

Westmount a national historic site: study

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The city of Westmount is looking to become the first Quebec municipality to be declared a national historic site.

The symbolic honour would recognize the city's architectural and cultural landscape.

"Modern-day Westmount is like a museum of turn-of-the-century architecture," said Université de Montréal student Jean-François Van der Plancke, who spent the last two years studying the city's 4,000 buildings.

He did the research with Daniel Paquin. Both are masters students at the university's Conservation de l'Environnement Bâti program, which is dedicated to the preservation of the urban environment.

The students evaluated the city's buildings, parks and streets to determine whether they matched criteria established by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, the advisory body to the Minister of Canadian Heritage. Their report was passed on to Westmount city officials.

According to the board's criteria, a

place may be designated of national historic significance if it's directly associated with a nationally significant aspect of Canadian history.

As well, buildings or cultural landscape of potential national historic significance are supposed to illustrate an exceptional creative achievement in concept, design and planning, or a significant stage in the development of Canada.

"After walking through the city's streets and looking at the different parks and layout of the streets, it became clear that Westmount residents have some-

thing very special," Paquin said.

About two-thirds of Westmount buildings, including the Church of St. Léon de Westmount, the site of this weekend's wedding of Caroline Mulroney and Alexander Andrew Lapham, are considered to be of exceptional heritage quality, featuring unusual architectural and landscaping designs, said Joanne Poirier, director of Westmount's building and planning department.

City officials recently endorsed the students' report, which will be sent to the board for study.