



July 2024 NEWSLETTER

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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Welcome to our last full newsletter of the season. It certainly has been a very busy period.

First, it was a pleasure to welcome a record number of you to our June 12 AGM. Thank you for your questions and engagement. Councillor Matlow conducted his usual engaging discussion on the community's concerns, with a particular focus on development and traffic. He noted the Province's overriding of historical planning processes, which has now greatly reduced the ability for residents to be consulted on applications and largely eliminated our ability to appeal decisions.

We also approved a change in our boundaries to include the Cottingham area between Avenue and Yonge (i.e. Alcorn, Walker, Birch and Cottingham) based on the support of those residents as well as our board.



The rest of the DPRG and this area share Councillor Matlow and many similar concerns so our looking forward to the involvement of these residents in the DPRG. Welcome Cottingham Square!

Also, thanks to all of you who took the time to complete the 2024 survey. Results showed traffic and development to be the top concerns for the community. We have posted the [survey results](#) to our website. We were particularly gratified at the number of you who volunteered to help us in our community to support and expand our activities to make the community better for all. We will be in touch to follow up on your interests as they relate to the area's priorities.

Finally, we wish to express our enormous gratitude to our retiring Board members for their important contributions to our community: Andrew Bodington for providing our communications to you and Chris Keating for leading us on issues including heritage preservation, leaf blowers, and quieter Air Canada planes overhead. And welcome new board member Richard Steele, who has interests in traffic issues and ravines.

Enjoy the Summer. We'll see you again in September.

Cathie Macdonald, President

DELISLE PARK UPDATE

Take the survey before July 16!

Following public consultation last fall on the broad vision for the planned park to the west of the One Delisle development, the City's project team developed two design concepts for the park. The concepts were presented at a virtual public meeting on June 26 and can be viewed on the project website: [New Park at 15 Delisle Avenue – City of Toronto](#). Once on the site click on 'Community Engagement Phase 2 – Design Options' to see the proposed objectives for the park and two options. The survey closes on July 16.

Following this period of consultation on the design concepts, the project will move to detailed design through the Fall of 2024. Current project timelines indicate construction for the park commencing late 2025 and completion 2026. This is likely subject to progress on the One Delisle development itself.

TRAFFIC SAFETY

Avenue Road Study Update

As many of you know, the City has been, via the Avenue Road study, seeking ways to improve safety, mobility and the streetscape on the stretch of Avenue Road between Bloor and St. Clair. See the City's Avenue Road project website [Avenue Road Study – City of Toronto](#) for details of the proposals for interim changes noted above and the results of consultation undertaken in Fall 2023.

Given that the full rebuild of Avenue Road is not currently planned for at least ten years, the City has developed a series of interim recommendations coming out of the public consultations held last Fall. They are, by road section:

Avenue Road between Bloor and Davenport

Bike lanes to be installed both north and southbound on this section of the road, as part of the City's broader cycling infrastructure plan. These recommendations were approved at Council on June 26.

Avenue Road between Davenport and Dupont

On June 26, Council also approved recommendations to reduce vehicle lanes from six to four (with additional turning lanes southbound at Davenport and northbound at Dupont), with pedestrian buffers, including parking spaces, curb extensions at intersections and the addition of a special pedestrian crossing at Ramsden Park that operates in conjunction with the lights at Dupont and Davenport.

The recommendation to install a median between Roxborough and Dupont was removed from the package after strong objections from residents in the surrounding area including the DPRG, as it would have prevented through traffic between those streets, driving traffic to east/west streets further north to local streets such as Farnham and Balmoral.

Council also agreed with our recommendation for further study of traffic impacts and has requested staff to "monitor and mitigate traffic infiltration through nearby residential streets by conducting traffic counts and observations, identifying and recommending actions to mitigate neighbourhood traffic infiltration, where appropriate, and publishing data and updates on the project website".

Avenue Road between Dupont and St Clair

This area is different from the two southern sections, with different street patterns including the long Balmoral and Farnham blocks and two schools. The Avenue Road Study proposed widened sidewalks with a reduction from six to four vehicle lanes (plus turning lanes).

Councillor Matlow will be holding further consultations in the fall regarding these proposals with the affected communities – the DPRG area, which now includes the Cottingham area, Rathnelly and South Hill - to develop consensus on recommendations to be brought forward to Council. Stay tuned for opportunities to participate.

UPDATE

As you are aware, our part of Avenue Road has recently been disrupted by the loss of two traffic lanes for the construction of the Amica project. This disruption is expected to take two or three years. Your Board members expedited the necessary corrections to the confusing lane markings that caused the traffic jams.

RAVINES AND PARKS

Calling all green (and just plain old interested) thumbs

Toronto Nature Stewards (<https://torontonaturestewards.org/what-is-tns/>) (TNS) with the agreement of the City of Toronto Urban Forestry Division, runs a community-based ecological restoration program on public land in ravines and natural areas. Sites are managed by Lead Stewards who are trained by TNS, recruit volunteers from the community, follow agreed-upon protocols for ecological restoration, and report their stewardship activities.

Our parks and ravines are increasingly overrun with invasive species and our biodiversity is in decline. TNS provides us a way to work locally to change this trajectory. It is a community-driven organisation, that started with 9 sites in 2021, and is now overseeing 42 sites across the city with more than 145 Lead Stewards and close to 1000 volunteer stewards.

On this note, the restoration of David Balfour Park, one of the City's oldest public recreation spaces in continuous use - along with High Park and Queen's Park - has been a disappointment and contractor warranties are now expired. Follow-up with the City via the Midtown Ravine Group and the Friends of David Balfour Park is ongoing.

While we cannot address the issues in the body of the Park, the perimeter is overrun with invasive species such as garlic mustard, burdock and thistle to name but a few, and could be considered as a site for a stewardship program. We are looking for a volunteer Lead Steward (or two) to prepare the fairly simple application to Toronto Nature Stewards, and if successful, to lead a team to steward the site on at least a

weekly basis from Spring 2025. For Lead Stewards a 20-hour training program over 10 weeks is provided commencing in January. A further commitment of 3 hours a week during the spring/summer is required. Further details can be found via this link: <https://torontonaturestewards.org/get-involved/become-a-lead-steward/>

If you are interested in helping nature and biodiversity in our community, please write to info@deerparkresidents.ca.

Climate-Friendly Gardening – One Gardener’s Story

By Cynthia Crysler, DPRG Board Member



Canada Anemone



Christmas Fern

A few years ago, I started to get more engaged with climate change concerns, in particular the loss of native biodiversity and how that is affecting our ravines, and in turn the increasing heat in the city. When I looked at my garden, I realized there were quite a few things I could do differently that would help in the challenge of increasing native plant biodiversity - here are my top tips, which apply to gardens and to pots of plants outside or, even, inside.

1. Avoid planting ‘invasives’ and remove them if you do have them.
These are plants that are not native to the area and can out-compete or smother native plants. They are particularly harmful in or near natural spaces like ravines and parks and even at a distance, such plant material can make its way into the ravines and cause problems. There are already lots of invasives causing harm in our parks and ravines. For my part, I decided to start removing all the ivy and euonymus that are in my garden to reduce the risk.

2. Plant Native Species (trees/shrubs/other plants)

Native species are good for biodiversity and giving native insects and birds stop-over spots as they travel between natural spaces. Ultimately, they maintain the planet for humans. This can be fun as they bring more butterflies into your garden. It is important to select plants that are right for the soil and sun/shade conditions - if the plants fit the spot, then once established, they shouldn't require regular watering

3. Use Peat-free soil

This is a hard one but important to have on your radar. If you buy soil in a bag, there is a very good chance it has some peat in it. Peat bogs are important carbon sinks and the digging of peat (for development and soil) damages rare habitat as well as releasing carbon. If you need to buy soil, see if you can find peat-free soil, or at least ask about it. In the UK, laws will be in place to prohibit sale of some peat-containing products by 2027, though others will be exempt until 2030. We have no such legislation pending, even though we have a larger percentage of the world's peat bogs.

4. Embrace 'No dig'

Digging soil releases carbon and breaks up the soil structure. There are many who believe that generally digging up soil is not helpful to growing plants and advocate minimal holes - this means less need to dig in soil from outside your garden. Adding compost on top of the soil will add nutrients and retain moisture, avoiding the need for frequent watering even in very hot spells. It is also easier than digging in soil regularly.

5. Say 'Yes' to 'Messy Gardening'

Avoid excessive clean up as many native and helpful creatures inhabit leaf litter, which is also a good source of nutrients for the soil. I find there is a limit to this with a small backyard compared to the 4 large trees dumping leaves in the fall so I use as much as possible to cover the beds and under trees, which means I clean up less (less work is always good.) I leave a pile of branches out of the way for creatures who like them for over-wintering. Messy gardening also means limited leaf blowing (preferably not gas-powered) as leaf blowing disrupts soil, dust and insects from doing their jobs - if necessary, the quiet work of a rake has less impact.

6. Consider making your own compost

A great way to avoid having to buy soil (with the likely peat included), increase nutrients for your plants, use up excess leaves, and reduce what goes out in your green bin (it is normally recommended to avoid meat and fat in a home compost to avoid racoons and rats so there will still be something for the green bin).

Small steps make a difference! I started with a compost bin and messy gardening and am slowly transitioning my non-native invasive plants to native plants.

HERITAGE

The street where you live

By Lyne Kurylo, DPRG member



Distinctive acorn topped Toronto street sign

What could be more important than the name of your street? But do you know its meaning or the story behind its name? Street signs in Toronto display the names of original property owners, places and people in the home country, royalty, officials and politicians, business people, artists, historic events, war heroes and geographical features. The history of the city and its people is told in street signs. Here is a quick look into the fascinating stories of Deer Park streets.

Deer Park was the name of Agnes Wallace Heath's estate where a herd of deer roamed. An intrepid widow from Scotland, Mrs. Heath arrived in Toronto with her children in 1836 and purchased a 40-acre property bounded by St. Clair, Yonge, Avenue Road and Lonsdale Road. Her house on Heath Street was reached from St. Clair by a road called Marlborough Crescent. In 1909 it was renamed Deer Park Crescent. Lonsdale Road was named in 1905 for the Earl of Lonsdale, an English baronet and viscount of the Lowther family.

When Mrs. Heath moved to Cobourg in 1844, her son Charles Heath divided up the property for sale. Colonel Weymouth Schreiber purchased one of the lots between Heath Street and St. Clair and when he started subdividing it in 1874, he laid out

Delisle Avenue, naming it for his wife Harriet De Lisle whose family had governed the island of Guernsey for hundreds of years. He located his own house on the south side of St. Clair Avenue West. It subsequently became the Granite Club which was demolished to make way for Granite Place at 61-63 St. Clair Avenue West.

The Grainger family owned a farm at St. Clair Avenue West and Avenue Road in the second half of the 19th century. Their young son Albert Grainger had adopted the name St. Clare (but spelled it St. Clair) for a character in Uncle Tom's Cabin. For a lark, he nailed a sign with his new name to a tree on the farm. Surveyors laying out the Third Concession Road saw the sign and assumed St. Clair Avenue was the intended street name.



Summer Hill House 1842

Summer Hill house, designed by renowned architect John Howard (Colborne Lodge), was the centrepiece of a 200-acre property known as Summer Hill Spring Park and Pleasure Grounds. After an eventful history, in 1890 the house became 94-96 Summerhill Avenue and with the further development of the area was demolished in 1952. The converted coach house remains in the rear of 38 Summerhill Gardens.

Farnham Lodge was built for an English chemist, Edward Hooper, and named after his boyhood home in Surrey, England. Arriving in York (Toronto) in 1832, he became the eventual proprietor of 6 drug stores. In 1844 he bought 6 acres between Yonge and Avenue Road and established his house and farm. When the land changed hands in 1899, the new owner arranged for a public street to lead to his property, calling it Farnham Avenue after Hooper's house which, by the way, still survives.

Sources:

Summerhill Residents Association website

Toronto Street Names, by Leonard Wise and Allan Gould, Firefly Books, 2000

A Historical Walking Tour of Deer Park by Joan C. Kinsella, Toronto Public Library, 1996

OUR COMMUNITY

One Dedicated Citizen

By John Plumadore, Past President DPRG and current member



John Plumadore, Past President DPRG and Elizabeth Mason, long-time DPRG Member

Over the years, Deer Park has been lucky to have some committed and engaged community members to represent the area's needs and concerns.

Elizabeth Mason is one such - a long-time member of the DPRG, who was recruited by former City Councillor, Howard Joy. A Torontonians and Havergal Old Girl/Alum, she has travelled widely and held many interesting posts during a long career.

Throughout her busy career she continued her dedication to fundraising and volunteerism.

Elizabeth traces her inclination to be generous and committed to her student days at Havergal where, as one of the few live-in students, she was engaged by staff. What she took away was simple, “We’re not put on this earth to be isolated and not think of other people. I don’t think we can live without doing something for someone else”

Elizabeth joined the DPRG in the 70’s and served for many years as our representative for Toronto Police Services Division 53, on the Community Police Liaison Committee. She recruited members, kept them informed on local policing issues and provided feedback to the community.

During her tenure Elizabeth attended divisional meetings for Toronto Police Services and later took part in DPRG ‘tenant action committee’ forums as a tenant representative. Elizabeth is soft spoken but made her points come across through persistent questioning about tenant issues in a neighbourhood that has a higher percentage of tenants than homeowners.

Elizabeth felt it was her responsibility to take an active role as a citizen. “If you live in a community like this you have to be involved.”

Her lifelong drive was honed by a life of travel, volunteerism and interesting people. Elizabeth had working stints in Yemen, Kenya (at the Tea Hotel in Kericho), as well as in England and Bermuda with a stop in Hong Kong. She continued fundraising as a side interest, particularly in Aden, Yemen in their tourism sector, learning along the way how to raise money for worthy causes. While in Montreal, during Expo 67, she worked as the Director of the Donation Department for Montreal Children’s Hospital and continued her work in that sector at the Hillcrest Hospital (now the Toronto Rehabilitation Centre). She also worked for Gerald Durrell, the well-known British naturalist, writer, zookeeper, conservationist, and television presenter, who founded the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust.

For many years now, she has spent her summers in Muskoka on an island that her grandparents bought in 1885, listening to the loons, cooking on a wood stove and using solar power for lighting – while dealing with a very curious local member of the bear population.

As citizens we rely on the dedication of people such as Elizabeth Mason and we are grateful for her generosity with her experience and thoughtfulness.



The voice
of our
community