



The Goode House: provincial heritage designation denied

## Description

# Is this the final chapter on preserving and protecting this rare example of Greek Revival architecture?

By Irwin Rapoport

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The tremendous efforts by many to protect the **Goode House** in Westmount, an **intact Greek Revival-style home** built between **1840-44**, from being renovated and expanded, have failed and the owners, who purchased one of the oldest buildings in the city, can now proceed with their plans to place a two-storey addition in the rear, remove the 1840s main staircase, and install an in-ground pool at the back of the property.

Quebec's Minister of Culture and Communications, **Natalie Roy**, denied a request to give the Goode House a provincial heritage designation and has approved the demolition permit requested by the owners and granted by Westmount City Council at the Demolition Committee hearing on June 14, 2022.

The Ministry released its [decision](#) to not provide provincial heritage designation on October 3. In it, the Ministry recognized the Goode House as a "Heritage building" on December 2, 2020, and on October 3 of this year, it denied the request for provincial heritage designation with the words "National status proposal not accepted."

The ministry update also included information on the house from the city in two parts: **Heritage value**, from a city web page from 2020 and **Characteristic elements**, also released by the city in 2020.

We last reported on the Goode House on September 15 with an article entitled [The Goode House: A tale full of twists and turns](#). This update covered the saga of the house after Westmount resident **David Nercessian** wrote a piece for Westmount Magazine on the heritage building entitled [Will the Goode house stay good or is it about to go bad?](#), published on June 1, 2022. For those unfamiliar with the protracted story of the Goode House, the



September 15 article contains many links in terms of newspaper articles, news reports, and information on the house, as well as an interview with [Heritage Montreal's Dinu Bumbaru](#), a leading advocate for the preservation and protection of Montreal's wonderful architecture and architectural history.

The October 11 Westmount City Council meeting had resident **Jon Breslaw** ask [several questions](#) concerning the Goode House in light of the ministry decision. Breslaw's intervention begins at 17:26 and ends at 23:50.



Goode house proposed renovations, front and back – Image: City of Westmount

On September 21, *The Gazette* published the article [Westmount home caught in a heritage tug of war is back on the market](#). This led many to believe that the ministry was leaning towards authorizing provincial heritage designation and that there was hope it could be purchased by people keen to protect and preserve this architectural gem. The Goode House is one of four similar houses built as the **Metcalf Terrace**. Two have been lost and a third still stands, but it underwent several renovations and expansions and has been changed significantly.

Here is some crucial background regarding the Goode House and its status:

- It has had **Category 1\* classification** since 1988. Category 1\* gives such buildings the highest category of architectural status and the protection that goes with it.
- Last spring **Westmount's Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) voted against** the application for a demolition permit from the owners, but on June 14 and June 20 city council voted unanimously to approve the demolition request.
- A letter, sent by "concerned Westmount residents" on September 22, 2022, to the Minister, supported the official request for the Goode House to receive provincial heritage designation.

This and other initiatives brought together people from within Westmount and the wider community, including Heritage Montreal, to support the Goode House's heritage.

The **Westmount Historical Association (WHA)**, as well as many residents, filed written opposition to the application for demolition submitted by the owners. The [February 2021 edition](#) of *The Westmount Historian*, the newsletter of the WHA, focused on the Goode House, providing an in-depth history of the house and its



architectural and landscaping features.

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This is another case where the fate of heritage is set through political arrangements rather than sound principles and publicly accessible information and studies,” he added. “Where are the famous studies praised by Westmount council in its resolutions?”

– Dinu Bumbaru, Heritage Montreal Policy Director

Heritage Montreal Policy Director Dinu Bumbaru is disappointed by both the Ministry and the City of Westmount, whose record of commitment to heritage conservation is now in doubt.

“The public authorities with the responsibility to protect heritage in Westmount and Quebec failed to set a proper precedent in allowing such a project and arguments like a “%” of masonry to serve when facing a heritage building of such outstanding integrity, particularly its interiors,” he said. “This is a family house, as it always has been. This use is a recognized dimension of its authenticity. So is the setting with the gardens. There needs to be a balance between what the house is and what the owners want instead. That balance should be based on the least intervention.”

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We understand that a request has been sent to the city that the two heritage studies, which the City of Westmount commissioned, be posted on the heritage section of the city’s website. Many look forward to finally reading the experts’ assessment of the property.

It is rare for a house with such heritage value to survive almost intact, but the Goode House has done so up to this point. The owners are keen to proceed with their renovation and expansion plans. In my opinion, it would be a tragedy to alter the Goode House in any major way. We have an obligation to conserve the heritage elements; it is necessary to update the plumbing, wiring, heating, and insulation, and to carry out restoration work to preserve the original interior and exterior features.

That it remains a family home would carry on a tradition going back to the late 1800s. Some homes are just houses; but the Goode House is a direct link to our past and if its integrity is lost, it cannot be brought back. Should the demolitions and upgrades proceed as planned, a dangerous precedent would be set for heritage protection. I thus urge, as do many others, that the city, the owners of the home, and all concerned work out a solution we can be proud of.

**Disclaimer:** *The opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of WestmountMag.ca or its publishers.*

*Feature image: the existing Goode House, Google Maps*



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