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Former newspaper premises are reborn as a top-drawer hotel complex

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By Mike King, Photograph by: Pierre Obendrauf, The Gazette

The city's newest luxury hotel bears little resemblance to the building's previous incarnation as home to The Gazette and, before that, the Montreal Star.

Le Westin Montréal, which began accepting guests a week ago, is the result of a \$90-million investment by [ATLIFIC](#) Hotels.



Where the newspaper presses once rumbled and rolled along the St. Antoine St. side of the building is now an enclosed grand entrance to the spacious lobby of the 450-room hotel.

It is also the entry to the 160-space, six-level underground parking garage.

Built atop the former parking lot on the corner of St. Antoine and St. Pierre Sts. is the 22-storey St. Antoine Tower, with 424 guestrooms and a 143-seat street-level restaurant/lounge appropriately called Gazette.

Food and drinks are also available at the [Reporter](#) bar on the mezzanine floor of the adjacent main building.

In giving a tour of the transformed facilities, general manager Jacques Baheux said "ownership is dedicated to making this A-plus," and to "creating our own town."

In addition to 40,000 square feet of conference space and reception rooms, there will be 100,000 square feet of office space for rent as well as retail areas.

Eric Huot of the Montreal firm Geiger & Huot Architectes, who led what he called "the very complicated Westin project," said the challenge was revitalizing, preserving and restoring the premises to maintain the facades of the three buildings that comprised the St. Antoine block.

There was the first Montreal Star building on St. Jacques St., dating back to 1899, its art-deco-style extension designed in 1929, and The Gazette building on St. Antoine, which was built in the 1950s.

"We had to combine all three existing buildings and coordinate them with the tower," Huot said of the 31/2-year project.

He added the mechanical room on the roof of The Gazette building had to be removed and four floors added.

Baheux said ATLIFIC, a fast-growing hotel management company that owns other properties across Canada, worked with Westin Hotels & Resorts "to help the Westin flag make a comeback" in the city after a long absence.

The Omni Mont-Royal Hotel and Hilton Montreal Bonaventure were the last Montreal hotels to be owned by Westin.

"We chose the Westin Hotels & Resorts banner because it is synonymous with the high standard of quality and refinement this heritage building should convey," Philippe Gadbois, executive vice-president of ATLIFIC Hotels, said last week. Baheux said yesterday the hotel is awaiting its classification, but anticipates it will be granted five-start status.

"We are delighted with the new Westin Montréal," John Dunn, executive vice-president of Tourism Montreal, said in a statement.

"Its strategic location near the Palais des congrès and its sheer number of rooms will certainly position Montreal as a frontrunner in the race to host major events."

<http://www.westinmontreal.com>

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