

This Week in the Annex:

February 14, 2024

Ulric Rules

Ulric Narinesingh is a familiar figure to those of us who traverse St George at Bernard. After all, he's been overseeing the intersection for four years now and is on a first name basis with scores of long-time residents, some of whom have been known to bring him the odd sandwich or cookie to tide him over his shift, his relationship with the neighbourhood being that strong.



There's an art to being the quintessential crossing guard, one that Ulric practises with enthusiasm and care. He watches assiduously for approaching pedestrians and then strides purposefully to the middle of the intersection, all the while making eye contact with drivers, taking a firm stance, and wielding his sign and

exercising his whistle with comforting authority. In short, there are no confusing signals. Drivers understand they must stop, and pedestrians feel safe. It's a perfect performance every time.

That's why we were delighted to learn that the quality of Ulric's work has been acknowledged by the company for whom he now works – Synergy – with the presentation of a hugely deserved certificate of appreciation.



Synergy has only recently taken over the contract with the City of Toronto to provide crossing guards. Previously the agreement was with Carraway – the firm Ulric began with not long after he first came to Toronto. The opportunity to pick up shifts as a crossing guard within comfortable walking distance of his own home was the perfect complement to his start-up business offering trouble shooting and tech support to private customers.



If you look closely at this image of Ulric proudly showing off his certificate at the end of his shift, you'll see he's sporting a cap that celebrates Vancouver. It was in that city that Ulric's father settled when he first came to Canada from Trinidad and Tobago in the early 1970s, and it was there that he met and married Ulric's mother whose family had lived in the city for many generations, part of the Chinese diaspora associated with the building of the railroads. Ulric still has family on the west coast whom he tries to visit at least once a year, but now he's happy to call the Annex his permanent home.

In fact, Ulric's deeply involved in the community, particularly with [Trinity-St. Paul's United Church](#) just down on Bloor. He volunteers his time there each Sunday to stream the services live on Zoom for the home-bound to enjoy.

An L-Shaped Watch

According to City's Transportation Division rules, crossing guards are not responsible for their entire quadrant. Rather, they are expected to guard only two of the four crossings – one running north-south, the other east-west. Still, Ulric ignores that rule when he sees young children crossing on the far side. To his mind, it's just not responsible to let them navigate the road on their own.

On the other hand, adults who want to avail themselves of his protection or think to stop and chat when the intersection's not busy will have to make their

way over to Ulric's side of the road. Trust us, it's worth the effort. His inevitable upbeat smile and good nature are infectious.

Art of Apartments

ARA Board Member Charlotte Mickie wears any number of hats, one of her favourites being her work on the Board of [CSDA/CCAD](#) – that is, the Canadian Society of Decorative Arts.

Charlotte has long been fascinated by the history, rich decorative details, and elegant exteriors of some of Toronto's most venerable apartment buildings. That's why she recently joined forces with Toronto heritage advocate, Adam Wynne, and heritage architect, Eric Charron to produce a live-streamed CSDA/CCAD presentation aired last Sunday, February 4th.



Charlotte stands in front of her beloved home, Spadina Gardens, one of the first and longest surviving purpose-built apartments in Toronto.

We are delighted to be able [to share the link](#) to this documentary with our readers. Several of the historic buildings in question are Annex gems. And the walk through the history of early 20th century development in Toronto is both an enlightening and sobering foil to present circumstances with condominium towers mushrooming throughout our community.

But don't [click on the link](#) just now. Wait until you can buckle up and settle down to a good 90 minutes of images past and present. You'll be sure to recognize many of the issues that beset an emerging city and see a straight line between that nascent Toronto and the Toronto of today. Food for thought.



Planners now hail the walkable city as the ultimate goal in urban living. In many ways those early apartment buildings could be equally walkable – that is, on a vertical plane with height limited by staircase access.

Photo credit: York Apartments stairwell, courtesy Gillian Clayton

Notes and Queries

No Cigar

The forces stacked against our attempts to quash the most recent demands of the developer of 316 Bloor have proven invincible. Alas, there's nothing for it but to accept defeat and move on. If there's a silver lining to this cloud, it's the acquisition of what are called Section 37 funds – money paid by the developer as compensation for any negative impact his project might have on the community. Given the adjacency of Paul Martel Park to the Bloor Street site, Councillor Saxe has asked us to produce a list of preferred capital upgrades for the site. Afterwards, we need to prioritize other suitable projects, beginning with [the list she sent](#) for discussion at last week's ARA Board meeting.

As always, input from Annexonians is welcome. There's money to be spent – and we want to do it wisely. Write to info@theara.org with your ideas.



The re-zoning for this project was first secured back in 2017. But nothing much has happened in the interim. Now that the developer has been granted permission to add 8 more storeys to the 27 approved back in the day, there's a possibility that the project might finally move forward. Or not.

Let's Make Friends

Well – if you weren't one of the 20 residents who participated in last week's Meet 'n' Eat at Signatures, it's clear you missed out on a good time. "It was great to meet neighbours in person!" wrote one participant. "The venue was wonderfully conducive to talking without competing with loud music," wrote another. In fact, by all accounts, the evening was a tremendous success. Huge thanks to organizer and hostess with the mostest, Fiona McHugh. We look forward eagerly to her next event!



Membership Chair Tija Dirks sent us this image of her table – one of three at the event – just before the first course arrived. From left: Micky Fraterman, Mandy Cole, Terri Hawkes, Iris Gershon, Michael Rubin, and Tija. Photo taken by an ever-so-obliging server.

Reading (?) Week

Oh dear. The University of Toronto is about to observe Reading Week, with classes cancelled as of Monday February 19th and not set to resume until Monday the 26th. It's a safe bet that those Annexonians who live within the vicinity of certain unruly frats should be prepared for celebratory disruptions as early as this coming Friday, though the return of colder temperatures might thankfully temper the festivities.

That said, our Councillor notes that gathering data on the issue is of great importance if we are ever to find a solution to the problem of unruly partying. That's why she's urging residents to report complaints to 311 even if that route seems to have failed in the past. Do note: if you try to submit a service request under "Unreasonable and Persistent Noise" due to a party, 311 won't accept it. The key is to submit an "**Amplified Sound**" complaint [using this page on the City website](#). Alternatively, you can [email the Councillor's office](#) with full details regarding the incident and her staff will submit/track a service request on your behalf.



If past experience is our guide, "Club 22" will be hugely active this coming weekend.

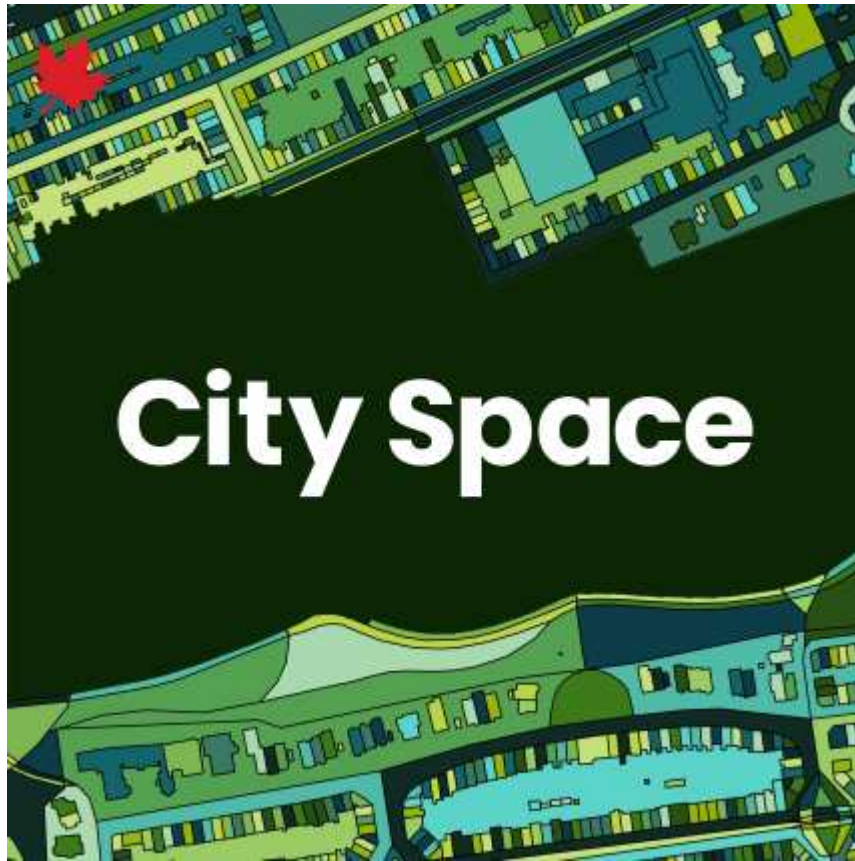
Spadina Redux?

It's common knowledge that the Spadina Expressway was one of five urban highways that were nearly built in Toronto in the 70s. The plan would have bulldozed neighbourhoods so that suburban commuters had a direct route to drive downtown. But campaigners like Annexionian stalwarts Bobbi Speck and Jane Jacobs stopped it, saving iconic neighbourhoods like our own.

We were delighted to learn that Bobbi has recently been featured on a podcast at the Globe and Mail's [City Space](#) which seeks to answer the question: *Should the Spadina expressway have been built given present-day Toronto's notoriously bad traffic?* Originally released on Monday, February 5th, [the podcast](#) is still accessible to Globe subscribers. It's the first of a series on cities, the next one being on heritage.

As Bobbi told us, "My part in the podcast is a kind of frame: it begins and ends with me speaking, and with other bits here and there like a thread which moves the narrative along." Her final take: "The podcast is very good: comprehensive . .

. planning information, statistics, density, high rise towers, missing middle. . . It's not all about Jane and me: we're just the hook!"



Reducing Waste

Who among us does not have a junk drawer stuffed with accessory food items such as straws, napkins, stir sticks, utensils, and condiment packages? Those drawers may soon have room for other odds and ends given the [Single-Use and Takeaway Items Bylaw](#) that was approved last December by Toronto City Council and is set to come into force a matter of weeks from now on Friday, March 1st.

In order to support businesses and educate consumers on the new rules, the City is hosting a webinar on **Thursday, February 22nd** from **10:30 to 11:30 am**. If you're interested in attending, register for the information session [by clicking here](#) to learn how businesses are being required to accept reusable bags and beverage cups and to distribute items in an "ask-first/by-request" manner. You'll also learn about future stages of the *Single-Use and Takeaway Items Reduction Strategy* and how you can provide feedback on these initiatives.



Back to Reality

Micky Fraterman sent us one last image of our preternatural spring – snowdrops blooming in early February in an inhospitably north-facing garden on Dupont. Still, much as we'd like to have believed the groundhogs, the truth is that Punxsutawney Phil's record is a dismal 30% accurate. And with yesterday's re-opening of warming centres in the city and the arrival of snowflakes it's obviously time to hunker down again for a good deal more winter. On the other hand, look on the bright side. Who knows? There might yet be more skating this year in Jean Sibelius park.



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