



This Week in the Annex:

October 13, 2021

145 St. George -- Townhall Report

More than 90 people flooded onto the Zoom screen last Wednesday evening to participate in the ARA's Townhall regarding Tenblock's proposed development at 145 St. George St. The ARA Planning and Development Committee opened the program with a brief description of the project and then proceeded to outline the key reasons why it objects to Tenblock's plans. (For a recap, check out the accompanying [deck of PowerPoint slides](#) that is now available on our website.)

A Spirited Discussion

Several current residents of the building followed next to share their own objections before the metaphorical floor was open to audience questions and comments.

Discussion was thoughtful and pointed with the tenor of the room one of disbelief that anyone, let alone the City, might countenance the demolition of such a sound building. After all, its 130 units of affordable and mid-range housing have been happily called home by many tenants for 20, 30, 40, even 50 years. For all, but especially for those of advanced age, the prospect of being displaced is devastating.

Our own Adrienne Clarkson spoke eloquently and passionately against the proposal, her words emboldening the audience to ask what they could do to help defeat the demolition.

Register for the Community Consultation

Well, the most important next step is for our community to flock to the Public Consultation to be held by the City's Planning Department in exactly one week's time – on **Wednesday October 20 at 6:00 pm**. Please note that you

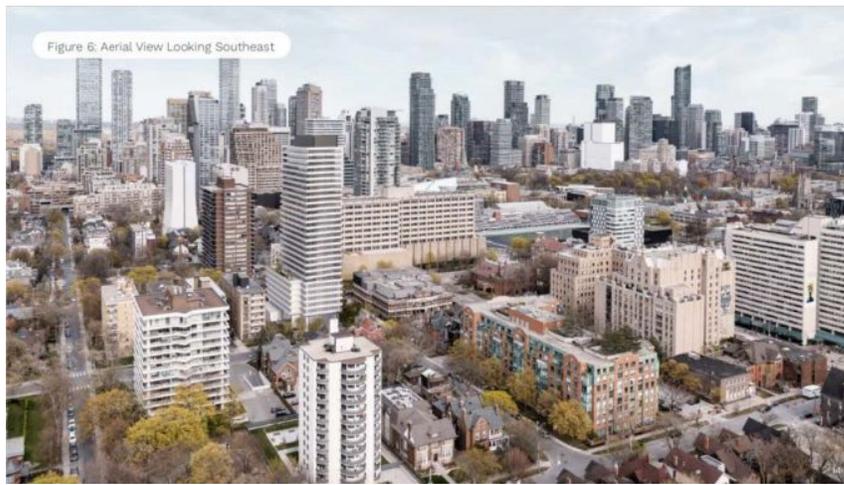
must [register](#) on the City of Toronto website for this meeting. And as you might imagine (it's City Hall after all), there are a few steps and clicks to go through. But you'll know that you've been successful when an email pops in from Planner Corinna Prior stating that your registration has been approved.

Get Familiar with the Arguments

Undoubtedly the developer will take a considerable portion of that meeting to explain the proposal in depth. But if you've got the time, it's well worth it to educate yourself in advance.

Again, it's not so easy navigating the City's website, but if you're persistent, it's possible to read every inch of fine print in the application. [Use this link](#) to go directly to the City's development applications page, and then type **145 St. George Street** into the search bar. *(Be careful here -- you must be absolutely sure to put the period on "St." for "Saint." If you don't, the website will take you downtown to George Street and then you're in a hopeless maze.)* A map will pop up with a blue dot on the property. Click on that dot and then click again on "Application Details" in the pop up box. Then scroll down in the new box to find "Supporting Documentation" and -- yes -- click again. Finally you are in Aladdin's cave!

There are 36 supporting documents in all including files like the arborist report and wind and noise studies. You might be most interested in downloading the Architectural Drawings (careful, it's a big file). On the other hand, files such as the Planning Report make for fascinating reading if you're into that sort of thing. (We've compressed and downloaded [Part 1](#) for you here.) Watch as the authors bend over backwards explaining why the LPAT decision against 64 Prince Arthur has no relevance to their own St George site right next door. Wonder instead as they cite all the tall buildings on Bloor. Who knows? You might want to ask a question about [that](#) at next week's meeting.



The slick image chosen by the developer to market this proposal is misleading. The building turns away from the neighbourhood it threatens (i.e. the Annex) and looks primarily east, but canted slightly (and strategically) to the south to include not only the tall buildings at Bloor and Yonge, but those all the way down Yonge to College. This is not by accident. Here the proposed building blends in to the point that its pretty hard to distinguish it from that mass of tall towers behind.



But turn the lens 95° and the invasive and utterly inappropriate scale of this 29-storey building is suddenly apparent. (And do note – describing height in terms of storeys is misleading. The difference mounts up rapidly between an older building with 8-foot ceilings versus a building with units such as these at 10 feet high).

As was patently demonstrated in the tribunal hearing on 64 Prince Arthur, towers are fine on Bloor Street but not in the apartment neighbourhood to the north. The zoning for tall buildings may be tantalizingly within the developer's grasp. But what is the purpose of boundaries if they are not adhered to?



You'll notice that all the colourful renderings in the application never show the full height of the project. They chop it off at the knees, showing only the bottom third of the tower. Of course the developer has to build way higher if only to make up for the cost of demolition of the original building and replacing the existing units. Begs the question – why demolish in the first place?



The worrisome prospect is that if this project is allowed to argue its way through, then the rest of the mid-century modern apartment buildings along St. George are similarly endangered -- the infamous domino effect. Whenever lawyers argue that their case is unique, the truth is that a win will set a most unwelcome precedent. That's just one more reason why we want the City to hold the line and reject this application to demolish.

Notes and Queries

Heritage Focus Group Last Call!

If you missed last night's West Annex Heritage focus group, there's still time to contribute to the project. Just RSVP for [tomorrow's meeting](#) scheduled for 12:00 noon. But hurry. Registration closes tonight at midnight.

Bernard Gardens Redux

Our September 08 newsletter featured the saga of Bernard Gardens and the determined efforts of the First Block Association members to green their end of the street. John Sakeris' tale of the decades' long struggle galvanized Annex activist Bobbi Speck – she of Stop Spadina fame – to go rooting through her files to dig up an article she had written long ago for Gwen Egan's "Voice of the Annex." Her [backstory to the Bernard bollards](#) is fascinating reading. Makes us doubly proud of the community spirit that pervades the 'hood!



Food for Thought

After last year's crushing cancellation of Hallowe'en, all signs point to a return of trick or treaters to our sidewalks this October 31st. But with the pandemic still top of mind, Elliott Shulman of the Avenue Food Bank has a suggestion. "Wouldn't it be remarkable if we could energize the neighbourhood to not only give candy to kids but also non-perishable food for food banks?" The sad fact is that food insecurity is still rampant in our neighbourhood. The food bank at the Church of the Messiah has seen a steady increase in clients. And the need for basic foods is unrelenting.

If you have food to donate, super volunteer Amir continues to collect goods on Tuesday afternoons. Just call or text him with your address at 416 997 6377. You can also donate money directly to the Avenue Road Food Bank so they can make targeted purchases of essential foodstuffs. On the church's [Canada Helps page](#), select "Food Bank" from the available fund options and fill in the rest.



Have Your Say

Once again the City is requesting responses from the public – this time regarding the upcoming vacant home tax. The goal of such a tax is to change the behaviours of homeowners who leave their homes unoccupied – compelling them to sell or rent them out to increase the housing supply, or to pay the price of a tax to keep them vacant. This is your final opportunity to weigh in on the details: [the City survey](#) closes on October 26.

Its hardly news that there's an affordable housing crisis, yet owners have been allowed to abandon ideal properties like these at 63-65 Kendal and 241 Bedford without penalty. Perhaps a vacant property tax might put pressure on the delinquent owners. Who knows?



Council Chokes Yet Again

And while we're on the topic of affordable housing, we have to register our dismay that City Council once again failed to legalize multi-tenant housing across the city with suburban councillors protecting their own seats rather than doing the right thing. [Shawn Micallef's article in the Toronto Star](#) says it all.



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