



Westmount vote 2021:
Neil Hopley – District 7

Description

WestmountMag.ca invites Westmount City Council candidates to present their platform

WestmountMag.ca extended an invitation to all eleven Westmount council candidates and those acclaimed, to provide an article about themselves and their platform on a first supplied, first published basis. Here we present **Neil Hopley, candidate for District 7.**

The articles are reproduced verbatim without corrections.

The election to determine the next councillor to represent District 7 is an important one and that is why I decided to run and ask for your support to not only look after the interests of the district, but to do what is best for Westmount as a whole. We have a great city, one that we can all be proud of, but there are overall problems and issues that must be addressed by the mayor and council, and ultimately have the consent of the citizens.

This is why I am seeking election as your next municipal councillor. For those who do not know me, let me introduce myself.

I was born and raised in NDG, having attended Saint Ignatius of Loyola and Marymount Academy, and graduated high school at Chateauguay's Howard S. Billings. I attended Dawson College, and completed my formal 3d design training at College Inter-dec.

Upon graduating, I started my own broadcast design company that allowed me to travel all over the world and experience other cultures and ways of life. This experience gave me a stronger appreciation for Canada and our Western Democracy which allows every one of us to have the rights and freedoms it provides. Furthermore, I have seen what life is like in cities where residents have little say in what is done on an immediate and long-term basis. Management at the municipal level has a direct impact on everyone's quality of life, It is more than just ensuring that we have safe roads, that snow and ice are removed promptly from our roads and sidewalks, that garbage is collected, that our parks are well maintained and family-friendly, and that our tax dollars are efficiently spent and maximized. These are givens, but as a councillor, my responsibility is to not only look after day-to-day issues, but consider the future and where our city will be in the next 10, 20 and 30 years. Nor can I and council



make such decisions alone – they require the consent of the citizens and their participation in the decision-making process. If I have the honor of being elected, public consultation is a key component of my vision and I shall do everything possible to expand the role of the public in how our city operates. In my view, it is crucial that the public have a greater say in how things are done in their name – voting every four years is just minimum.

I moved to Westmount in 2009, having purchased a home on Abbott Avenue, which was built in 1896. It is a solidly-built townhouse and has served my wife and two sons extremely well. I see our house as a reflection of what Westmount is – a Historic city in the heart of the island that is based on solid planning and a desire to ensure that every resident enjoys an excellent quality of life via the services that are provided. I am grateful that Mayor Trenholme in the early 1900s favoured Westmount remaining as an independent municipality and that the residents of our city decided to restore its independence following the forced merger with Montreal, whose impacts we are living with daily. The forced mergers were a disaster and we as citizens, are still paying a high financial price for that, with \$40 million of taxes being sent to the City of Montreal annually.

Many Westmounters appreciate the efforts of former mayors and councillors and of the city staff that have and continue to work hard on a daily basis, but that doesn't mean there is no room for improvement.

One of the biggest issues for most Westmounters such as myself and those that I have spoken with is the potential changes of Westmount Park and the defacing of a historic masterpiece that has been there for well over 100 years. The importance of the park's duck pond, and the romantically designed landscape leaves you feeling as if you've traveled back to early 1900's as you stroll along the winding paths enjoying the fresh air from the abundant trees and vegetation. The landscape designers, Outhet and Manning, being students of the famed architect and designer of New York's Central Park, Mr. Frederick Law Olmsted Sr., adhered to much of his teachings for the landscape of Westmount Park. This historic connection to the famed architect of Central Park only adds to the importance of preserving its heritage.

The future of this park is so important to me that I would reject any and all plans to deface it in any way. What does need to happen is replacing the degraded plumbing and repairing areas that have been neglected over the many years of not maintaining it properly.

Next there are the roads and most important, the Lanes in District 7, which are beyond repair at this point. I've posted dozens of photos on the Westmount District 7 Facebook page that clearly illustrate the sad state of our lanes with patch up job after patch up job. This clearly needs to be completely torn up and repaved properly. I've heard numerous stories of seniors falling due to the state of our roads and sidewalks here – this must be addressed immediately.

The famous sound barrier is an issue we've all been hearing about decades now, it is our version of the Cavendish Blvd. extension plan. When my family moved here in 2009 and in the years since then, we've heard all about how there will be a sound barrier erected along the train tracks. Yet somehow the answer as to why nothing has happened has always been "we're in court over it." We all understand how the wheels of justice can be slow, but the situation has reached a critical point, a tipping point you might say, in which the quality of life for many residents has been impacted far too long. We need to find a solution and rapidly. If it cannot be done via regular channels, we will have to find a "made in Westmount solution." But whatever happens, let's be clear and honest about where the situation stands and what our options are. Our citizens deserve nothing less.

There is much to be done to improve the quality of life in Westmount and that is why I am seeking this public servant position. I do not claim to have all the answers, but I know that when Westmounters combine their collective wisdom to a problem, solutions are found and acted upon. If elected, I would be your councillor, and my actions would reflect your wishes and desires and your suggestions would be most welcome, as would hearing about your problems and finding ways to resolve them via the city.

I would propose the creation of a District 7 citizens committee that would meet in-person and have a social



media component to hear from everyone. An informed public is an active public that can make the proper decisions. I want to preserve what is working well and improve and repair what needs to be reformed and spruced up.

Matt Aronson, my opponent, has said he wants to continue with the legacy of our predecessor. While I appreciate that Matt is running and cares about our community, from that standpoint alone, I fear nothing will happen in our District 7 that will benefit our needs, mainly roads, lanes, and sound barrier, which is why I decided to run in the first place.

The election is taking place on November 7 and throughout the campaign, I have had the privilege of meeting many of you and learning more about our community. You have provided me with many insights and concerns that need to be acted upon. We can make a difference as a community, and I have learned just how important our city is to you.

As the day of the vote approaches, I should like to hear more of your concerns. I can be reached at the [Westmount District 7 Facebook page](#) and by email at nhopley@protonmail.com

If you truly desire change then you need to vote for change. If you can support my campaign, that would be greatly appreciated, but whoever you choose to vote for, I urge you to cast your ballot.

Neil Hopley

Image: courtesy of Neil Hopley

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