

Fall 2009

Volume 7, Number 2

Harbord Village Residents' Association

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This newsletter is produced twice a year by the Harbord Village Residents' Association (HVRA) serving the part of Toronto bounded by Bathurst, Bloor, Spadina, and College. See Page 10 for information about HVRA or visit www.harbordvillage.com where this newsletter can be found in glorious colour.

Message from the Chair of the HVRA Board



A Terrific Run at It

Dear members of Harbord Village:

This will be my last note to you wonderful folk as chair of HVRA. This changeover has been in the works for some time; the time is right for me to step down as your chair and make way for some new blood and some new ideas.

This is a happy occasion really. ... This is an orderly change, no palace coup, no one with a nose out of joint, no cranky folks just wanting to get me out – in other words, a planned leaving.

And best of all, we have an excellent candidate in the person of Tim Grant, who is prepared to stand for election as your chair at the AGM in October. Tim is a long-time member of the board, who



has already performed enormous service in HV. In addition, he has, I think, exactly the right qualities to make him

an excellent chair going forward.

I know I could continue to do this job, and make no mistake, **it's a job I simply love.** But my view is that a healthy organization cannot have one person at the helm for extended terms. **It's best that the officers change regularly so the organization doesn't become a mere extension of the personality of the leader – even if that leader continues to have the confidence of his/her constituents and even if he/she is a "good guy."**

There is much more good news. HVRA is without a

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HVRA's Annual General Meeting

Tuesday, October 20, 6:30 for 7:00 p.m.

Kensington Health Centre, 25 Brunswick Avenue

- 6:30 – 7:00 Meet, greet, catch up on your membership dues
- 7:00 – 7:45 Area caucuses, caucus reports; election of 2009-2010 Board
- 7:45 – 8:15 Councillor Vaughan: State of the Ward and City, and Q & A
- 8:15 – 9:00 Special topic: **Visioning the lanes of Harbord Village.**

The meeting will end promptly at 9 p.m.



/continued from Page 1

doubt one of the most active, most solvent, and most admired residents' associations in the city. With a series of outstanding boards since inception, we are the proud possessors of a thriving association with very ambitious agendas driven by our members.

HVRA has come a long way since 2000 when we had about 30 paid-up members and about \$800 in the bank. Today we are closing in on 400 members and have \$16,000 in the bank. We have a state-of-the-art website; we have produced some of the most inventive green initiatives undertaken by a residents' association anywhere.

“We have enormous depth in the association and the board with respect to talent and the willingness of all to take time to contribute.”

We have enormous depth in the association and the board with respect to talent and the willingness of all to take time to contribute. Departing offi-



cers all tend to say what a privilege and honour it has been to work with the folk they did.

Hard work – yes, but for me the payoff of being part of

building a better community arm in arm with you has been a feeling of palpable energy and accomplishment. I cannot begin to tell you how wonderful it has been to be the right guy at the right time. There is no doubt this has been in many ways the most rewarding bit of public service I have ever done.

Thank you for letting me be your chair.

With all good wishes. Long Live HVRA!

Rory 'Gus' Sinclair
Chair, HVRA

PS I am not gone. I will now sit on the board as past president. ... still lots to do.

A fall fair most fair

Winning an item in the silent lottery at the Fall Fair
(photo by Wendy Smith)



Sunday September 13 dawned sunny and warm...a far cry from last year's Fall Fair date when Hurricane Hugo forced cancellation of this terrific event.

This year there were so many

kids running about and really enjoying themselves. The music – eight bands playing a huge variety of material: bluegrass, country swing, fado, folk, blues – was simply outstanding! St Stephens provided children's supervision

for face painting, artwork and other kids' fun. The Silent Auction & Raffle brought in more money than we have earned in the last three fairs.

There were several community tables: the HERO table, the Telecom partnership with Escarpment Biosphere Project, and the newly formed Friends of Margaret Fairley Park.

The food was outstanding, as usual,

with the added feature of veggie pitas from Ghazale on Bloor Street.

It was an ideal day for spending time with neighbours, enjoying a glass of wine or a beer on a warm pre-fall day. **It's an event that will continue to be the social centrepiece of the Harbord Village year!**

[Editor's note: The amazing Fall Fair has been organized each year by Gus Sinclair, who recruits a remarkable team of people to put on what must be one of Toronto's stellar community events. We are very fortunate to have had Gus as our chair for the last nine years and fortunate again that he will still be among us, organizing the 2010 Fall Fair and continuing to be a pillar of strength in our community. Thank you, Gus.]



More photos from the 2009 Fall Fair



Photos by the remarkable Wendy Smith





HERO project helps reduce energy consumption

Signing up for HERO at the 2009 Fall Fair



The HERO project continues to make Harbord Village greener and more efficient. Over 90 Harbord Village residents have had energy audits of their homes. Now they know how efficient (or inefficient) their homes are and what needs to be done to improve their efficiency.

They also have a good idea how to upgrade their homes based on the results of their audit, because all HERO participants receive a list of energy upgrade contractors. These contractors will perform a variety of energy-improving (and cost-saving) upgrades.

Harbord Village's homes are amazingly leaky and draughty. Our energy audit partner Carson Dunlop and Associates reports that the average home has air leakage equivalent to a **hole in the outside wall of 22"** square, leaking hot air out and cold air in during winter (and the opposite in the sum-

mer)! Sealing up the gaps around windows and doors, light fixtures, and wall outlets is a cheap and easy way to save energy and reduce drafts.

Many homes would benefit from additional insulation in the outside walls, attic, and basement. Interestingly, new windows and crawl space insulation, while always good **ideas, don't provide significant** energy savings opportunities.

Furnace deals

But one of the biggest savers is a new high efficiency furnace. Carson Dunlop recommended that half of the homes audited upgrade to a new high efficiency furnace. Based on this recommendation, HERO organized a bulk purchase of high efficiency gas furnaces through furnace contractor AtlasCare, the leading expert on retrofit installations in older homes. Ten of the audited homes have gotten quotes on new furnaces, and one has already signed on with AtlasCare.

The company will be offering a bulk discount of 8% on all new installations and services.

This discount, along with government incentives and a rebate from the HVRA, may allow you to save about one-third of the cost of a new furnace and recover the rest in three years through saving on heating bills.

High efficiency boilers also qualify for grants and discounts. Seniors can qualify for further discounts. Purchase financing is available. For more information, check out the AtlasCare website at www.atlascare.ca.

Don't wait – the HERO program will be over at the end of 2009, and you won't be able to benefit from significant government grants and rebates, since the energy audit is your entry to these deals.

For more information, check out the HERO page on www.harbordvillage.com or contact HERO project coordinator David Booz at 416.806.2669 or hero@harbordvillage.com.

- David Booz

Our neighbours are doing things too

In addition to the work we are doing under the HERO project (90 energy audits and counting), our neighbours are taking up the environmental challenge.

The University of Toronto is installing solar collectors for a huge hot water system on the roof of the Athletic Centre.

Trinity College intends to install a massive array of photovoltaic panels.

The ROM has agreed to reroute the kitchen fans from its downstairs restaurant, which have been blowing on the trees along the east side of **Philosopher's Walk, so we** will no longer have the smell of French fries in the woodland glade and the trees can grow in peace sans aroma.

- Sue Dexter

COSTS AND SAVINGS

Installed cost of high efficiency furnace (varies from house to house)	\$5,000 to \$6,000
Federal and provincial grants	up to \$1,705
HERO program incentives, including 8% discount from AtlasCare	approx. \$580
Annual energy savings (25-40%, depending on your current furnace)	roughly \$1,000

[actual savings also depend on natural gas prices]



The return of the great pumpkin

Mark your calendars for the second annual Harbord Pumpkin Festival: Sunday, November 1st.

Get ready for another evening of magic. From 5-9 p.m. on November 1st, the second annual Harbord Pumpkin Festival will find hundreds of candle-lit pumpkins, some elaborately-carved, festooning tables along the sidewalks between Spadina and Lippincott.

Once again, the Harbord Business Improvement Area (HBIA) is co-sponsoring the event, and local restaurants are being encouraged to offer pumpkin on their menus. (Tim: I loved the pumpkin beer at the Harbord House last year!) As last year, the HBIA will be renting display tables, printing posters and arranging for the city to compost all the pumpkins after the festival.

This year, HVRA will use a

store on Harbord to serve hot cider and auction celebrity **artwork from last year's** festival with the proceeds going to the Hospital for Sick Children. We also hope to auction other items, like meals in local restaurants, and organize a display of the work of local artists. And we are also seeking buskers to perform outdoors along Harbord Street that night. We already have commitments from one well-known bagpipe-player (no names, please!) and a folksinger.

To accomplish all this, we'll need volunteers to take photographs and help with the many logistics. If you can help in any way either before or during the event, please contact me at 416.960.1244 or tim@greenteacher.com.

Meanwhile, please add the following to your to-do lists:

- buy one or more pumpkins before Halloween

- invite all the friends you have to the festival
- carve those pumpkins and display them on Halloween (i.e. on the Saturday night), and then leave them outside again by noon on the Sunday to be picked up and brought to Harbord Street that afternoon.

- Tim Grant

“Get ready for another evening of magic – from 5-9 p.m. on Sunday November 1st”

2008 pumpkins
(photo by Eleanor Levine)



Twenty new trees along Borden Street

Twenty new trees – including native species not seen in the neighbourhood in the past 100 years -- were planted on three sites on the Borden Street side of the Central Technical School campus as of late June. Thanks to the 40+ residents who donated a total of \$3,500, we were able to purchase larger trees, which are likelier to survive the wear and tear of being located on a school property.

We are especially thankful to the two teachers at the school

who recruited eight students to help us dig most of the tree holes. Additional thanks go to Dinny Biggs for her strong role in organizing the project and to the following residents who helped plant the trees: Josh Blank, Amy Collier, Zack Childs, Carmen Gauthier, Meaghan Heath, Chris and Michael Jones, Jonah Kelley, Ted Mumford, Hari Prathod, Samiha Abdul Sayed, and Regine Schmid.

- Tim Grant

The tree-planting gang





For the love of laneways

We welcome Alison Gorbould, a new resident of Harbord Village and a former member of Toronto's Public Space Committee. At our Annual General Meeting on October 20 (see Page 1), the special topic will be 'Visioning the lanes of Harbord Village'. Alison has submitted this and the next article as a personal view of lanes and their possibilities.

Working the night shift, I often find myself walking home at two or three in the morning. I quickly discovered that **Toronto's laneways are a wonderful place to walk at night.** I feel much safer in a residential laneway, with the proximity of sleeping neighbours, and I find myself far from traffic or the rowdiness of main streets, sharing the space, bursting with lush, green growth, with only the occasional cat or raccoon.

This is why it always surprises me when there is a flurry of discussion about putting gates on laneways to increase safety. A gate will not deter those determined to do wrong – it only provides them with a more secluded place in which to do it. A safe laneway is a well used laneway.

Most of the 300-plus kilometres of laneway in Toronto were built between 1850 and the 1930s. They were built for utility, but they provide porosity to the urban fabric, places to slip into for a bit of quiet and a more human scale.

At one time, laneways played a larger role in the social life of our city. Nowadays, they seem to be used simply as a means to get to our cars or dump our garbage. But the liminal nature of our alleys and laneways also means **they're full of possibility and open to change,** and the very act of collaborating on change brings neighbours together in life-altering ways.

If you live on or use a laneway frequently, go outside and enumerate the uses people are making of it. Evaluate the problems and the assets. If you see neighbours, talk to **them. Already you've begun to create change.**

Improvements can take many forms. Small changes can make a big contribution to an **area's vitality and liveability:**

- Plant a few flowers in a patch of dirt.
- Talk to your neighbours about starting a community garden. What about a bench in a shady spot?
- Got a wall or garage door **that's constantly being tagged?** Talk to the young

artists at the Mural Transformation Project of the Harbourfront Community Centre (www.harbourfrontcc.ca). Or do it yourself (with permission). There's a wonderful tribute to a much missed neighbourhood cat, Monty, on Croft Street.

- Check out NewMindSpace's guide to naming your laneway (<http://www.newmindspace.com/nameyourlane>).
- Consider holding an event – a meet-your-neighbours BBQ or a community garage sale. Or take a page from The Dupont & Spadina Corner Collective's (dupsa.org) book. This summer they held their first "Light Up Our Alley" festival, complete with bands, a dusk lantern walk and a "Really, Really Free Marketplace."
- For inspiration, check out **Portland's City Repair Project** (cityrepair.org). They engage in "place-making" – helping neighbourhoods reclaim urban spaces to create community-oriented places, empowering communities and nurturing local culture.

To find out more, contact me at alison@publicspace.ca.

- Alison Gorbould

"Toronto's laneways are a wonderful place to walk at night."

Harbord Village lane today (Croft Street) and in 1935 (behind Robert Street)





Laneway housing

Perhaps the most contentious laneway issue is housing. While cottages and coach houses were a common feature when our laneways were first built, few of these remain, and mostly what you'll find are garages (which can be built as of right).

Toronto's population continues to expand. We know that unchecked urban sprawl has disastrous effects on our health and environment. Many also object to the massive, block-busting condos sprouting up everywhere.

Proponents of laneway housing say that it's the perfect solution to intensification – and to diversification as well. New families could choose to live in a friendly neighbourhood where their children can play, rather than a box in the sky or a long commute to the suburbs. A "granny flat" might allow families to stay together, or a rental studio might ease financial burden and allow a long-time resident to age in place.

A ban on the "house behind a house" stands in city zoning and bylaws...probably for a number of reasons relating to utility and Fire Department

access, as well as neighbourhood privacy.

Perhaps the most compelling argument, however, is the fear laneway housing would destroy what we love about these spaces – the human scale. This would be a tragedy. There are many places where laneway housing would be inappropriate. But is there some compromise? Is an all-out ban the best or only answer?

Having a small number of front doors on a laneway **would give us more "eyes on the street"** (as Jane Jacobs was known to say).

Councillor Adam Vaughan recently asked city staff to investigate the barriers to allowing homeowners to build a studio, workshop or similar space in place of a garage, which can be built as of right. But he was quick to voice opposition to laneway housing.

Vancouver has taken another approach. The city launched a pilot project that will allow the development of up to 100 sites, after which the results will be evaluated. On a standard lot, these sites can have

up to 500 sq. ft. of floor space and be up to one and a half stories high. They can only occupy the space usually reserved for a garage. The motion was passed unanimously by council and promoted by former mayor Sam Sullivan as part of his eco-density initiative. Suffice it to say, many Torontonians will be watching this closely.

- Alison Gorbould

Housing on Croft Street (a lane with a name between Borden and Lippincott)
(photos by Alison Gorbould)





Telephone calls save the environment and support HVRA

“Since 1996, Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy has created 84 nature reserves, protected over 7,000 acres of land and become Ontario’s largest regional land trust.”

An insect trap high up in Harbord Village
(photo by Katrina McHugh)

Bob Barnett, a resident of Harbord Village for 36 years, is the executive director of the Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy, dedicated to creating nature reserves along the Niagara Escarpment from Caledon to Manitoulin Island, the Saugeen Valley and the Lake Huron shoreline. Since 1996, the EBC has created 84 nature reserves, protected over 7,000 acres of land and **become Ontario’s largest regional land trust.** The EBC has developed 80 km of hiking trails on Manitoulin Island, protected great stretches of wetland to the satisfaction of birdwatchers and 12 km of Great Lakes shoreline for nature enthusiasts and canoeists. EBC reserves protect 57 rare and endangered species including nesting bald eagles.

For more than 10 years, Bob has also used Escarpment Telecom as a small fund-

raising venture for the EBC. Using a Canadian company based in Nepean, Ontario, Telecom provides long distance phone services to customers at competitive rates. Instead of making a profit, **20 percent of customers’ phone charges** are considered a donation to conservation. Customers receive a tax receipt for their EBC donation each year.

Escarpment Telecom has several partners, such as the Sierra Club and the Ontario Environment Network, which receive half of the donation proceeds. To date, Telecom has raised over \$100,000, which has allowed EBC to purchase a number of properties for conservation.

Harbord Village is another of **Telecom’s partners.** As more members participate, more donations pour into **HVRA’s coffers for urban**

conservation projects, such as tree planting, street beautification projects and historical preservation efforts. Conservation can be a mission with many faces. To make this a truly green initiative, Bob hand-delivers the invoices each month to HVRA members (thus saving postage and getting some great exercise), and many members drop their **payments off in Bob’s mailbox** on Sussex Avenue (some just empty out the change from their pockets!).

The EBC website is www.escarpment.ca. Direct questions about Telecom to Anna Barnett at 416.960.8121. And if you see Bob Barnett wandering the streets of our neighbourhood, he is bound to have an information brochure in his pocket.

- Anna Barnett

What’s the buzz?

Unless you’re in the habit of looking up as you walk down the street, they are hard to spot. But hanging almost 15 metres above ground in our largest street trees are a few dozen large insect traps, part of a three-year research study by Eric Davies, a U of T grad student in the Department of Forest Conservation. Before long, these tall, soft cloth enclosures attracted lots of attention and many queries at each location.

The purpose of the study is to determine if native trees sup-

port a larger and more diverse array of insects and birds than the non-native trees that are equally common in Harbord Village. In a flyer Eric delivered to participating homes at the beginning of the summer, he explained that while non-native trees are often more **tolerant of pollution**, “we don’t know how suitable they are for hosting native biodiversity.”

For more information, or to have one of your large trees included in the study, contact Eric Davies at 416.879.2117 or Eric.Davies@utoronto.ca.





Art in the park Margaret Fairley gets a facelift

On Saturday, September 5, a group of pint-sized Picassos gathered around the drab walls of the utility building in Margaret Fairley Park at Ulster and Brunswick. What ensued was an energetic, and incredibly well organized, neighbourhood paint party. In just a matter of hours, the utility building was transformed into a vibrant seascape complete with colourful fish, underwater plant life and the occasional octopus.

The mural-painting event was just one of many recent park-improvement projects undertaken by the ever-expanding Friends of Margaret Fairley group, which met in the spring over concerns that the park was starting to look a little rough around the edges.

What began as a community cleanup during the **city workers' strike** culminated in an ongoing initiative to make the park a cleaner, more kid-friendly place to play. In addition to completing several projects on their own, including repainting the park's rusted fence, the

Friends of MF met with Councillor Adam Vaughan to address some of their larger concerns.

Thanks to their efforts, Margaret Fairley Park has a fresh new look for fall. The city did some landscaping, provided a new picnic table, delivered fresh sand for the sandbox **and spruced up the park's worn-looking benches** with a welcome coat of paint.

And stay tuned for more park improvements. The park "wish list" created by Friends of MF is ongoing and includes plans for additional seating and some spring planting initiatives. But for now, a big thank you to all the families who've come together to help fix up Margaret Fairley.

- Sydney Loney

Photos by Mario Cupido





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

HVRA Board 2008-2009

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SE	Tim Grant	960-1244	tim@greenteacher.com
SE	Wendy Duff	929-1488	wendy.duff@utoronto.ca

Membership stuff

- *Already a member?* Thanks. In particular, sincere thanks to all of you who have honoured us with your Supporting and Fanatic memberships, which have supported many of the new initiatives we've undertaken.
- *Haven't had a chance to renew?* Now's the time. Simply fill out the renewal slip on our back page and post it with your cheque.
- *Not yet a member?* Now's the time! Meet your neighbours,

have some fun and perhaps devote a few hours to something you want to improve. No time to spare? We understand. But by simply joining, you'll add your name to the ever-growing roster and help make HVRA's voice even better heard at City Hall.

- *Ideas for how to grow our membership, and strengthen connections?* Please contact membership secretary Katrina McHugh at kmchughc521@rogers.com.

HVRA Membership & Renewal Form

Thanks to everyone who renewed for 2008-9. Not a member yet? Know someone who should be a member? Please join -- to help us continue building a great neighbourhood!

2009-10 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) \$5/one year; \$10/two years
- Supporting Member (to support HVRA activities)..... \$20/one year; \$40/two years
- Fanatical Member (to really support HVRA activities!)..... \$50/one year; \$100/two years



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

Name.....

Address.....

TelephoneEmail.....