



## This Week in the Annex:

March 15, 2023

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## Tonight's the Night

### Let's Meet n' Eat!

The ARA is resuming a popular activity, with our first Meet n' Eat in three years happening this very evening. This is an opportunity for residents to enjoy a dinner and meet their Annex neighbours while at the same time supporting a local establishment. The ARA coordinates the reservation while participants order from the menu and pay their own bill.

- This Meet n' Eat is taking place at [Famoso](#) (386 Bloor Street West), at **6 pm tonight**.
- If you would like to attend, you have until noon today to **RSVP** at <https://www.theara.org/events>, after which time we will confirm the final numbers with the restaurant.

If you have already RSVP'd but for some unfortunate reason now find that you can't make it, please use the link in your original confirmation email to cancel your reservation.



## Development Update

Many of you will have caught the article in last Saturday's Star regarding the [explosion of condos in Toronto](#). To quote from the headline:

*A record 100 new towers could be built every year for the next five years. **Some neighbourhoods will never be the same.***

And that's what keeps our Planning and Development (P+D) committee going day and night – including folks like our own Ron Soskolne who is quoted in that very article.

## A Neighbourhood Deluge

The Annex is no stranger to the condo boom. Consider that as of this moment, there are literally dozens of buildings just coming on line or in the works.

Most of us are aware that **Bloor Street** is fast becoming unrecognizable. (The P+D committee is currently engaged with seven developments there alone: 208, 210, 300, 316, 320-332, 346-350, 425.) Immediate neighbours near **Dupont** will be relieved now that The Bianca is pretty much finished, but 328 has just begun construction with 374-388 moving towards approval.

**Davenport** continues to erupt (224-34, 287, 306-26, 321, 361) with the northwest side of **Avenue Road** heating up (110-116, 126-30) not to speak of **Bathurst Street** (914) where there are the ongoing negotiations over the Official Plan Amendment.

And the innards of our neighbourhood are beginning to feel the pinch with **Prince Arthur** (10-14, 64) and **St George** (145) and **Lowther** (171-175) and **Walmer** (38) demanding attention. And that list is not exhaustive.



ARA regular contributor Yuen Chua alerted us to this bit of nostalgia -- [the BlogTO piece](#) on the original Swiss Chalet on Bloor near Bedford. How the streetscape has changed!

## The P+D Role

We're incredibly lucky in the ARA to have a volunteer team comprised of experts like Ron – architects, lawyers, planners, and heritage specialists who are willing to devote long hours to the cause. It's hard to exaggerate the amount of time they put in – hours easily worth the equivalent of three full-time professionals. And their goal is to preserve the integrity of our neighbourhood as much as possible while at the same time accepting the need for – and the political reality of – intensification.

We've written earlier about [Bill 23](#), the Provincial Government's "More Homes Built Faster Act" and the legislative changes that override previous safeguards in order to fast-track development. But it's only the most recent of many documents that drive growth in the Annex.

You could get your city planner's certificate just by slogging through such provincial policies as the [Provincial Policy Statement](#) and [Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe](#) and Toronto's guidelines including the [Official Plan](#)

and pertinent Secondary Plans and [Zoning By-Laws](#) as well as the City's recent policies on [Expanding Housing Options in Neighbourhoods](#) (EHON) not to mention yesterday's just released [Housing Action Plan 2022-2026](#).

And it's P+D's job to navigate and understand these documents in order to engage thoughtfully and effectively with residents and developers.

## Fights Past

The ARA has the unfortunate – and undeserved – reputation of being against all development. It's true, we fought tooth and nail against the tower proposed at 64 Prince Arthur a couple of years back. And our P+D members offered unstinting guidance to residents in the Bedford Neighbourhood Coalition who fought the development at 287 Davenport right through LPAT. They also advised residents in the East Annex Condominiums Association who opposed the application for 210 Bloor.



*Neither of these towers proposed for 64 Prince Arthur made it to reality. And a good part of the credit for that belongs to our intrepid P+D trio of Henry Wiercinski, Elizabeth Sisam, and the late Edward Leman. You can read the story from our December 2, 2020 newsletter [by clicking here](#).*

But fights like those are dauntingly expensive and increasingly unsuccessful, especially in the current political climate. We had a rare victory at 64 Prince Arthur. On the other hand, despite residents raising considerable dollars to hire expert planners, lawyers, and architects for the LPAT hearings, we were soundly beaten at the other two.



That explains why, for most proposals, teams of P+D members try to work **with** residents and developers and City Planners. The aim is to achieve better outcomes than those initially proposed without incurring costly and uncertain litigation. And negotiations – long and arduous though they can be – have led to past wins like the improved physical form of the Cielo at 300 Bloor and its addition of a dedicated space for seniors.

## Fights Present

In fact, P+D members are presently intensely engaged in meetings related to three major projects – 374-388 Dupont, 110-116 Avenue Road, and Walmer Road Baptist at Lowther – with others pressing on the horizon.



*The map of the downtown condo boom that was featured in the Toronto Star article stopped at Bloor Street. P+D's Elizabeth Sisam has rectified that error by producing this map of current developments. Red dots are all on P+D's radar.*

And it's not all about built form.

Also very much at the forefront is P+D's concern for the plight of tenants in this onslaught of condo construction. As we've pointed out before, 70% of Annex residents are renters, and a good portion of them occupy affordable units that we strive to protect.

Together with representatives from three other residents' associations (HVRA, PARA & SVRA) our team fought hard for the inclusion of mixed-use, market-rate, and affordable housing in the Honest Ed's development. And as readers of this

newsletter well know, we are doing what we can to protect the tenants at 145 St George who live under the threat of imminent demoviction.



*The absurdity of Toronto's housing market makes tearing down perfectly fine rental buildings financially lucrative. The ARA is keeping a watchful eye on the mid-century modern apartment buildings that parade up St George. Their generously sized and rent-controlled units are unfortunately a prime target for developers.*

## **The ARA Planning Principles**

In such a climate, it has become ever-more important for P+D members to articulate a set of planning principles that guide their own response to development applications. That's playing out right now under Ron Soskolne who has been working with a team for the past three years to create what might possibly be the underpinnings of a secondary plan for the Annex. The aim is to accommodate growth in a measured way, ensuring new development enhances the Annex as a [complete community](#).

ARA members were treated to [a presentation on the team's work](#) at last year's AGM and afterwards were invited to participate in the ongoing process. However, there was only one member who volunteered to join.

And totally understandable. The fact is that most residents only become involved in planning matters when it directly affects them and their personal patch of the 'hood. Life's just too busy and full otherwise. So given that situation, we are doubly grateful to those who can and do give liberally of their time and talents.

We'll end with a plea to all Annexonians. If you learn of a development issue you think P+D members ought to know about, or if you're interested in watching the P+D committee at work, or -- even better -- if you're willing and able to help the cause, then please reach out and email us at [info@theara.org](mailto:info@theara.org) We'd love to hear from you.

## Notes and Queries

### The 211 Incident Crisis Pilot

Councillor Dianne Saxe briefed the Board last week on doings in Ward 11. One intriguing nugget: we are apparently the most sophisticated and prolific users of the City's 311 help line. And the councillor told us to keep that up. The service works very much on the squeaky wheel principle, and it's only by calling and reporting problems with issues like snow clearing that will wrest a response from City staff.

Councillor Saxe also championed our (partial) access to Toronto's pilot of a harm reduction service. For those of us who live **west of Spadina**, if you see a situation that requires mental health intervention rather than an armed response, then **211** is the number to call. As she pointed out, the greatest feature of this 211 service is that it's not catch and release – there's guaranteed follow-up with the individual in crisis for the next 90 days. For more information, check the [Toronto Community Crisis Service website](#).



### Bloor Annex BIA

What's good for business is good for the community, and that was crystal clear at this week's AGM for the Bloor Annex Business Improvement Area. BIA

Manager Brian Burchell presented a comprehensive report on recent initiatives, many of which are to our benefit. [Click here](#) to read about the improvements of parkettes, installation of performance spaces, maintenance of a free herb garden, and sponsoring of wall murals among other neighbourhood enhancements. Note that the report leads with a picture of our own Horn on the Cob and the Social Distance performing at [Wiener's 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration](#).



*Photo Neiland Brissenden BABIA*

## **The Annex Native-History Tour**

We first featured Paul Richard and his team of Earth Helpers back in 2020 in their early days of labour on the eco-restoration of Paul Martel Park. Fast forward three years to find a [newly launched website](#) in praise of their efforts. In addition to learning about the project and the Annex's rich ecological and Indigenous history, the website also includes [a link](#) that allows you to make a tax receiptable donation in support of the Earth Helpers' ongoing efforts to protect and improve the park.





## You Read it Here First!

Well, isn't that a feather in our cap?! Yes – we admit to feeling kind of chuffed when Meg Roberts of the CBC reached out last week regarding our item on the crazed raccoon who attacked Merrijoy Kelner in Taddle Creek Park. Merrijoy was game as ever to tell her story, and the result was [a charming piece posted by CBC](#). A good news story worth reading again!



*Photo Meg Roberts / CBC*



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](mailto:gillianbartlettara@gmail.com). To stop receiving emails, [click here to unsubscribe](#).

The Annex Residents' Association