



This Week in the Annex:

January 18, 2023

A Cry for Help

Just as the world seems to be waking up to the vital importance of our urban forests, the tree canopy in Toronto is under increased threat. Consider Metrolinx' plans to fell 61 old growth trees in Moss Park in order to accommodate the Ontario Line (this after a stay – but not outright dismissal – of plans to remove the grove standing on Osgoode Hall grounds).

Consider Mayor Tory's proposed slashing of a half million dollars from the City's tree maintenance budget rather than flatlining its value, let alone giving it a boost.

And consider, closer to home, the ominous loss of 25% – yes, a full quarter – of the trees on Bathurst, Albany, and Howland since they were first surveyed ten years ago. That's devastating news.



The stump in this image supplied by Terri Chu is a cruel reminder of three venerable trees that were downed just last month on upper Albany – with yet more slated for removal this year. As Terri notes, many Annex trees are nearing end of life while others are finding it hard to survive under stressful urban conditions.



City signs warn of street tree maintenance along Howland this week. All too often these days, our trees aren't maintained so much as removed.

Sobering Results

This sobering report on tree loss comes from the initial stage of the *Annex Tree Survey: Take 2* launched last year under Terri's indefatigable leadership. As you might recall, ARA members generously stepped up to donate more than \$5,000 in support of this survey. Given this preliminary finding, it's hard to exaggerate the project's importance.

Our canopy has long been under attack, witness the following pair of images taken 56 years apart at the intersection of Lowther and St George.



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1257, f1257_s1057_it0745

In 1967 a grove of mature trees graced the corner property.



The red arrows point to the only original tree that still survives.

This eloquent pairing of images was inspired by Vicky Kwong, one of two researchers hired for the survey and a graduate student in the Faculty of Forestry at the John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design at U of T.

And while we know that the Annex has been losing trees since developers like Simeon Janes first set eyes on the land, there is every reason to believe that the decline is increasing exponentially.

Vicki's map below tells the sorry tale in colour. The green trees are those that have survived since 2011. The purple trees are those that have been lost in the intervening decade.



What's more, only 231 saplings have been planted to replace the missing 536 trees.



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1568, f1568_it0302

Back in the day, foresters plant a mature tree on Roxborough Road. Rarely are trees replaced these days with anything but young saplings. But the sad fact is that it takes upwards of a half dozen of these striplings to do the work of one mature tree.

Soldiering On

If we're going to make a compelling case against the free-wheeling destruction of the Annex canopy, we need to continue this project. And that's why we're turning to you, once again, for donations.

It costs approximately \$15,000 to hire two graduate students for the summer. Terri is a master of grant applications and commercial solicitation. And she's tireless in promoting the cause. (Heaven's, you might have caught her at the daunting hour of 7:00 am last December 27 speaking on CBC Radio One in defence of our trees.)

But she can't do this alone. So we're urging every one of you who values our trees – surely one of the signature elements of the Annex – to step up and donate. Just go to [our website](#) and click on the big blue Donate button on the home page. Choose one of the suggested dollar amounts – or write in your own. Then complete the form.

We can't give you a tax receipt. But what we can do is to assure you that your donation is a contribution not just to trees in the Annex but to the entire global movement to protect our environment.

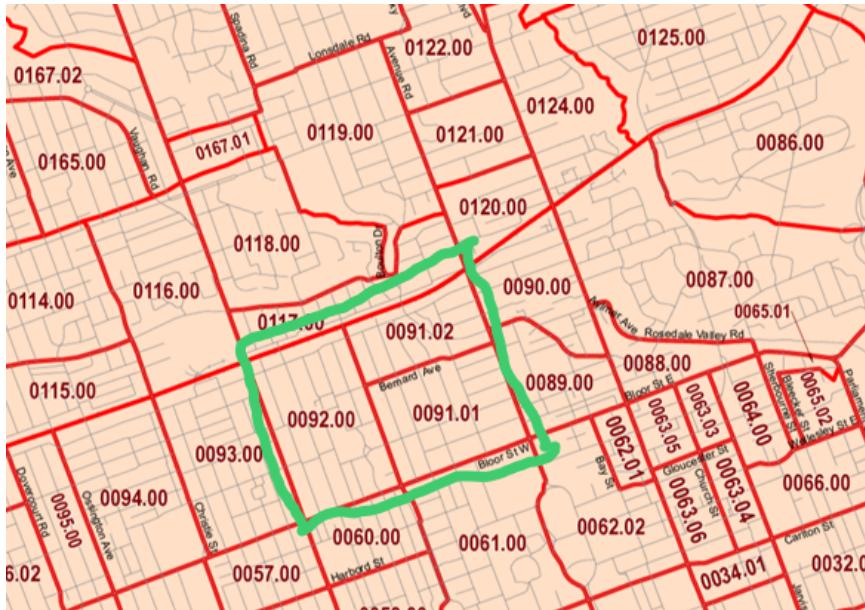
The Annex by Numbers

It was ARA loyalist David Sisam who originally suggested that we tell the story of the Annex by numbers. Inspired by *Harper's Index*, he wanted to counter the prevailing view of our community as a group of latte-sipping elites. So he developed a list of topics that would paint a more accurate picture. All he needed was someone more experienced in mining data bases to fill in the facts.

The stars were clearly aligned when Alex Topp, newly arrived in Toronto with a freshly minted masters from McGill in urban planning, stumbled by chance on our ARA website. Alex reached out to info@theara.org, soon found himself corresponding with David, and ended up – to our tremendous gratitude – volunteering for the project.

Defining Our Borders

The first task at hand was to establish our exact borders. As we have often lamented in this newsletter, various City institutions and agencies, newspapers and realtors have conflicting opinions as to what constitutes our patch of Toronto. The boundaries are mapped right on [our home page](#) if you need a refresher. But it's just as convenient to consult the following plan from Statistics Canada.



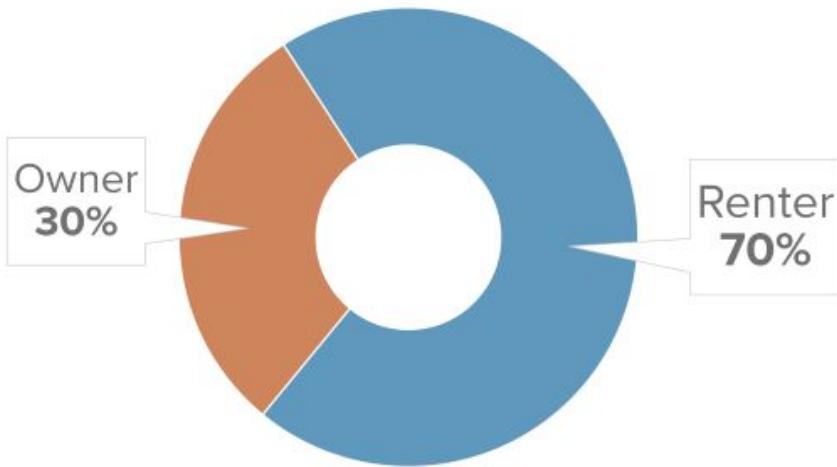
The 2021 census breaks us into the 3 parcels that are outlined above in green. Alex downloaded the related data, and, in consultation with David, went to work. The result is a rich cache of material that we'll present chart by chart over the course of the next few weeks.

Property Tenure

First up is the ratio of owners to renters. Outsiders believe our bounty of Victorian and Edwardian houses are owned and occupied by wealthy single families. While that may be true in many cases, as any Annexonian knows, these venerable properties are infinitely flexible. And that accounts in part for the following statistical finding.

When questioned as to whether they rented or owned their homes, it transpired that the majority of our residents are tenants: a full 70% of us rent their homes while only 30% of us are property owners.

Annex Housing Tenure



Statistics Canada: 2021: Housing Tenure

The 30/70 split is a statistical rarity in that it reflects no rounding. It's also a fact worth keeping in your back pocket when you next encounter strangers deriding the Annex as an exclusive enclave of NIMBY home owners.

What Do You Want to Know?

Next week David and Alex plan to look at housing typology. But we're sure there are many topics you yourself would like to see addressed. So by all means, send in your requests to info@theara.org and Alex will do his best to extract the numbers. Please just remember to put "Census Data" in the subject line so that your question can be quickly forwarded to the team.

Notes and Queries

Winterlicious

[Winterlicious](#) is back in town starting January 27 and running until February 9th. More than 220 restaurants are participating in the festival by offering *prix fixe* lunch and dinner menus. Five of the restos are right here in the 'hood. So if

you're inclined to support local businesses, you might consider making a reservation before they're snapped up.

All meals are 3 courses and fixed price (excluding beverages, tips, and taxes). Except for Blu, which offers dinner only, the prices in brackets are first for lunch and second for dinner.

[The Pour House](#) (\$27 / \$35) [The Duke of York](#) (\$34 / \$45) [Signatures](#) (\$41 / \$55) [Blu Ristorante](#) (\$65) [Joni \(Park Hyatt\)](#) (\$55 / \$75)



Weather Watch

What a difference a year makes! Last January 18th the ice rink at Sibelius Park had already been operating for a month thanks to a dedicated cadre of volunteers and some appropriately chilly temperatures. This year. Well. Yeah. Board Member Christine Innes reports that the necessary permits have been obtained, but now it's up to Mother Nature to do her part.



Sibelius exactly one year ago

The City Advises

Given the balmy temperatures, it seems otiose to be offering the following information. But we'd be remiss if we ignored a City request such as the one made just before Christmas by Senior Communications Advisor, Kris Scheuer, that we include "free tips to avoid frozen pipes" in our newsletter.

The tips are essentially common sense. But especially if you intend to abandon your home for a few days or weeks this winter, it's worth giving them a read. Just [click here](#) to access the City's video and full web page dedicated to the issue.



Photo Global News / Getty Images

Anyone who's experienced a frozen or – worse yet – burst pipe in their home knows the importance of taking preventive measures.

Parking Lot Makeover

If you're in the habit of using TPA parking lot down at Bloor and Bedford, here's a heads up. Starting the first week of February, the lot will be fully closed to the public, accessible only to Sonesta Hotel guests and those holding monthly permits.

Partial re-opening is scheduled for the end of July when 175 underground spaces will be made available, while full completion of the project isn't forecast until year end. However, given that legal negotiations between the hotel and

City regarding this timetable have not yet concluded, we can undoubtedly be confidant that the disruption will extend well into 2024.



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