

This Week in the Annex:

August 02, 2023

Sunshine on Howland

Several tenants in the rooming house at 54-56 Howland have, over the years, proudly enhanced the neighbourhood through their volunteer labours on the front yard landscaping.

Twice in this newsletter we have celebrated the efforts of Damon Pacheco-Perin, Howland's honorary ambassador, who developed an idiosyncratic garden from what had previously been a neighbourhood eyesore: patches of grass struggling to survive under the wheels of moving vans and illegally parked cars.



Alas, the final centrepiece of Damon's masterpiece was a boulder unearthed from a site up the road which he wanted to dedicate to the "Boys of Howland" who had given their lives in WWI. However, the property manager was totally hostile to Damon's vision and required that the rock be removed together with all his other plantings and their containers.

Rebirth

Two years later, long-term tenant Jeff (Sonny) de Graaf has stepped in to create once again an appealing space in the barren lot for the entire neighbourhood to enjoy. But this time he's done so with a field of cheerful sunflowers.



The project began early last Spring when Jeff (shown here with his beloved companion, Jake) sourced a batch of untreated sunflower seeds, placing them between layers of moistened paper towels. Once they had germinated, Jeff tilled the soil and planted the seedlings by the dozens outside.

His intention was more than aesthetic, as he also planted the field as a tribute to the Ukrainian people who continue to resist Putin's invasion. That's why you can see the Ukrainian flag firmly affixed to the utility pole on the sidewalk outside.



Although Jeff secured his property manager's approval for this enterprise, it has come with a price. He's had to promise that in the Fall not only will he remove the spent plants but also personally pay for and put down enough sod to cover the entire front lawn. (In fact, the sod's already scheduled for delivery on October 15th.)

Kudos and thanks to Jeff for his efforts – and also to Howland neighbour Libbie Mills who kindly tipped us off to this cheerful display. The flowers are still growing taller by the day and just coming into bloom, so there's lots of time left for you to enjoy them.



Honouring our Heritage

Thanks to all who responded last month with suggestions for suitable subjects for a new permanent heritage plaque in the Annex. Given the rich history of our community, there were some truly worthy nominations. These included topics as disparate as recognition of the literary flowering that took place in the Annex beginning in the 1950s to the work of Grassroots Albany in caring for St. Alban's Square Park, and from celebrating specific houses on Howland blessed with historic pedigrees to honouring individuals like Jane Jacobs or the writing power couple of Jack Batton and Marjorie Harris.

Board member Sandra Shaul submitted the full list together with any background documentation to Christ Bateman, Plaques Manager at Heritage Toronto. He wrote back instantly, excited to hear of funding being available. And this is what he had to say:

From your list, 41 Spadina Gardens stands out to me. There are many notable apartment buildings in the Annex -- including Uno Prii's multiple works -- and as far as I know none have yet been interpreted via a Heritage Toronto plaque. This would be a good place to start.

The Eatons' opposition to the building is also notable. It would be interesting to generally explore the history of apartment houses in Toronto and local opposition to multi-unit buildings within the narrative of the plaque.

So there you have it. Heritage Toronto will be working towards honouring our apartment buildings. Can you think of a more timely initiative? Nor can we!



Timothy Eaton opposed the building of Spadina Gardens so vigorously because it was directly opposite the bombastic Victorian mansion he inhabited at 38 Walmer. Ironically, that mansion was later demolished to make way for Uno Prii's iconic Vincennes apartment building.

You can learn more about Spadina Gardens from our [newsletter of July 13 last year](#).

Notes and Queries

Too close to home...

Henry Wiercinski heard rumoured and Constable Timothy Somers confirmed that officers from 53 Division were forced to shoot an aggressive coyote last July 10th after a pack of the animals killed a small dog at 2:30 in the morning in Ramsden Park. The body was found on Chicora Avenue, smack dab in our beloved Annex. Less than a week later, another small dog was attacked late at night over on Cottingham Avenue by the school.

A quick trip around the Internet indicates these aren't isolated incidents. There have been several such shootings in Toronto in recent years as the coyote population rapidly increases. That's why all residents are urged to obey the restrictions on feeding wild animals no matter how in need they may appear. Check the warnings on the sign pictured below. Or, better yet, get informed by accessing the [City's web page](#) devoted to interactions with urban wildlife.



Have You Registered?

Just a reminder that our next Meet n' Eat is less than two weeks away. The reservation is for **6:00 pm** on **Tuesday August 15** at [Indian Desire](#), 469 Bloor Street, home of some of the best Indian food in Toronto. This event is coordinated by the ARA to provide an opportunity for Annex residents to meet each other over a meal while at the same time supporting a local business. Note that separate cheques apply: Each participant orders and pays for their own food and beverages.

We look forward to seeing you there. But it would be great if you could [RSVP on our website](#) so that we know how many seats to hold.



A New Champion

Back in 2019, the ARA awarded Neil Jain the Community Builder Award “for his determination in exhorting the City to take action on the deteriorating condition of the properties at 6 – 8 Walmer.” Our own Albert Koehl then took up the cause and pressed the case until finally, back in 2021, repairs were completed in accordance with Heritage rules.

While the proper refurbishment of the property was a major relief, nothing positive has happened in the interim. In fact, garbage and equipment have accumulated to the point that the site has become once again an eyesore. Kudos to Councillor Dianne Saxe who has now taken up the cause, contacting the owner directly and securing a promise to clean up the site shortly.

We promise to keep you in the loop on this one. Amazing how one single property can cause so many years of dismay!

The Progress of 6 Walmer Road



July 2020 A sorry state of neglect



Jan 2021 Spanking new wrap



July 2021 A stagnant work site



Nov 2021 The slate roof restored

The Progress of 6 Walmer Road

Better Late Than Never

We don't know just when it happened, but cheers to management at 50 Prince Arthur for finally removing that unsightly graffiti that has for months disfigured the boulders edging the property at the corner with St George. Fingers crossed that the perpetrator(s) are tired of the game and don't return with their spray cans.

That was then:



This is now:



Dupont Under Repair

Poor old Dupont Station – it seems to be perpetually under renovation of some sort or other. We caught a crew of four on scene last week gathered to replace a faulty pane of glass in the roof. Admittedly not the easiest of repairs to get done.



Tenant Resources

Board Member Charlotte Mickie attended Councillor Saxe's Tenants' Town Hall last Thursday and reports that it was a very comprehensive information session. She noted the positive changes [RentSafe](#) has made to evaluate and audit rental buildings more effectively, as described by the spirited team of presenters, Janet Stoeckl and Mohamed Abukar. Pip Geddie of Downtown Legal Services provided broad, useful information on sources of legal support, as well as some pithy activist comments. Geordie Dent from FMTA also kindly contributed, and in particular gave a succinct summary of tenants' current rights to air conditioning.

The highlight was likely the presentation by Justin Cowen from 30 Charles St E (a designated building) who showed just what a tenants' association can accomplish in the face of adversity. The tenants at 145 St George and Spadina Gardens are in talks now with those at 30 Charles E to see how they can support one another.

There were cautionary words from the Councillor who noted the hard legal and political realities confronting tenants. But at least the participants came away armed with a list of resources – many of which are neatly summarized on the handbill sent out to all residents in Ward 11 and reproduced below.

Tenant Resource Guide

1 - Cooling

If your unit has air conditioning installed by the landlord, it **must be operated between June 2nd and September 14th** and maintain a temperature of no more than 26° Celsius.



2 - Apartment Standards

If there is an urgent maintenance request, such as lack of heat or water, **landlords are required by law to address it within 24 hours**. If no action has been taken within the legally required time, call 311 and your local Councillor's office to address the issue through the city's apartment standards and RentSafe teams.

For long-standing issues, you can also reach out to MLS and Rentsafe to begin an investigation. **If apartment standards are found to have been violated, the landlord will be forced to address the issue.**



3 - Tenant Associations

If you and your neighbours would like to form a Tenant's Association, you can contact **The Federation of Metro Tenants' Associations** for assistance in organizing your building and creating a formal association.

4 - RentSafe TO

RentSafeTO can help address property standards issues in your unit & building, including the following:

- No Electricity
- No Water
- Low or No Heat
- Breach of Security
- Ice Clearing
- Grass Cutting
- Property Damage
- Maintenance
- Graffiti
- Waste Management
- Pests
- Water Leaks

Tenant Resource Guide

5 - Evictions

If you are facing eviction, a hearing will be held the Ontario Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB). It is highly advised that you obtain legal representation. Downtown Legal Services and West Toronto Legal Services provide representation Pro-Bono for eligible tenants.



6 - Rent Bank



The Toronto Rent Bank can issue grants for rental arrears up to \$4,000 or 3 months rent, whichever is lower. For rental deposits, grants are based on unit size and range from \$1500 to \$2100.

Key Contacts

Councillor Dianne Saxe
Councillor_Saxe@toronto.ca
416.392.4009

MLS & RentsafeTO
Contact 311 & follow-up with your Councillor's office

Downtown Legal Services
downtownlegalservices.ca
416.934.4535

Toronto Rent Bank
toronto.ca/rentbank
416.397-RENT (7388)

West Toronto Legal Services
wtcls.org
416.531.7376

Federation of Metro Tenants
torontotenants.org
416.921.9494

Sign-Up For Our Tenants Townhall!

Thursday, July 27 at 7:00 PM

Join us for our Virtual Tenants' Rights Townhall. Representatives from MLS, The Federation of Metro Tenants' Associations, and Downtown Legal Services will be available to answer questions about your rights as a renter in Toronto.

Scan the QR Code
or visit diannesaxe.ca
to Register or
Get More Info!



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