

October Sales: Boom!

By Andy Dodge, CRA

It may have been the returning confidence in the economy, it may have been the low interest rates, it may have been a combination of factors, but certainly the effect has been to create one of the busiest October real estate sales periods on record in Westmount. Agents now are starting to complain about a lack of supply, and certainly prices are staying firm as we move toward the end of the fall buying season.

Eighteen one- and two-family dwellings sold in Westmount last month, double the number from September and double the number from October last year. Coupled with six sales in the last week of September, things appear to be moving fast. And while prices have not regained all of what they lost in 2008, they are still strong and could get stronger. Prices ranged from \$532,000 to \$2,350,000, but only five of the eighteen sales were for less than \$1 million, and in fact four were above \$1,500,000, compared to only one above that mark in September. The average markup stayed at about the 25-percent level, with only two houses selling under the city assessment.

Only two condominium sales have been posted in October, ranging from \$300,000 to \$350,000, one an apartment and one a flat in a triplex, but five co-operative apartments in some of Westmount's large apartment buildings sold last month. The co-ops ranged up to \$795,000, indicating buyer acceptance of this method of ownership. Even adjacent-Westmount saw a surge in sales, five sales each in the Côte des Neiges section and east of Westmount (including the "Golden Square Mile") and four in the Notre Dame de Grâce section, counting September and October together. The averages per district were between \$575,000 and \$725,000, only one of the 14 sales was for more than \$1 million.

Volume turned south in July of last year and stayed well below average through June 2009, but now appears ready to regain its normal pace. The October volume figure is the highest for the month since 2003; in October 1997 agents posted 23 sales, and two other years since 1986 have seen more than 20 sales in October.

So far this year there have been 29 house rentals compared to 25 reported throughout 2008; perhaps more important, the range of rents this year is between \$2,300 and \$12,000 a month. Last year there was one rental over \$7,500; this year four have been reported.