

This Week in the Annex:

December 06, 2023

FoNTRA Talks Planning

On Saturday, December 2, sixty or so engaged Torontonians — among them our ARA Chair, Rita Bilterman — met at Metro Hall to listen to Gregg Lintern, the City's retiring Chief Planner, and to discuss a broad range of planning matters, all through the agency of [FoNTRA](#) — the umbrella association of which the ARA is a member.

While everyone present acknowledged the need for affordable housing, and while it was also made clear that a significant number of housing units have already been approved, Gregg explained that this does not translate into either affordable or finished units. The fact is that for every 10 units currently approved, only six are actually built.



The much-ballyhooed Vertical Jungle to be built on the former site of *Just Desserts* at Davenport and Bedford is now a mothballed parking lot. There's nagging doubt as to whether the massive project will ever see completion.

The same can be said for other development sites in the Annex such as the parking lot at 361 Davenport. After passing through zoning and site plan approval, the property is currently up for sale as is — in the meantime rented to Alterra for storing construction trailers.

The Price of Growth

This is troubling news given that Toronto is expecting to welcome 700,000 more people over the next 30 years and these newcomers will need complete communities in which to live, work, and play.

Gregg expressed his belief that the growth plan should be developed at the federal and provincial level, creating a new path forward on how to pay for growth and the concomitant building of critical infrastructure like sewage and electrical services, rather than indulging in the current model of civic penny-pinching and haggling with developers.

Sounds a bit like the recent up-loading of the Gardiner and the DVP to the Province, doesn't it? Talk about a plan.



Toronto's Chief Planner Gregg Lintern is retiring on Dec 29.

(Photo courtesy Talia Ricci/CBC News)

Christmas Trees That Give Back

It's a time-honoured Annex tradition to purchase Christmas trees from Sonny's lot next to Future Bistro (483 Bloor at Brunswick). And once again this season, Sonny and his family are generously donating a significant portion of their proceeds to [First Interfaith Out of the Cold](#).



Last year Sonny raised \$47,422 for the Out of the Cold program.

The donation has a tangible impact on our community through First Interfaith's partnership with volunteers in the [Common Table Drop-in Program](#). That's a grassroots community effort run out of the Church of the Redeemer at the corner of Avenue Road and Bloor. First Interfaith Out of the Cold partners with the Common Table once a week to provide lunch for hundreds of guests.



Common Table operates weekdays offering anyone in need the comfort of a healthy breakfast and/or lunch, daily toiletry supplies, basic health care services, and housing referrals.

So if you want your holiday decorations to deliver a positive social impact, then do consider purchasing your tree from Sonny's. And if a Christmas tree is not your thing, remember that direct donations to [Out of the Cold](#) are always more than welcome.

Notes and Queries

Indigenous Artisan Marketplace

If you're looking to purchase a unique gift for someone on your list, it's not too late. The annual NCCT (Native Canadian Centre of Toronto) Indigenous Artisan Marketplace is back for 2023. Running each year for three weekends in a row, the Marketplace features new Indigenous craft vendors and artists. There's still time to [get your free ticket](#) to the in-person version of the event which runs up to and including this coming **Sunday, December 10**.

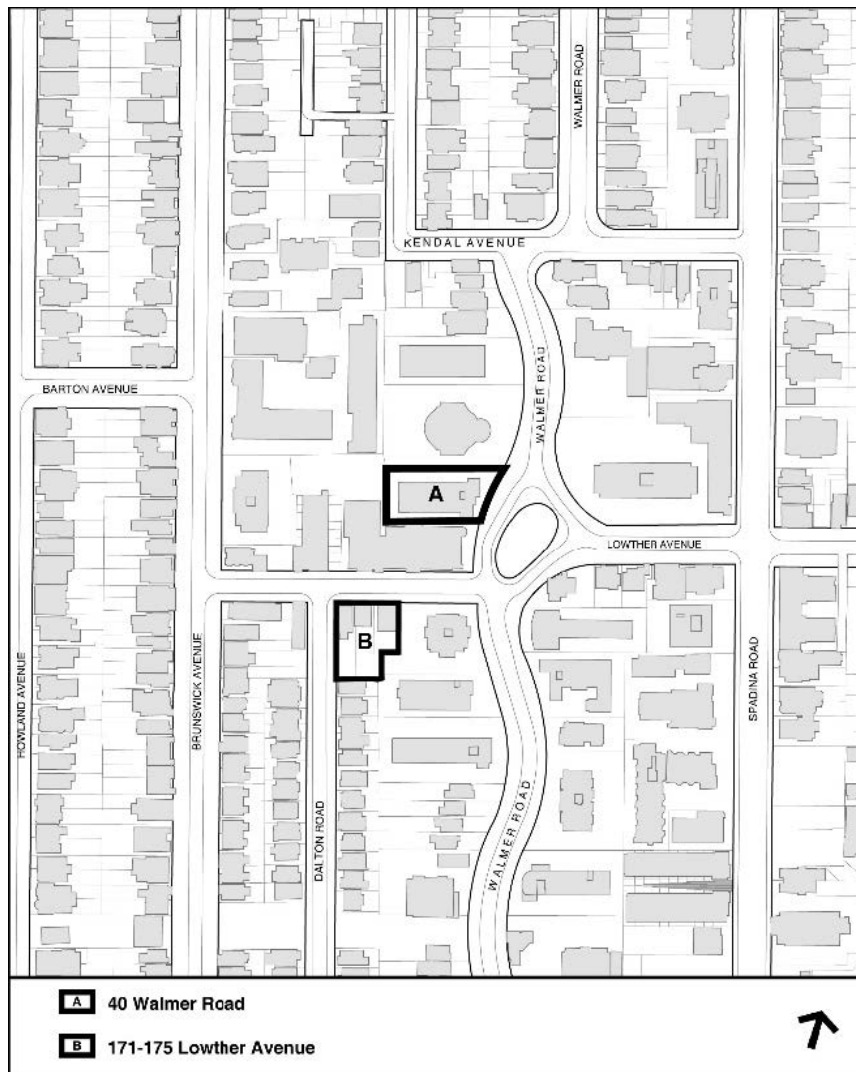
Though it's always a treat to watch in-person interviews with selected artists, to listen to live music, and to test your luck in the free prize draws, you can also do your shopping with the click of your keyboard -- buying directly online from your favourite local artists. Just scroll through the [NCCT website](#) to see what's on offer.



Two For One?

Well, this is a first. City Planning is hosting a virtual Community Consultation Meeting for not one but two different developments at the same time. If you have questions and concerns about development proposals for either **40 Walmer Road** or **171-175 Lowther Avenue**, mark your calendars for **Monday, December 18, 6:00 to 8:00 pm**. The meeting will be held on WebEx.

To read the full announcement and register, [click here](#).



Jessica Bell's Tenants' Social

Kudos to MPP Jessica Bell for her ongoing support of Ward 11 tenants. Last week she held a social at Knox Church which featured Rebecca Gimmi (pictured below), ARA Board member and founding member of No Demovictions, speaking about her experiences in winning practical and positive change for renters. As Rebecca pointed out, when tenants come together, they can get things done.

Witness the fact that Delroy, one of the tenants renovicted from 11 Walmer back in 2019, has finally been given a date for his return. It's shameful that it took years of advocacy and the rallying of an entire community for the landlord to admit defeat and follow the rules. But we'll be sure to celebrate with Delroy on February 1st when he's given his keys and returns to his rightful home.



Photo courtesy David Steinman

Chalk Another One up for the Little Guy

The informal tenants' committee at 250 Davenport has been waging a mighty battle to secure the return of the bus stop that for over 30 years stood directly in front of their building before being quietly removed in favour of a Bike Share stand. The team of John Corso (external communications), Christopher King (technical wizard), and Rita Debiasi (spokeswoman extraordinaire) spent the last two weeks preparing to make an official deputation at the TTC's Advisory Committee on Accessible Transit (**ACAT**). Joining forces with them last Thursday was a deputation from the ARA led by Board member Henry Wiercinski.

Truth to tell, none of us felt confident of victory. Frankly, we didn't expect even to be listened to. But it was tremendously heartening to hear the debate that

followed the presentations. Even more encouraging was the fact that the Chair ruled the issue needed further study. No promises made. But for the moment, we'll take whatever encouragement we can get.



Sign of the Times?

Not sure whether this is an accident waiting to happen — or whether there's already been one afoot (or should we say "awheel"?). Micky Fraterman sent us this image of a clearly brutalized stop sign staggering on Lowther at Gwendolyn MacEwen Parkette circle. Any bets on how long it'll take to get this particular signage snafu sorted?



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