

This Week in the Annex:

November 29, 2023

Santa Was Here!

Last Sunday, thousands of cheerful spectators lined Toronto's streets to watch a host of costumed volunteers pass by for an hour of much needed holiday joy. And here we Annexonians were, blessed to have the parade cross right through our very own 'hood, marching on the Bloor stretch from Bathurst before turning down Spadina.

What's more, despite dire predictions, the weather this year managed to hold. Heavens, it was veritably balmy! The sun shone. Everyone was feeling the warmth. And just to give you a taste of the fun, here follow some of the highlights recorded by your faithful reporter.

Marching Bands

It wouldn't be a parade without a band or two or three, and – trust us – there were several on hand to give us all a lift.

It's always a joy to watch the fresh faces of the North Toronto Collegiate Band, captured here celebrating the season with *Feliz Navidad*. (Just click on the pictures to listen.)



And one of our annual favourites is the white-and-purple-clad troupe from Western University who even managed to make a much-needed water break sound infectious. We dare you not to tap your feet.



Winning the award for the most inventive cultural mash up -- a steel band plays *Auld Lang Syne*.



Dancers

Ebullient clusters of young dancers shimmied and shook and pranced along the route. And just check out the cartwheels. Imagine pulling that off in the middle of Bloor Street!



It's Toronto, so for sure there was a Chinese dragon on hand to bring luck and good fortune. Kudos to the candy-cane dragon pole wielders who still had many kilometers ahead of them.



Performers

The upside-down clowns are a perennial favourite.



And as usual there were rabbits and pigs and raccoons and squirrels and beavers and bears galore. But the crowd favourites had to be the skunks – not at all shy as you’ll see in the video. Though no one on our stretch knew to call out “roadkill” – apparently a time-honoured signal for them to flop on their backs and play momentarily dead – the skunks still had fun with the crowd.



Floats

The floats were big and bright and corporate sponsored – perhaps the most seasonally apt and perfectly located being Metro’s gingerbread house.



But the undisputed star of the show – was Santa himself waving and cheering from his reindeer-pulled sleigh, “I love you all. We’re all together.” It was lovely, a much-needed interlude of communal joy.



The Back Story

Your septuagenarian reporter arrived at the parade route just a tad too late to score a decent spot from which to report. But then she fortuitously spied one of those ubiquitous development signs serving as a perch for intrepid parade watchers.

There was space for one more occupant on the rails. And, on request, the young man pictured below pocketed his camera and used two hands to heave yours truly up on the boards -- and at the end the parade helped us to jump down. It was thanks to his gallantry (and our personal sense of balance) that we’ve been able to share the experience of the parade. You’re welcome!



This was Sayid's ("Call me Sunny") first Santa Claus parade. We ourselves have stopped counting. But both of us had great fun being there.

Notes and Queries

FONTRA City Planning Forum Dec 2

Sorry for the short notice, but you might well want to attend the [FoNTRA City Planning Forum](#) to be held this Saturday, December 2nd from 9:30 am to noon down at Metro Hall. Chief Planner Gregg Lintern and his directors and senior staff will provide an update on planning initiatives of interest. Afterwards, attendees will be able to ask questions and make comments or suggestions. You can find a copy of the meeting agenda [HERE](#). Note that [pre-registration is required](#).



Bike Plans

Given that people are cycling more than ever, the City is looking to enhance safety by building additional bikeways, including physically separated cycle tracks, dedicated lanes, neighbourhood routes, and multi-use trails. Now's your chance to recommend which bikeways should be built, upgraded and/or studied in 2025 to 2027. Visit toronto.ca/cyclingnetwork/input to complete the short survey and learn more about the initiative.



Overnight Work at Spadina

The road signs have long intimated that overnight work would take place in the ongoing project to make the Spadina subway station accessible. And now it's a fact. **From Monday, December 4 to Saturday, December 9, there will be City-approved overnight construction work at Spadina Rd and Lowther Ave.**

Apparently this overnight work has been scheduled to avoid daytime street closure, mitigating significant traffic impacts. But it does mean that area residents may experience noise, vibration, and dust, which are unavoidable for this type of activity.

The good news? Following this overnight construction, Lowther Ave on the east side of Spadina Rd is expected to re-open for traffic. Before the year is out, that is. Fingers crossed. . . [Click here for more information.](#)



An Annex First

The lineup for the grand opening of [Cong Caphe](#) at 424 Bloor last Saturday snaked down the street all day and evening according to sharp-eyed newsletter tipster Mimi Tompkins. Seems that this is the first North American outpost for a beloved Vietnamese coffee shop that is famed for its condensed milk lattes and coffee coconut smoothies. You got that right. Of all possible locations on the continent, Cong Caphe chose to open right here, smack dab in the Annex. Judging by the size of the crowd, we can expect to see a flurry of new franchises in the near future.



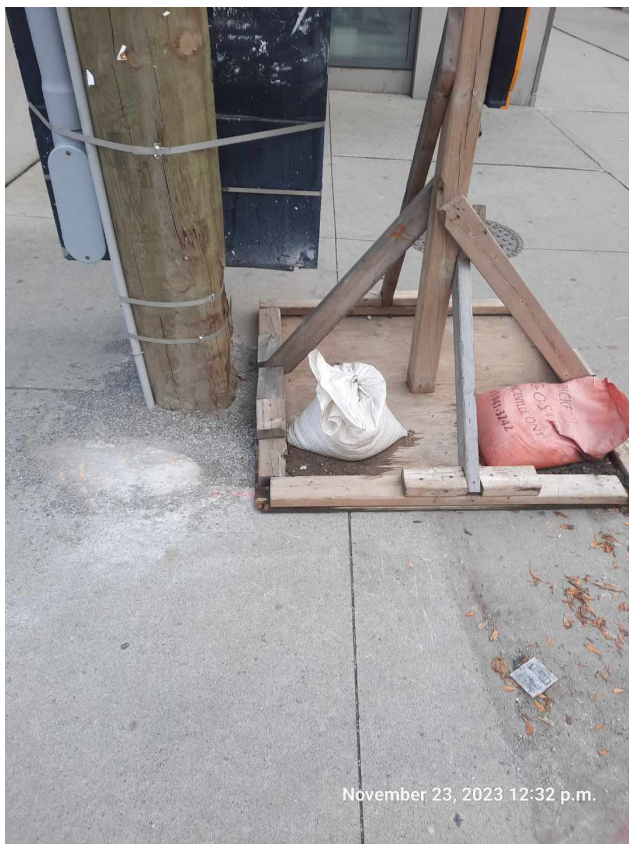
Vietnamese is a tonal language, hence the unfamiliar marks on the café's name as seen in the sign above. Tone marks in Vietnamese are somewhat daunting. But if you're curious, [click here](#).

Here's One for Pedestrians

Lacking a camera focused on the corner, we've no idea how many pedestrians have had their comeuppance tripping over the mechanical protrusions left on the sidewalks from the ongoing construction at Bloor and St George. The cure may be only momentary, but we are delighted to report that thanks to the pleas from the Councillor's office, the site changed in a matter of hours from this:



To this:



And from this:



To this.



Fingers crossed that the bigger bollard stays in place. But dubious though we may be, let's take comfort in the news that the construction is still well ahead of schedule.



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