

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

**October 18, 2023**

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### **Sustaining the Pressure**

The ARA's indefatigable Henry Wiercinski is still in disbelief regarding the meeting held just seven years ago in Timothy Eaton Memorial Church to discuss the future of Avenue Road. Apparently not once in the hefty report presented by City staff could a reader find the word “pedestrian.” It was as though the pavement belonged purely to motorized vehicles – those of us on foot or in wheelchairs or pushing prams or riding bicycles were beneath consideration.

For the City to have made such a significant about-face as it has in its recently proposed improvements for the road’s stretch between Bloor and St Clair is a triumph – testimony to the gargantuan efforts of the residents’ associations like ours who formed the [ARSC \(Avenue Road Safety Coalition\)](#) and the sustained lobbying of interest groups such as [Toronto Community Bikeways Coalition](#).



Three years ago, back in September 2020, Henry was caught on camera pounding in stakes for our ARA sign erected as part of an ARSC event promoting wider sidewalks for Avenue Road pedestrians.

## Public Drop-in Event

But the battle is by no means over. And though we risk boring you with repetition, we wanted to begin this week's newsletter with a special plea for your support.

Tomorrow, **Thursday, October 19 any time between 4:00 and 8:00 pm**, the public is encouraged to drop by to review the proposed improvements to Avenue Road and chat with City staff. This in-person event will be held, just as it was seven years ago, in the **West Assembly Hall of Timothy Eaton Memorial Church at 230 St Clair Ave West**.

There are bound to be poster boards and maps and even physical props to illustrate the proposed changes. But there's a good chance there will also be commuters present who will resist the barriers and planters and markings and tracks and buffer zones and urge, instead, that the pavement be left as is and continue to privilege vehicles while compromising the safety of other road users.

That's why we're urging any of our readers who care about these proposed improvements to charge up to Timothy E and make your views known in person.



It was a bleak March day in 2022 when Henry led a group of politicians and City staff through the obstacles that constitute a walk up Avenue Road from Bloor to St Clair. It's hard to exaggerate the amount of time he's dedicated to the cause of civilizing that stretch of highway in our midst.

### **And if You Can't Get to the Church on Time?**

Of course this is pretty short notice. And most of you simply won't be able to attend the public event even if you'd really like to. We know that. So let's assuage your possible discomfort by giving you an easy task that can be performed from the comfort of your armchair.

We told you last week about the City's Avenue Road Study survey. Several of you wrote to say you'd done your part and clicked your way through it. And for that we're extremely grateful. But if the events of the past week somehow pushed your good intentions aside, not to worry. There's still time for you to respond. Check [last week's newsletter](#) for hints on how to speed through it.

And then, once you're ready, [CLICK HERE TO START THE SURVEY.](#) We're counting on you!



## To Close or Not to Close . . . That is the Question

Yet another example of motorists being privileged over others is playing out at the intersection of Lowther and Spadina. That's where the TTC continues its lengthy construction project to improve subway access. We almost caused a heart attack for residents living near the intersection when we printed the news last week that Spadina was to be fully closed at nights right up until the New Year. After all, isn't that what the sign pictured below proclaims?



Fact is, the TTC had earlier given nearby residents notice that they would have to endure only (!) three sleepless nights of construction under their windows in October and possibly three more of the same in November. Apparently Spadina motorists were too important to inconvenience during the day with these necessary closures.

That was hard enough news to take. But the prospect of months of overnight noise and spotlights was beyond bearing.

The feisty residents of Spadina Gardens supported by the ARA's chair of transportation, Tim Hadwen, immediately reached out to their contact at the TTC

for clarification. Turns out that the TTC agreed its sign was "misleading." And no, Spadina would remain open to traffic most nights (emphasis on "most").

But where does that leave the rest of us? There are at least five such signs that have been deployed elsewhere in the area. One passerby has thought to "correct" the one up on Dupont.



But there's no word as to whether the TTC will spend the thousands of dollars it would take to remove, refabricate, and re-install all this signage. And even then, it's not at all clear what message they actually want to motorists to absorb. We'll let you know if we ever find out.

## Notes and Queries

### It's That Time of Year Again

Thanksgiving is now over and Hallowe'en beckons and preparations in the 'hood are well underway for the night of ghouls. We're delighted to see the return of the punning tombstones to the front lawn of 88 Bernard – wouldn't be Hallowe'en without them. And in a relatively new twist we were amused to encounter a nod to our canine friends. It's totally apropos given the recent

explosion of dogs in the Annex. The skeletal walker on Brunswick pictured below was likely worn out from tending to so many pups, especially that mini-Cerberus on leash.



## Farmers' Market End of Season

Another sure sign of the impending change of seasons is the wrap up of this year's Bloor Borden Farmers' Market. Today (**Wednesday October 18**) is your last chance to browse the stalls, purchase some freshly picked produce, and fortify your freezer with baked pies and edibles like the homemade challas, cinnamon & chocolate babkas, and chocolate rugelach from this week's pop-up vendor, Matanya Nieman. Word is that the Dairy Farmers of Ontario will also be attending bearing lots of samples for folks to enjoy. Congratulations to all those volunteers who worked tirelessly this summer to make the market not only a fine resource for locally grown food but a warm community hub. Your efforts are much appreciated.





*Photo of Pat Brom's hand-crafted market banner courtesy L Spink*

## Thwarting Vehicle Theft

Constable Timothy Somers from 53 Division's Community Response Unit has reached out to every residents' association in his precinct regarding an alarming increase in vehicle theft in Toronto. He's urging those of us who own cars to consider more extreme measures for protecting our vehicles beyond the standard advice to lock doors, hide any valuables from view, and secure keys safely inside one's residence.

Strong outdoor lighting, hi-def security cameras, alarm systems, wheel clubs, or even car boot locks are a list of measures everyone should consider. And as [this media story from City News](#) reveals, many homeowners in the city are even going to the expense of installing driveway bollards. While it's easy to be complaisant, the timeliness of Constable Somers' advice was driven home this weekend with news of an attempted break-in to a car parked in a driveway on lower Admiral Road. Vehicle owners beware!



## Charlotte's Castle Redux

If you missed seeing *Charlotte's Castle* on the big screen when it premiered last month, you've got a second chance. This inspiring film by Jamie Kastner that lovingly documents the fight to preserve the historic Spadina Gardens apartments was so warmly received that Hot Docs has scheduled two more showings for this coming **Monday, October 23: at 4:30 and 6:30 pm** respectively. If you haven't already seen the film, we urge you to go. You'll be treated to the Annex at its quirky best. [Click here](#) for tickets.



## Eyes on Jean Sibelius Park

We know that our Annex tree canopy is rapidly aging with the demise of historic beauties such as the former meeting tree – now sadly reduced to a platform – in the Huron Street schoolyard. But it sure feels like City crews have been on a bit of an extreme rampage in Jean Sibelius Park, reportedly lopping off every single



branch that could conceivably imperil folks walking 'neath or entice children to climb. The wooden pillars seen below are particularly unsettling.



But at least there's an upside to this frantic quest for safety. We spoke with City worker David as he prepared to mount the bucket of his boom truck, pictured below holding the device that allows him to manoeuvre the lift. The task at hand? Replace some failed light bulbs as well as a sadly degraded photocell or two. That's a job we can all get behind.



## Best in Show?

When the owners of 70 Lowther hired Ted Humphreys and crew to create for them a garden that would rival all others on the block, they knew what they were doing. Working with a generous budget and his own superb sense of style, Ted's spent more than a year developing a flourishing oasis – one that not only suits the owners' personal tastes and needs but also provides joy to every passerby.

We caught Ted (right) and his workers – Miku (left) and Benny (middle) – as they added the latest blooms to the ever-growing masterpiece. They have even dared to plant 400 tulip bulbs amongst those boulevard perennials. Ted swears that the copious amounts of manure that he mixed in when preparing the bed will prove sufficient deterrence to marauding squirrels. He hasn't been wrong yet, so we'll choose to believe him, battle-scarred though we personally are from waging ineffectual war on the tulip-chomping rodents.

Whatever, it's going to be a delight watching that garden come alive next Spring. Huge thanks to the owners from the entire community for adding so exquisitely to the public park that we call the Annex.





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