



This Week in the Annex:

August 03, 2022

Changing of the Guard

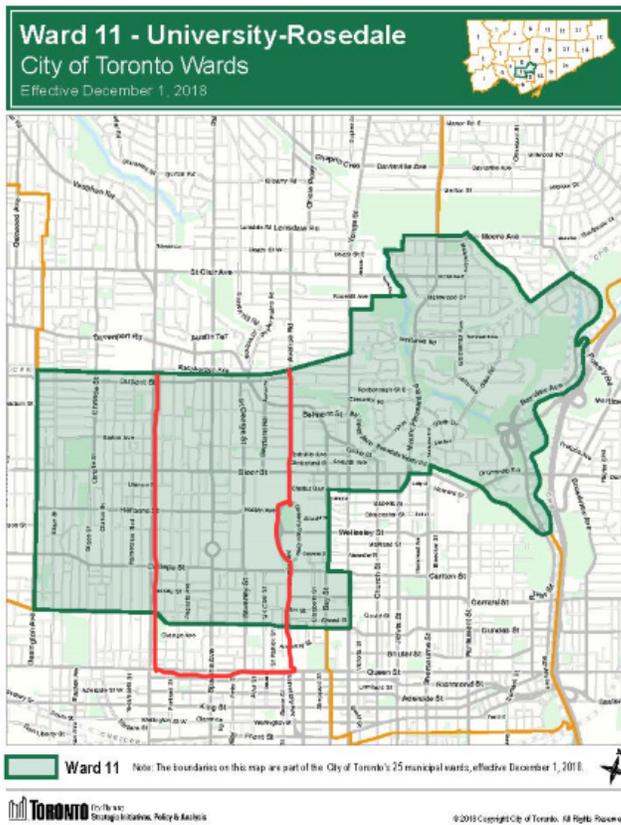
It's a sign of the close working relationship that he's had with the ARA that Councillor Mike Layton took the time last Tuesday night to personally call the chair of our Board and key members of the Planning and Development Committee to give them advance warning of his decision not to run in the upcoming municipal election.

We don't mind telling you that it was all we could do to hold ourselves back from including the scoop in the next day's newsletter: the Lois Lane urge runs deep. But the courtesy and respect with which Mike – because he's always been Mike to us – has treated our association clearly deserved reciprocal treatment. Especially in the face of the job that landed in his lap in the 2018 election.

A Sizeable Job

It was just four years ago that Doug Ford turned Toronto upside down with his provocatively titled [Bill 5 Better Local Government Act](#). [Forty-seven council seats](#) suddenly shrank to twenty-five, and in the ensuing kerfuffle, our former Councillor, Joe Cressy, took Ward 10, Spadina-Fort York, and Mike our Ward 11, University-Rosedale.

The prospect must have been daunting – almost to the point of paralysis. The following map says it all.



At the beginning of voting season, we had been set to elect a councillor for the area outlined in red on the map above – Ward 24. It was a challenging ward with more than 42,000 residents according to the 2016 census. But Ford’s Bill 5 submerged our territory inside a considerably larger piece of the Toronto jigsaw puzzle -- the one shaded in green.

We were now vying for our councillor’s attention within a resident population of 104,310 – to which tens of thousands more petitioners could be added in the form of daily commuters and commercial property owners.

As Board member Sandra Shaul says, being councillor for Ward 11 is like being a mini mayor but with no power. It encompasses everything from areas with serious housing and welfare issues to those like ours with huge pressure on development and environmental urgencies, and from sectors in the south dominated by large commercial interests to the prosperous residential enclaves of Rosedale and Moore Park.

Calling it a Day

If there was a silver lining to the pandemic, it was that so many meetings moved on line. The efficiency allowed Mike to snatch precious moments of family time from a non-stop day of responding to community members and lobbyists, serving on numerous committees of Council, and liaising with City staff.

As he described the role, “It starts from the moment you wake up and check your phone to the moment you go to sleep.” And now that meetings are beginning to resume face to face, the job is only going to get more onerous with travel time added in – not to speak of formidable budgetary shortfalls to be faced and the demoralizing loss of allies on Council like Joe Cressy.

So despite the fact that everything pointed to his certain re-election in October, Mike has decided to relinquish his seat, but not without some well-deserved moments of satisfied reflection. As his resignation message to constituents makes clear, he’s accomplished much to be proud of in his twelve years on City Council.



Photo taken from [Councillor Mike Layton's resignation message](#)

Grace under pressure: Mike always approached his work with a warm smile and enviable calm. Now it's time to get some breathing room in his life.

What Next?

We’ve no crystal ball, but for Mike the happiest move would be to a career focused on his first priorities: the environment and climate change. Perhaps a position at Evergreen Brickworks? Or teaching at his alma mater, York University?

He’ll be fine. And we wish him well.

But what about us? Who's going to take on such an arduous responsibility as Ward 11?

Two who threw their hats in the ring early in the process are political newcomers [Adam Golding](#) and [Andrew Layman](#). Two others have come forward on the heels of Mike's resignation. There's [Norm Di Pasquale](#), a Catholic School Board trustee known for his work this past decade fighting jets at the Toronto Island Airport. He has the advantage of strong NDP backing. An experienced challenger is [Robin Buxton Potts](#). Robin is currently the acting councillor in Kristyn Wong-Tam's former ward and is up to speed with issues critical for Annexonians: heritage, planning, social housing, and diversity.

No doubt other candidates will soon materialize before the August 19th deadline. And it's a sure bet that the ARA will be co-sponsoring a community meeting – on Zoom – in which you can take the measure of those who want our votes. Suffice it to say, we'll keep you posted. And who knows? We may yet get ourselves a proper news scoop. Watch for it!



There's no end to the demands on a City Councillor's time. On a cold and wintry day last March, Mike and fellow Councillor Josh Matlow joined our ARA vice-chair, Henry Wiercinski, on an eye-opening walk up Avenue Road. We in the ARA join

with the Avenue Road Safety Coalition in thanking Mike for his support of our advocacy for wider sidewalks and slower speeds on that dangerous stretch of pavement.

Come and Celebrate

The project was the subject of much debate and consultation, fraught with legacy planning permissions dating back to the 60s. The ARA's P+D committee members worked hard with the Councillor and City staff to achieve a satisfactory outcome. And now the long-awaited finish is at hand.

As new Annexonians gradually take up residency in the condo tower and townhouses at Bedford and Davenport, it's time for the community to enjoy the newly designed and landscaped site that remains part of the TCHC tower at 250 Davenport.

That's why everyone is invited to join the celebrations this **Friday August 5** from **1:00 to 5:00 pm** in the POPS park. Sponsored jointly by the TCHC Revitalization and Cota 250 Davenport teams, this Funday will feature a BBQ, outdoor games (anyone for lawn darts or beanbag toss?) and a kid's zone where young faces can get painted in their favourite colours. If you're in the 'hood, why not drop by?



*Fingers crossed for fine weather this Friday afternoon for the community **Funday** in front of 250 Davenport.*



*The park between the private townhouses and original tower at 250 Davenport has been designated a **POPS** area. In other words, it's privately owned, publicly accessible space. So while the expanse of lawn that was at the corner for so many years has been considerably diminished in size, the greenspace is actually much more accessible and useful to the Annex community.*

Notes and Queries

Stay Alert

It's easy to let one's guard down in these sleepy days of summer, particularly during the glorious weather of this past civic holiday weekend. But we were reminded of the need to stay alert when reading, of all things, [an opinion piece in last Saturday's Star](#) in which the author waxed eloquent about the joys of her spacious two-bedroom rental in a gently aging mid-century modern apartment building.

We've no problem with her joy: It's shared by many of our members in similar living circumstances here in the Annex. But we were concerned with her complacent belief that her home was there for life and with her attendant pity for those living in newer towers.

Let's pray that whoever wins Ward 11 in October's municipal election will be as committed to fair treatment of tenants in such buildings as was Mike. The tenants of 145 St George know well whereof we speak.



We need to elect strong politicians who appreciate the value of such mid-century modern buildings as these on St George and who will consequently do everything possible to save them from the wrecking ball.

Construction Updates

The KESKUS project on Madison is moving forward with admirable determination spurred on by project lead Ellen Valter. Just scroll down two or three items to read the progress report in the most recent [KESKUS newsletter](#). We knew that building on top of a subway line would bring its unique challenges – but having to schedule and deploy your vehicles according to their tonnage? Tricky.

That said, there are times in the Annex when home renovation projects seem to have come to a dead stop. Stalwart ARA member Cornelia Baines wrote in despair about one such project right on her doorstep that's been an eyesore more off than on for the past six years with no end in sight. There's one we know on Admiral that's been at least four years in unsightly renovation limbo. And we're wondering whether readers know of even worse cases of construction narcolepsy?



A never-ending eyesore on Admiral Road.



There's good news: Shan and partner pictured above had arrived on Elgin yesterday to deliver an order of long-awaited windows. But there's the inevitable

bad news: there was no-one on site to receive them.

Shan was shocked by the amount of garbage strewn about. Imagine what it must be like to live beside this chaos for not days, weeks, or months, but for six long years. There oughta be a law!

Annex on Screen

To acknowledge and atone for the disruptions caused to our neighbourhood, the ARA regularly asks film companies working in the Annex to make a donation to the cause. That's why we're happy to thank *Fellow Travelers North Productions Inc.* for the latest donation made: a recent generous gift of \$500 in consideration of their extended shoot at 45 Spadina Road.

We confess to having been out of town last week and thus not witness to the inevitable parking chaos at Lowther and Spadina. Nor did we catch a glimpse of the star, Matt Bomer, pictured below from [the Variety article](#) announcing the green light for production. But we're sure that whenever Matt was on set, he, too, managed to stop traffic.



End of an Era

A fixture for more than 50 years at the corner of Dupont and Davenport, *Nick's Shoes and Repair* has closed its Annex doors. From its beginnings as a neighbourhood service under founder Nick in the days when it was the norm to repair rather than toss one's footwear, to its most recent manifestation under son Spiro as a bespoke shoe factory with clients worldwide, the store has been a mainstay of the Dupont strip.

Not to worry, though. The enterprise has moved, not folded. In fact, it's joined forces with another legendary Toronto shoe repair service: *Novelty Shoes* down on Yonge at Adelaide. The trip takes a little longer, but for those who wish, Spiro promises pickups and drop offs from your home or business going forward.



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