

October 2004

Volume 2, Number 2

Harbord Village Residents' Association

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Welcome!

By Rory 'Gus' Sinclair
Chair, HVRA

Hello members and residents of the fabulous Harbord Village Residents' Association!

Here we are rolling on just like 'Old Man River'. Inside is a series of reports from our board back to you, our constituents, on what we've been doing over the last six months. The short version is this: for whatever reasons, you are blessed with an excellent board that heads up "one of the most active residents' associations in Toronto," according to a City Hall insider who has seen it all. We like to think this comment is bang on!

Some highlights of the six months:

- We hired a student to find private locations to plant trees in our neighbourhood.
- The College Street committee has had a huge impact on the new streetscape of College between Bathurst and Spadina. The results are taking shape before our eyes.
- We sponsored a neighbourhood cleanup in May and



are planning to undertake another this fall, possibly with a graffiti cleanup theme.

- We sponsored the annual Fall Fair.
- We presented at the Committee of Adjustment and OMB regarding over-development issues.
- We continue to be active on the University of Toronto Liaison Committee, specifically over the proposed new Varsity Stadium, with which we have serious reservations.
- We sponsored a new Heritage Conservation District to encompass Brunswick

south of Ulster and Willcocks between Spadina and Robert.

- We instituted a new Planning Committee, which will take an inventory of the housing stock and usage of the HVRA, including back lanes, with a view to reporting our findings to the City Planning Department, which will, in turn, will make recommendations concerning intensification for HVRA.

This is the record of an active and caring association. Onward, folks!

"HVRA—Good neighbours building a great neighbourhood"

Come to the Annual General Meeting of the HVRA

Where: Kensington Gardens Activity Room
25 Brunswick Ave., just north of College St.

When: 6:30 p.m., October 19, 2004

Agenda 6:30 doors open for registration

7:00 AGM: Reports, election of officers.

8:00 Presentation on the new HVRA Heritage Conservation District

Come out and support YOUR activist
residents' association!



Mary and Gus in action at the Fall Fair
(Photo credit: Wayne Neon)

Fall Fair report

Sunday morning, September 19, broke with blue skies and warm sun for the Annual Fall Fair, which saw Margaret Fairley Park full of brimming with neighbours catching up with one another, kids singing songs and painting faces, burgers and corn on the BBQ, beer and wine being sipped, along with laughter, non-stop live music of **outstanding quality....In short, a dream come true for your Fall Fair Chair-guy.**

We sold out of everything, but

people still stayed to the very end. By 8:30 p.m., a willing crew of young and old who could not be stopped had neatly tucked away both the trash and the materials needed for next **year's festival.**

The event is important for all of the reasons above, and although we hope to make money, for your chair, the real value is in the community building. This year, not only was it a spectacular day for the community, but the Fall Fair produced

a tidy profit of just over \$2,200 for the good works of the HVRA in the coming year.

Many thanks are owed by me -- and indeed by you, the residents of HVRA -- to the amazingly competent and reliable members of the Fall Fair Committee. You may now applaud! Thank you, they are taking a bow. It was worth every minute!

by **Rory 'Gus' Sinclair**
Fall Fair Committee Chair

"With an eye to the future, HVRA's board agreed to renew the project for another year."

Last spring, HVRA hired a graduate from the U. of T.'s Forestry Department to go door to door encouraging area residents to fill out a city application for a free front-yard tree. During May and June, she visited 195 households, delivering

flyers and, whenever possible, discussing the many benefits of trees.

It was not smooth sailing. After studying our neighbourhood, she decided to focus on the most tree-deficient areas: the east side of Bathurst, from Harbord to College and Ulster from Bathurst to Brunswick. With some of the smallest front yards in our area, residents who feared that planting trees would cause problems with their foundations and water pipes were most resistant. While city forestry officials say this isn't true -- because the "footprint" of most trees is actually very shallow -- their literature does nothing to disabuse the public of this misconception. Our employee couldn't provide homeowners with the evidence they needed to dispel this notion.

She also had a hard time finding people at home, in spite of making day and evening visits to the same streets. And in 33% of homes where someone did answer the door, it was a tenant, who cannot legally complete the city's tree application. In the end, only eight owners submitted their application

forms to the city.

On a more positive note, our employee surveyed Harbord Village and identified 10 public spaces in need of more trees. At the end of June, she submitted a report to the city's Urban Forestry Department, complete with digital photos of each area. The city is currently reviewing each site, and each location that is approved will be added to their waiting list. They will also produce a flyer this winter dispelling the view that frontyard trees are a threat to foundations and water pipes.

With an eye to the future, **HVRA's board agreed to renew the project for another year.** With many lessons learned, and a promise of a continuing \$500 grant from Samiha Abdul Sayed, the wife of the late Jorg Bentz, we anticipate greater success next spring. Inspired by the many years that Jorg spent advocating for trees in our **neighbourhood's public spaces,** we can do no less than continue trying for a greener Harbord Village.

by Tim Grant





Varsity Stadium proposal meets resistance

Opposition is mounting against the University of Toronto's plan to build a 25,000-seat stadium at the site of the old Varsity arena. The plan, which requires city approvals as well as approvals from the governing council of the university, received a negative response from neighbours at the city planning meeting held September 23.

The university's close neighbours, including Trinity and Massey Colleges, the Royal Conservatory of Music, and the Annex and Harbord Village Residents' Associations, are worried about the noise and neighbour-

hood impacts of the proposed stadium.

The university proposes using grants totalling \$35 million from the federal and provincial governments to promote a soccer championship in 2006. Other funding would come in the form of a \$15 million mystery donation and \$30 million from the university. The U of T itself requires only 5,000 seats, but has been unable to work out internal financing. The stadium size is driven by the needs of the university's proposed partner, the Toronto Argonauts. Under the proposed scheme,

the stadium would be used for 46 major events a year, including Argo games, soccer games and rock concerts. The Argos would manage the site and could promote six rock concerts annually to help pay for their use of the facility.

Neighbours are worried about the lack of parking, with as many as 2,500 cars expected for each major event, noise, which Councillor Olivia Chow said could not be effectively monitored, and rowdiness.

by Sue Dexter

"Neighbours are worried about the lack of parking, with as many as 2,500 cars expected for each major event, noise, which Councillor Olivia Chow said could not be effectively monitored, and rowdiness."

STOP PRESS: Minutes before we go to press we learn that the University has shelved its current plans for the stadium because of "ballooning costs"!

Community composting: City says *No*

For the past 15 months, approximately 120 households on Major and Robert Streets (mostly south of Harbord) have participated in HVRA's community composting project. Using four of the same 35-gallon green bins used by local restaurants and corner stores, members of these households placed all their food wastes into clear plastic bags and carried them to the nearest bin. One night a week, volunteers would wheel the bins to Harbord Street and Spadina Avenue and collect the empty bins the next morning. The program was popular because it allowed residents to help the environment while removing compostable wastes from their premises whenever they wished. And without food wastes in their garbage, they no longer had to contend with raccoons or other animals.

On April 24th, HVRA asked the City of Toronto to support neighbourhoods - like our own - that chose to adopt our community composting system, rather than providing each household

this fall with its own five-gallon green bin. Our rough cost estimates suggested that our model would cost the city only 25% as much as it was planning to spend on its individual household bin program. We viewed the city's program as more suited to the suburbs, rather than to downtown areas with lots of pedestrian traffic and too little space to store additional waste receptacles. And we feared that if only 20% of households did not clean their bins on a regular basis, the smell every Friday on Harbord Village sidewalks would be less than pleasant.

Several residents' associations were supportive of our proposal, but in late August, it was rejected by city staff, who argued that our system would not divert as much food waste as theirs. They did not accept our contention that once garbage is picked up every two weeks - starting this fall - all residents will start diverting their compostable food wastes, regardless of what system is in place. The city did not dispute our

financial calculations.

When the city distributes the green bins, HVRA will retire its four community composting bins, probably donating them to the businesses that supported our program. If at some point in the future, the city decides to look for cost-savings in waste management, perhaps that will be the time to dust off our worthy proposal and re-submit it.

by Tim Grant

"The program was popular because it allowed residents to help the environment while removing compostable wastes from their premises whenever they wished."



Community composting in action

(Photo credit: Lydia Hansen, Annex Gleaner)



Lower Brunswick-Willcocks Heritage Conservation District: The home stretch

“We need more research into owners, builders and local history. In particular, we need photographs of Lower Brunswick Avenue and Willcocks Street as they were, between the time they were built more than 100 years ago and today.”

Research and development of the Lower Brunswick-Willcocks Heritage Conservation District (LBWHCD) are all but complete. One hundred houses have been photographed – some in loving detail – builders and early owners have been traced, trees and special features logged. By the time you read this, the LBWHCD will have held its penultimate meeting at which research completed to date will be described and the tricky issue of local Heritage Conservation District guidelines and the even trickier issue of paying for the HCD will be addressed.

On Wednesday, October 20 the LBWHCD will hold what should be its final meeting (Kensington Gardens, 25 Brunswick Ave., at 7 p.m.). Heritage Architect Catherine Nasmith will present her draft Heritage Character Statement for final comment before presenting it to the Ontario Preservation Board and City Council.

Every effort has been made to contact every property owner in the prospective HCD via door-to-door dropoffs and direct mailings. So far, none of the more than 50% of owners who have responded has strenuously objected to the HCD. Those who choose to live on Lower Brunswick Avenue or Willcocks Street or invest in these neighbourhoods do so because they recognize the architectural beauty and historic charm of these neighbourhoods that are so close to the amenities of downtown and yet so far from its noise and bustle.

The goal of the HCD is simple: to preserve the special character of Lower Brunswick Avenue and Willcocks Street and persuade property owners of the value of restoring their homes to their original appearance whenever they need renovation. Where this happens, experience proves, property values increase in a process in which everyone is a winner: owners,

investors, tenants, the city and anyone who chooses to visit an HCD.

Much has been done, but much more needs to be done to complete our Heritage Character Statement. We need more research into owners, builders and local history. In particular, we need photographs of Lower Brunswick Avenue and Willcocks Street as they were, between the time they were built more than 100 years ago and today. Guides to Toronto archives and the resources of the Central Library have been distributed to all property owners – with a summary of research completed to date. If property owners or people who lived in the HCD in the past can share their knowledge and their photographs with us, that would be wonderful – the Lower Brunswick Willcocks Heritage Conservation District will be all the richer for it.

For more information:

Catherine Nasmith, Heritage Architect 416.598.4144
cnasmith@sympatico.ca

Richard Longley (Lower Brunswick) 416.961.2766
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by Richard Longley





College Street revitalization is going gangbusters

Check it out! Spadina to Bathurst, north side sidewalks are essentially complete -- with many new tree pits in place awaiting plantings and enough of the project completed to give a good idea of how the variety of sidewalk widths will play out. After some hiccups, we're pleased with the sidewalk detailing, and walking the area makes us even more convinced that the new trees and public space will help attract people and businesses back to College. We'll continue to work with the city to ensure that all the good plans come to fruition -- with the whole project expected to be complete in November.

In other news from your College Street Committee...

Additional Streetscaping? We recently met with the Mayor to discuss ideas for **additional streetscape funding for College Street** -- specifically, decorative lighting, street furniture, public art and cultural/historical markers. There are several ideas on the table for philanthropic donations, and the Mayor is supportive -- but the first step is to present an overall plan to council to get general buy-in before approaching potential donors.

Keeping the wide-open feeling? We're meeting with city staff in early October to discuss and decide on **'programming' the many items which might inhabit the new sidewalk space**: garbage bins, paper boxes, patios, retail displays, phone booths, advertising boards, bike rings, and so on. The goal is to design a simple model for deciding what goes back on the sidewalks and place it in a way that is accessible, attractive and pedestrian-friendly. The good news is -- we've got agreement from city staff that nothing is reinstalled until the meeting takes place and we've got a plan.

More people on College? We've reviewed the draft Official Plan

'Avenues' study and provided comments back to City Planning. The consultants' draft captured the community input well and made numerous recommendations to ensure that good design enhances the pedestrian environment and mitigates the street level impact of higher buildings. Greatest intensification is proposed at Spadina/Bathurst intersections (to effectively form a 'gateway' to our neighbourhood) and along the south side of College (similar to the Ideal Condo development west of Bathurst). Intensification proposed for the north side of College is much more modest, owing primarily to the narrow lot depths and a number of existing heritage buildings. Next steps are for City Planning to turn this input into a workable planning/zoning document -- and conduct further community input sessions.

What's in a name? Now that the strip is starting to come alive, we'll probably want a better way to identify our 'hood than "that crummy section of College between Spadina and Bathurst." What do you think? College West? Old College Street? Kensington-College? U of T Area, Palmerston, Little Italy all have their distinctive designations -- we want one too. Please e-mail us your thoughts at harbordvillage@hotmail.com. There's a free HVRA membership for the most "creative" response.

For more info, please contact any member of your College Street Committee:

- Gord Brown 416.924.6445
- Bob Frankford 416.922.1705
- Richard Gilbert 416.923.8839
- Bob Stambula 416.922.4453

by Gord Brown

"After some hiccups, we're pleased with the sidewalk detailing, and walking the area makes us even more convinced that the new trees and public space will help attract people and businesses back to College."



The new shape of College Street emerges

(Photo credit: Richard Gilbert)



HVRA Board 2004

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This issue of the HVRA Newsletter has been edited by Jane Widerman Auster
Layout: Richard Gilbert

Green roofs in Harbord Village?

One of the most exciting new renovation ideas is green roofs. Suitable for any flat roof on a well-constructed home or building, a green roof will help to cool buildings in summer and prevent heat loss during the winter months. Among their many benefits, green roofs reduce energy costs and storm water run-off. They increase natural cooling and evaporation, improve air quality and have considerable visual appeal. Finally, Canada's National Research Council has estimated that if six percent of Toronto's rooftops were greener, summer temperatures would be reduced by one to two degrees!

Not to be confused with roof gardens (which consist of planters on top of a roof), green roofs have as little as one to five inches of "soil," consisting mostly of mosses and herbs that need little or no maintenance, or as much as one foot of soil depth with elaborate irrigation and drainage systems.

A meeting will be held later this fall for those interested in seeing green roofs take root in the **Harbord Village**. If you'd like to join the discussion, or obtain more information, contact

Marianne P. Rukavina at mpr@ecoelemental.com or 416.975.1655

by Marianne P. Rukavina



HVRA Membership & Renewal Form

Thanks to everyone who has renewed for 2004. Not a member yet? Know someone who should be a member? Please join -- to help us continue building a great neighbourhood!

2004 HVRA Membership

Please mail to:

Harbord Village Residents' Association

P.O. Box 68522
360A Bloor Street West
Toronto, M5S 1X1

Please check one:

Voting Member (individual or family):	\$5	2 years \$10
Supporting Member (to support HVRA activities):	\$20	2 years \$40
Fanatical Member (to <u>really</u> support HVRA activities!):	\$50	2 years \$100

Please make your cheque payable to the Harbord Village Residents' Association and include:

Name.....

Address.....

Telephone Email.....

Areas of interest or concern.....