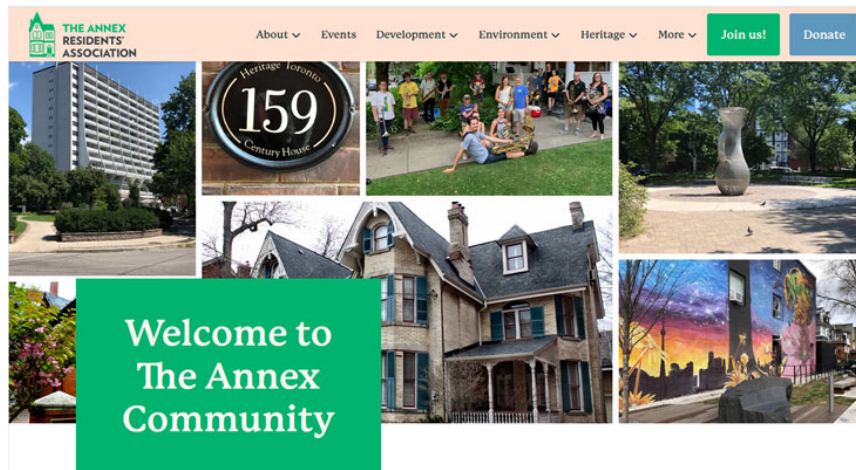


This Week in the Annex:

November 08, 2023

ARA Board Meeting Tomorrow

We've had a request to post these notices right at the top. So here you go – the ARA will be holding its monthly meeting tomorrow night. Do plan to join us on Zoom: **Thursday November 09** from **7:00 to 9:00 pm**. Just send an email with the subject line "Board Meeting" to info@theara.org by noon on Thursday and our indefatigable Board Secretary, Micky Fraterman, will send you the link. Hope to see you there.



Brace Yourselves

As the development proposal for Walmer Road Baptist Church winds its way through the interminable planning process – now locked in legal action at OLT (the Ontario Land Tribunal) – it's not surprising that other properties on the street are in the development cross hairs. Most recently 40 Walmer Road has been targeted for demolition in order to make room for a 35-storey tower.



Above is the existing 4-storey apartment building at 40 Walmer nesting tidily and unobtrusively on its lot. It's possible you've never paid it any attention.



But this is the developer's proposal for the same space – a glass and steel tower soaring above a redbrick podium that bloats out to the lot lines.

How Can This Be?

In effect, Bloor Street is marching north. The whole west side of Walmer around the curve is at risk of tower creep as is all of St George. Builders are ignoring the official neighbourhood land use designation as they propose fully developed towers with virtually none or very little new open space.

Two years ago, the ARA's Planning and Development Committee (P+D) successfully petitioned the City to authorize a "four corners" study to monitor and coordinate the development node at Bloor and Spadina. But nothing has yet

materialized — it appears that each of the three proposed developments on those corners continues to be examined in isolation from each other.

And now it is apparent there is an urgent need for a full precinct plan to address the growing pressures on inner streets like Walmer and Lowther.



Pictured above is a development proposal for 171–175 Lowther that’s currently [creating huge buzz](#).

Keep Informed

If you want to have any say in what’s happening in our neighbourhood, the first step is to be informed. By the time a tower starts to rise in concrete, steel, and glass it’s far too late for you to have any impact. Many years of planning and negotiations and irrevocable approval will have gone into the project by that point.

Fortunately, you can now sign yourself up for alerts from the City’s Application Centre. This relatively new feature makes it much easier for anyone to learn whenever a new project is filed. In the firm belief that every Annexonian should be alert to what’s happening in the ‘hood, here follow the steps you must take to get yourself in the loop:

First, go to the e-updates page: <https://www.toronto.ca/home/social-media/e-updates/>

Then, click on **New Development Application Notices**.

A drop-down menu listing three steps will appear.

Step 1: Check “University-Rosedale” from the list of wards

Step 2: Key in your email address in the dialog box

Step 3: Respond to the confirmation sent to your email address

Bingo! You will now be automatically informed when applications are filed. But truth to tell, you still won't necessarily be ahead of the game.

Better Yet – Come to P+D

Because of brutally tight timelines imposed by the Provincial Government, some developers (though not all) are canvassing interested parties before they submit an official application. They will go to the Councillor. They will seek a meeting with the Planning Department. And, in most cases, they will also reach out to the local Residents' Association (RA).

That's why, several times a year, P+D hears presentations from developers who are only at the earliest stages of planning. For example, the developers behind the proposal for 171–175 Lowther pictured above voluntarily shared their thoughts with P+D last September which allowed the committee time to express [their first response](#).

If you want to be in on the ground floor of such presentations and ensuing discussions, please by all means join P+D. Meetings are held regularly on the first Tuesday of each month from 5:30 to 7:00 pm on Zoom. Just write to info@theara.org with the subject line "Attending P+D" and your name will be put on the distribution list. The more residents we have involved, the better. With a daunting [38 development projects](#) currently in the works, P+D needs all the help it can get.

Bless the Bloor Annex BIA

We were all set to entitle this item "Baby Steps" as we noted with only the most subtle touch of sarcasm the progress (?) made in mitigating the hazard posed by that jagged stump of a bicycle rack on the Bloor Street pavement outside Cobs that had recently felled more than one of our unsuspecting residents. (If you need a refresher, you can read about it [in last week's issue](#).)

It seems that someone (a City worker?) thought to mark the offending stump with fluorescent orange paint.



That's a start, we thought. But hardly helpful come wintry sidewalks.

On a hunch we turned to Brian Burchell of the Bloor Annex BIA (Business Improvement Area) and asked if he had any pull with the City to get this taken care of quickly.

First, Brian delivered the sobering news that the City only sub-contracts such repairs on an annual basis and that we had missed this year's cycle. But our mood immediately soared to joy when he promised that of course the BIA would deploy its own grinder within the next couple of days and eradicate the blasted remnant.

It's hard to exaggerate how much we Annexionians benefit from the attention and inspiration of this BIA under Brian's management. Murals. Pole Wraps. Daily graffiti and trash eradication. Winter sidewalk clearance. And now stump removal. Fantastic!

Please do let the individual store owners know how much we appreciate their BIA's efforts.



Next on the hit list – this perilous post foundation on the northwest corner of Bloor and St. George.

Photo courtesy Elizabeth Sisam

Notes and Queries

Toronto Budget 2024

Our Mayor clearly meant what she said during the election campaign: she wants the people to be involved in the budget process from the ground up. To that end, the City has laid on a host of consultation sessions, one or more of which you are encouraged to attend. (For full details, go right to the City's official budget webpage: www.toronto.ca/budget.)

But where you might get even more satisfaction is by completing the "thought exchange" [online survey](#). It's unlike any City survey you've taken before. It's a breath of fresh air. It's simple. It's direct. And it's open ended. You can finish it in a matter of minutes. Or you can become engaged in a lengthy dialogue as you review others' comments.

In short, this is a survey well worth taking. It's your chance to become an ally in Mayor Chow's crucial negotiations with Queen's Park and Ottawa for much needed dollars.



Keeping up the Pressure

We were impressed to catch a photo of ARA Board Members Rebecca Gimmi (back row left) and Charlotte Mickie (back row right) posing on the Ontario Legislature's grand staircase last month. They were there to participate with fellow members of No Demovictions in a press conference at Queen's Park to call on the province to stop the mass displacement of tens of thousands of working-class tenants across Toronto and Ontario through Bill 23.

Afterwards the group attended Question Period as guests of MPPs Jessica Bell (front row left) and Kristen Wong-Tam (front row right). Charlotte reports that while the questions from the NDP side of the house were oriented towards the blight of demoviction, the responses from the government benches were, predictably, deflections rather than engagement with the issues.



Critter Corner

Love 'em or hate 'em or just don't care, it's impossible to ignore the fact that the Annex has seen an explosion of the canine population in the past couple of years. Just tally the number of times you've been out in the 'hood for a walk and haven't encountered at least one pooch. The fingers on one hand will no doubt do for the count.

On the other hand, there's been a perceptible decline in the feline population. Where once pet owners let their cats roam free, kitties seem to have vanished from sight behind closed doors – if they're there at all. Penning them up ensures safety from predators like our local cayote. But still it was a delight for a cat lover to catch this wary beauty [out for a post Hallowe'en patrol](#).



The Annex Residents' Association is a volunteer organization of residents committed to improving and preserving the distinctive character of our neighbourhood. Our strength depends on our base of support in a well-informed community.

This email was sent to gillianbartlettara@gmail.com. To stop receiving emails, [click here to unsubscribe](#).

The Annex Residents' Association