



This Week in the Annex:

March 01, 2023

Transition 250

A fixture on our Annex skyline since it was built in 1968, 250 Davenport is a jewel in the crown of [Toronto Community Housing](#) (TCH). Offering residents geared-to-income rents, the complex boasts 449 units distributed across 25 storeys supplemented by 11 townhouses.

The sale of land to AYC condos back in 2017 released the funds required for the desperately needed refurbishment of the fifty-year-old property. New thermally insulated windows and balcony doors, upgrades to the heating and cooling systems, and retrofitting of the elevators were among the physical improvements to the tower, while the townhouses were in such a state of disrepair that they were totally demolished and replaced.

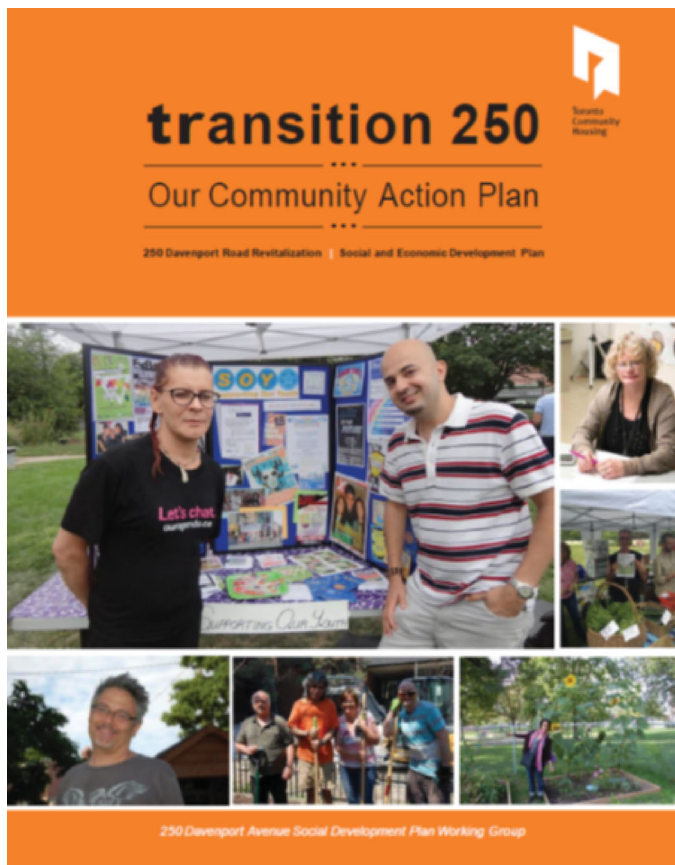


For the tenants, the value of these physical renovations is undeniable. But almost more important has been the revitalization of the community itself.

Empowering Residents

The project began nearly ten years ago when a committee was established to create a community action plan. Residents of 250 Davenport were guaranteed a majority role in the 14-member working group while other representatives were drawn from TCH, [Margaret's House](#), and the Church of the Messiah.

Together the team developed a document – [Transition 250](#) – that has become a model of social development planning. To quote from the final report, the plan empowers “residents to determine their interests, needs and priorities to enhance their quality of life while working collaboratively with partners to implement action plans to move forward.” Or – as the group’s motto succinctly declares – *Nothing About Us Without Us*.



Tenant Leadership

We caught up last week with John Corso, an erstwhile ARA Board member and long-time tenant representative at 250 Davenport where he has lived for 23 years. And what we found was a vibrant community – in essence a small town – comprised of families and individuals, old and young, focussed on mutual support and cooperation.

It was clear from the number of residents who greeted John warmly or asked his advice as we waited briefly for the elevator that he is a valued leader in the community. But he is also at great pains to downgrade his role, emphasizing that the tenants' committee works to be as democratic as possible so that everyone knows they're being heard. And to that end there are monthly tenants' meetings to troubleshoot problems and plan events.

And there's a lot going on at 250.



Residents are given certificates of appreciation to acknowledge work they've done for the community. Here Pia Stein accepts her certificate from Kelly de Hoops. Kelly and Suzanne Fish (with 4 month old Norali) were former revitalization staff members who returned for the ceremony.

Programs

Approximately 80% of the residents live on their own, and close to a third are 55 or older. So when the seniors requested one of the Sunshine programs for their building, [the Centre](#) happily obliged. Every Friday, 250 Davenport is a hub of camaraderie – open not just for those who live at 250 but to seniors from across the city. Together they share a complimentary meal and enjoy light exercise, arts and crafts, games and trivia, and other activities.



Then there's the loosely composed garden group led by John. Now that the outdoor property has been significantly redesigned, they are planning how to manage the planting. Whether they opt for ornamentals or pollinators or vegetables or all three, the communal activity will bring the residents a sense of pride and ownership and restorative calm.

[Cota Health](#) sponsors a variety of regular programs that range from yoga classes to help in filling forms and connecting with social agencies. And, as food security is always top of mind, fellow tenant rep, Christopher King, manages the Good Neighbour's Food Market that features weekly distribution of fresh produce and baked goods.

PROGRAM GUIDE: WHAT'S ON THE CALENDAR?	
BINGO! (B2 Rec Room)	Join us for a morning of BINGO! Everyone is welcome; win small prizes. We serve tea/coffee and light snacks.
B2 Library Social	Come visit the B2 Library, check out the books and the "Free Store." Stay for a chat!
Neighbor Check	Register for a weekly check-in with a volunteer that will come to your door and can connect you to supports. Ask Cota for details.
Food Market (B2 Rec Room)	The Good Neighbors Food Market, a 250 Davenport specialty. Get your fresh produce at amazing prices!
Bread Program (Lobby)	FREE Bread! Come get yours in the Lobby, every Thursday. Courtesy of COBS Bread and our amazing volunteers.
Meditation Group (B2 Library) **LIMITED TIME ONLY**	Limited six week group (until Mar. 9th). Join Vishnu on a journey towards calmness. Learn the basics of meditation practice and what it takes to be mindful and non-judgmental towards yourself.
Games Night (B2 Rec Room) *NEW PROGRAM*	Join us for board games and more. Play classic games, try new ones, or help us solve our jigsaw puzzle. Enjoy free hot drinks!
Tai Chi: Exercise Group (B2 Rec Room)	During Tai Chi, we do easy, calming movements. All ages welcome! Participate standing up or sitting down. Great for mental and physical health. Come practice with us!
Movie Night (B2 Rec Room) *NEW PROGRAM*	See a new movie every week during Movie Night! Free popcorn, tea and hot chocolate. Find this week's movie posted outside the B2 Rec Room. Help us pick the next movie from one of our streaming services!
Working Group "Food Security" (B2 Rec Room)	Have your voice heard! This meeting is held once a month, all tenants are invited to share ideas, concerns, and suggestions for the future of 250 Davenport. We focus on one topic per month.

A photo posted on 250's dedicated Facebook page gives an idea as to the wide range of activities sponsored by Cota.

The Wider Annex Context

Part of the Transition 250 plan was to create social connections with the greater Annex community. At 250 there is space now available to those who might want to offer workshops or programming that may benefit everyone in the area, especially the most marginalized. John imagines these spaces supporting pop-up health clinics, art therapy, or other preventative healthcare approaches.

But while the renovations to 250 Davenport have been a boon, recent changes in the neighbourhood are not all to the good. The residents feel especially the demise of comfortable places in the community to simply hang out. The donut shops, the small eateries, and the convenience stores are rapidly disappearing as condo towers march in.

The reduction in green space is also keenly felt. And there's the perennial problem of no basic grocery store within easy reach, adding to a sense of isolation from the community at large.

Even so, John still describes the Annex as "a bit of heaven far removed from the grind of downtown." Being able to walk through tree-lined streets offers enormous peace of mind and comfort. And that's surely something we can all agree on.

The Annex by Numbers

This week Alex Topp and David Sisam set about searching census data and the Internet to discover just how much social and affordable housing there is in the Annex. Trouble is – there's no one source that captures it all.

Besides 250 Davenport, TCH owns a smattering of smaller buildings, 8 in all, ranging from 6-15 units, for a total of 64 units. Then there are multiple agencies operating supportive housing like the YWCA at 348 Davenport, the Salvation Army at 78 Admiral, and LOFT Community Services at 316 St. George, while Egale Canada, Toronto Community Hostel, and the YMCA all have a housing footprint in the Annex.

The houses that were expropriated for the aborted Spadina expressway have in many cases been converted to social housing and service agencies including Interval House, the Children's Aid Foundation, Community Living Toronto, and Sheena's Place.

And then there are multiple buildings and privately owned houses broken into flats and offering affordable, rent-controlled units, not to speak of the fraternities and sororities (more than a dozen by last count) that are scattered throughout our community.



The truth is that while our streetscapes present as a wealthy enclave to most outsiders, we are in fact an extremely diverse population spanning the full spectrum of income, social status, and stability. And we've got the housing stock to support it.

Notes and Queries

Meet n' Eat March 15

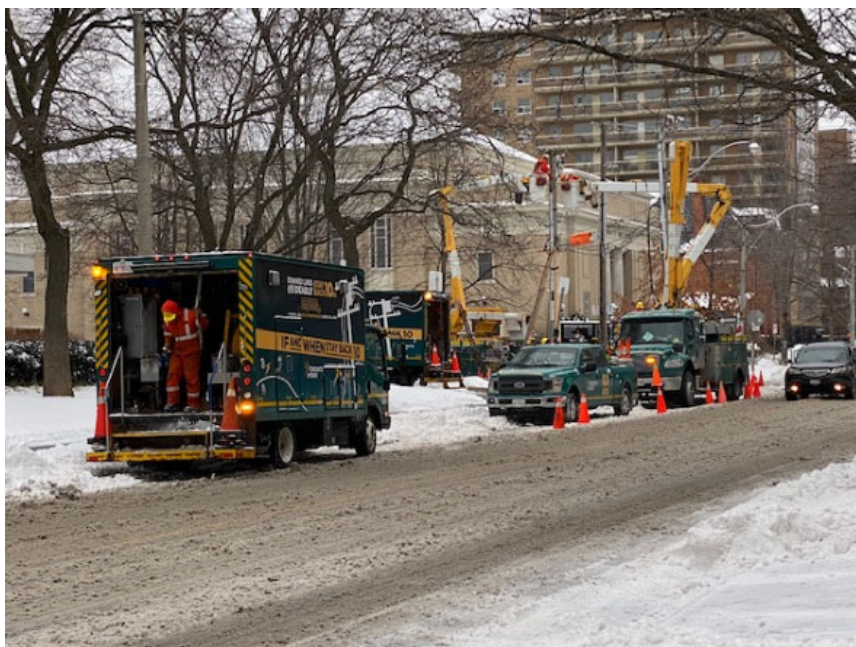
Just a reminder that two weeks from today – on the Ides of March no less – you've a chance to gather and greet neighbours – old and new – over dinner at Famosa on Bloor at Dalton. Membership Secretary Tijka Dirks has reserved several tables at the eatery starting at **6:00 pm** where you will be able to select from the [regular menu](#). To RSVP, [click here](#) and then scroll down. And if you've nimble enough fingers to be doing this on a smart phone, you'll then need to tap on the Meet n' Eat event box to access the reply form.



Mighty Mayhem

It's amazing the chaos one small rodent can cause. Last Sunday, Feb 19, a squirrel got itself into trouble at the southwest corner of St. George and Lowther. Our news source and guest photographer, David Sisam, was alerted to its predicament by a loud explosion accompanied by a geyser of flames erupting from the top of a hydro pole.

The squirrel reportedly survived the conflagration, albeit singed and shocked. And while nobody at 190 St George reported losing power, other residents farther along Lowther felt the loss. In the end it took [a phalanx of hydro trucks](#) and police cars to repair the damage.



How's that Working for You?

There were bound to be some growing pains – particularly since there hasn't been much snow to practice on in the last couple of years – but there are clearly big gaps in the City's sidewalk clearing program. We don't mean to be cranky, but four days after last Wednesday's blast of 15 cm of snow, the upper east side of St. George Street was still a disgrace, not to speak of a pedestrian's nightmare.



It was obvious that the plow operator had simply given up in the face of obstacles like a parking meter plunked in the middle of the sidewalk and three large refuse bins not retrieved by their owner. But surely that didn't give them

permission to totally abandon the job? Nor did it authorize them to sideswipe a property owner's fence.

A solution would be to issue operators with snow shovels to wield at awkward spots. But how likely is that to happen, we ask, somewhat crankily?



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.

This email was sent to gillianbartlettara@gmail.com. To stop receiving emails, [click here to unsubscribe](#).

The Annex Residents' Association