



Work to finally begin at
the Westmount Conservatory

Description

The much-awaited restoration of an architectural gem and inclusive oasis in the heart of the city

Westmount, February 24, 2021

The **City of Westmount** has announced the beginning of **restoration work at the Westmount Conservatory**, which has been closed for six years. Ultimately, the project will allow residents to once again enjoy this architectural gem and discover an accessible and inclusive “mystery garden”. The project includes a complete restoration of the exterior and the refurbishment of the interior of the main greenhouse (Conservatory) as well as the adjoining greenhouse, affectionately known to residents as the Frog Pond.

The exterior of the 1927 Conservatory will be completely restored, preserving the unique appearance of this heritage structure. The building is expected to surpass in performance and longevity the original construction. The materials used, while conforming and equivalent from a heritage and aesthetic point of view, will be of superior quality including structural silicone and glass. In addition, all electromechanical systems will be updated.



Image: courtesy of Affleck de la Riva, architects

Thanks to the redesign of the interior layout, visitors will be invited to discover the mysteries of the flora through a winding path. A new access ramp to the Westmount Public Library will allow everyone to fully enjoy the experience.

We know that this oasis has been much missed by the residents and the Frog Pond even more by our smaller citizens but we couldn't do things by halves. Being able to announce the start of the restoration is something we've been waiting for.

– Mayor Christina Smith.

A complex restoration

The Westmount Conservatory and its adjacent greenhouse were closed in September 2015 following the fall of a glass panel. The deterioration of the cypress wood, which held the glass panels together, was partly to blame.



Image: courtesy of Affleck de la Riva, architects

In the wake of studies to determine the condition of the structure, full restoration proved to be the only option considered by City Council, for whom fragmentary repairs were neither satisfactory nor viable. However, some of the materials used for its construction at the time – notably cypress wood – are no longer readily available today. The original manufacturer no longer exists and few firms have the necessary experience or expertise.

Several teams of professionals participated in the different phases of the project. A consortium headed by **Nadeau Nadeau Blondin architectes** developed a restoration plan and proposed various interior design concepts. The consortium led by **Affleck de la Riva** produced the plans and specifications during the final design phase, and the work will be carried out by the contractor **St-Denis Thompson Inc.**

Unlike large-scale restorations of similar greenhouses in the United States, wood will not be replaced by aluminum, a first for this type of repair according to available information.



Image: Westmount Archives (date unknown)

An architectural gem

The Westmount Conservatory was built by famous greenhouse manufacturer **Lord & Burnham**, builder of the conservatories of the **New York Botanical Gardens** and the **United States Botanical Garden** in Washington, D.C. Since its construction in 1927, the Conservatory has presented superb floral exhibitions year after year. The plants grown inside the glass structure are also used to make one of the city's most recognized emblems – the Floral Clock. Over the years, the Conservatory has undergone several restorations.

The City is planning eight months to complete the work, assuming it is not interrupted in the context of the current pandemic. The City of Westmount is investing \$6,279,417 for the final design phase including plans and specifications, as well as the execution of the work.

Feature image: courtesy of the City of Westmount



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