



## **This Week in the Annex:**

**January 25, 2023**

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### **The ARA and CofA**

How's that headline for an alphabet soup? The CofA in question is the Committee of Adjustment, the municipal body charged with adjudicating property owners' requests for variances in zoning bylaws. If you want to build a porch that extends further than the bylaw allows or if you want to erect a third storey that rises slightly above the stipulated height, you need to apply to the Committee of Adjustment for permission to do so.

These are examples of minor variances, the sorts of changes that can sometimes lead to bitter disputes among close neighbours, but ones that don't have a perceptible impact on the neighbourhood as a whole. That's why the ARA tends to stay out of CofA cases, offering guidance to residents when asked, but generally avoiding direct involvement in any squabbles.



*The CofA is the usual venue for ruling on applications related to parking. This particular use of the front yard on Bernard was actually not approved.*

## Changing Times

One of the best resources available to help residents navigate the CofA process has been produced by our colleagues to the West – the Palmerston Area Residents' Association (PARA). This [step-by-step guide](#) gives detailed tips as to what to do as the process unfolds. It's clear, comprehensive, and constructive, and we urge all property owners and residents – whether applicants or neighbours – to follow its advice.

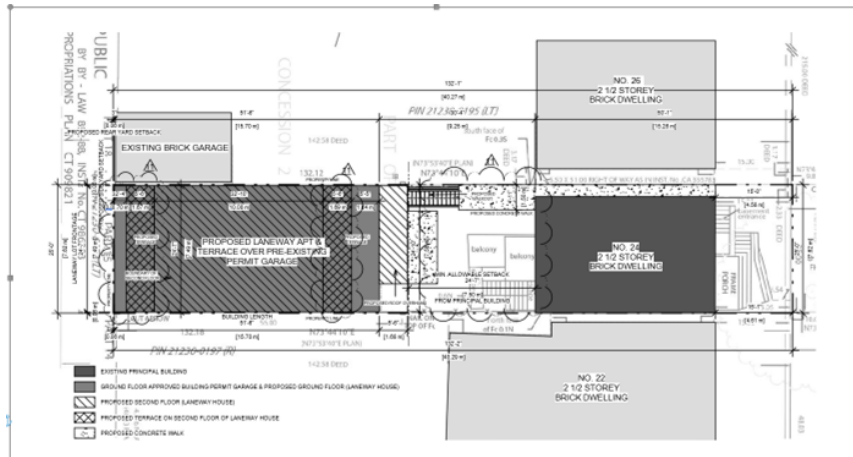
That said, we at the ARA have recently noticed a shift in the CofA landscape. The number of applications hasn't changed – typically a couple per month – but the nature of them certainly has. Increasingly, applicants are asking for not one variance but several. And some of these variances can hardly be called minor.

## 24 Kendal

A recent example of this overreach pertains to the property at 24 Kendal. The application was submitted in July of last year, and a hearing scheduled to be held today, January 25. Neighbours were caught unawares by the official notice which was issued during the holiday period. Nevertheless, there was a flurry of

objections, all of which are publicly available on [the City's application centre page](#) for this property.

The ARA weighed in on the issue with a detailed response, and you can read [the entire letter here](#). But, truly, a picture is worth a thousand words. Just have a look at the following site plan for this project.



The dark gray block on the right is the existing house at 24 Kendal. The larger dark gray block to the left represents a proposed new build. And it is this proposed new structure that is the subject of 10 “minor” variances.

To quote from our ARA letter: *We are supportive of laneway suites in the City of Toronto that provide new rental housing opportunities within established neighbourhoods such as the Annex. However, with a total of 10 variances, this proposal seeks to expand the parameters for laneway suites to such an extent that it entirely contradicts the spirit of the legislation that was intended to encourage their construction.*

In the face of robust community opposition, it’s not surprising that the applicants have requested a deferral of today’s hearing. However, by deferring their application rather than withdrawing it, it is clear that the owners of 24 Kendal are intent on pursuing the project.

The members of our P+D committee promise to keep their eyes on the file and urge the immediate neighbours to do the same.

## Vacancy Tax Impact

The recently imposed tax on vacant homes has caught some property owners by surprise. We now know that the average Snowbird needn’t worry. But those folks

who own and keep more than one residence for themselves are in a different category altogether and need to check with their lawyers.

The City expects to garner \$55 million this year from the tax according to current budget projections. To most of us, however, the most anticipated impact of the vacancy tax will be to discourage those lingering renovation projects that blight the Annex.

## The Reno-Vacant Blight

Just up the road from the problematic CofA application is the abandoned property at 63-65 Kendal. (Records show, rather ominously, that the owners are related to those of number 24 Kendal.)

We've moaned multiple times about this Edwardian beauty that was featured in a [Toronto Star article](#) in March of 2020. Former tenants reportedly cherished their apartments, but were served with reno-viction notices way back in 2013. To this day, building permits are prominently displayed on the front doors. But an online search reveals they were issued in January 2015 and have consequently expired.



*Neighbours have submitted evidence that the roof is compromised at 63-65 Kendal. It seems obvious the owners are pursuing demolition by neglect.*

## A Clutch of Problematic Vacancies

There are other egregious examples of properties languishing in renovation limbo for years. The apartment at **241 Bedford** (reportedly also the property of

the Kendal owners, or their relations), the house at **149 Admiral**, the semi at **38 Elgin**, the building at **6-8 Walmer** have all had their day in these e-pages. It would add insult to injury if the City were to grant these properties a reprieve from the extra tax simply because building permits have been issued.

The question is, have we missed any similar cases? Are there unoccupied properties you know of that have ostensibly been under renovation for years? Do let us know by emailing us at [info@theara.org](mailto:info@theara.org), and we'll investigate.

## Tree Survey Campaign

It's hard to exaggerate the importance of trees. They are the **lungs** of this city, fighting valiantly to clean the air of pollution. They are vital **reservoirs**, soaking up ground water that might otherwise flood our basements. They are natural **thermostats**, moderating temperatures at ground level by up to 20°C. They are **therapists**, with a demonstrable impact on our health and mental well being.

And that message is clearly understood by many of us. Indeed, we are beyond grateful to those readers who stepped up last week and donated so generously to the tree survey campaign. A remarkable **\$3,455** poured in from 24 individuals. And on the corporate side, Terri Chu has managed to secure a repeat **\$2,000** from Masters and Cohen. What a fantastic start!

That said, there's still almost \$10,000 to be raised for this coming summer's efforts. So if you value our Annex trees, please do consider making a donation. Just [click here](#) with credit card in hand, and you're off to the races. And if you'd rather send a cheque, by all means reach out to us at [info@theara.org](mailto:info@theara.org).

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*The venerable “meeting tree” on the grounds of Huron Street Public School is reckoned to be at least two centuries old.*

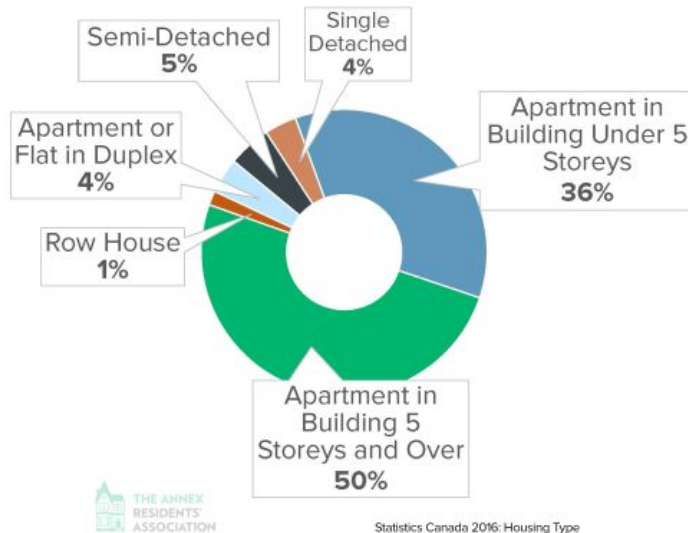
## Notes and Queries

### The Annex by Numbers

This week Alex Topp and David Sisam examined the various building typologies in the Annex according to occupancy by households. Statistics Canada defines a household as *the related family members and all the unrelated people, if any, such as lodgers, foster children, wards, or employees who share the housing unit.*

The following chart shows that only 4% of Annex households reside in single detached homes, while a full 50% live in buildings that are 5 or more storeys in height.

## Annex Housing Type



The interesting number is that for households occupying units in low-rise apartments. More than a third, or 36%, live in buildings typical of what planners call the “missing middle.”

Those are the facts according to the 2016 census. Alex and David say they have little reason to believe that there will be a significant change once the comparable 2021 census figures have been released. But they’ll keep us posted.

## Calling All Cyclists

Are you one of those Annexionians who travels on two wheels rather than four? If so, you’ll be interested in [CP24’s report](#) regarding City staff’s recommendation that the Yonge Street bike lanes be made permanent. If those lanes are a part of your regular biking network feeding from Bloor Street or Davenport Road, former ARA Board member Albert Koehl suggests that you might want to [sign the petition](#) that’s currently circulating in support of this move.



*The more extended the network of bicycle lanes, the more riders will take advantage of them.*

## **(Ezra's) The Pound**

Just a quick follow-up to our January 8 news item on the changes at Ezra's Pound. It's now been decided: the neighbourhood hangout's name has officially changed to "The Pound." But although his name's off the façade, Ezra has not fully stepped away from the enterprise, so much as he's partnered with two baristas whom he's mentored and worked with over the last seven years. And for those customers who were drawn to the vegan options, rest assured that they are still available alongside the newly returned buttery favourites.





*There's no word yet as to how long "Pound" will languish without its "The."*

## **Give a Cluck if You're OK with Hens**

This is your last chance to let the City know what you think about the [UrbanHensTO Pilot Program](#). Initiated in 2018, it has permitted residents in specific areas and wards to keep up to four hens on their properties. Ward 11 officially entered the program last April. And now the City is contemplating authorizing its expansion right across Toronto.

If you've got views about your neighbours keeping a flock of four next door (no roosters allowed), you're urged to give feedback via an [online survey](#). It will help to inform a final staff report scheduled for the April meeting of the City's Economic and Community Development Committee. Note that you've got until February 7 to have your say.



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