

Spring 2010

Volume 8, Number 1

# 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](http://www.harbordvillage.com) where this newsletter can be found in glorious colour.*

## Message from the Chair of the HVRA Board

Dear members of Harbord Village:

Eight years ago, I attended my first HVRA public meeting to hear a wonderful guest speaker. Paul Bedford, then **Toronto's chief planner, spoke** eloquently of his vision for Toronto. I remember his definition of a sustainable city: one in which the transit system is so well-developed that residents would not feel like second-class citizens if they **didn't own a car.**

After the meeting, I walked back up Robert Street from College with about 10 neighbours. As our group dispersed at Willcocks, one person



turned to me and announced that board meetings were on



the third Tuesday of every month. I learned only then **that I had been "volunteered".**

As I thought about whether to accept or turn down the opportunity, I recalled that my partner Gail had once been a member of the board of **HVRA's predecessor association** and had enjoyed the camaraderie and neighbourhood gossip.

So I decided it was worth a try. Within a few months, it had become my favourite volunteer activity. I was meeting interesting people from all corners of Harbord Village, people who were thinking about how to improve our neighbourhood. But we also laughed a lot at our monthly

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## HVRA's Spring General Meeting

Tuesday, May 18, 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 – 7:40	Area caucuses, caucus reports
7:40 – 8:00	Councillor Vaughan: State of the ward and city, and Q & A
8:00 – 9:00	Special topics: 1. Green roofs 2. Termites (details on Page 2)

*The meeting will end promptly at 9 p.m.*



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board meetings, and that made it easier when we had to debate tough issues or listen to new ideas.

What also made HVRA so attractive to me – and to many others along the way – were the extraordinary talents of **our chair, Rory “Gus” Sinclair. I’ve sat on many committees** over the years, and have never seen anyone as skilled as Gus at keeping tough debates from becoming too divisive or as able to enliven meetings with such good humour. Best

**of all, he valued everyone’s** opinions, and in his own articulate way he created an atmosphere that encouraged us to take on projects and recruit others to help with those activities.

**As your new chair, it’s pretty challenging to follow in Gus’s** footsteps. But over the last few months, his ongoing guidance and support have made it much easier to try.

While my own involvement with HVRA began almost by **chance eight years ago, I’ve** seen more than one hundred Harbord Village residents step

forward to volunteer with our Fall Fair, Pumpkin Festival and numerous other projects.

Our twice-yearly general meetings feature interesting speakers and provide opportunities for neighbours to voice their opinions on issues big and small that affect our community.

But please be forewarned: attending your first one could lead you down a path to more rewarding moments than you might have thought possible!

- Tim Grant

*“Our twice-yearly general meetings feature interesting speakers and provide opportunities for neighbours to voice their opinions on issues big and small that affect our community.”*

## Special topics at the May 18, 2010, general meeting

- Carolyn Moss, Moss Sund Architects, on residential green roofs.
- Richard Murphy, Aetna Pest Control, on termite infestation in our neighbourhood and how we can spot and deal with the pesky varmints.

### HVRA’s Farmers’ Market

(photo by Wendy Smith, June 2008)



## OTHER NOTABLE DATES

Tuesday, May 18, 2 p.m. Free compost provided by the City at Margaret Fairley Parkette, corner of Brunswick and Ulster.

Wednesday, June 2, 3-7 p.m. The Farmers' Market returns to Harbord Village. At the east side of the Green P parking lot between Lippincott and Borden south of Bloor. Meet your friends! Buy amazing food! Listen to wonderful music!

*Every Wednesday, 3-7 p.m. until October 27.*

Come and buy fresh produce from farmers who grow our food within 160 kilometres of Toronto. Meet the people who grow these wonderful products and taste the goodness and freshness.

Wednesday, June 24, 3 p.m. Official opening of **HVRA’s 2010 Farmer’s Market.**

Saturday, July 3. **Adam Vaughan’s Environment Day.** Details to be distributed from the Councillor’s office.



## The naming of laneways in Harbord Village

At the regular meeting of the HVRA board on January 19<sup>th</sup>, I proposed a process to name the approximately 50 lanes in Harbord Village. The proposal was adopted, and I agreed to serve as the coordinator for the HVRA Laneway Naming Project.

### Background

In the summer of 2009, at a meeting with police, The Bloor Annex BIA, Harbord Street BIA, ARA, and HVRA concerning a swarming incident at Bloor and Bathurst, talk moved to things to make the job of the police and fire departments easier.

The police described some barriers to quick response from citizens reporting emergencies in their neighbourhoods, especially in back lanes. Without lane names (think Croft St.), there can be great confusion. For example, saying the emergency is in the lane between Robert and Major south of Harbord is insufficient since the lane is not continuous.

Since then, there have been several discussions with members of the community, the **Councillor's office, and the** appropriate city department where the idea of laneway

naming met with positive feedback.

Rose Rodrigues of Major Street, following City of Toronto protocol, started the process of naming the laneway behind her house after **her father. Soon it's expected** to be christened Louis Laki Lane.

We also learned that the lanes in Cabbagetown have all recently been named and themed – Canadian song birds and historical personages, to name two themes.

How can Harbord Village name its laneways?

### A possible way forward

We must engage our members as much as possible by gauging their interest, getting their buy-in, and signing up volunteers to do the legwork.

The first thing would be to notify our members by email blast and flyer that this project is testing the waters for feasibility. At this point we can ask for suggestions for names or themes for names.

The next step would be to invite our members to public meetings. I recommend that the laneway coordinator (LWC) work with the five area

reps to engage members. These meetings would involve:

- a walkabout to nail down the location and number of lanes in each area
- discussion of the value, usefulness, fun idea-ness of it all
- discussion of possible names for the lanes and/or a theme for researching such names.

Each area would report to the LWC, who would then report to the board. If there is consensus on an overall theme, the next step would be to ask for member suggestions on names. Final selections would be chosen based on popularity.

Without clear consensus, we could adopt different themes and appropriate names for each area, or we could solicit random suggestions for names for individual lanes from our members at large.

Remember, this is as much an exercise in community-building as laneway naming!

- *Rory 'Gus' Sinclair*

*"... there have been several discussions with members of the community, the Councillor's office, and the appropriate city department where the idea of laneway naming met with positive feedback."*

On the left, a Harbord Village lane that already has a name: Croft Street, as it is today. On the right, a lane behind Robert Street in 1935 that remains unnamed







*“If everybody spent a few dollars and a few minutes to paint over their tags, we would have no graffiti in Harbord Village. Defeating graffiti really is that simple.”*

This wall visible from Borden St was covered in tags. The owner said he didn't care what happened in the lane and contributed nothing to the cleanup.



For many years, the HVRA has organized a one-day event on Croft Street. Volunteers use donated paint to cover over vandalism graffiti. While *some* of the graffiti 'tags' do return each year, far more get painted over than reappear, which has meant steady progress in beautifying this lane.

Last year the effort expanded beyond Croft to the heavily vandalized laneway between Borden and Brunswick, from Harbord to Ulster.

Some residents who have happened upon this event are thrilled to see it. Many are indifferent. Often bystanders ask why we bother, when the vandalism simply keeps coming back.

The short answer is that graffiti is easily defeated – it simply requires an understanding of why and how it happens, and a bit of effort from everyone.

Why do vandals paint graffiti tags?

Grffiti is actually about as old as the written word itself. Evidence of graffiti dates back at least as far as the pyramid

builders of ancient Egypt. A main reason for etching **one's initials on a pyramid**, or spray-painting a 'tag' on your garage door is simple commemoration – a selfish **"I was here" statement**. This is important to know because vandals generally **don't bother tagging surfaces** that they believe will be painted over.

The whole point of a tag is that it endures. Tags may just look like random splotches of spray paint, **but they're characteristic to the vandals that make them**, just like a set of initials. If you look carefully, **you'll realize there are actually very few individuals responsible for most of the damage** – tags repeat themselves all over the neighbourhood.

Why does graffiti seem to happen in waves?

Grffiti activity tends to be highest in the spring and fall, although there is in fact activity year round – including rainy nights and freezing weather. However, vandalism also goes in waves by *location* – often we see a garage door with one or two tags on it suddenly become covered in a matter of months or even weeks. Covering a surface in countless tags is known as **'ridiculing' a wall**. **In essence, it's a comment by vandals that whoever owns the wall clearly doesn't care about it.**

The bigger problem, though, is that ridiculing a wall eventually does lead to the spread of tags to adjoining and nearby surfaces. Tagging seems to behave similarly to litter – one piece of litter on the ground soon attracts much more, because that single piece represents a cue to what is acceptable behaviour.

**The 'litter effect' has been the subject of psychological studies and is a well-understood phenomenon. So, an 'epidemic' of graffiti can appear in a short space of time because one tag was left to endure – thereby inviting more.**

How can we keep graffiti from returning?

This question has a simple answer: paint over tags when they appear on your property, and they generally do not come back. The HVRA has consistently demonstrated this on Croft Street over a period of several years.

**Last year's laneway project between Borden and Brunswick has seen only perhaps one percent of the amount of previous graffiti return since last fall. A success rate of 99 percent speaks for itself.**

Apart from simply removing tags proactively, murals can be a good way to keep tags at bay. For the most

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part, vandals respect murals and do not deface them. Murals function as a way of showing that the owner is asserting **'ownership' of the wall, but** there are exceptions. Murals that appear to be too **'cute' or too out of place,** or that have fading or peeling paint can attract **'ridiculing' vandalism.** Most murals are an excellent deterrent, however. They also do not need to be expensive. Some artists will work for little more than the cost of the paint.

Why has the HVRA not cleaned this up?

If we know how to keep graffiti away, why is it still all over Harbord Village? The simple answer is, the problem is too big to be solved on a once-a-year basis, using volunteers with buckets of cheap, donated, latex paint – which soon peels. Oil-based primer works best, as demonstrated last fall, but is too expensive to use on a large scale.

Printing and distributing information flyers to residents also consume time and money. The real issue is neighbourhood apathy – all of those residents with tags on their garage doors who shake their heads and ask why we bother. For all previous graffiti remediation events, *all* volunteers came from *outside* the HVRA, and not a single resident has ever come

forward to donate time or paint.

What is the way forward?

Having the HVRA undertake graffiti removal across the neighbourhood is simply not sustainable. There is a way forward, however – sharing the effort and spreading the word. After you read this article, speak with your neighbours – split a \$20 can of oil-based primer and take an hour to paint over the tags on your properties. Simple rectangle-shaped, tag **'paint-overs'** may not look especially pretty, but they're a big improvement over leaving vandalism tags to endure.

Paint-overs also send a clear message to would-be vandals, in effect saying: **'your tag isn't going to last, so you might as well go somewhere else'.** If everybody spent a few dollars and a few minutes to paint over their tags, we would have no graffiti in Harbord Village. Defeating graffiti really is that simple.

- Colin Furness

*Colin is a HVRA board member who coordinates graffiti removal efforts. He can be reached at 416.822.5525 or at [colin.furness@utoronto.ca](mailto:colin.furness@utoronto.ca).*



Last October these volunteers used 105 litres of oil primer in less than four hours to remove graffiti in Harbord Village.

A vandalized garage door gets cleaned up by two volunteers who are studying to become police officers.







## HERO project a high-efficiency success

*“... we want to thank participants in the HERO program. Together we can continue to make Harbord Village the greenest neighbourhood in the city!”*

Willcocks St. resident Sue Dexter during her energy audit

The HERO project has come to a successful conclusion. Our energy audit partner, Carson Dunlop, provided subsidized EcoENERGY energy assessments to 119 Harbord Village homes. If the homeowners make all of the recommended home upgrades, they will reduce their home energy consumption by 36 percent and enjoy a similar reduction in their utility bills. Even more important, they will enhance the comfort and value of their homes.

In addition, 15 homeowners purchased new high efficiency gas furnaces from our furnace contractor partner, AtlasCare. HERO participants have installed other furnace upgrades, on-demand hot water heaters, insulation, and more. Homes that have had their follow-up audits have boasted an average improvement in

energy efficiency of 23 percent (with one home at 41 percent!).

The City of Toronto has set a goal of **reducing the city's** greenhouse gas emissions to 20 percent of 1990 levels by 2050. The reduction in fossil fuel use required to achieve this goal will save a huge amount of money in utility costs, reduce the impact of peak oil, and improve energy security.

This goal will require owners of heritage homes like those of Harbord Village to make dramatic improvements to ensure the viability and the protection of these valuable heritage assets. The HERO program, while having the potential for significant improvements, is a first step in the upgrading of Harbord Village and all the older neighbourhoods of Toronto over the next generation.

Meanwhile, the HERO project encourages all participants to complete your home upgrades and get your follow-up audits completed as soon as possible. The program officially continues until March 2011, but nothing would stop the government terminating the program earlier.

The federal government announced on March 31, 2010 that they would not be accepting any more new applicants to the

EcoENERGY - Retrofit program. Homeowners who did not have firm appointments for audits before that date no longer qualify for reduced price audits and the EcoENERGY home upgrade grants. The EcoENERGY - Retrofit program has been a big success, providing cost-effective greenhouse gas reductions and generating economic stimulus in the form of good green jobs for home energy auditors and home upgrade contractors, while encouraging homeowners to upgrade their homes.

We continue to encourage all homeowners to have home efficiency audits and perform upgrades on their homes, even without government incentive programs. We still recommend Carson Dunlop for home energy audits and AtlasCare for your home heating and cooling needs. Visit [www.harbordvillage.com/hero](http://www.harbordvillage.com/hero) for more information or contact HERO project coordinator David Booz at 416.806.2669 or [hero@harbordvillage.com](mailto:hero@harbordvillage.com).

The HERO project thanks the **City of Toronto's Live Green Program** for the Community Investment Program grant towards our project. We also thank the HVRA board for its support and the volunteers who served on our committee and helped out in many other ways (e.g., hand-delivering 7,500 flyers!). Finally, we want to thank participants in the HERO program. Together we can continue to make Harbord Village the greenest neighbourhood in the city!

- David Booz



## Treeing the Village

HVRA's Tree Committee is working on two themes this year: canopy care, to protect and increase the number of trees in Harbord Village, and roots of local history, to research and celebrate trees of the past and present urban forest.

See the trees page at <http://harbordvillage.com/trees> for more information, and consider getting involved — whether it's rolling up your sleeves to plant trees, talking to business owners about watering their street trees, or bringing in photos and stories about trees from the past.

May 22 is the last chance to

order a backyard tree at a subsidized cost of only \$20, thanks to our grant from the City Parks and Trees Foundation. Contact Dinny Biggs at [dinnybiggs@gmail.com](mailto:dinnybiggs@gmail.com) to get on the list for a site visit and delivery of the tree at the beginning of June.

We remain on alert to ensure that street trees and the 100+ young trees we planted over the past few years get watered thoroughly once a week in any hot, dry weather this spring or summer. This may be the year we need to buy or construct a water cart. Can you help by letting us use your water connection, or by

taking responsibility for watering a street tree near you?

The City of Toronto Archives holds dozens of photos of this neighbourhood, some of which show striking stands of trees. Let's gather more and share them with each other via the Trees section of the HVRA website.

If you have old photos or memories of specific trees, please let us scan your pictures and listen to your stories. Contact me at [margaret.procter@utoronto.ca](mailto:margaret.procter@utoronto.ca) to start the process.

- Margaret Procter

**IN THE WORKS FOR MAY/JUNE 2010:** details to be posted at HVRA website:

- Community Tree Walk being organized with LEAF and Prof Kenney, U of T Forestry Department

On the left, Major St. looking north from near No. 250 in 1913. On the right, looking south from about the same spot in July 1935. (Note the two-way traffic with parking on both sides.)  
*(from the City of Toronto Archives)*



## Nominate for HVRA's awards

To recognize those among us who've improved our community, the association is once again inviting nominations before the September 15<sup>th</sup> deadline for the following four special awards:

- \* Community Builder Award
- \* Best Front Yard Garden
- \* Best Heritage Restoration of a Home
- \* Best Heritage Restoration of a Commercial Building

For details about how to nominate someone, visit [www.harbordvillage.com](http://www.harbordvillage.com), or call Tim Grant at 416.960.1244.



# Heritage protection is expanding

Following the passage of Harbord Village Heritage District protection for Robert and adjacent streets, a group of neighbours formed a heritage conservation district (HCD).

Participants are beginning the groundwork for heritage protection for Major Street from College to Bloor. Public meetings will be held and neighbour input sought for the guidelines.

So far, Harbord Village Heritage Conservation protection includes:

- Phase I: Willcocks and flanking houses on Robert and Spadina; Brunswick

St., south of Ulster

- Phase II: The east and west sides of Robert Street from College to Bloor; the south side of Sussex Avenue from Spadina to Robert Street; the north side of Russell Street from Spadina Crescent to Robert Street and the west side of Spadina Crescent and Avenue from Russell Street to Willcocks Street

The Harbord Village Heritage Conservation District Directory for Conservators and Restorers of Heritage Properties has been assembled to guide home owners in restoring and maintaining

their properties.

The Robert St. volunteers have compiled an inventory of the 246 houses in the Phase II District, which includes a house-by-house history and descriptions of all properties. These volunteers are eager to commemorate this achievement, communicate to residents the information gathered through these efforts, and raise funds so our heritage preservation work can continue.

Heritage Conservation District designation means that the front of our houses in the designated areas will

preserve their historic look.

City grants are available to assist in historic preservation within our Heritage Conservation District.

If you want to join in the work and re-visit old Toronto history, contact Carmen Gauthier, 416.323.3944, or Debby Black, 416.928.0702. Visit the HVRA website for more information.

- HVRA's Heritage Conservation District Committee

The Barton Cottages, 78-94 Robert St., built by George Barton in 1882 or 1883, a fine example of High Victorian Second Empire architecture featuring a mansard roof.







## A rare appearance at 68 Brunswick Ave.

Once upon a time, a very long time ago now, about Friday, 16 April, a rare visitor came to the bottom of our garden. It was an American bittern and, according to naturalist Miles Hearn, its visit was "extremely, extremely, extremely unusual, as this is a wetland, marsh environment bird. Likely it grew tired during overnight migration and needed a spot to rest."

Rest it did, while I took some photographs of it, then it took off to the roof of our garage where it allowed me to take some more, before it took off again, we hope to a nearby wet marshland where it might find a mate, build a nest and raise a family.

Would you like more birds to visit your gardens, and stay when they do come?

Miles Hearn suggests we plant trees and shrubs that make berries and provide

shelter for nesting. Elderberry, dogwood, junipers, mountain ash are among those a Google trawl names. Then, having provided birds with food, shelter (and water), Hearn recommends: "Keeping cats indoors would be the biggest aid in maintaining our bird populations." So good luck with your birds and, at the very least, make sure your moggies are belled.

**Hearn adds: "I lead three-hour morning nature walks three times a week in spring and autumn, plus twice a week in winter (total of 27 weeks) for the Toronto District School Board's program learn4life."**

More info can be found at [www.learn4life.ca](http://www.learn4life.ca) course #s 39652, 39199 and 39251.

"This spring we are visiting (or have already visited) Humber Bay, Lambton Woods, Scarborough Bluffs, Toronto Islands, High Park,

Marie Curtis Park, Rattray Marsh, lower Don River and **Colonel Sam Smith Park."**

- Richard Longley

*PS Richard Longley is offering a jar of homemade marmalade to the first person to spot the origin of the phrase "Once upon a time, a very long time ago now, about Friday..."*



## Crime in our neighbourhood: what you can do

Community liaison officers of the Toronto police 14 Division, the station which covers the HVRA area, recently met with your board and provided an update on trends in our neighbourhood.

The good news is that crime in nearly every category declined last year, and most crimes are down slightly again so far this year. Nonetheless, we live in a downtown neighbourhood and experience a

significant but not alarming level of criminal activity, the most common being break and entry to property and thefts from vehicles. You can view a map of the area and where incidents are reported on the 14 Division website, which is updated every month: [www.torontopolice.on.ca/statistics/crime\\_maps.php](http://www.torontopolice.on.ca/statistics/crime_maps.php). We are in the neighbourhood the police call "University" (#79).

The police track and respond to trends, so it is important to report all incidents, including suspicious activity, all of which will be investigated. The level of policing we receive is in relation to the demand for it. To report anything suspicious, call 14 Division directly at 416.808.1500 unless it is an emergency, in which case always dial 911.

- Douglas Mason

*"The good news is that crime in nearly every category declined last year, and most crimes are down slightly again so far this year."*



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

### HVRA Board 2009-2010

Chair	Tim Grant	960-1244	tim@greenteacher.com
Past Chair	<b>Rory 'Gus' Sinclair</b>	966-1523	rory.sinclair@rogers.com
Treasurer	Leslie Thompson	924-6393	lthompson@lesrisk.com
Secretary	Eva Jancek	923-3538	Eva_Janecek@camh.net
Membership	Katrina McHugh	934-0295	kmchughc521@rogers.com
UofT	Sue Dexter	964-9527	susan.dexter@rogers.com
Communications	Richard Gilbert	923-8839	mail@richardgilbert.ca
NW	Gail Misra	434-5746	misrag@caleywrays.com
NW	David Booz	806-2669	dbooz@boozengineering.com
NE	Stuart Shoenfeld	964-3223	schoenfe@yorku.ca
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SW	Jane Perdue	923-7065	jperdue@sympatico.ca
SC	Mairin Wilkinson	929-8242	mairinw@sympatico.ca
SC	Wendy Smith	471-9373	wendy@wendysmithtoronto.com
SE	Debby Black	928-0702	debblack@sympatico.ca
SE	Angie Andreoli	830-5340	angieandreoli@hotmail.com

### 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



**Payment can be made via PayPal or credit card at our website: (www.harbordvillage.com) or mail a cheque payable to the Harbord Village Residents' Association, and include:**

Name.....  
Address.....  
Telephone .....Email.....