



The voice
of our
community

DECEMBER 2024 NEWSLETTER

Your source for the latest news and updates about our neighbourhood.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Season's greetings from your Deer Park Residents Group!

This Newsletter provides an update on the development issues, which will change our neighbourhood in the future, in ways we can't entirely foresee. It also provides updates on our initiatives to improve the many traffic and safety issues we face, as well as on plans to improve ravine and parks. We also highlight the places visited on the recent Heap Estrin Deer Park heritage walk for you to check out.

Members of the DPRG Board met with Councillor Matlow and his staff this month to discuss our concerns and perspectives. We thank him for his ongoing support as we work toward addressing the issues facing our Deer Park and continue to enjoy its many benefits.

Please share this newsletter with your neighbours and encourage them to join the Deer Park Residents Group.

2025 will be another busy year!

Cathie Macdonald, President

DEVELOPMENT

The changing face of Yonge + St Clair

Our neighbourhood continues to be a magnet for very tall buildings that are out of scale and ill-adapted to the area. Our ability to comment or effect this scale is highly constrained.

It's important to note again that the Province has dramatically reduced the ability of the City to plan for growth, including establishing an Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT) that supports developers and greatly restricts the ability for residents to participate in City planning. The OLT replaced the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) which used to allow greater latitude for residents' input. In the current reality, your Board, in letters and deputations, asks City Committees to approve changes needed to development applications but with only minor successes.

Your Board is sensitive to the intense need for housing – particularly affordable housing - in Toronto. However, it is our perspective that allowing a series of something on the order of 16 buildings, 13 of which are over 40 storeys in the zones from Woodlawn to Heath and Yonge to Avenue and St. Clair to Avenue is not a sensible approach. It is also to note that currently there are no plans for construction of the approved applications. Only the 44-storey One Delisle project and the 32-storey tower at Bretton Place are under construction. One can question whether the approved projects will get built. Little new construction is proceeding due to a substantial increase in construction costs and market conditions. The approved projects can be placeholders to create land value and, in the meantime, the sites dormant.

In a meeting with Councillor Matlow on December 6, members of the DPRG Board highlighted the impact of the increased number of vacant stores on Yonge St. in our area due to these stalled development projects leading to increased blight and vagrancy. This is happening in other parts of the City as well and the Councillor engaged to see which tools might be available to address this phenomenon as developers wait for an optimal moment from their perspective to commence their projects. The Board will also be consulting with the BIA to address this issue, which is also clearly a concern to existing businesses in the area.

In the same meeting, Matlow indicated he will continue to find ways for residents to participate in planning decisions. He also supports Toronto becoming a Charter City, with greater independence and latitude for decision-making.

Wind control measures

Your Board is also trying to ensure that development applications will address wind conditions at street level in the applications coming forward. We support the use of building podiums as an important way to control the wind effects of tall buildings. Councillor Matlow was successful at the December 4 Community Council meeting (see below) in obtaining approval for a wind study for the Yonge St. Clair area. Currently, the studies are only done per building without considering the overall effect of a multiplicity of tall buildings.

Development applications update

45 St. Clair W

This application for 51 storeys was approved at the December 4 Community Council. Prior to this meeting DPRG reps met with City Planning to address concerns about the building frontage design that, despite the applicant's supportive wind study, we argued would make street level conditions unacceptable.

The Community Council approval included a recommendation that a street frontage canopy be added to help reduce wind impacts and that DPRG reps be consulted in its design and that there be a wind study of the Yonge and St Clair area. Other deputants from a number of neighbourhoods across the City also complained that the City needed better ways to address wind for tall buildings.

1251-1303 Yonge St

This application now extends from Jackes south to Woodlawn so is a shared concern with the Summerhill Residents Group. Two towers are proposed – 43 and 47 storeys – with a park in between. The Public Consultation took place on December 11 at 6-7:30. The site is close to the Summerhill subway station which, despite the current work being done on the station, is not adapted to the capacity that such a scale of development would occasion.

135 St Clair W

The site of the Provincial Environment Building is now proposed to be a 49-storey high rent building with community use at grade including a day care facility. It has no podium and therefore will create unacceptable wind conditions at street level. The site is not close to the Yonge St. Clair where the subway and streetcar transit meet, and where the tallest buildings should be. A public consultation meeting will be held soon.

Small scale retail in our neighbourhood

Many of you may have noted an item in one of Councillor Matlow's recent newsletters where he lamented the loss of small-scale retail on our main streets, they being the source of 'vibrant, walkable, affordable and successful neighbourhoods'. Too true! (Many of us are still recovering from the loss of our Home Hardware!)

Matlow indicated that the City currently lacks the ability to mandate small-scale retail units and that he had moved a motion on a Yonge St application between Manor Rd and Hillside that six retail units be provided mirroring the number which currently exist. He has also moved an amendment to the City's economic development strategy asking for a long-term plan to address the retail streetscape 'before it's too late.'

It's important to understand that the issue is a bit more complicated in new developments. Rents can also be high even in the small buildings that line many of

our small streets. The pedestrian volume of the area usually is the major influence on the market rents.

The city's planning policies are a significant contributor to this retail problem in new buildings. New developments are obligated to put in new retail along major roads regardless of whether there is a market need in that location. Also, regardless of the size of the new building this retail must have twenty- foot ceilings, have separate internal garbage rooms, internal garbage truck pick-up areas, internal bicycle parking, and often a separate internal loading dock.

Plus, until relatively recently, they were also obliged to have retail parking underground. Legally these new retail spaces are units in the condominium and hence have monthly condominium fees to pay for their shared costs to maintain all these areas beyond the retail space and to also contribute monthly to the condominiums reserve fund for future capital cost repairs on the whole building.

Additionally, taxes for retail commercial space are 3 times higher than for residential space and the assessment is a result of the size of the space. A new retail unit with 20' ceilings and all the associated common areas has a far higher assessed value so will have far higher taxes.

All these things combined cut out the traditional 'Mom and Pop' retail that make a nice walkable neighbourhood because it all must be paid for.

A barber shop, dry cleaner, affordable restaurant, greengrocer and countless other categories have prospered for years with 9' ceilings, no garbage rooms, no internal garbage pick-up and no internal loading docks nor bicycle storage rooms. They just can't afford all this stuff. We are authoring our own decline.

TRAFFIC AND SAFETY

Avenue Road

City of Toronto staff believe the language of provincial Bill 212, while aimed primarily at bike lanes, may also require provincial approval for other measures to improve road safety that impact vehicle lanes, such as those proposed by the City for Avenue Road.

Councillor Matlow had been proposing further community consultation on proposed changes to the stretch of Avenue Rd between the CPR tracks and St Clair West. Matlow has advised that consultation is now on hold pending further analysis by City staff of the full implications of Bill 212 (passed by the Provincial legislature November 25).

The DPRG Board has also requested that Councillor Matlow explore with the TTC the potential to improve the currently infrequent route 13 bus service on Avenue Road, to

provide a viable alternative to the once again increasingly crowded Yonge Line subway line. This might be a particularly useful addition once the Eglinton Crosstown LRT (eventually!) opens, with the potential for connections to Avenue Station and points further north on Avenue Rd.

Bill 212

As residents will be aware, the Province introduced and passed Bill 212 this Fall. Amongst other things, the legislation requires municipalities to seek provincial approval for bike lane infrastructure that results in the removal of vehicle lanes and also provided the authority for the Province to remove existing bike lanes on Bloor St, Yonge St and University Ave.

The DPRG Board recognizes that there are differing views within the community regarding bike lanes (and specifically the Yonge St bike lanes). However, we believe strongly that any concerns and issues regarding bike lanes should be worked through between the community and the appropriate – municipal – level of government and that Bill 212 represents an unwarranted intrusion of the Province into what should be locally managed decisions. As such, the DPRG Board submitted a letter to Council urging Council to use whatever means within its disposal to resist this provincial interference in local affairs.

Yonge / St Clair Traffic and Transportation Plan

In light of significant planned development for the area, the creation of a comprehensive traffic and transportation plan for the neighbourhood has been a long-standing priority for the DRPG.

The objective would be both to establish a comprehensive picture of the cumulative impact of planned development, along with plans to mitigate impacts on neighbourhood streets and the potential for improved transit (see above, for example re Avenue Road) and walkability etc.

With the Yonge + St Clair BIA having expressed interest in supporting such a study, the Board has requested and received Councillor Matlow's support for this exercise and also support in securing previously promised traffic data from the City contained in existing development applications.

The Board looks forward to pursuing this initiative further with the BIA with, hopefully, the cooperation of the City.

Off Street Parking

CreateTO, the City's developer, has control over the current Toronto Parking Authority ("TPA") garage on Pleasant Blvd/Rosehill Ave. While there may well be merit in utilizing city owned properties for housing development, there would nevertheless be a concern regarding the potential impact of a loss of this amount of parking on the neighbourhood. At this point it is unclear what plans, if any, TPA may have for alternative sites and the extent to which surplus privately owned parking spaces may be available. Councillor Matlow has undertaken to pursue additional information from CreateTO and the TPA regarding their plans.

Yonge / St Clair Pedestrian Crossing - state of disrepair

Many residents will have noticed the very poor state of repair of the pedestrian walkways at the intersection of Yonge and St Clair. The Board has requested that Councillor Matlow escalate this issue with City staff for resolution. (The Board also has been pursuing a plan for special treatment of the whole intersection area as a special feature and the BIA Strategic Plan shows an option.)

Traffic on Neighbourhood Streets

The Board understands concerns regarding the volume and speed of through traffic on neighbourhood streets, frequently ignoring posted limitations at certain peak hours. One example would be the use of Oriole Rd as an alternative route between Heath St and Lonsdale Rd. The installation of speed bumps is one potential approach which may at least ensure reduced speeds, if not reduced traffic. The Board will work with Councillor Matlow to explore this option further and welcomes the identification of other problem spots in the neighbourhood.

PARKS AND RAVINES

Toronto Nature Stewards (TNS) application

In previous newsletters, we highlighted an application made by some of our local folks to the TNS to steward the boundary area of David Balfour Park, particularly where it is adjacent to the ravine, where we are seeing an increase in the presence of invasive species. Unfortunately, the City of Toronto has not approved the application, primarily due to the bulk of the application being adjacent to the ravine which is designated as an Environmentally Significant Area (ESA).

John Bossons, co-chair of the Midtown Ravine Group, reacted to the rejection: "We're disappointed by this decision as we believe that Parks' ongoing resistance to using trained and committed volunteers to supplement their work is leading to an unnecessary decline of the ecology of the area. The need for stewardship in the

ravines far outweighs the resources available in the Parks budget. It is incredible that Parks is unwilling to utilize what competent trained volunteers can offer.”

Vale of Avoca/Summerhill Gardens erosion project

As highlighted in our last newsletter, the work to repair the stream bed below Summerhill Gardens is underway and slated for completion in April. However, we noted that the ever-growing sinkhole on the southwest side of the pedestrian bridge and within the fenced off area is not in scope for this project. We include an image here:

Southwest side of pedestrian bridge – Vale of Avoca



The Midtown Ravine Group (MRG), an alliance with deputies from each of the adjacent Residents Groups – including the DPRG, has written to Councillors Saxe and Matlow as well as the TRCA to highlight the illogic of this. An onsite meeting was held to discuss options. It has now been agreed that the TRCA will cost the work to be done to remediate the area and see if money can subsequently be found.

The MRG believes that it would be a mistake to leave this area unrepaired only to have to return at a later date and fence off that particular area once again. While we have been encouraged by the responsiveness of the TRCA and Parks in this matter, there is not yet a commitment to do the work. The MRG is suggesting that, if individual residents are concerned, that they write to Councillors Saxe and/or Matlow to highlight this, particularly given its ongoing deterioration. A suggested wording:

Dear Councillors Saxe and Matlow

Re: Yellow Creek - pedestrian bridge adjacent sinkhole

*I am writing to express my concern about a lack of logic and coordination in the current work to stabilise the creek channel below Summerhill Gardens. An area has been fenced off to execute that much needed work but **within that area**, there is an ever-growing sinkhole adjacent to the sole pedestrian bridge across Yellow Creek. Apparently, this is not in scope. This sinkhole has been growing with each rainstorm and is likely to consume the entire trail on the west side of pedestrian bridge before very much longer, which will cause collateral damage to the TRCA's work. This failure of coordination and to take a holistic view of an already barricaded area is short-sighted, disruptive and inefficient.*

Staff continues to attempt to erect barriers around the hole and the barriers keep falling in as the hole increases in size.

I would urge you, as Councillors who have oversight of this precious area of the City to work with City staff to address this illogic and stabilise this area while it is already in the closed off zone.

Thank you

HERITAGE

November 9 Deer Park heritage walking tour

We thank the real estate firm Heaps Estrin for inviting members of the Deer Park Residents Group to join the November 9 tour, which was advertised in our last Newsletter. The firm provides heritage tours of Toronto neighbourhoods.

About 30 of us met in Lawton Park where we were told that the Lawton was the original Yonge Street alignment, chosen to avoid the lumber mills in the valley to the north.

For those of you who missed the tour, here are the places to check out in your wanderings around our historically interesting neighbourhood. We have also added notes from an online walking tour designed by Lost Rivers which has many interesting walks and highlights historical information of various Toronto areas.

<https://www.lostrivers.ca/content/hilldale/deerpkoaks.html>

- **Christ Deer Park**, designed by George Moorehouse & King, 1923
- **Yorkminster Park Baptist Church**, designed by George Moorehouse & King, 1928
- **32 Heath "The Neuk,"** (Chadwick & Beckett, c.1910) John Palmer, the last owner of Lawton Park, built a house for his daughter, Mrs. Henry Baird, on his land. This large white brick house still stands here and is used today by the Canadian Mothercraft Society as a day care centre and school. Take a moment

to appreciate the sculpture ***“Mother and Child”*** (1947) by Florence Wyle, pioneer of the Canadian art scene, at the front door.



- **37, 39 & 41 Heath Street West, Alfred Hoskin House** built 1880; Altered and added to by Gabor and Popper, 1981. The eastern two units in this building #37 & 39 date back to 1880, when it was the first house to be built on the south side of Heath Street. # 41 was added in 1981 but has been designed so that it appears to be part of the original building. This house was first owned by Alfred Hoskin, barrister: Architects Peter Gabor and George Popper, who restored much of the original grandeur, were given an “Ontario Renews Award” for the renovation project.
- **50 Heath Street West**, designed by Laidlaw, 1923, An example of Frank Lloyd Wright’s influence on builders from about 1910 to 1930. The emphasis on geometry, with flat roof, deep eaves with square cornice, grouping of casement windows and strong corner piers with square-on-square motifs is characteristic of the Ontario Prairie style.
- **55 Heath Street West**, John Willis House, 1888 Note: Queen Anne Revival style. 888 This Victorian house with its steeply pitched roof, broken by an eyebrow dormer window, and two-storey bay, separated by a wooden scrollwork frieze is listed in The City of Toronto inventory of Heritage Properties for its

architectural importance. The stained-glass transoms in the lower bay are possibly the work of the first owner, John Willis, a stained-glass manufacturer

- **Oaklawn Gardens**, Cambridge Securities, 1954
- **76 Lonsdale Road**, Captain John Ford House, c.1875 (veranda remodelled by Horwood & White 1936). It was designated, under the Ontario Heritage Act as 'a place of architectural and historical value or interest' in 1997.
- **63 & 69 Lonsdale Road**, Lonsdale Road Cottages, 1908 First owner: Dr. Campbell Meyers, Meyers Hospital for Nervous Diseases
- **84 Duggan Avenue**, designed by Douglas Kertland, c.1920s Note: Built for Lawren Harris, first home to William and Gretchen Gurney
- **101 Lawton Boulevard** (Lawtonia Apartments – images below) designed by Douglas Kertland, 1929 When first built it contained 45 suites, including 5 seven room suites, underground parking, elevators. To note, its designer **Douglas Edwin Kertland** (November 23, 1887 – March 4, 1982) was a Canadian architect and an Olympic athlete, rowing in the 1908 summer Olympics. He was a coxswain of the Canadian boat, winning the bronze medal in the men's eight. See the former Lawtonia below:



Toronto Star Article 1929

Modern Fireproof Apartment House for Lawton Blvd.

Modern Fireproof Apartment House for Lawton Blvd.



ARCHITECTURAL MOTIF IS COLONIAL

Work has commenced on the modern fireproof apartment house to stand on the south side of Lawton Blvd. near Yonge St., an architect's perspective drawing of which is shown ABOVE. Douglas E. Kertland, winner of the recent contest in which 30 Toronto architects submitted designs for the new million dollar automotive building for the Canadian National Exhibition, is also responsible for this design and has sustained his reputation for graceful and pleasing proportions. The architectural motif is Colonial and the new structure, set as it is on a rise, should strike a restful note in Toronto's up-town development. The building will have frontage and depth of 110 feet and will be

of red brick construction with gray trimmings, base course and cornice of stone. It will contain 45 suites of from two to seven rooms, an outstanding feature of the new building being the provision for five seven-room suites each having two baths. A high conlonnaded front surmounted by a wrought iron railing adds a graceful note to the design. The new Lawtonia Apartments will, upon completion, offer an excellent view of the park which lies to the east of the apartment house site. In addition to the unsurpassed view, there will be the additional facilities of excellent light and plenty of sunshine. Garage accommodation for tenants has been provided at the rear where a garage runs

under the building. Transportation to upper floors will be effected by two high-speed elevators. Mr. Kertland states that all finishing and detail work will be of the finest and that lighting, plumbing and kitchen equipment will be the last word in modern efficiency. Heating will be supplied from a central heating plant in the basement and there will be mechanical refrigeration and electric ranges in all suites. Construction work is being undertaken by G. C. Benneit and Co., general contractors, and it is stated that the building will be ready for occupancy on November 1. Financed by a syndicate, whose identity is not divulged, the project represents an investment of \$250,000.

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