



**THE ANNEX  
RESIDENTS'  
ASSOCIATION**

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

**April 26, 2023**

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### **ARA AGM Tomorrow Evening – Register Now!**

You've still got time to register – that is, unless you're reading this newsletter some time after Thursday April 30 at noon. Register before then [by clicking here](#), and our membership secretary, Tija Dirks, will send you the Zoom link for the meeting. The agenda, minutes, and financial docs are all [available on the website](#). Hope to see you there!

## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**



## **GET INVOLVED!**

## Guest Spotlight

*Alas the weather wasn't all that cooperative this past Earth Day weekend to inspire neighbourly gatherings to clean streets and sidewalks. But it did permit the ARA's past Communications Director, John McGrath, to commune with a pothole. We'll step aside and let him explain.*

### The Heritage Pothole

I still remember the first time I saw it. "It's not often," I thought, "you get to see a hidden part of Toronto's past reappear." I pulled over on Dupont Street, parked my bike against the fencing around a nearby construction site, and went back to get a closer look. "Yes, those are bricks at the bottom of that pothole. I have found a Heritage Pothole!"



It's not known when this Heritage Pothole first appeared in the Annex. Maybe, with the neighborhood's long-time support for heritage, it thought it was safe here. Now that it's gone, paved over in the City's April pothole blitz, the big question is - how did it get here? I mean, it seems kind of short-sighted to just pave over stuff, when you could create a more long-lasting thoroughfare by digging everything up and starting anew.

Yet, that's what the City of Toronto often did in the 1960's, 70's and 80's. According to a City spokesperson, it was common practice back then to pave over brick roadways, if the bricks were deteriorating, or if drivers and passengers wanted the smoother ride that asphalt provides. But that still doesn't answer the question – how did the bricks get there?

## Cue the TTC

The answer likely is – the Toronto Transit Commission. People who have lived in the neighborhood longer than I have may remember that Dupont Street had a streetcar line for sixty years until 1963, when it was abandoned following the opening of the University subway. And those bricks are likely left over from the ballast used to hold the streetcar tracks in place. The same thing has been found under other streets in Toronto, including York Street and Ossington Avenue.

I don't know why this pothole intrigued me so. I may like our heritage more than most, but there are limits. This pothole though, and its short life on Dupont Street, made me wistful. And in a city that is constantly changing and reinventing itself, that doesn't often happen enough.

—John McGrath

## The Other Shoe Has Dropped

We knew it was coming. Much as the ARA and tenants of 145 St George had spent the last two years making the case for preserving the mid-century modern

building that anchors the corner of St. George and Prince Arthur, the owners have pledged to proceed with demolition, armed with their victory at Council in securing permission to replace 25 St Mary Street with two condo towers.

We can say that at least the lobbying over the last two years has led to promised compensation packages and strict guarantees of return for current tenants. Tenblock (the developer) has clearly heard the message that vulnerable residents need and deserve protection. So that's in their favour – especially when you consider that recently proposed provincial legislation in the form of the [Bill 97 Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act](#) threatens to undermine the tenant protections currently mandated in Toronto.

## First Principles

On the other hand, those promises are just that – promises. And to quote that old proverb: there's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip. For example, what happens to these displaced tenants if, after the building is demolished, the site is mothballed due to changing economic conditions? The stall in the vertical jungle project on Davenport is the immediate example that comes to mind.

Which leads us to that first principle: why demolish perfectly sound rental buildings to be replaced by what are almost certainly to prove less sturdy condo towers? If 25 and 145 were isolated cases, the question might not be so pressing. But the fact is that they are part of an epidemic that is sweeping the city.

There are currently seventy-three (73) active applications across Toronto to demolish apartment buildings. That adds up to an alarming **3400+** units presently called home by some **10,000** tenants. The vast majority of these buildings are old enough to be under rent control and consequently affordable. And with a current vacancy rate of 1.7 percent, those demovictions add up to a daunting number of people who will need to be housed on a temporary (one hopes) basis.

## Financialization of Housing

The replacement of rental buildings with individually owned condos is nothing short of the financialization of housing. Developers no longer build for the long term: their aim is to re-coup costs and make their profit within the first decade of a project's life. There are haunting stories out there recounting astronomical assessments levied in comparatively young condos already forced to replace such fundamental building systems as windows and elevators and furnaces.

There's nothing in current legislation to forbid demolitions. As City Councillors pointed out in the debate on 25 St Mary – owners of property have a constitutional right to wrest value from their land. Still, after reading [Rosie di Manno's heartbreaking report in the Star](#), one can't help but hear a whisper in one's ear, "Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses?"

## Notes and Queries

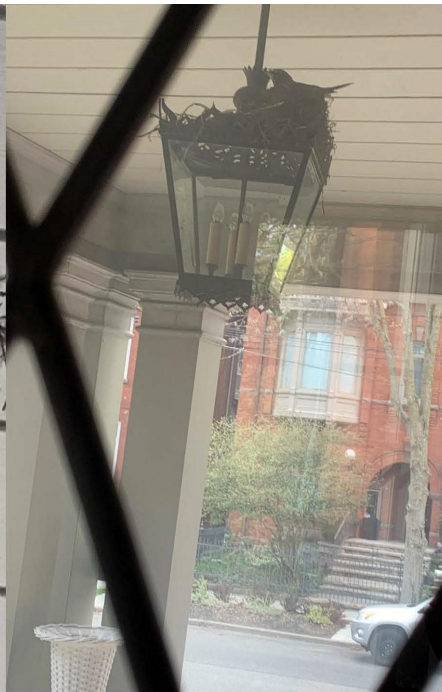
### It's for the Birds

Seems that David Harrison's front porch lamp has once again found favour with our feathered friends. We first reported on a robin making her nest there back in May 2021. And now, after a two-year hiatus, a mother robin is back to hatch her eggs. Given the species' average two-year lifespan in the wild, we have to face the hard reality that this is likely not the same creature. On the other hand, it's reasonable to imagine that it's one of the original 2021 nestlings returning to her birthplace. If so, we can be sure she has warm childhood memories of that first home so comfortably heated by the light.





2021



2023

## The Annex qua Park

As the late Ko Van Klaveren so rightly insisted, the Annex is a park. It just happens to be one whose grounds are tended by hundreds of individual property owners rather than a team of publicly paid workers. So while there's been much press made recently about High Park's rightly famous cherry blossoms, we're driven to crow about our own flowering trees – especially the magnolias that presently grace the neighbourhood. Mindful that the blooms will be gone in a matter of days, we've captured some of them here for memory's sake in pixels.



## You Aren't Mistaken

There are days when an Annexonian can feel physically under siege and aurally assaulted by pounding, drilling, hammering, grinding, beeping and buzzing. In fact, the entire city feels at times like one gigantic construction project. So it's not hard to believe that, yes, once again Toronto is the crane capital of North America. Just check [the RLB index](#) pictured below.

If you total up our American neighbours from Boston to Washington DC, they share among them a mere 278 operating cranes. Compare that to little old Toronto that all by itself runs 238. That means our share is a whopping 46% of the cranes currently operating in comparable US cities combined. And – also no surprise – the stats show that 58% of our cranes are servicing residential (aka condo) builds.

# RLB CRANE INDEX

Q1 2023 Release



	Boston	Calgary	Chicago	Denver	Honolulu	Las Vegas	Los Angeles	New York	Phoenix	Portland	San Francisco	Seattle	Toronto	Washington DC
Civil														
Commercial		2		6	1		7	5			1	3	35	
Cultural			3				2							2
Education	1									2	1		7	1
Federal/Govn't.													1	
Healthcare		1				2	1		1	1		1	2	1
Hospitality				1		5	1					1	10	
Industrial					2		2				5		1	
Mixed-Use	8			6	9		20	3	3	8	3	11	33	11
Public Assembly				2										
Public/Civic												2	6	
Residential		17	11	21	2	5	10	2	5	3	7	33	139	7
Sports							1						0	
Transportation							3						4	
Unknown														4
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>26</b>

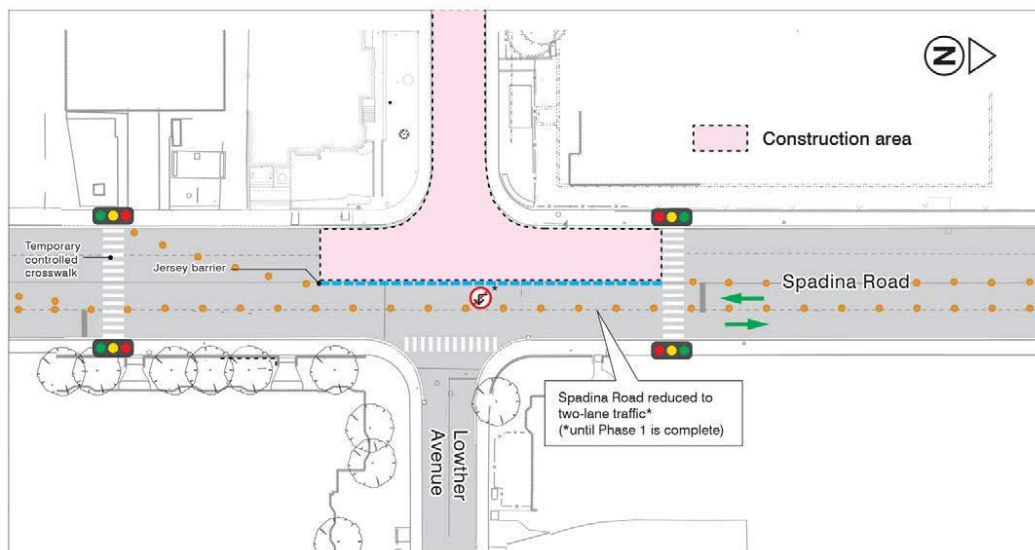
**Note:** Beginning in 2020, crane counts are now conducted on a bi-quarterly basis; referenced as Q1 (collected in February) and Q3 (collected in August).  
Las Vegas was added to the Crane Index in Q1 2020.  
Parameters for New York City were expanded in Q1 2021.

RLB.com

## TTC Spadina Construction Update

TTC construction at Spadina continues to press forward. Starting **April 27** Spadina Road at Lowther will be reduced to a minimum of one northbound lane and one southbound lane. Drivers should beware that left turns from southbound Spadina to Lowther will be forbidden until this lane reduction is lifted. Expect Jersey barriers, signage, and pylons to guide drivers and cyclists who share Spadina Road. And for pedestrians there will be detours and temporary controlled sidewalks. Finally, for nearby residents, the TTC notes laconically: *Some noise and dust should be expected*. No kidding! But at least they're keeping us in the loop. (You can [read the official notice here](#).)





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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