



Welcome to a new decade:  
the Burning 20s

## Description

# Westmount must make climate change the priority in its new urban plan

By **Patricia Dumais**

As we enter a new year, and a new decade, we can't help but wonder what the coming years have in store for us. Many people are looking back 100 years to the Roaring Twenties and the similarities between those times and ours. They were years of abundance and decadence, with a stock market making ever-higher gains and everyone thought the luck would last forever. We all know how that ended with a monumental crash, followed by a decade of financial depression.

Welcome to **the Burning Twenties** – we have abundance and decadence, and a stock market making ever higher gains. We are also witnessing ever-increasing manifestations of the greatest threat mankind has ever experienced – **climate change** brought on by man-made global warming. BC, Alberta, California, the Amazon and now Australia, have all seen their forests decimated by fires brought on by abnormal weather, with loss of life (human and animal) and property, and billions of dollars in damages.

Westmount, a wealthy city with a very large carbon footprint, must lead the way, as it has the resources to do so, and make climate change a priority in all relevant decisions.

Even though these manifestations of climate change have so far occurred far from home, we are not on another planet – they can happen here too. Dry, hot droughts could set Quebec forests ablaze. Other types of climate change-driven events have already happened: the exceptional EF3 tornadoes that hit the Gatineau area in 2018 and last spring's floods, causing millions of dollars in property damage in South-West Quebec.



We all contribute to climate change and it is our responsibility to prevent it. We just can't sit idle. Westmount, a wealthy city with a very large carbon footprint, must lead the way, as it has the resources to do so, and make climate change a priority in all relevant decisions.

The city of Westmount has announced that it will be holding a public information session entitled **Imagine Westmount 2040!** on **Wednesday, January 29** to explain their proposed approach to its **new Urban Planning Master Plan**. According to the invitation distributed to residents, "Your comments and suggestions collected during this evening will help promote citizen participation and ensure that the new Master Plan is developed by and for the community."

Since the city welcomes our ideas and suggestions, here are a few and I invite you to share your own by way of a comment here below or on the [city's website](#):

### **1. Make Westmount great for active and public transportation**

Since motor vehicles are responsible for most carbon emissions, it makes sense to encourage other means of transportation.

- **Keep our sidewalks in top condition to encourage everyone to walk**  
Seniors and the disabled are often discouraged by the poor state of our sidewalks. Keep them as clean as our roads, year-round.  
Provide more benches throughout the city to allow older people to rest.
- **Work with Montreal on enhancing public transportation**  
Among other things, introduce [solar-heated bus shelters](#).
- **Make intersections as safe as possible**  
Paint the crosswalks: cars often stop right in the middle of these crosswalks when they are not properly indicated, forcing pedestrians in the way of cars.  
Increase pedestrian crossing times to allow for senior pedestrians.
- **Create more protected cycling paths to encourage cyclists of all ages**  
Cyclists feel more secure on paths that protect them from cars. And keep all the cycling paths clean year-round.

### **2. Introduce regulations to ensure green construction and retrofitting**

- **Enforce LEED norms**  
New buildings, in particular large projects, should conform to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) norms.
- **Encourage ecologically sound updates** for existing buildings such as green roofs, solar and geothermal energy, permeable driveways and walkways, and water re-use and conservation.
- **Be open to the use of new building technologies and materials** while protecting our building heritage
- **Ban wood burning**  
Follow Montreal's example and ban wood burning fireplaces and stoves that are a threat to resident's health.



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~~Not only do these add CO<sub>2</sub> to the environment, the particulates they disperse seriously degrade the quality of our air.~~

### 3. Protect all green spaces and create more parks

“Green spaces are precious”, said Mayor Smith at the June 2019 council meeting. To this statement I recommend the following:

- **Respect people’s wishes concerning Westmount Park**

As citizens expressed at a consultation on the “refurbishing” of Westmount Park, “Respect the park’s aesthetic – fix what needs fixing (broken paths, infrastructure in poor condition, leaking lagoon membrane), introduce more trees and shrubs to add to the natural aspect of the park, but do not introduce more services to an already saturated park”.

- **Give Summit Woods the TLC it deserves**

This urban forest is an important stop-over for migrating birds. Unfortunately it has been neglected for years. Among other things, it suffers from invasive species and the paths are badly eroded. In 2007, the city-commissioned Fauteux Report made several recommendations that must be urgently implemented.

- **Protect the WAG (Westmount Athletic Grounds)**

There are those who want the WAG to be artificially turfed, which would create a heat-island effect, drastically reducing the quality of life for residents living in its proximity, as well as users of the grounds. Under this scheme, grass would be replaced with [synthetic turf](#) that cannot capture CO<sub>2</sub>, therefore destroying a green space. Scientists worldwide are calling on a reduction of the use of plastics as they are seriously contaminating our environment.

- **Create a new park**

There is an opportunity in the city’s South East to create a new green space in the Tupper parking lots. This narrow land could be used to create a green belt from Atwater to Clark Avenue, adding much-needed green space to the most densely populated area of Westmount, and providing visual relief from all the new high-rise development in the vicinity.

### 4. Really encourage the 4 Rs – reduce, reuse, recycle, recover

Westmount was a pioneer in municipal recycling and composting but recent stats show that just over 50% of residents recycle, and participation in composting is even less. We could certainly do much better.

- **Introduce proper recycling and composting bins in public spaces** (not just recycled garbage cans) throughout the city.

- **Implement a [ban on single-use plastics](#)** (water bottles, cutlery, straws, bags) throughout the city. Plastics, a fossil-fuel product, take hundreds of years to decompose and are a serious threat to our environment.

- **Make recycling and composting available to all citizens**

All new buildings should accommodate both recycling and composting to reduce materials sent to landfill. Existing buildings should be retrofitted for the same.

### 5. Reward environmental efforts

As proposed by Caroline Jondahl of the **Healthy City Project Environment Committee**, the city should introduce **Leadership on Climate Change Awards** to reward Westmount citizens, students and corporations who make a



difference in battling global warming.

**6. Participate in ongoing environmental dialogues with other cities**

It was recently announced that Mayor Smith would be meeting with Montreal officials to discuss environmental issues. This is a good step towards joint climate efforts. The city could also learn from other municipalities' approaches and practices – see *resources below*.

These ideas are just a few examples that, once implemented, would make a world of difference in our quality of life and the health of our planet.

Remember to attend the **Imagine Westmount 2040!** meeting on **Wednesday, January 29** at 6 pm in Victoria Hall, 4626 Sherbrooke W, and voice your concerns and ideas.

Visit [westmount.org/imagine2040](http://westmount.org/imagine2040) for more information.

Resources consulted:

[Climate Opportunity: More Jobs; Better Health; Liveable Cities – Quantifying The Benefits Of Climate Change Mitigation Measures In Buildings, Transport And Energy Supply – C40 Cities](#)

[The Climate Mobilization Victory Plan – Ezra Silk](#)

[A strategic approach to climate action in cities – focused acceleration – November 2017 Report – McKinsey and Company](#)

[Cities 100 – 100 city projects making the case for climate action – Realdania – C40](#)

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