

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

**August 04, 2021**

---

### **KESKUS International Estonian Centre**

An exquisite structure is about to rise in the Annex on Madison Avenue just opposite Paul Martel Park. What is presently an urban heat island (*aka* a parking lot) is soon to be replaced with a 3-storey architectural jewel complete with green roof, courtyard bistro, and through-block connection between Madison and Huron. [This short video](#) offers a fine introduction to the complex that's slated to open towards the end of 2022 as the [KESKUS International Estonian Centre](#).

KESKUS (meaning "centre" in English) will be the second cultural home for the Estonian-Canadian community in this city. The first centre – Estonian House – was accommodated for many years in an aging structure at 958 Broadview Ave. Faced with major capital repairs, the community decided in 2009 that it may just be better to start anew. And what better location than in the heart of Toronto's academic/cultural district near easy transportation access at Bloor and Spadina?

### **Tartu College**

But there was another impetus behind the move. Tartu College on Bloor Street between Huron and Madison was designed by Elmar Tampõld (1920-2013), an Estonian-Canadian architect who trained at the University of Toronto in the late 1940s. Originally opened in 1970 as an undergraduate student complex, Tartu was Tampõld's signature project, together with Rochdale College across the street, one in which he had a hand from start to finish in implementation, design, and construction as main financier, sponsor, and architect.

The college was named after Tartu, both Estonia's oldest and most famous university and also the place of its location – the second largest city in Estonia. Considered the intellectual centre of the country, the present-day city of Tartu houses not only its eponymous university but also Estonia's supreme court, its

national museum, and the oldest Estonian-language theatre as well as being the birthplace of the world-renowned Estonian Song Festivals.

Tampõld himself played a significant role throughout his lifetime in the support of the Estonian diaspora in Canada from his days as a student establishing the UofT Estonian Students' Society, to the founding of the Chair of Estonian Studies at the UofT and the establishment of a major scholarship program. To this day Tartu College on Bloor Street is a significant stakeholder in the Estonian community, providing income from its student rentals business, space for Estonian fraternities and sororities, and an academic and archival program through its Estonian Studies Centre.

### **Building for the Future**

The present KESKUS project was designed by Estonian-Canadian architect Alar Kongats, a 3-time Governor-General award winner, who quietly references his heritage in the design. For example, through the shape of the courtyard he evokes the borders of Estonia, while the three gray-toned stone ribbons that weave through the space salute the blue-black-and-white colours of the Estonian flag and simultaneously conjure the waves that wash to Estonian shores. That said, the intent is for the complex to be accessible to everyone, that although "Estonian" is in the name of the building, it remains open to all.

Indeed, this complex is destined to become a busy community resource with a variety of facilities available for rent including the acoustically engineered grand hall, the rooftop garden, and four meeting rooms. The heritage building at 11 Madison will be restored and brought back to life as the Prozes Annex (named after a leading donor and, yes, Annex pun intended). That annex will house a business accelerator, while facing onto the courtyard will be a bistro and the main branch of the [Northern Birch Credit Union](#).

### **Mutual Support**

Projects as exquisite as this are not without their price. So it was that the Estonian community launched its major fund-raising campaign this past June in a three-day event that secured donations from across the world. More than \$8.3 million has already been raised toward the final goal of \$10 million, for the capital campaign portion of the financing.

In the coming months you can expect fund-raising drives and cultural initiatives to introduce Annexonians to this vibrant new centre that aims to support multiculturalism and the literary, musical, and visual arts, artists, and arts

education. In the meantime we note with thanks that KESKUS has already joined and reached out to the ARA (members of which were consulted in the early stages of the project). And in a concrete sign of its intent to become an active and engaged participant within our community, the centre made a donation last year towards the restoration of Paul Martel Park. What a wonderful new neighbour! Welcome!



The Madison Avenue elevation allows for easy public access and open space.



An artists' rendering of the passageway for the through-block pedestrian connection. Wouldn't the courtyard be perfect for a farmer's market?



The proposed rooftop garden.

## Notes & Queries

### Construction Begins on Madison

We were rendered (almost) speechless upon receiving the following message late last Wednesday from the dynamic Ellen Valter, driving force behind the KESKUS Estonian Centre on Madison. No developer has ever been so thoughtful! Ellen asked...

*... as we go into site prep (fencing is already up) around 9 & 11 Madison, how is it best to let the area residents know of construction phases or particular work undertaken? Current estimate is that in the next 7-10 days the fencing between the properties will be removed, and other site prep, like asphalt stripped off etc. There will be some parts of construction that will be just awful, so better advance notice than surprises. At least the end result will be just gorgeous!*

So those of you on Madison and Huron, consider yourselves forewarned – and be assured that KESKUS will do its utmost to keep you in the know regarding the inevitable tumult.



### Deadline for Comment August 8

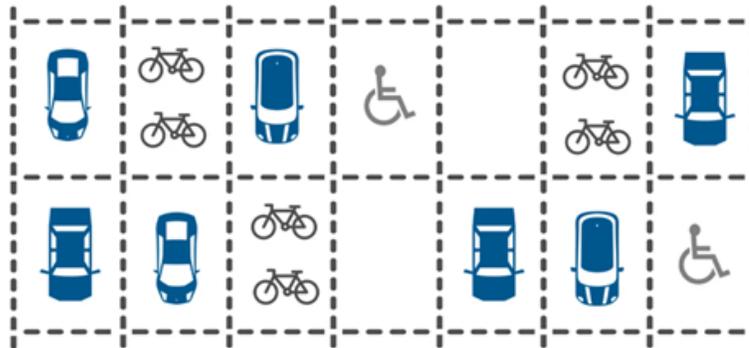
Current City standards require the inclusion of a minimum number of underground parking spaces in every new residential building. But developers and some affordable housing advocates argue that this regulation simply increases the cost of housing while adding to construction delays. The City is now asking residents to weigh in on the subject by taking a quick survey. It's set

to expire at the end of this week. So if you're at all concerned about parking in new developments, [click here](#) to find a link to the survey as well as to the City's official documents regarding the history of the issue.

#### Parking Survey

The purpose of this survey is to gather public and industry opinion about parking standards in Toronto. Your feedback is important to us and will help shape the future of parking in Toronto. We want to assure you that your responses are completely anonymous. The results of this survey will be analyzed at the group level. **Please do not include any personal information about yourself or other individuals in any of your responses.** The survey should take 15 minutes or less to complete. You are not required to answer all questions, and you can skip ahead at any time. We appreciate your time and input!

For more information about this survey or if you prefer to provide feedback through an alternative method, please contact Michael Hain (Program Manager) at 416-392-8696.



Next >

0% complete

## Beware the Box Moth

Have you recently noticed the sudden browning – nay, outright demise – of swaths of boxwood hedging in the 'hood? We first alerted readers to this plague exactly one year ago when the dreaded box moth finally made its presence known in Annex gardens. The pest has been on an around-the-globe march from Asia since the mid twenty-teens, making its first appearance in Toronto in 2018. And there's little that can be done to halt its progress. The City of Toronto has set up a web page to guide distressed gardeners ([click here](#)) though it's been difficult to source the only treatment approved by the powers that be. Garden centres and hardware stores alike have reported shortages of the BTK caterpillar killer since early Spring. And when a supply DOES materialize – beware. That erstwhile \$13 bottle of product can now cost north of \$40!



## Having Trouble ... Connecting?

It's worth repeating our note from last week. The switch in our ARA website from the old service provider (Wild Apricot) to the new one (NationBuilder) has meant that several readers have been flummoxed by a sudden error message suggesting that it's not safe to go there. Not to worry. Our site at [www.theara.org](http://www.theara.org) is perfectly safe – it's just that your device is trying to access the old provider. You need to clear your cache and bookmarks – or simply to keep on trying – and soon you'll be able to admire our fine new site!





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.

This email was sent to [gillianbartlettara@gmail.com](mailto:gillianbartlettara@gmail.com). To stop receiving emails, [click here to unsubscribe](#).

The Annex Residents' Association