

Montreal home show: Place Bonaventure has been transformed into a housing showplace, F4

What's in: Columnist Lynda Reeves lists the latest trends – from colours to accessories, F2

HOMEFRONT

THE GAZETTE | MONTREAL | SATURDAY, MARCH 18, 2006 | HOMEFRONT EDITOR: BRENDA O'FARRELL | 514 987 2563 | ofarrell@thegazette.canwest.com

RANDOM SAMPLER

A selection of recent Montreal-area real-estate transactions



Plateau

3733-3737 Coloniale Ave., attached triplex, 3-bedroom unit rented for \$1,020 per month, 2-bedroom unit rented for \$680 per month, third unit vacant. Heating paid by tenants. Building sold without legal warranty. Built in 1885. Taxes (municipal and school): \$2,968. Valuation: \$159,400. Asking price: \$349,000. Sold for \$330,000. Listing agent: Philip Malwyn, Groupe Sutton-Cloderm Inc., LaSalle.



Montreal West

19 Brock Ave. N., cottage, 3 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, renovated, lots of original woodwork, fireplace, finished basement. Built in 16 on 4,400-square-foot lot. Taxes (municipal and school): \$7,388. Valuation: \$377,900. Asking price: \$900,000. Sold for \$652,500. Listing agents: Isabelle Papineau and Clark Lavell, Groupe Sutton Centre Inc., Montreal.



Dollard

10 Amsterdam St., cottage, 6 bedrooms, 1 bathroom, 1 powder room, kitchen, bathrooms renovated, wood floors, fireplace. Built in 1968 on 6,000-square-foot lot. Taxes (municipal and school): \$2,924. Valuation: \$1,500. Asking price: \$249,000. Sold for \$235,000. Listing agent: Ilian Angelov, Re/Max West, Dollard des Ormeaux.



Beaconsfield

12 Windermere Rd., cottage, 3 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, 1 powder room, new roof, fireplace, central air, back deck, Unistone driveway. Built in 1971 on 8,205-square-foot lot. Taxes (municipal and school): \$3,893. Valuation: \$400,000. Asking price: \$349,000. Sold for \$337,500. Listing agent: Shepherd Abbey & Vier, Beaconsfield.

If you are an agent and want to submit listings that have sold, email them to estate@thegazette.canwest.com. Include a digital photo and the listing info.

REAL ESTATE



RENDERING COURTESY OF VISION EN VERT INC.

As an example of how the century-old homes will be restored, this is what the bath tub in the Thompson house will look like. Carved from a single piece of limestone-like travertine and weighing about a tonne, it is set in front of a fireplace. The designers based their restoration on architectural drawings and photos from the era.

AT ONE TIME THREATENED to make way for a condo tower, two old houses on Côte des Neiges Rd. will be transformed into show-stopping examples of opulent living

Money will save old mansions

You would be forgiven if you thought the words carved into the entrance of the Thompson and Sparrow houses on Côte des Neiges Rd., Fan Na Greine, meant "Enter at your own risk." The century-old mansions have crumbled and stubborn weeds choke their once gracious grounds.

In fact, the Gaelic inscription means "place where the sun always shines."

Gilbert Rashi likes that. Time and indifference have taken their toll on the elegant old mansions, but thanks to an owner with a change of heart and the efforts of Rashi's company, Fan Na Greine is being given another day in the sun.

Rashi and partner Endrée Villeneuve of Vision en Vert have thrown themselves into the challenge of restoring the Sparrow and Thompson houses, a job started 10 months ago, when they began researching the homes' history. They'll need another year to put the finishing details in place.

They were grand in their day, built at the turn of the 20th century for pillars of Montreal's Anglo business establishment, probably as country homes on what then would have been the outskirts of downtown.



MARY LAMEY

The years haven't been kind. The Thompson and Sparrow homes were converted into rooming houses in response to the severe housing shortage that hit the city after World War II. It was all downhill from there. They were abandoned in the early 1980s, then taken over by squatters, who looted and vandalized. There were fires and floods. There went the neighbourhood.

In 1999, Canderel Ltd. paid \$675,000 for the mouldering properties and unveiled a plan to tear the buildings down and erect a 10-storey condominium tower on their 26,000-square-foot lot. There was fierce opposition from Les Amis de la Montagne, Heritage Montreal, conservationist Phyllis Lambert and residents of the neighbouring Gleaneagles apartments and Trafalgar condominiums, who worried the

project would block the view and cast a long shadow over the mountain.

The conservationists won. In 2002, Quebec's ministry of culture classified the block the houses occupy as historic, effectively defeating Canderel's condo plan. They sat abandoned and increasingly decrepit until last year, when developer Jonathan Wener, chairman and controlling shareholder of Canderel, stepped up.

"It wasn't a business decision at all. It was purely emotional," Wener said in a telephone interview last week.

Rashi and Villeneuve approached Canderel, hoping to buy the homes, restore and sell them. Wener listened to their proposal and instead hired the pair. He and his wife plan to live in one house. His daughter will occupy the other.

Canderel had long argued that the houses were beyond saving and that razing them was the only logical answer. Now, Rashi and Villeneuve are deeply immersed in the task of not just saving Fan Na Greine, but of turning back the clock.

Please see MANSIONS, Page F2



MARCOS TOWNSEND THE GAZETTE

Now: The Sparrow house. Abandoned and neglected, it was saved from the wrecker's ball after the site was selected for a condo project.



RENDERING COURTESY OF VISION EN VERT INC.

When work is completed: Among refinements planned is a ventilated cigar lounge, wine cellar, home theatre, designer kitchens.