

April Sales: Holding Pattern

by Andy Dodge, CRA

(NOTE: The following article relates to offers to purchase Westmount residential dwellings which were reported by the local real estate agents as having been accepted in April, 2008. Because they are not final registered sales, the addresses and prices cannot be made public, but give a good idea of current trends in local real estate activity. The graph on page xx offers a picture of these trends over time.)

Westmount's real estate market hit something of a holding pattern for mid-spring, still showing the average price of local houses around the \$1.2 million mark, but without the anticipation or enthusiasm it had shown last fall. Still, the market is holding its own against last year's market and is way up from 2006.

Volume in April was about the same as last year but is down slightly for the year to date, largely, we feel, because there is less inventory particularly in the middle price range between \$800,000 and \$1.3 million. The number of days to sell jumped from 117 in March to 163 in April, again indicating that buyers are settling on clearing out some of the longer-standing inventory in the absence of new listings. The higher-priced houses are starting to move, with three sales over \$1,500,000 in April, top price was \$2,305,000. The lowest price of \$545,000 is up from the \$530,000 minimum in March and from \$522,500 in February, an indication that the bottom end of the scale is slowly getting cleared out. On the upper side, however, we find some 45 still-unsold houses for sale at prices over \$1,500,000, compared with only 23 at the same time last year.

So far this year 63 one- and two-family dwellings have sold for an average \$1,104,658, grossed up to \$1,247,825 as the value of the "typical" Westmount home. That compares to \$1,217,566 for all of last year, indicating an increase of only 2 percent year-to-year, but 15 percent compared to 2006 and 22 percent compared to 2005. So far 32 sales over \$1 million have been reported, compared with 25 in the first four months last year.

After a flurry of sales in February, Westmount's condominium market appears to have died off, with only two sales so far reported in April after three in March. For the first quarter of the year, the average markup over valuation among condominiums was 16 percent compared with 26 percent for one- and two-family dwellings.

In adjacent -Westmount, eastern Notre Dame de Grâce appears to have been the big winner in April with four home sales reported. There was one condo

sale on Victoria Avenue north of Westmount but otherwise nothing major to report in any of the other districts. A house on Ponsard Avenue drew more than \$1.8 million in February, but otherwise this year the only interest in the expensive property seems to be inside Westmount. Among cottages and duplexes in adjacent-Westmount the price range is pretty firm, between \$525,000 and \$835,000. There is plenty of inventory in the area outside of Westmount over \$1 million but it is not moving.