

This Week in the Annex:

January 19, 2022

Art in the Annex

Our guest contributor, Nicole Stoffman, takes it from the top in today's newsletter. This is the second of her guest columns featuring art in the Annex – the first being published last [May 12](#) telling the story of the Dupont Subway Gate. For more from Nicole, you can follow her on [Twitter](#), watch her [videos](#), and read her [articles](#). – Ed.

Just in time for Toronto's Year of Public Art, Torbridge Construction has restored Brad Golden's "Solar Recorders" beneath the railway bridge north of Dupont at Spadina Road, on the east side.

Though the site has been marred by an uninformed tagger, local resident J. Hatherly captured the artwork on December 21 at noon, exactly as it was meant to be enjoyed: aligning with the shadow cast by the bridge at high noon on the winter solstice.



"The selection of materials was based on a poetic relationship to times of the year," explained Golden, who consulted with a U of T astronomer to get the angles exactly right.

The winter solstice solar recorder in these photos is made of iron ore, which is supposed to evoke the cold and dark. Another copper recorder is described by the artist as "transformative and oxidizing," because it is set at the angle cast by the bridge during both the Vernal and Autumnal equinoxes. Golden describes the third stainless steel solar recorder as "bright and reflective" to evoke the summer solstice.

These recorders also recall the different ores carried by the railway. [Click here](#) to listen to the artist's full description of the work, part of a larger installation called *Spadina Line*.



For those of us (you're not alone!) who have forgotten what an equinox and solstice are, here's a refresher and a photo that clearly shows the angles.

"The earth's axis is tilted towards the sun during summer solstice, and away from the sun during the winter solstice, and is halfway between those points on either equinox," explains MacDonald. The sun is highest in the sky during the summer solstice (steel recorder, far right), is lowest in the sky during the winter solstice (iron ore recorder, far left), and is at the same in-between point during both equinoxes (copper recorder, centre).

Plan Your Visit

In the coming year, plan to visit the copper recorder during the vernal equinox (March 20th), the stainless-steel recorder on the summer solstice (June 21st), and the copper recorder again during the autumnal equinox (September 22nd).

Noon is the best time of day, "since that's when the sun is highest in the sky," advises Ilana MacDonald, instructional support and planetarium administrator at the David A. Dunlap Department of Astronomy and Astrophysics. "Though if it's cloudy, you won't see any shadows! It should still be pretty close the day before and after the equinox or solstice, however," she said.

Spadina Line, (1991) is a subtle, intelligent public artwork that asks us, in this instance, to connect to nature, and through nature to the history of the railway in the Annex. Its other components continue on the west side, and along Spadina to Davenport, in the form of a series of weathered steel light standards with corresponding words laid into the sidewalk.

Happy year of public art!

Ed note: Thanks to Nicole's tireless advocacy, all components of [Spadina Line](#) are currently being restored under the supervision of Catherine Machado, the public art conservator for the City of Toronto.

Skate Freely at Sibelius

Yesterday when the rest of the city was just starting to dig out from under, a team of Annex residents descended on the skating rink at Jean Sibelius Square and made short work of the mounds of snow. It's hard to exaggerate the importance of this patch of ice to our entire community. And we have a host of volunteers to thank for its maintenance.

Work on the rink begins every November when Tom Friedland and Christine Innes do the necessary behind-the-scenes administration – liaising with the City, acquiring permits, ensuring the necessary equipment is in order. Then, when the thermometer drops, some dozen or more volunteers pitch in to flood the field, groom the ice, and shovel the snow on a 24/7 schedule.

This year, the team got an earlier start than usual due to extreme cold periods, so the rink was up and running before New Year's Day – a welcome contrast to last year when the pitifully short season was marred by weeks of slushy disappointment. Congratulations and thanks to all involved in this effort. And remember – an extra pair of hands (BYO shovel) is always welcome in the event of snow!



Whether you're a beginner....



...or a seasoned player, there's always a place for you on the ice at Jean Sibelius.

Notes and Queries

Avenue Road Intervention

It seems that persistence has paid off. Councillors Layton and Matlow co-hosted a meeting with the ARSC ([Avenue Road Safety Coalition](#)) and City staff to get clear commitments towards championing improvements on Avenue Road. Staff finally acknowledged the need for some urgent tactical intervention and committed to thoroughly evaluating the designs that were undertaken pro bono by Brown + Storey. Since then, a consultant has been hired to conduct a feasibility study. While this is promising, it's not time to hold your breath. We're not likely to see any improvements before the end of 2022 at the earliest.



Budget Time

As Councillor Layton reminds us in his most [recent newsletter](#), it's that time of year again at City Hall. He's urging residents [to let him know](#) the items they'd like to see prioritized in the next budget. For background on the process go straight to the [City website](#). And for an interesting analysis, check out the independently researched and written [City Hall Watchdog](#). That's where you'll find a discussion of the following visual of the budget iceberg.



Speaking of Icebergs...

The City was no match for the record time in which volunteers cleared the ice of snow at Jean Sibelius Square on Monday. That said, approximately 600 road plows, 200 salt trucks and 360 sidewalk plows are out working 24 hours a day until the clean-up from the most recent storm is complete. The City allows residents to track road or sidewalk plows in their areas by using the [PlowTO map](#). And if you're wondering about where your street sits in the pecking order of snow removal, Toronto has a comprehensive snow and ice [response plan](#) that prioritizes the safety and movement of residents above all else.



Twitter Wars

It seems the Annex can't get a break in the world of Twitter. Witness the exchange just recently between our own Margaret Atwood and earnest young fans. We're painted as NIMBYs rejecting all development when the real culprits are those in wards who steadfastly oppose multiple family dwellings. It's unfortunate that certain politicians are very protective of their own backyards and places like the Annex have to do more of the heavy lifting when it comes to advocating for affordable housing. Witness our fight to protect 145 St. George, a mid-rise apartment building that, if the owners get their way, would be demolished to create a tower of more expensive condos. If you're interested, check out the [twitter feed](#). And thanks, Margaret, for the shout out to the ARA newsletter.



Welcome Guests

Last Thursday's ARA Board meeting was enlivened by the participation of a record number of guests. The Board meets regularly on the second Thursday of every month, and all registered ARA members are welcome to attend. If you'd like to know more about the work done on the community's behalf, then plan to be there (on Zoom) next February 10th.



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.

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The Annex Residents' Association