



This Week in the Annex:

July 27, 2022

Hot Enough for You?

The break in temperatures these past few days has been a welcome relief, but there's no avoiding it, the intense heat is bound to return sooner than later. Air conditioners throughout the Annex will once again be cranked up high (contributing, ironically, even further to the problem of climate change and global warming).

So while we enjoy this brief respite from hot and muggy weather, it's time to give thanks to our trees and gardens for mitigating the heat and allowing us to enjoy summer in the city.

A Public Park

Long time ARA Board member Ko Van Klaveren was undeniably correct when he declared adamantly at a recent Planning and Development meeting: "The Annex is a PARK." His sentence was short, but the truth of it is profound.

Just try to imagine our streets denuded of trees. Imagine each and every building fronted not with lawns and gardens but with stretches of concrete and pavement. Horrific, right?

Those trees and gardens are a vital part of our infrastructure, as important to our identity and quality of life as the heritage homes and mid-century modern apartments whose properties they enliven.

Heat Islands

The Brunswick Park Residents' Association recently posted on Twitter an image that helps quantify the value of trees. (Not to worry. We, too, were taken aback when Terri Chu first sent us that link. But rest assured: our Annex neighbours on

Brunswick haven't seceded. This particular Brunswick RA is based in London, England.)

The image appears to have been lifted from a Polish website. But no matter the language or geographic location, the message is the same. Take a look.



[Posted on Twitter](#)

There's 10°Celsius difference immediately beneath the tree canopy – with the trees absorbing the sun's rays from above. That increases to more than 20° Celsius difference down at ground level.

No wonder developers ironically celebrate our "leafy streets" in advertising their new buildings that verge so close to the property lines. No wonder the ARA fights applications for front yard parking so vigorously.

Sweltering Cities

In the same vein, stalwart ARA members Yuen Chen and David Sisam independently alerted us to a CBC feature released just two weeks ago. It's a sobering analysis of heat islands in Canadian cities entitled [Sweltering Cities](#).

The introduction is compelling:

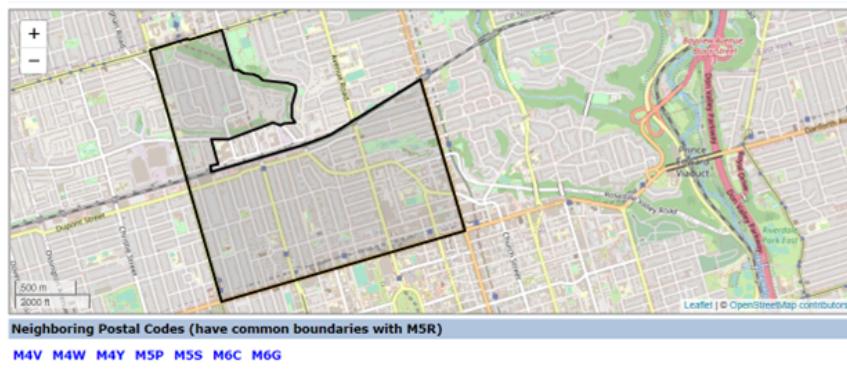
Picture yourself walking through the downtown core of a city on a hot day in July. Heat radiates up from the asphalt. Rows of tall buildings stop the breeze from reaching you. There are no trees in sight — only blocks of concrete, steel and sweltering heat. . . The fact is, Canadians on the front lines of climate change don't just live in the North, on the coasts and on the Prairies; they also live in downtown apartments or highrises in the suburbs.

And the data analysis and graphs that follow are thought-provoking. The big takeaway? Immigrants and people with low income are most likely to live in the hottest urban areas. This makes them much more vulnerable to heat waves, with deadly consequences.

Close to Home

So how does the Annex stack up in comparison with other parts of Toronto or other Canadian cities? You can find out by entering the Annex postal code identifier (M5R) [on this page](#). The results may surprise you.

To be fair, M5R bleeds well beyond our formal boundaries, reaching northwards and stretching eastwards past Avenue Road to Yonge as you can see from the following map provided by [zipdatamaps](#).



Our heat island score is noticeably impacted by the canyons of Yorkville and Bay Bloor. But it's clear that as tall towers continue to rise and as private greenspaces yield to concrete and stone, our score is bound to deteriorate.

That's why we need to stop and celebrate all Annex property owners who tend flourishing lawns and gardens and care actively for their trees. Together they contribute to this beautiful park in which we live. And we thank them for their efforts.



Jim Jacobs sent us the photo above of rocks that were unearthed during a basement deepening on Albany last April. He notes that it took a team of 8 very strong men to move them one by one. Like many of the boulders scattered along Howland, these are memories of a much earlier geologic age when the climate was not so hospitable to humans as it has been these past few centuries. Fair warning.

Our City Council at Work

We promised last week to report on the final epic meeting of Toronto City Council before it breaks for election season. Two votes were of particular interest to our residents, the first being the adoption of a [policy](#) to address the scourge of renovictions. The motion passed by a resounding 21 to 3 votes.

Council even amplified the motion to include an amendment requesting that the Province re-instate rent control for all units to ensure that landlords can't hike rents between tenants. This initiative is, of course, one of policy. It will take action on the part of the Province to ensure it becomes practice. Breath holding not advised.

Noise Control

What's guaranteed to have an immediate impact on our community is a second motion that was approved to restrict noise from power devices. Starting **September 1**, we'll get an hour's reprieve each weekday morning from the noise of leaf blowers, lawnmowers, grass trimmers, chainsaws and the like, these machines only legally operating after 8:00 am. The evening cut-off time remains unchanged at 7:00 pm. Ditto for restrictions on Saturdays, Sundays and statutory holidays when the noise continues to be limited to the ten hours between 9:00 am and 7:00 pm.

The City's press release also goes on to tout measures intended to curb excessive vehicle noise. You can read the [full press release here](#), but do note that these measures depend on both Provincial action and the cooperation of the public, neither of which is likely easy to come by.

Fixing Avenue Road

And while we're focussed on Council, our own representative, Mike Layton, was featured in the July issue of *Yorkville Post* regarding the state of Avenue Road. He shares with the [ARSC](#) the goal of fixing that badly savaged thoroughfare, though he's cautious about what can be realistically achieved. [Click here](#) to read the article with its attention-grabbing headline: *Councillor doesn't want to wait until someone dies to fix Avenue Road.*



City of Toronto Archives, Series 65, s0065_f10034_d0001

Avenue Road widening south of St. Clair, 1962. City of Toronto Archives (S 0065, file 10034, id 0001)

Notes and Queries

Corn Fest Revival?

There's recently been a call for revival of that traditional Annex gathering – the annual Corn Fest in Jean Sibelius Square. It's been suggested that **Sunday afternoon September 18th** would be the perfect day. And several ARA board members have already stepped up to say they'll secure the necessary permits, pots, and paraphernalia if it's a go.

But there's no way we can deliver the fun without a host of volunteers to boil or husk or serve the corn, or to help collect and set up equipment prior to the event, or to help clean up at the end of the day. So we need to hear from you.

If you'd like to see the Corn Fest revived and you fancy yourself up to one of these tasks or might even consider assuming a leadership role, then do please write to info@theara.org with the subject line "Corn Fest." We can't host this day without you!



Volunteers like now retired [Natasha Gromoff Kramer](#) are the heart behind ARA community events such as the corn fest.

Know Your Trees

A shout out to our loyal ARA ally, Sue Dexter, who hails from neighbouring [HVRA](#) for alerting us to a webinar series sponsored by [LEAF](#). Over the course of four 90-minute episodes viewers will learn to identify more than 35 tree and shrub species found in the GTA while at the same time exploring their history and significance.

The series is free, funded jointly by the City and the Canadian Tree Fund, but [registration is required](#) to get the Zoom links and passwords. An added bonus: some event attendees may be eligible to receive native shrubs gratis.

1. **Look-a-Like Species**- Tuesday, August 9, 7:00 PM – 8:30 PM
2. **Native Shrubs**- Thursday, August 11, 7:00 PM – 8:30 PM
3. **Edible Species**- Tuesday, August 16, 7:00 PM – 8:30 PM
4. **Urban Wildlife**- Thursday, August 18, 7:00 PM – 8:30 PM



Photo courtesy [LEAF](#)

So How Did Plastic Free July Go for You?

All right. We confess. The whole month of July has almost completely passed by, and we didn't even twig to the fact that a [global movement](#) has been underway with individuals around the world striving consciously this month to reduce single-use plastic in their lives.

While it's important to push for strong action banning plastics at the governmental level (as we did in this newsletter way back in early March) it's also undeniable that if we each consciously adopt new habits we can do much to reduce the overall demand for plastic in the first place.

There are still four days left for you to complete [the Pesky Plastics quiz](#) designed to assess your current addiction to the stuff. Come August, the foundation will deploy a second survey for you to record how well you did in cutting back.

Frankly, just taking the first part of the survey is a sobering reminder of where plastic can easily be eliminated from our lives. This week's newsletter is pretty

short (*It's July. Say no more. –Ed.*), so why not take a moment to try the quiz? You were prepared to spend the time reading something useful, anyway.



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