

This Week in the Annex:

November 01, 2023

Two Steps Forward . . .

The ongoing saga of Paul Martel Park continues.

So first — the good news. After two years of petitioning and planning, the Earth Helpers have seen a key element of their dream realized: the park has finally been defined and dignified with an ornamental fence. The barrier signals gently to passersby that this is a unique space. So now, rather than wandering happenstance into the park, visitors have to make a conscious decision to enter.



For those readers into lit crit or anthropology, you'll recognize that this is all about liminality — the changes that occur when crossing a threshold. Not as dramatic (nor as egregious and outmoded) as the groom carrying his new bride through the doorway. But a subtle difference as the individual transitions from passerby to participant in the experience of the park. The intention is now clear: an Indigenous botanical garden, one that both highlights habitat loss and

provides a safe and welcoming space for Indigenous ceremony — all in the inclusive spirit of Truth and Reconciliation.



City workers put the final touches on the fencing around Paul Martel Park last week.

One step back . . .

And then there's the bad news.

Last Thursday a group of considerable size gathered in the park under rainy skies (for proof, just check the umbrellas deployed in the image below) to discuss the TTC's plans for expanding the Spadina streetcar platform. There were representatives from the TTC, the City, the ARA, and the Earth Helpers to walk through the proposal for increasing capacity at the station.



It seems the project was first broached to the Earth Helpers last August. There was talk of removing the four trees along the park's southern boundary as well as another invasive tree outside the park. Still, Paul Richard, who has determinedly overseen the park's restoration in the face of so many obstacles over the last three years, believed at the time that with care the boundary trees could be saved.

After they bored holes to ascertain the location of power lines, TTC engineers concluded that not only would the trees have to come down, but they would need to board off a significant section of the park (approximately 16% of the square area) to accommodate such tasks as relocating the main hydro line to the Spadina station and constructing the platform walls.

Naturally once the project is over, the TTC promises to restore the affected area to similar or better condition. But that's small comfort in the face of a projected two years of disruption to complete the work. And we all know how construction projects can take on a life of their own. Remember the Dupont station?



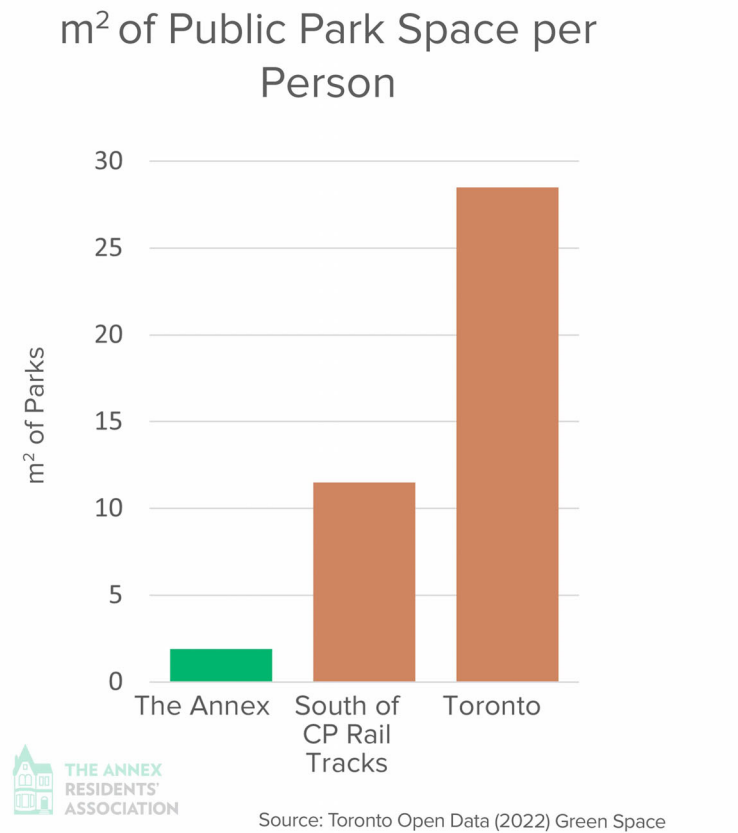
As you can imagine, the prospect is simply devastating to the elders and Earth Helpers who have devoted so much energy to revitalizing the park. Kudos to ARA Chair Rita Bilterman (pictured above discussing plans with the TTC engineers) who is pushing vigorously for project changes that make it more sensitive to the Indigenous' world view.

An Opportunity for All

We've written before in these pages about the plans for each of the four corners at Spadina and Bloor — developments that will change the face of the intersection forever. And while enduring the chaos of impending construction at least comes with an end date, the task of absorbing the thousands of new residents who will move into those towering condos once they are completed is quite another matter.

The universal appeal of the Annex is the prevalence of leafy streets, lawns, gardens, nature. (If you're in any doubt — just check the sales literature for new developments as they come on stream.) But the truth is that we have precious little public green space. Our largest park is Jean Sibelius — a postage-stamp size by City standards.

This relative deficit in parks is instantly visible from the graph prepared for us last spring by Alex Topp and published in our [March 8, 2023 newsletter](#).



The numbers looked bad enough in 2022 at only 2 square metres per Annexonian. It's sobering to think of how they will have shrunk ten years from now once all those new condos are up and occupied.

The impact on children, especially, could be devastating. Witness [the Toronto Star's article](#) published this past Tuesday as part of its series *The kids aren't all right*. It's a given that green spaces are critical for climate change. But that fact is that they're equally important for everyone's mental well-being.

A Bright Spot on the Horizon

In short, we need every bit of green we can get. And that's why we are so grateful for initiatives such as those by the Bloor Annex BIA as it works to carve welcoming parkettes out of abandoned corners. Just consider [the award-winning oasis](#) at the bottom of Howland Street — once an oppressive slab of concrete for parked cars.

And now it seems there's a major opportunity at hand to expand the public realm right on our doorstep.

The developer of the Metro site at 425 Bloor West has proposed greening both sides of Robert Street by building on the BIA's [recently celebrated work](#) at the corner and working southwards all the way down to the playing field. Word has

it that members of the community working group as well as representatives of the Bloor Annex BIA are in full agreement with this vision.

There's just one more legal hurdle to leap — that is, the blessing of City Council — and then we can anticipate the arrival of some necessary breathing room for old and new residents alike. Fingers crossed. Can't wait! Please fire off a note to your councillor at councillor_saxe@toronto.ca if you agree.

It Gets Worse

You read last week about Terri Hawkes sustaining a black eye from her unhappy encounter with that jagged metal stub on Bloor in front of COBS Bread Bakery at 370 Bloor. Thankfully, her bruise has faded to a gentle greenish yellow. But she's unfortunately now facing a series of physio appointments related to her fall.

Sad to say, it turns out that in comparison to Bill Horan, the gentleman who fell just ahead of her, Terri's been comparatively lucky.



Micky Fraterman kindly connected us with Bill and Mary Horan — the couple caught on Terri's camera above — and we heard a story that should give everyone pause.

"It happened so fast," said Bill. "Mary was walking just ahead when my toe caught, and I literally flew down to the pavement. I knew I was in trouble when I saw my kneecap was lower than it should be as well as being deeply indented."

Passersby rushed to their rescue, most heroically a doctor who lamented the fact that her specialty was not Orthopedics. She stayed with the couple for a full 90 minutes as they waited for an ambulance. At that point — no siren remotely within hearing — together they decided they'd be better off transferring to Toronto Western by Uber.

Long story short, Bill's quadricep tendon was completely ruptured, and he underwent emergency knee surgery one week later, returning home in a full leg brace from ankle to thigh. There's a follow-up appointment with the surgeon scheduled for next week. And then months of rehab to rebuild the muscle and regain mobility.



Bill, pictured here with Mary, will be pretty much housebound for the coming weeks. But even when safe at home, the stairways will be tricky to negotiate.

The Cost

In the meantime, it's crutches for Bill and a full-time return to patient care for Mary who — in a stroke of good fortune — has had some experience dealing

with such crises after a career in rehab medicine.

It boggles the mind to consider the cost of all this. Start with the hard dollars involved in medical treatment — including assessment and x-rays and surgery and drugs and outpatient physio and rehab. And try adding to that the “soft” costs — the pain endured and the turmoil in the victims’ lives and the hours lost by them and their caregivers. Those are beyond pricing.

And for what? Civic neglect, pure and simple.



Terri returned to the scene of the crime on Monday and once again found the jagged stub fully exposed. And once again, she covered it with an orange cone.

In despair of 311 we ask: Does anyone out there have a solution to this situation — short of renting the machine to grind down the stub ourselves? In the meantime, beware, take care.

Notes and Queries

The Time is Now!

Okay. Okay. You meant to. You read about it [last week](#). And [the week before](#). And even [the week before that](#). But you figured there was time. But now there

isn't. We're down to the last hours, if not minutes. So please — if you haven't already done so — register your responses on the Avenue Road Survey.

Tomorrow — Thursday, November 2nd — is the deadline. We need loud voices to support pedestrian and cyclist safety on that stretch of highway in our midst. We're counting on you. So please [click here](#) and get started.



It's by no means the first time Henry Wiercinski has captured on camera the consequences of a six-lane highway in our midst. This collision occurred just hours ahead of press time.

Disaster by Design?

Our indefatigable Planning and Development co-chairs, Elizabeth Sisam and Henry Wiercinski, were out for an official tour of Bloor Street last Friday when they spotted tread marks on the newly poured concrete at the corner of Madison and Bloor. As you can see from the image they snapped, large vehicles seem unable (or unwilling) to make the turn within the roadway allowance. Instead, they drive over the sidewalk, cutting across the pedestrian zone — including the accessible crossing ramp which has a stippled surface for the seeing impaired.

In view of upcoming developments scheduled for 316 and 320-332 Bloor, this is nothing short of a disaster waiting to happen. Elizabeth and Henry have reached out to the City. We'll let you know if there's any response.



Noise Bylaw Implementation

Would you believe that the City hosted over 750 participants and heard from more than 2,200 residents by email regarding the Implementation Review of the Noise Bylaw? Whew! The issue has clearly hit a nerve. And, as a result, staff need time to process the information — in fact, won't be reporting until the **January 11, 2024** meeting of the Economic and Community Development Committee (ECDC).

That doesn't mean you have to lose interest in the meantime. You might consider attending a film screening and debate on the issue to be held next **Wednesday, November 8** at Innis Town Hall on the UofT Campus. *Do You Hear What I Hear* is an eight-minute short documentary directed by Cat Mills and commissioned by Hot Docs as part of the [2023 Citizen Minutes program](#). [Click here](#) for details and to register.



Critter Corner Redux

Well, we feel obliged to acknowledge that it's the day after the night before (aka Hallowe'en). And we also regret that there haven't been any critter spots for quite some time in these pages. So let's kill two birds with one stone and stage a reprise for the rodent pumpkin carving duo caught on camera exactly three years ago. [Click here](#) to replay the scene. Different times. Hard to remember that we were struggling with lockdowns.





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