

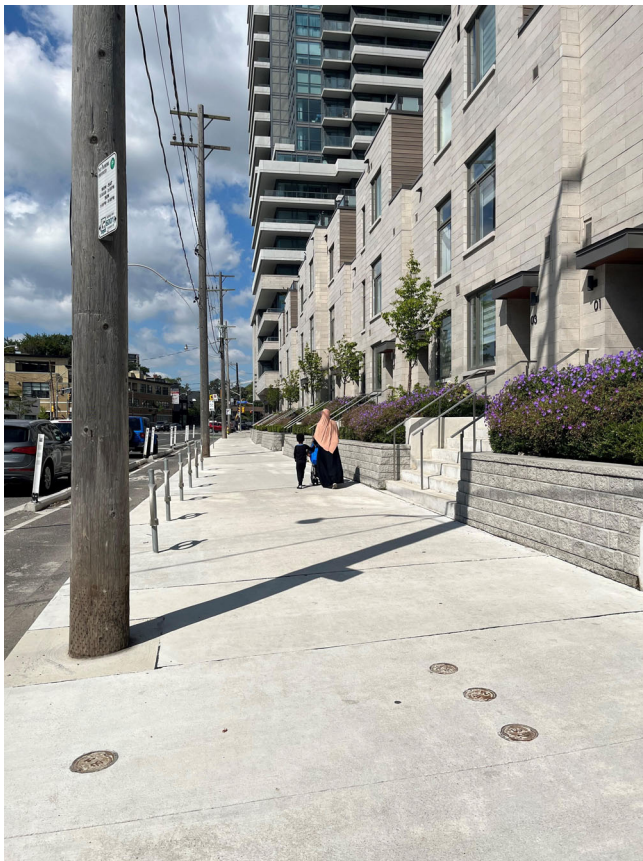
This Week in the Annex:

August 30, 2023

Who Counts in This City?

The development project at the northeast intersection of Bedford and Davenport was the subject of much debate and consultation, fraught as it was with legacy planning permissions dating back to the '60s. The ARA worked hard with the councillor of the day and City staff to negotiate a satisfactory outcome.

And while there's nostalgia for the open green space that used to occupy that corner, the project is now accepted as a handsome addition, especially with its chain of landscaped gardens along Davenport that somewhat take the edge off the mass of concrete and stone.



Ironically, in all those negotiations over height and density and green space, no one at the table gave a thought to the bus stop located directly beside the TCHC building at 250. It was a given. It was a fact of life. It was an amenity consciously negotiated decades before to support the residents and compensate for their building being moored in a sea of affluence.

And that's why it came as a total shock when the stop suddenly disappeared post construction last year, forcing residents to walk home from the corner -- either at Avenue or Bedford.

What's in a Bus Stop?

There are almost 1,000 residents at 250 Davenport living in a total of 460 units. Many have been there for decades while others are young families with multiple children. All of them have lower incomes. A significant number of them are seniors and persons with physical and mental disabilities: canes and walkers and wheelchairs abound.



Almost none of the 1000 residents has the wherewithal to own and operate a car. Nor can they afford to shop at Whole Foods for groceries.



In other words, these Annexionians have always relied on public transit for the bulk of their commuting needs – whether to go to work, to buy food, to attend doctors' appointments, or to see a movie. And the accessibility of that public transit is critically important to them. Asking them to walk those extra metres to the corner poses a palpable burden, especially in summer heat or over winter ice.

Adding insult to injury, what they got in place of their bus stop was. . . a bike lane and rack of bicycles.



Posing a Challenge

It doesn't take much to figure out that the majority of these residents are not in any position to hop on a bike. The physical and emotional confidence implied by cycling in this city is guaranteed to be in short supply at 250.

Needless to say, the residents are angry. They want their bus stop back. And to their credit they've been waging a determined battle for over a year now against what have sometimes seemed insurmountable odds.

There have been messages to TCHC and COTA, the Councillor, the TTC, the ARA, you name it. And now tenant leaders John Corso, Christopher King, and Rita Debiase have secured 280 signatures on a petition to reinstate the stop. Getting those signatures didn't come easy in a community of individuals of whom many are reclusive or fearful or naturally skeptical.

What's the Problem?

The major issue cited time and again by authorities for the removal of that long-standing bus stop is one of safety. But there's a question: safety from what and for whom?

The first pushback has come from the TTC which cites an anathema for mid-block stops. The theory goes like this – residents on the opposite side of Davenport will be tempted to cross mid-block in a race to catch the northbound bus. Problem is – the line ends at Dupont and loops back down. Who takes that bus north for just two blocks? ([Check the route map here.](#))

(On the other hand, to be fair, we're asking Annex residents for their lived experiences. Have you or anyone you know ever resorted to dashing across the street for this northbound bus in the last 40 years or so?)

Then there's the fact of the (badly needed) bike lane. It's cited as an impediment to reinstating the bus stop. But examples of bike lanes and bus stops in peaceful coexistence abound in this city – just like the one immediately up the road at Bedford.



It's the Bikeshare platform that presents a major impediment. But there's a question as to its safety as well. A few short weeks after it was installed, the rack was demolished by a passing vehicle. Luckily no would-be cyclists were present, so no one was hurt. But these bikes are surely sitting ducks, planted as they are veritably in the middle of the roadway. Couldn't they have been sited elsewhere in a location less exposed?



An Immodest Proposal

The massive tower about to be erected down the road at Ave and Dav is bound to necessitate reorientation of the current bus stop for at least 4 or 5 years.

So why not reinstate the one that served 250 so well for so many decades? That would give authorities time to measure the comparative use of the Bikeshare station, secure a safer site for that platform, evaluate the bus passenger usage, and, most importantly, assess the impact of that stop on the lives of those 1000 residents at 250 Davenport.

We'll let you know what happens with the petition.

And, as always in this newsletter, responses from the community are more than welcome: Write us at info@theara.org.

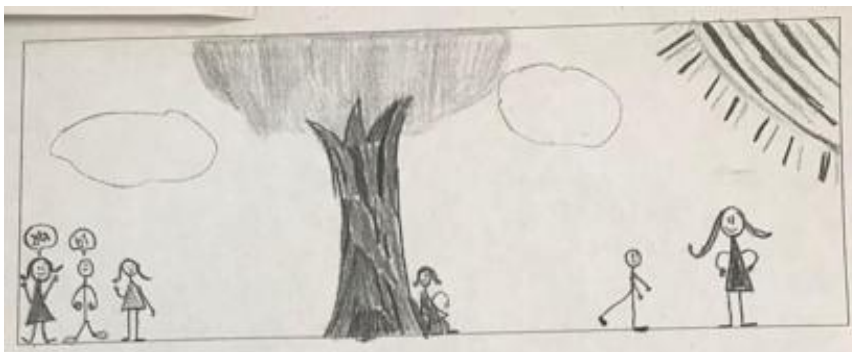
A Tragic Passage

It's been hard to watch, but it apparently had to be done. Last week huge sections of the Big Tree at Huron Street JPS were cut down and its massive limbs carted off to parts unknown.



To be sure, the silver maple was at least 150 years old – reputedly the second oldest tree in the Annex – and it had suffered a ruinous lightning strike the previous week. But its demise will be devastating, especially for the students set to return to classes next week.

Not for nothing has the tree been described as “a grounding force in the lives of generations of schoolchildren.” Just look at Richard Lautens’ images in [an article featuring the Big Tree](#) that appeared four years ago in the *Toronto Star*.



The child’s drawing he photographed was accompanied by a poignant text:

The Big Tree is a special place where lots of people sit. It’s a very wonderful place. You don’t know it but it’s watching you, your every move. The Big Tree is a peaceful place. It comes from a far away time. When you’re under the Big Tree you’re not alone, because the Big Tree

is your second home. It's a perfect place to talk with friends! That's why I appreciate the Big Tree. We should make it a national place.

Plans Undone

In an interview with the *Annex Gleaner* back in 2018, teacher and loyal ARA member Meg Gardner explained the thinking behind the current school yard renovation. It started with the desire to “. . . celebrate and create more of a welcoming space around the big tree.”

There were other goals, of course. For example, the permanent sports areas needed a thorough makeover while the playing field required serious upgrading.

But it's so hard to swallow that just as those renovations are nearing completion, the Big Tree – the centrepiece for the children and for many of us in the Annex community – won't be there to preside majestically over the playground's rebirth.



Photo Richard Lautens, *Toronto Star*

Notes and Queries

Perchance to Dream

This is a first. It's not often we're asked how to spend money. But there's a unique opportunity at the moment for our community.

When she was first elected to office, Councillor Saxe learned of Section 37 monies set aside for the benefit of Ward 11. These funds had long sat unused but were now threatened with being clawed back by the City. (For a brief explanation of these somewhat mysterious funds and how they work, [click here](#). Or for the longer, official version provided by the City, [click here](#).)

Now they've been alerted to the possibility, our P+D committee has taken up the hunt for the remaining monies collected from developments across Ward 11. They've no idea how much is out there. No guarantees. But at the same time it seems prudent to have community feedback as to how such money might be allotted. Check out the chart of [acceptable targets listed here](#).

So here's the ask. Do you have any ideas for specific projects that would meet one of these criteria? If so, please let us know by writing to info@theara.org. We'd love to hear what you think is important so we can be prepared with a list if any money happens to come our way.



Night Economy Review

If you live near any of the main streets in the 'hood – think Bloor, Bathurst, Dupont, Avenue – you'll be particularly alert to this City initiative.



To quote from the review preamble:


The City is exploring strategies to support Toronto's night economy - the social, cultural and business activities that occur at night. The goal is to create a vibrant, safer, and more inclusive night economy, with an updated approach to licensing and zoning bars, restaurants and entertainment venues in communities across Toronto.

That's long hand for plans both to extend opening hours and to remove zoning restrictions.

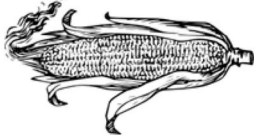
There are two public sessions scheduled for next week (**September 6 and 7**) to bring residents up to speed on deliberations to date. [Click here](#) for more information and to register.

Cornfest Reminder

On the off chance you've been offline and missed our announcements – do record in your calendar the upcoming ARA Cornfest to be held **September 10 between 3:00 and 5:00 pm**. As always, everyone in the neighbourhood is invited to gather at Jean Sibelius Park for an afternoon of food, entertainment, and conviviality. It will be so good to be together in person again.

**THE ANNEX
RESIDENTS'
ASSOCIATION**

Invites You to Our Annual



ANNEX CORNFEST

Sunday September 10th
3:00-5:00 PM Rain or Shine

Jean Sibelius Park

If you live in the Annex – you're invited!

- FREE farm-fresh corn-on-the-cob, cookies, & cold drinks
- Live music provided by *Whether Permitting*
- Interactive Estonian dance display sponsored by KESKUS
- Official ARA T-shirts for sale

All we ask is that you bring your own cup (BYOC)

Come meet your neighbours
New members always welcome
Follow us on our website: www.theara.org

Market Cheer

It's hard to believe that there are only a handful of Wednesdays to go before the Bloor Borden Farmers' Market closes for the season. But this is in many ways the best of times for everyone involved: the Fall harvest has begun flooding in and a bounty of vegetables and baked goods and prepared foods loads the tables. Now adding to the colour and happy buzz of the venue is a second banner handily crafted by Pat Broms to match the one we featured [last August 16](#). This banner graces the tent that has sheltered musicians all summer. And once again we're grateful not only to Pat for her handiwork but also to Lynn Spink for being our eyes on the scene.



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