



This Week in the Annex:

August 18, 2021

Your Turn Next

The ARA newsletter has been invading your inbox for 75 straight weeks now (OK, you're right, we did take off two weeks last Christmas...) giving you updates on construction, introducing you to stellar neighbours, rallying support for various Annex causes – generally keeping you in touch with news from the 'hood. Many of you have written with kudos, comments, and suggestions – for all of which we are extremely grateful. But now the ARA wants to widen its reach and deepen the conversation.

Digital Public Square

For the past two years Board members have been working on a pilot project with [Digital Public Square](#) (DPS) to explore how healthy technology might help neighbours from all walks of life become more engaged in the community. To that end, DPS has built a privacy-first web-based tool – [Community Reflect: Annex](#) – that's focussed primarily on our patch of the city.

The tool is designed so that people can use it without sharing any personally identifiable information. That's the vision DPS brings to this project – that healthy technology never asks you to trade privacy for participation. The idea is to make it easier for residents to weigh in with the ARA and each other – even when circumstances (pandemic, anyone?) keep them apart.

Seven Days to Launch

All systems are set to launch [Community Reflect: Annex](#) next week on Wednesday, August 25. Obviously we won't ask or expect you to explore the tool that very day (unless you want to, that is!). We're just asking for a few minutes of your time at your own leisure.

But, trust us, the information you share will have a big impact. It will help us prioritize issues and guide ongoing conversations with our community leaders, stakeholders, and local government. What's more, in addition to getting to know more about each other, we are confident you will leave the experience much better informed about what's currently happening in the Annex. A newsletter can get you only so far...



Guest Spot

Annexonian Ian Scott sent us a charming anecdote and image last week that for sure we wanted to share. Talk about helping to shape your community!

A GFL/311 Angel

*Yesterday afternoon, having aborted my usual long afternoon walk in favour of a sit-down in **Sibelius Square** (the mercury having risen to 35°C), I was headed down Brunswick to the Farmers' Market. Half way down the block I came up upon a 24' GFL truck loading up mattresses and box springs and other large detritus ... and what looked like a weathered but perfectly intact kids playhouse.*

I asked the young man (I'm in my mid-70s – anyone under 50 is a "young" person to me ...) loading the truck if the playhouse was in OK condition, or truly "garbage"? He said it was in perfect condition. I asked where it was going. To the land-fill!

I told him about how similar "toys" had been left in the Sibelius Square playground and that my grand-children, among many others, had delighted in playing in

*them – did he think this house might be moved there instead of the land-fill?
After all, it was just a half block north ... ?*

He expressed interest, and “would see”...

On my daily morning walk the next morning I was delighted to see...



Enjoy kids! Thanks to GFL!

PS: We went by the park last Monday and noted that the playhouse is already plenty popular. Thanks, Ian, for a great rescue.



Queen's Park Update

Last Friday the [Queen's Park Heritage Precinct Coalition](#) (QPHPC) was rewarded for its Herculean efforts with approval granted at LPAT for the mediated settlement regarding UofT's proposal for the site of the Planetarium. Elizabeth Sisam, our key representative on QPHPC, asked us to note that this compromise couldn't have been achieved without the continued support of our community and neighbouring Residents' Associations – not to speak of quite literally hundreds of individuals and RAs from across the province.

Details of the Settlement

The compromise is visible only as a block model for the moment, so before we'll know exactly what the new building looks like, the University's architects need to complete a re-design. This will reduce the height and mass of the project and step it down to Flavelle House so that the new building will be within the agreed limits.

Other key points in the settlement include input from the Coalition regarding the site plan on such elements as the new building's exterior materiality and the type and size of trees to be planted. We know for certain that replacement trees are to be increased in size and there is to be no construction encroachment or impact on Philosopher's Walk.

Next Steps

A copy of the Construction Management Plan will be provided to the Coalition as soon as available. And in what QPHPC sees as a positive move, the Tribunal ordered the University to provide an update with respect to the status of the Site Plan application within six months.

However, QPHPC's work is not yet done. The coalition continues to press City Planning and Heritage Planning to begin work on the Cultural Heritage Landscape Study as directed by the Preservation Board, TEYCC and City Council to conserve the Queen's Park precinct as a whole.



We don't yet know what the new building will look like. But for certain it won't be the behemoth pictured in this official notice in front of the Planetarium.



As part of the mediated settlement, UofT has also agreed to restore the Palm Room in Falconer Hall to the south of the Planetarium.

P+D Never Sleeps!

Last week some 30 neighbours from Tranby and Bernard met on ZOOM to discuss the development happening around the corner at 110—116 Avenue Road. Hosted by the Planning and Development Committee of the ARA, the

meeting featured presentations by Henry Wiercinski on development precedents in the neighbourhood, Sandra Shaul on heritage implications for the project, Ron Soskolne on what we know to date of the developers' plans, and Edward Leman on the planning process and next steps.

The P+D Committee has already helped organize three lengthy meetings with the developer and representatives from the immediately impacted neighbours. Now plans are in the works for a broader community meeting.

It was heartwarming to see that one of last week's participants made a [donation](#) to the ARA immediately after the meeting concluded. Given that our organization runs on purely volunteer labour – that gesture of appreciation was most welcome. Thank you!



The assembled site is now under wraps, but we have a few months (years?) to admire the heritage windows of 112 before a new building rises around it. At least that unsightly addition at the corner of Tranby is to be removed and the gorgeous building at 110 will be properly restored for permanent public appreciation.

Notes & Queries

So is THIS Nora Johnson?

As she works her way through the raft of ARA boxes stored in her basement, our resident heritage expert, Sandra Shaul, is hunting down the unfamiliar names and faces that appear in the photos and record books left by past ARA

volunteers. One name that keeps popping up – always in the context of grateful thanks for her outstanding work and service – is that of Nora Johnson. We found one incognito image that might just be a match – or not! Do YOU have any information about either Mrs Johnson (who apparently lived on Walmer Road) or the folks in this photograph or, indeed, about the event at which it was taken? Please, please if you do, then reach out to info@theara.org with the subject line: "Nora Johnson."



300 Bloor Condos Go on Sale

Micky Fraterman alerted us last week to the appearance of a sign on Bloor Street signalling the onset in earnest of marketing for the condos destined for the site of Bloor Street United Church. This project has been years in the making with P+D Committee members logging literally hundreds of hours in meetings with residents, the developer, councillor, and City staff. P+D Chair, Edward Leman, cites this project as proof positive that with enough good will, developers and the community can come to mutually acceptable agreements. We don't always have to end up at OLT!



Growing Pains

A glitch or two is always to be expected when switching computer systems and platforms – and for sure that’s the case with the new ARA website. Now that there is no longer a “family” option available, there are going to be some hiccups for those who are reminded to renew their memberships. Please bear with us through these growing pains. Our Membership Secretary, Tija Dirks, is on the case. If you experience trouble, by all means reach out to her via info@theara.org with the subject line “Membership Renewal.”



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