



This Week in the Annex:

January 11, 2023

Time to Take a Bow

Our neighbourhood is an exquisite architectural microcosm of Toronto. It traces the story of the city's development: from the Indigenous presence expressed in Paul Martel Park, through the sober mansions of the Victorian and Edwardian eras, followed by the exuberance of the Uno Prie buildings and asceticism of mid-century modern apartments to the contemporary towers glittering even now on Bloor. And no one knows more about this historic evolution than ARA Heritage Chair Sandra Shaul.

Decades of Service

It's been close to 20 years that Sandra has pursued the protection of our community through skillful negotiation with City planners and dogged defence of individual properties. But her great breakthrough came in September 2020 when the City granted formal permission for the ARA to embark on the West Annex Heritage Conservation Project.

As most of you are already aware, this project was established as a precursor to protecting our community west of Bedford with a heritage designation similar to that enjoyed since 1994 by the properties to its east. Under Sandra's stewardship, the experts at ASI have systematically studied and assessed every street, house, and building for its historic, cultural, and architectural significance. And now, just over two years later, she is thrilled to announce that the project has been completed and the [results published on our website.](#)



Sandra's interests in heritage extend well beyond the Annex. Chair of the City of Toronto Preservation Board, her latest project is a book about Jewish beer, hotel, and tavern owners in Toronto after the second world war. (And yes, that includes the Brunny.)

What the Report Reveals

It's impossible to summarize in a paragraph the value and findings of this project. That's why we're urging every ARA member to at least skim through the final report to get an idea of its scope and depth and – let's be honest – to check on how your own patch of the neighbourhood has been characterized. But if you want the high-level summary, try this description from the Executive Summary:

. . . the West Annex is its own distinct place with a rich history, architectural traditions, and community value, forming a neighbourhood with a complex pattern of social, economic, and cultural qualities. It is a place of inclusivity and exclusivity. It has been a place for wealthy landowners and a place that could accommodate nineteenth-century workers and later, boarders, bohemian artists, newcomers, and students. These dynamics are numerous and important and need to be further understood and assessed to determine appropriate ways to manage change within and around its boundaries.

No Resting on Laurels

Unfortunately, in a sadly ironic twist the report was published right smack dab in the middle of last Fall's flurry of Provincial measures putatively designed to solve the housing crisis. And to our dismay, heritage protection was directly in the sights of Bill 23. The list of registered buildings has now been all but devalued: buildings can only appear on the list for two years, and if they're not fully

designated within that time frame, they are to be removed and languish ineligible for readmission until five years have passed.

But that doesn't mean the fight to protect the heritage of the West Annex is over. Not with Sandra Shaul on the case. As City staff scramble to protect priorities, the WAHP report will be an invaluable resource for helping determine which individual properties need to be immediately targeted for full designation.

As Sandra is quick to point out, there is also the innate protection of practicality and common sense. The great swath of existing Annex homes – whether single family or multi-unit dwellings – are worth preserving if only for their value as exceptionally adaptable and solidly built structures. And while legal heritage protection may have been recently compromised by the Ford government, there's no guarantee that that version of the political landscape will last anywhere near as long as the homes in our beloved 'hood.



Stunning examples of Annex properties from every era of its development nestle comfortably side-by-side in an iconic leafy landscape. This image from the front cover of the WAHP report says it all.

The Loss of an Annex Stalwart

We are saddened to report the unexpected loss of one of our long-serving ARA board members – architect Jacobus Van Klaveren. Known to us all as Ko, he and his wife Christine first moved to the Annex in 1982 when they purchased the

rambling property at 92 Albany facing St Alban's Square. Ko spent countless hours on the loving restoration of this beautiful home, always with a sensitive eye to historic detail. As fellow Board member Jim Jacobs told us – it showed. Jim remembers especially Ko's dismay at discovering one morning that his magnificent copper downspouts had been stolen overnight.



Ko took a similar interest and pride in the park and helped lead a group of neighbours who watched over, advocated, and cared for it. Jim noted that St Alban's Square is constantly under threat: It's well used as a quiet place to sit, read, socialize, or picnic year-round, but too tempting as an off-leash dog site, a boys' school active playing area, a bicycle parking lot, or a construction staging area. Ko was a valiant observer and defender who could often be seen cleaning up graffiti or making small repairs.

As another of Ko's neighbours told us, he was deeply engaged and famously blunt about issues of importance to him – his community and local politics – often expressing himself with a wonderfully sardonic sense of humour. An irascible Co-chair of the Planning and Development Committee, he was for the last decade our ARA eye on the Committee of Adjustment. He had an excellent sense of when a proposal was truly objectionable or when it was reasonable enough that the ARA should stay out of the discussion.



Ko was a key player in his role as Solutions Architect at Stantec for whom he posed for this head shot in 2010.

Downsizing

Ko and Christine were well-known figures on Albany, walking the neighbourhood together every evening with their exuberant sheepdog Bo, succeeded later by an equally exuberant rescue dog. When in 2015 it came time to leave their cherished home, they waited until the right apartment came available – this one also in the Annex at 50 Prince Arthur – so that they could bring their beloved pet with them.

We on the Board will miss Ko's presence greatly as well as his keen observations about the Annex – a neighbourhood that he insightfully thought of as one giant park. If you would like to share in both our thanks for his long service to our community and our deep condolences to Christine, please do send your memories to info@theara.com. A full obituary recounting his long and well-lived life will appear soon in the *Globe* together with information regarding a celebration of his life.

Notes and Queries

Ezra's Gets Re-Branded

More than one aficionado of *Ezra's Pound* up on Dupont was shattered to find it closed last week and the windows blanked out with brown paper. So it was with much relief to its loyal clientele that the coffee house – something of a cult in the 'hood – re-opened. The overall vibe's the same, but there's a twist. Butter is back in the croissants and milk is back on the condiments bar as co-owner, namesake, and devout vegan Ezra steps away from the operation to concentrate on other projects. No word yet on a new name. But that's fine by the regulars as long as their personal sanctum stays open.



Behind the counter Nando cheerily displays some of the newly reinstated non-vegan baked goods.

Councillor Outreach

One of the downsides of being a newly elected City Councillor hailing from a political party different from that of the previous incumbent is that much must be done from scratch. There are a myriad files to be learned – some with a long and complex history – encompassing thousands of constituents and multiple residents' associations, often with competing interests. And from a practical point of view, office staff need to be hired, a new website needs to be built, and even the ward's mailing list must be freshly developed.

All of which is to say that although you might have been on Mike Layton's list, there's no assurance that Dianne Saxe's office knows how to reach you. If you want to receive your Councillor's newsletters, then you should send a message to councillor_saxe@toronto.ca. This month's jam-packed issue is already out – and we can report, not without a bit of chagrin, that we've been scooped: it contains a full report on the ARA tree survey which we've scheduled to profile only next week. Talk about keeping us on our toes!



The ARA Makes Its Case

The relentless pressure on development expressed so concretely by the sweeping measures of the Ford government's [Bill 23](#) has the Annex under increased attack. Sadly, there's a knee-jerk tendency to decry our association as blindly NIMBY when that's far from the case. That's why we were pleased to read [Josh Sherman's balanced report](#) in January's issue of the *Annex Post*. As apparent from the planning work currently being spearheaded by ARA Board member Ron Soskolne, we are prepared for development and welcome intensification – just not at all costs. We adamantly refuse to be Manhattanized!



Wacky Weather

Most of you will have recently received in your mailboxes a cheery notice from the City announcing the launch of the [PlowTO Map](#). Residents are invited to click on that site for tracking plows and salters and to see (approximately) when a particular area was last cleared. But you'll obviously have to wait some time for an appropriate occasion to consult the map given forecasted balmy temperatures.

While rain is easier to deal with than snow (barring its being frozen), it still presents problems of its own. [Witness this video](#) submitted by Admiral Road's self-appointed caretaker, the redoubtable Ted Humphreys. Ted was out in the early morning darkness during last week's deluge clearing one storm sewer drain after another to ensure that we didn't wake up to a lake instead of bare pavement. Thanks, Ted!

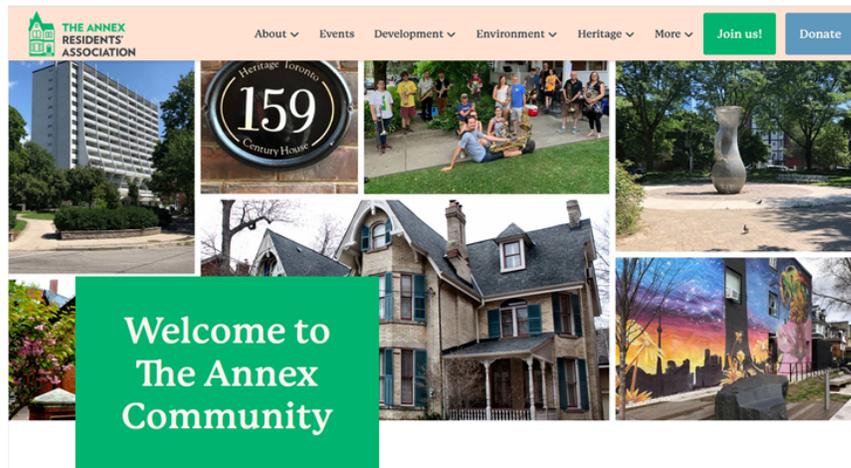


And while we're talking about Admiral, we just had to share this once-in-a-lifetime photo of the street bereft of vehicles. Who'd 'a thought it possible?



ARA Board Meets Tomorrow

Your ARA is back in the swing with the first Board meeting of the year scheduled for tomorrow – Thursday January 12th – at 7:00 pm. Our meetings are still held on Zoom. So if you're at all inclined, we'd be delighted if you wanted to attend. Just email our Secretary, Micky Fraterman, at info@theara.com with your request, and she'll send you the link. And if you're new to the association, why not [browse our website](#) beforehand just to get familiar with our committees, concerns, and colleagues?



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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