the beginning of the 20th century, are truly worth discovering while walking between the parks.



5. Devon Park

A park known as Westview occupied the east section of what is now Devon Park as early as 1902 and by 1949, the current area and layout were in place. The park's rustic appearance, large trees and gentle slopes are reminders of Mount Royal and make it a valued leisure space for neighbourhood residents. A skating rink is maintained on the tennis court surface every winter.



12. Clarke Island

Clarke Avenue was developed up to its present elevation in 1900 and this small island garden first appeared on City maps three years later. Its existence owes to the increasingly steep escarpment, which prevents any northward extension of the avenue. This type of landscaping is evocative of Westmount's long horticultural tradition.

2. Summit Park

Park Origins

Summit Park occupies the Western peak of Mount Royal. It is separated from the other summits by the small valley of Côte-des-Neiges Road.

In 1895, Sir William Macdonald acquired a number of woodlots and donated them to the McGill University department of botany. In 1920, the University built the MacDonald Observatory on the site, which remained mostly forested, and two years later, a tower for the first radio station in North America was constructed there.



From 1940 to the present day

In 1940, Westmount purchased 46 acres from McGill University on condition that the site remains a park in perpetuity. The natural state of the park was thus preserved and the area designated a reserve and bird sanctuary. Pheasants and grouse were introduced there shortly afterwards, but they survived only few years.





In 1941, the City planted many conifers to provide winter shelter for birds and it was around this time that the public began to use the park for walking, bird watching, cross-country skiing and tobogganing. In the early 1990s, in response to serious signs of wear, a three-year restoration program was undertaken.

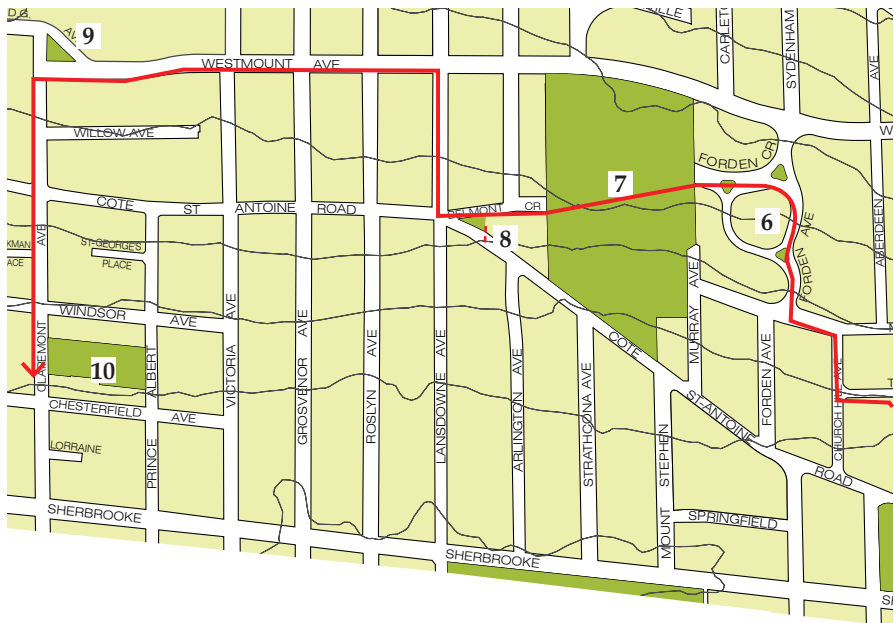
Each year the City of Westmount continues to make special efforts to ensure the survival and the protection of this natural forest. Because of this, Summit Park remains a unique ecosystem and a peaceful haven for walkers in the midst of a densely-built city.



The park features three types of forest – a red oak grove towards the centre and north with many mature trees, a black cherry grove in the east and a mixed wood forest in the south section where Norway maple, sumac and hawthorn grow. Many wild flowers are seen here as well.

Sector 2

The slope





Sector profile

This sector, which gently slopes down toward the south, was among the first areas to be developed in Westmount. From the very beginning of the European settlement, Côte St. Antoine Rd. passed through this area where large summer homes were built in the 19th century. It was from one of these properties that the City name originated.

In this sector one notices playgrounds and sports fields of a more urban character in keeping with the surrounding environment, as well as the presence of a few public stairways.

1. Argyle Park

Argyle Park offers an oasis of greenery at a busy intersection. A result of the division of the Notman property and the consequent construction of The Boulevard and of Westmount Avenue in the late 19th century, this tiny park first appeared on City records in 1898 and created a harmonious urban ensemble with the dwellings facing it.



2. Mount Pleasant Slope

Defined by the zigzag switchback of Mount Pleasant Avenue, these two small triangular islands are connected at their east and west limits by staircases dating from 1929 or earlier. The east staircase continues southward between residences to reach De Lavigne Road. The slope's densely-wooded escarpment and the open winter views it offers during the winter are much in keeping with the character of Mount Royal.



3. Queen Elizabeth Gardens

This park was created on the former grounds of the Sulpicians which were subdivided in the 1920s. This small oasis – a pleasant, unified space within a very urban surrounding – offers a summer playground and a winter skating rink.



4. City Hall Park

This notable park, also known as Garden Point, was created in 1902, the same year as the nearby bowling green. City Hall, an elegant stone building designed by renowned architect Robert Findlay (1859-1951), was added in 1922, along with the Cenotaph in the eastern portion of the park. This ceremonial space extends to the bowling lawn on the west side of City Hall.



5. Thornhill Steps

This imposing stone staircase is located at the site of an old quarry which was in use during the 19th century.

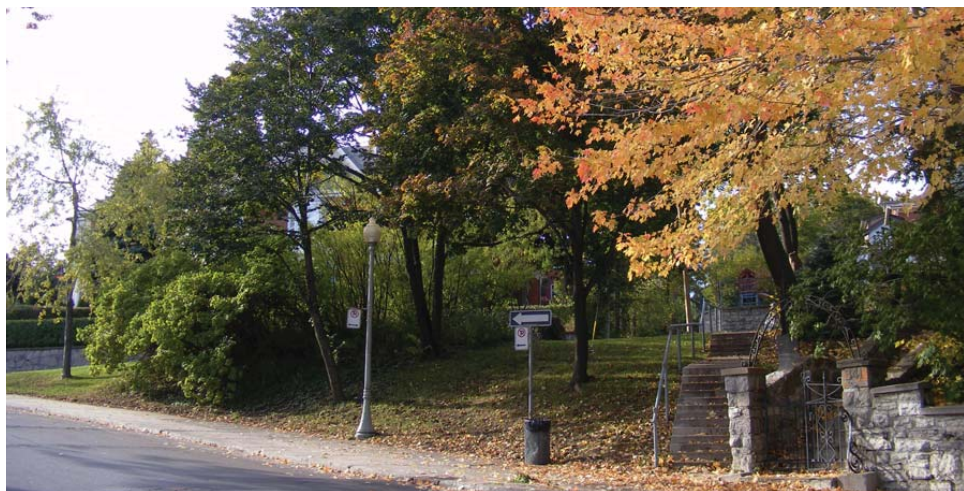
6. Forden Islands

These tiny islands, which appeared around 1930 during the development of Forden Crescent, wonderfully illustrate the cultural and horticultural landscape of the entire city. In the tradition of the 'Garden Suburb' movement, it creates a feeling of unity and integration with the residential neighbourhood.



7. King George Park

See the following page for a full description of the park.



8. Belmont Crescent

This small ornamental space, equipped with a public staircase, marks the previous location of a roadside cross which stood along Côte St. Antoine road in the 18th century.



9. N.D.G. – Claremont Island

This small island marks one of the the western entrances to the City and accommodates a dog run.



10. Prince Albert Park

This park, equipped with a playground, was built in 1927 and expanded in 1938. The comfort station was constructed in 1940. The rectangular shape of the park echoes the street pattern in this sector. One can find skating rinks in the park during winter.

7. King George Park

Its beginnings

In 1857, William Murray bought the Leduc farmland and built a country residence named "West Mount". This was the name chosen in 1894 by the citizens of the Côte-St Antoine village for their new city. In 1927, much of the surrounding area was developed and the City purchased the remaining portion of the former estate, including the Murray house and the house of his son to create a public park. During the 1930s, the residences were demolished and the park expanded to its current state. Its designation changed from Murray Park to King George Park in 1939 to mark the royal visit of that year.



Overview

The park officially opened in 1929 outfitted with playgrounds and playing fields much as they are today.

Playground, circa 1930.
Photo: *A View of Their Own* by Aline Gubbay, 1998.





The residence of William Murray, known as West Mount, was demolished in 1936. It was located approximately where the tennis courts are today.

Residence of W. Murray, 1913.
Photo: McCord Museum.



The elegant clock pavilion, designed by architect Robert Findlay, was built in 1936. It accommodates the users of the surrounding playing fields and dog run and provides an impressive view of the City.



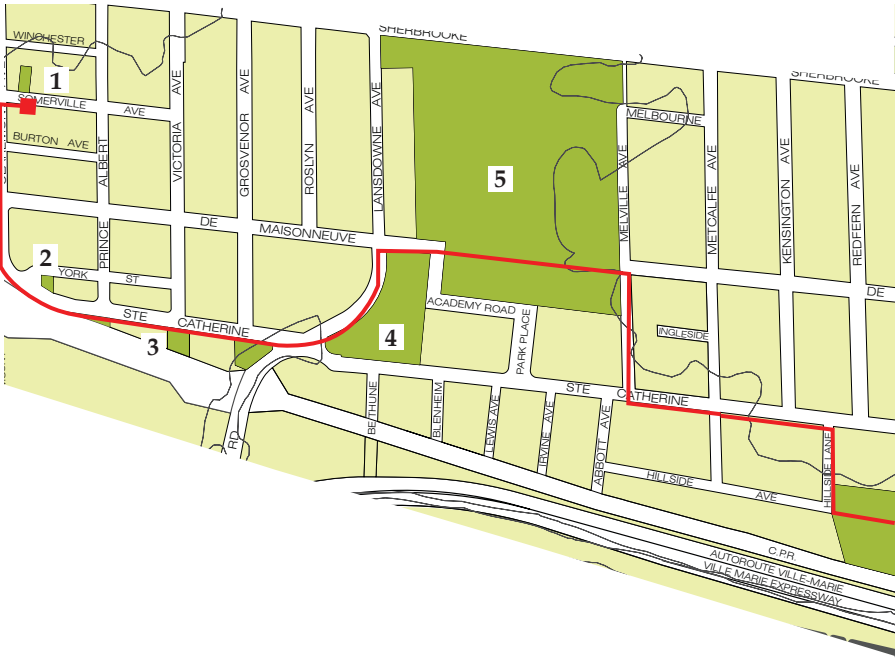
The southern section of the park has retained the character of the old Murray domain, with its wide rolling hill offering a pleasing panoramic view. This landscape is one of the rare vestiges of the pre-urban Westmount terrain.

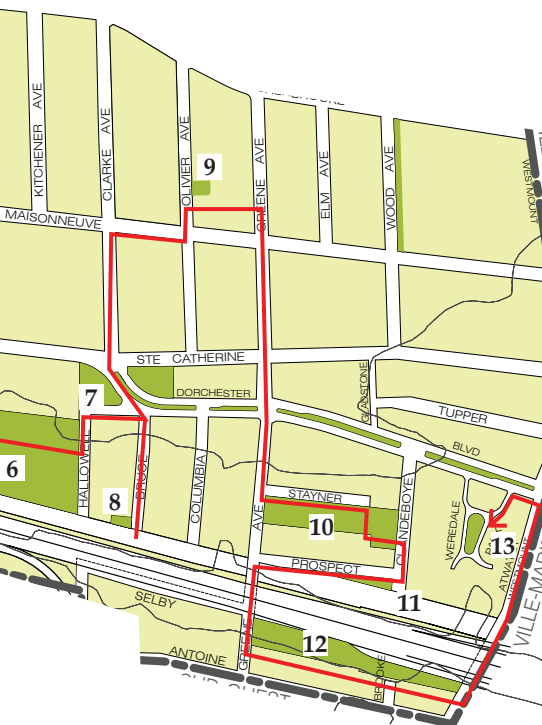
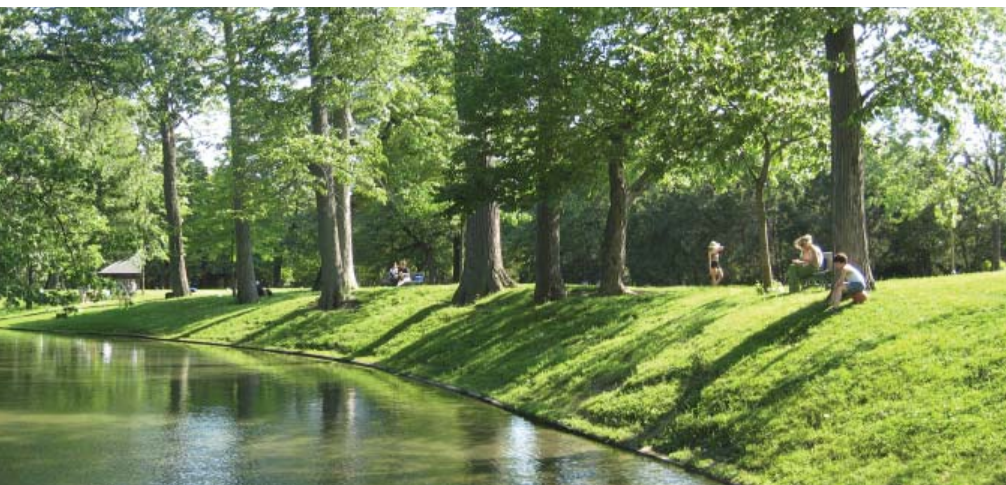


This park, which has preserved many features from its past, harmoniously combines its historical landscape with its recreational functions, including playgrounds, sports fields, a wading pool, a dog run and areas for sitting.

Sector 3

The plateau





Sector profile

This stretch of flat land between the mountain to the north and St. Henri to the south could be called the heart of the Westmount community. While its grid of streets, commercial districts, row houses and high-rise buildings lend the area a more metropolitan flavour, green spaces still abound. The parks of this higher-density area feature numerous playgrounds and sports fields while providing many other spaces for quiet respite. Between the older and the more recently built green spaces, residents will find a wide range of environments and activities.

1. Somerville Tot Lot

This tiny pocket park was constructed in 1939 and re-landscaped in 1994 and again in 2001. Here, one can find a shaded playground area.



2. York and St. Catherine Intersection

A green space located in a residential area, this small ornamental park was set up in 1936 following the demolition of a residence.



3. Westmount Train Station

This park was created in 2000 in front of the old train station, which dates back to 1914, in order to maintain the view of the facade of this historical building. It is the newest park in Westmount.



4. Lansdowne and Ste. Catherine

Located on what was once the bank of the Glen Brook, this corner was also the site of a tramway station between 1890 and 1959 (cf. *Commission des biens culturels du Québec*). Next to the intersection, an old stone drinking trough for horses remains. The nearby municipal arena was built in 1958 and the public swimming pool in 1963. The south portion of this space features a charming public garden and a dog run.





5. Westmount Park

See the following page for a full description of the park.



6. Westmount Athletic Grounds

Created by the Montreal Amateur Athletic Association (M.A.A.A.) in 1887, this space is the oldest park in Westmount. Purchased by the City in 1936, it featured a covered bleacher and many sporting grounds at that time. While its primary sports vocation has not changed, the WAG now includes a playground, a community garden and a neighbourhood dog run.



7. Dorchester and Clarke Islands

Created during the refurbishing of Dorchester Boulevard in 1967, these gardens frame an important intersection with greenery. From this corner eastward, the boulevard medians create a narrow green corridor right up to the City limits at Atwater Avenue.

5. Westmount Park

Evolution of the park

In 1890, a committee of Côte-St. Antoine citizens recommended the creation of a central park to act as an important civic focal point for a rapidly-expanding city. In 1898, the grounds were acquired and Westmount Park was officially created. The Westmount Public Library and the Victoria Hall community centre were both inaugurated in its northwest corner in 1899.

Over the years, the park increased in size and underwent numerous changes, including a major reconstruction during the 1960s. The portion of De Maisonneuve Boulevard that once crossed through the park was closed in 1985 and converted to green space. De Maisonneuve Boulevard which ran through the park was closed in 1985.

A brief look

The original site was valued at the time of its acquisition for its rustic landscape of brooks and small wooded ravines. Traces of this natural topography still remain today in the contours of the undulating terrain and in the shape and location of the park's ponds.



Westmount Park, 1897.

Photo: Robert Harvey, Westmount Historical Society archives.





The first sailing pond was constructed in 1908 at the site of the current water course near Melville Ave. and was rebuilt in the 1960s. The playing fields, skating rinks and toboggan run were added in 1914.

Sailing pond, circa 1910.
Photo: McCord Museum.



From its creation in 1898, the open spaces of the park have been used for team sports, as today. The large open spaces allow for grand views of Mount Royal. One will find tennis courts and soccer fields in the park as well.



The ponds display a picturesque charm typical of the large urban parks created during this era. As the “Jewels of Westmount”, their scenic allure adds to the invaluable heritage and makes this park a special place for Westmounters.



The main Conservatory was built in 1927 and is one of the remarkable elements of the rich architectural heritage of the park along with the library and Victoria Hall. A perennial front garden created in 2001 reflects the horticultural tradition of Westmount.

8. Bruce Tot Lot

This small alcove park was created in 1937 and was refurbished in 2001. It offers a shaded playground for the neighborhood children.



9. Olivier Electric Station

This charming little pocket of greenery allows for harmonious visual integration of an electric sub-station in a residential area.



10. Stayner Park

This park is divided in two parts. The Eastern part was built in 1924 under the name of Clandeboye Park, while the Western part was established in 1936. The park includes a playground, a basketball court, a water play area and tennis courts as well as skating rinks in winter.



11. Prospect Avenue Green Space

Partially wooded, this small space faces and screens the railway. It also features a dog run.



12. Selby Park

Created in 1975 following the construction of the expressway, this park is a green buffer and is equipped with a playground.



13. Weredale Island

Located on the old Moffat property since 1903, this green island offers a cosy ornamental space to the surrounding neighbourhood.

