

May 2004

Volume 2, Number 1

Harbord Village Residents' Association

Interesting Articles inside:

- UPDATE on the College Street Revitalization
- Annual Spring Meeting is coming!
- and much more...

Important points:

College St. Update	2
Environment Notes	3
Heritage Conservation District	4
Membership Form	6



Welcome!

By Rory 'Gus' Sinclair
Chair, HVRA

Welcome to this, our 3rd semi-annual newsletter. Your new board and executive were elected only a short six months ago, yet it feels to me as if the activity generated by this board and our association is already practically a year's worth. There is much to report. The College Street revitalization has begun with the laying of the new TTC tracks – there will be much inconvenience in the short term, but let's try to keep our "eyes on the prize" -- the possibility of a wonderful streetscape that is equally hospitable and aesthetically pleasing to pedestrians, cyclists, motorists and businesses alike. It's been a long, hard slog, but the College Street Committee has never wavered in its goals and vision, nor has its energy

flagged in the three years this initiative has been part of the HVRA's agenda.

In April, we saw the neighbourhood join together for the semi-annual cleanup. For more than six hours, many of you were out cleaning up the back lanes and streets and then sorting your findings into recyclables and trash. Good on HVRA's Environment Committee! Olivia Chow would like us to compose a small instruction sheet for other residents' associations to follow, as she sees what we do as pretty much state of the art. In addition, the Environment Committee has piloted a wet compost collection system which we think has worked so well that it could be a model for how to deal with wet compost in

densely populated neighbourhoods such as ours.

There is a new and exciting initiative on Brunswick Avenue below Brunswick – a sub-committee of HVRA, involving local residents, is pursuing Heritage Conservation District designation. This will take about a year and will help preserve the wonderful Victorian facades that we all love so much. It involves much leg work, for which we have some enthusiastic volunteers already as well as some money (see below for more information). We hope that the eventual text of the designation by-law will be written in such a way as to make further designations in HVRA much easier – one area that comes to mind immediately is the stretch of Willcocks between Spadina and Robert.

Annual Spring Meeting – May 18th 7pm

Come to the JCC at Spadina & Bloor! Our special topic is HVRA and our relationship to the

schools in our neighbourhood: King Edward, Lord Landsdowne, and Central Tech.

For more information, please check out our web site: www.harbordvillage.com

Ride the Rocket.



THE BETTER WAY

Visit the TTC's website here:
<http://www.city.toronto.on.ca/ttc/>



It's not the first time we've had to deal with this...

"...for the past two months, the HVRA College Street Committee...have been working with city staff..."

College Street Revitalization - UPDATE

By Gord Brown

Road/sidewalk re-construction IS happening in 2004 -- currently scheduled for early July, after the current gas line/ water main work is completed. And for the last two months, the HVRA College Street Committee (Bob Frankford, Richard Gilbert, Bob Stambula and I) have been working with city staff to finalize details and retain as much of the "compromise agreement" as possible.

Since the last update:

- Council has approved the proposed curb alignment (widened sidewalks and layby parking) and approximately 90 new trees.

- Community Council, the City Budget Committee and now Council have supported inclusion of the entire project in the 2004 capital budget. A major coup, thanks to Councillor Olivia Chow's support.
- Forestry staff have proposed to install a new "continuous tree pit" adjacent to the Fire Hall to see if it helps improve sustainability -- another innovative aspect of the project.
- Council has directed city staff to continue discussions with HVRA reps to work out final design details.
- As a group, you've contributed almost \$6,700 of the \$7,500 target to make this all possible. *Thanks -- and welcome to the recent*

donors.

- Discussions with city staff are continuing to finalize location of the parking laybys and fight for more pedestrian space, especially at the Bathurst intersection. Following that, we'll work with Urban Design to incorporate Brown & Storey ideas for concrete and paving details.

Questions, concerns, need more info? Please send me, Gord Brown, an e-mail, or call me at 416.924.6445. I'll try to have a layout drawing available for the Spring AGM -- if you'd like a closer look.

Here's to all of us getting safely and sanely through the construction season!

Need a refresher on the project?

The main elements of the project are:

- Northern sidewalks widened by approximately 2-3 metres in the current "no parking" zones -- for up to 70% of the Spadina to Bathurst section. The balance will be inset "layby" parking.
- Southern sidewalks have standard "layby" parking -- but significant stretches of wider sidewalk as well.
- Approximately 90 new trees interplanted with existing trees.
- Unhealthy trees will be replaced. New trees will be placed in line with existing (the same line as utility poles) to bring some order to the street and help keep pedestrian areas as clear as possible
- Bike stands, garbage receptacles, paper boxes (if needed) and other "services" will be located between the trees to create clear pedestrian walkways
- TTC island at Augusta will be removed, and safety of islands at Bathurst/Spadina will be improved by making them more similar to the Spadina islands. We fought for removal -- but at this point, it doesn't appear possible.
- Plans are in the works for a much improved entrance to Croft Street.
- Discussions are ongoing for improving the entrance to Kensington Market.
- Standard, full-width bike lanes in both directions.

The "Avenues" Study is continuing...

By Gord Brown

As mentioned in the Fall 2003 HVRA newsletter, HVRA was successful in getting our section of College Street included for assessment under the "Avenues" designation of the new official plan.

In a nutshell, this means looking at the possibilities of sensible redevelopment to take advantage of excellent transit service and close proximity to the U of T and downtown.

The hope is that focusing

redevelopment on College -- to accommodate the expected population growth over the next 10-20 years -- will reduce development pressures within adjacent neighbourhoods and help keep them stable and sustainable.

HVRA reps, businesses and other stakeholders have met with city staff and consultants on several occasions -- and the feeling is very much

that well-designed redevelopment could house a large number of new residents, who could support the businesses we hope will locate here.

Planning staff are reviewing the consultant report now and will be arranging a public meeting to discuss the findings and seek neighbourhood input. I'll provide a further update in June -- earlier if there is anything significant!

Gord Brown, for the HVRA College Street Revitalization Committee



Avenues Study

"This summer, two groups of residents...requested bins and launched their community composting projects."

The Tree Planting Initiative is taking off

By Tim Grant

On April 13, HVRA's Board of Directors voted to spend \$1,100 to hire a student - ideally from the U of T's Forestry Department - to go door to door this spring, encouraging residents to fill out a city application for a free front-yard tree. Hopefully, the student we select will be both knowledgeable about native tree species and personable. And she/he will also need to recognize and ask for assistance if language barriers need to be overcome. Our tree-planting initiative

all started at the beginning of April, when HVRA's Environment Committee received a \$500 grant, which was awarded posthumously to the late Jorg Bentz. Jorg was a longtime Lippincott resident and a dedicated tree-planting advocate, who was responsible for the planting of more than 50 trees in our neighbourhood over the years.

The association offered to match, up to a maximum of \$300, any additional donations from its

members, which would go into a tree-planting fund. When our members gave \$300 in donations, we then had a total of \$1,100 to spend.

After first receiving the news about the \$500 grant, our initial plan was to use the money to purchase a handful of trees and plant them in the public spaces most needing them. But the board felt there were too many parts of our neighbourhood without sufficient numbers of tree. This perception was supported by a ...
(Continued on page 4)





At least we're out of this!

Tree Planting (cont...)

By Tim Grant

lengthy article in the April 24 edition of the Toronto Star, which confirmed that Toronto's urban forest had been shrinking.. in 1992, the tree canopy once covered 22% of downtown neighbourhoods, but by 2003, the canopy had shrunk to 16%.

Our hope is that, once selected, our student will be ready to start knocking on doors by mid-May. He or she will be carrying copies of the city's front-yard tree applications and a letter from HVRA that encourages the homeowner to select a native tree species from

the city's list and sign up for a free tree. In addition, our student will be asked to compile a list of public spaces in our neighbourhood, such as schools and parks, that would benefit from more trees. S/he will be asked to forward this list to officials at the city's Urban Forestry Department and lobby to get the needed trees planted. The student's work must be completed by June 15.

Thanks to this two-pronged effort, it is our hope that Harbord Village will start to look a lot greener by this time next year.

Your help is needed! If there are public spaces or residential parts of our neighbourhood that are most in need of additional trees, please let us know.

If you speak Portuguese, Italian, Mandarin, Cantonese or another 2nd language and would be willing to join our student for an evening speaking with local residents who do not speak English, we'd love to hear from you.

Please contact Tim Grant at 416.960.1244 or tim@greenteacher.com.

HVRA Board 2004

Chair	
Rory 'Gus' Sinclair	416-966-1523
Treasurer	
Gord Brown	416-924-6445
Secretary	
Bob Wilson	416-928-0271
Area Reps	
Richard Gilbert	416-323-8839
Tim Grant	416-360-1244
Maria Perin	416-922-6652
Bob Stambula	416-922-4453
Mark Treleaven	416-921-6251
Jane Wideman	416-534-9888
Margaret Beare	416-926-8984
Special Board Member for UofT	
Sue Dexter	416-964-9527

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!

.....CUT HERE.....CUT HERE.....CUT HERE.....

2004 HVRA Membership	Please mail to: Harbord Village Residents' Association P.O. Box 68522 360A Bloor Street West Toronto, M5S 1X1
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- 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 really 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.....

Environmental Notes

By Tim Grant

Last July, HVRA launched what has become a very successful community composting pilot project. At present, approximately 120 households on Robert and Major Streets regularly bring their compostable wastes in plastic bags to one of four of our 35 gallon green bins (the same bins used by neighbourhood restaurants and corner stores for their organic wastes). Many residents who had never previously composted have embraced it with enthusiasm, in part because it enables them to dispose of compostable wastes away from their properties. They do not have to store compostable wastes. To date, we have had no problems with odours, animals or vandalism. Unfortunately, we are concerned that these very problems will plague the city's planned introduction of household composting bins and weekly pickups in late October.

While we are grateful that our financially-strapped city is committed to extending its household composting program to downtown neighbourhoods, we think their program is better suited to suburban

neighbourhoods with large lots. In Harbord Village, where lots are narrow and the population density is much greater, most residents have very little outdoor storage space for the five-gallon compost bins that the city will be supplying this fall.

Those who live in row houses will likely keep their green bins on their front porches. Most people will keep their bins clean, but inevitably some won't, and these bins will be a constant source of odour, an irritant to neighbours, and a magnet for insects and other vermin. On the pickup day each week, there will be more than a thousand bins -- one every six to seven meters in our neighbourhood and some of them very smelly - out on the sidewalk for 12 to 24 hours. These are areas of high pedestrian traffic, where the bins may be tipped over, kicked over and quite possibly vandalized or scavenged by our very healthy downtown populations of skunks,

raccoons, rats and squirrels. In short, HVRA's board concluded that the city's planned household composting program will not be practical, economical, aesthetic or hygienic for downtown residents.

On April 22, Earth Day, HVRA sent a letter to city waste management officials, inviting them to study our community composting program as a more economical and practical alternative. By our admittedly rough calculations, extending our community composting program to downtown neighbourhoods would cost only 25% of what the city will be spending to establish and maintain its planned system of providing separate small bins to each household. We calculated that if 40 similar-sized, downtown neighbourhoods were to adopt our system, the city would save \$6,790,490 in the first five years!

For more details, or a copy of our letter to the city, visit HVRA's website or contact Tim Grant, chair of HVRA's Environment Committee.

"...the next meeting is Thursday, October 16th."



To participate in the environment committee, please contact Tim Grant at 416-960-1244 or tim@greenteacher.com





Your neighbourhood at its best!

"We see the HCD process as a wonderful creative opportunity..."

Lower Brunswick - Willcocks Heritage Conservation District

By Richard Longley and Sue Dexter

The summer of 2003 was marked for our community by the demolition and reconstruction of 64 Brunswick Avenue. Apart from the development of Doctors' Hospital and Kensington Garden, this was the first disruption of lower Brunswick Avenue's historic streetscape since it was built in the 1890s and 1900s.

#64 has been rebuilt in a style that harmonizes quite well with that of its neighbours, but this might not have been the case. The City of Toronto's zoning bylaw addresses such issues as a building's use, height, gross floor area and setbacks from the street; it has nothing to say about a proposed new building's appearance or character.

As one member of the HVRA has pointed out:

"If the owner of a property wants to pull his house down and replace it with a concrete box, there is nothing his neighbours, the city or anyone can do to stop him - so long as his plan conforms to the zoning by-law he can build what he wants."

In view of this experience many of us determined to seek the designation of lower Brunswick Avenue (south of

Ulster St) as a Heritage Conservation District (HCD). Since then Lower Brunswick has been joined by Willcocks Street.

The HCD process is fascinating and intricate. Cursed with architectural conservation laws that are notoriously the weakest in North America, the City of Toronto requires a tremendous effort from those of its citizens who seek the preservation of its finest buildings. Guided by Heritage Coordinator Brian Gallagher and Heritage Architect Cathy Naismith, we have set about photographing our houses and their unique features and gathering their histories from City Archives and the Central Library. Out of this effort will come a Heritage Character Statement, a beautifully illustrated architectural and social history of the proposed Lower Brunswick - Willcocks HCD, which will be used to persuade City Council to grant us HCD status.

What does becoming an HCD mean. The HCD bylaw covers the façades and rooflines of HCD properties *only*. Owners of HCD properties may renovate the interiors, backs and sides of their buildings as they see fit, subject only to the existing zoning bylaw. The hope is that in time the HCD streetscape will assume the appearance it had at the

time of its construction. In Lower Brunswick and Willcocks we have a great foundation to build upon: solid, Victorian and Edwardian houses that have, for the most part, not been greatly altered in the past 100 years and more.

We see the HCD process as a wonderful creative opportunity: to research the histories of our homes and their neighbourhood, to identify the builders who created our piece of Toronto and those who lived here before us, to find out how our homes might have looked at in the time of their construction and to remember this when they need renovations. Meanwhile, we remain as free as we have always been to alter the interiors of our homes and those parts of them which cannot be seen from the street to suit our individual needs.

The creation of the Lower Brunswick- Willcocks HCD is far from a done deal. In spite of an intense letter-campaign, we have yet to hear from every property owner. If you are a Lower Brunswick or Willcocks property owner who has not yet contacted us, we are keen to hear from you as soon as possible, especially if you have any questions to ask or any doubts about what it means – and does not mean – to live in an HCD. We look forward to hearing from you!

