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SOUTH ROSEDALE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

At the time of writing and in contrast to recent past years, Winter has truly felt like a real Toronto one this year and we can only hope that Spring is upon us.

The SRRA continues to be very involved with a number of neighbourhood residential and commercial development matters which have had serious implications for the District Heritage designation and character of South Rosedale. Several have gone to the Ontario Municipal Board ("OMB") and as a result, the SRRA has incurred substantial legal and planning expenses to represent the Association's position.

We also continue to monitor and respond to the proposed North St. James Town development to our immediate south and the significant visual impact and pressure on local infrastructure that a project of this scale will have. We have recently been informed by City Planning Staff that a revised proposal has been received from the developer. It is our intention to review the changes and respond accordingly.

On a more positive note, I am pleased to confirm that the "Gates to South Rosedale" on Crescent Road have become a reality. The SRRA will formally dedicate the gates in May and honour long-time resident Raymond Cowling, whose vision and generous financial contribution made this beautiful project happen.

This Newsletter also contains details for your annual SRRA membership renewal. We encourage all South Rosedale residents to renew their membership for 2013, or join the Association if they have not previously done so. In addition to the basic \$75 membership fee, many members include an extra financial contribution which is much appreciated in funding the Association's activities and more specifically, the expenditures arising from development and heritage issues noted above.

The Association's Board is committed to providing the South Rosedale community with a strong voice relative to the area's unique position as one of Toronto's most desirable residential communities. I personally welcome the contact of residents who may have any concern as it relates to our neighborhood.

David M. Townley, CA, CF
President



Photo of the Eastern Comma Butterfly taken by:
Frederick K. Larkin

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THE NORTH ST. JAMES TOWN HIGHRISE PROJECT RESURFACES

In August 2010, legal counsel for Lanterra Developments Ltd. (as agents for "Bloor Parliament Investments Ltd.") filed an Application for a Zoning By-law and Official Plan Amendment to obtain the City of Toronto's permission to proceed with a major transformation of Howard Street between Sherbourne and Parliament Street.

Howard Street is the first street south of Bloor Street East. It is located immediately to the north of the development known as St. James Town, an immense rectangle of 19 apartment buildings ranging in height from 19 – 32 storeys. St. James Town is bounded by Sherbourne Street to the West, Wellesley Street to the South, Parliament Street to the East, and Howard Street to the North.

According to published reports, St. James Town is the most densely populated area in Canada. It was constructed in the 1960s as a result of a comprehensive land assembly by several ownership interests, including the Bleeman, Grossman and Silver development families. Following this assembly, the existing housing stock in the area was demolished to make way for the apartment towers that have been the subject of numerous reports and studies. Many of these reports have been highly critical of the planning principles followed in the St. James Town Development. Others have documented the undue stress placed upon existing City and Community Services by the level of density which exists in St. James Town, and have cautioned a conservative approach to any further development in the area. Historically, the City itself has recognized the need for increased social services and infrastructure in St. James Town, and the adverse effects of past development mistakes upon the residents who live there.

Howard Street is the last undeveloped block in the St. James Town area. There seems to be a consensus that some development is appropriate, and indeed welcome. These views are shared by the SRRRA, as reflected in the preliminary position paper posted on the SRRRA website. However, over the past two years, many residents have emphasized the importance of learning from past mistakes and ensuring that this time the elected officials and Planning Staff responsible for making decisions about what should be permitted for the last developable land in St. James Town "get it right".

According to title searches conducted by the SRRRA, much of the property now sought to be developed appears to be held (through a patch work of private holding companies) by some of the same family ownership interests who developed St. James Town over fifty years ago. It appears that these interests have held on to these lands (including the dilapidated, vacant heritage properties on Glen Road), awaiting the right time to seek the City's permission to develop them.

While the details of the underlying arrangements are not known, the current development appears to be a joint venture between Lanterra and these historical families. In this context, the labeling of the Howard Street proposals as the "Lanterra Development" seems inaccurate. The new project is more appropriately called the "Lanterra—North St. James Town Expansion Project".

MAJOR CONCERNS WITH PROJECT REMAIN

The original development Application sought permission to change the existing "Neighbourhood" designation applicable to most of Howard Street (which limits new development to 4 storeys in height) to allow the construction of four large condominium buildings—a 50 storey tower at the northeast corner of Howard and Sherbourne, and 3 towers of 55, 46, and 53 storeys on the north side of the eastern segment of this block.

In December 2012, Lanterra filed an Amended Application with the City. This was the culmination of a lengthy process of so-called "consultation". It is beyond the scope of this article to describe all of the history over the past two years: interested readers should review the prior Newsletter articles as well as the updated chronology posted on the SRRRA website. Suffice to say, the SRRRA believes that the processes followed have been highly unsatisfactory.

If granted, the Amended Application would permit the construction of four condominium towers on the development site—a 47 storey tower on the northeast corner of Howard and Sherbourne Street, and three further towers of 12, 37, and 45 storeys on the eastern most segment of the block at Parliament Street.

In other words, the height for one of the three towers on the eastern end of Howard Street has been reduced to 12 storeys, in line with the planning parameters recommended in the Tall Buildings Report referred to in prior Newsletter articles. However, the height now proposed for the other two towers on this part of the block is 37 and 45 storeys. This is far in excess of the planning recommendations which were made to and initially adopted by the Toronto and East York Community Council. It represents a reduction of zero storeys and two storeys from what Lanterra informally suggested for these two towers over a year ago.

While the current proposal represents a reduction in building height and number of condominium units from the original plan submitted to the City, the SRRRA is of the view that the proposed development remains inappropriate and is inconsistent with proper planning principles. The size and scope of the revised plan represents a very fundamental change to the "Neighbourhood" designation currently applicable to most of the affected lands.

The height of the proposed towers is still grossly in excess of what had been recommended by Senior City Planning Staff as being appropriate in the Tall Buildings Study commissioned by the City to help set criteria for exactly this type of proposal. The Amended Application also fails to adequately take into account the particular location and unique context in which the proposed development is being advanced, and the existence of numerous studies which would suggest that a more restrained intensification should be called for in the area in question.

Finally, the SRRRA is extremely concerned by several acts of political interference which in our opinion have distorted and compromised the planning process, and by the refusal of the developer to honour promises made on its behalf to consult affected residents in a meaningful way.

We understand that similar concerns are shared by many of the residents who live on or near Howard Street in the St. James Town area, with whom the SRRA Board has been in regular contact as this process has unfolded over the last two years.

SRRA TAKING ACTION TO ADDRESS CONCERNS

Given the passage of events and a clear message from City Planning Staff that the Project is nearing political approval, the SRRA intends to act immediately.

First, we have been invited by our Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam to advise her of the SRRA's reaction to the recently filed Amended Application. In the past, Councillor Wong-Tam has indicated that she shares many of the concerns held by the SRRA and has voiced her support for several of the issues we have attempted to raise. The SRRA intends to respond to Ms. Wong-Tam's invitation immediately with a detailed brief which will document the basis for our concerns and the professional planning advice we have obtained.

Second, in the coming weeks, the SRRA will follow up with the professional advisers who have already been retained and consulted about these issues to determine the most effective way to respond to the Amended Application, including if necessary, planning for a contested Hearing at the OMB.

Third, although our efforts to date have been ignored and rebuffed, we intend to reach out to the proponents of the development to determine whether any room for reasonable dialogue exists.

Fourth, we plan to meet with other ratepayer/residents groups who have expressed an interest in the Project, and, more generally, believe that it is important that the City adhere to its own studies and recommendations.

Fifth, we will be liaising with appropriate community representatives in St. James Town to coordinate our responses. If requested, we intend to assist them in accessing legal and other resources to effectively make their views heard, both at the political level, and if necessary, in their own right at any OMB proceedings which occur.

Sixth, the SRRA has been contacted by media representatives who have expressed an interest in writing a story about this Project. We plan to follow up, as we believe that putting all of the facts about the Project, its history, and the so-called consultation into the public realm will demonstrate the flaws in the process and the need for substantive changes to the Project before any approval.

Finally, WE INTEND TO ARRANGE A TOWN HALL MEETING SHORTLY ABOUT THIS DEVELOPMENT.

FURTHER NOTIFICATION ABOUT THIS MEETING WILL FOLLOW.

The Gates to South Rosedale Are in Place – Time for a Celebration!

The "Gates to South Rosedale," first announced in the SRRA's Fall 2012 Newsletter, have become a physical reality.

For pedestrians, cyclists and drivers alike, one cannot help but notice the handsome Indiana limestone pillars which now flank either side of Crescent Road, just east of the Rosedale Subway Station. The Gates were constructed in late January/early February by Brennan Custom Homes Inc. after the City realigned the road and modified the curb and sidewalk. Some minor construction and landscaping details remain to be completed.



Rosedale Gates

The SRRA will hold a formal dedication ceremony and public reception on Saturday, May 25th to honour Mr. Ray Cowling, whose initiative, financial generosity and passion for his South Rosedale neighbourhood made this happen.

The SRRA is currently working with the office of Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam and the City Protocol Department around the celebration details for this project, which was two decades in the making. More information on the event will be provided after the details are finalized.

Hiring a Handyman: Be Aware

Homeowners are urged to be wary when hiring a handyman for odd jobs around the house.

The SRRA has received numerous reports of a handyman who goes by the name "Daniel," who offers to do odd jobs such as cleaning eavestroughs and windows. He typically claims to have done work for other nearby residents, often identifies them by name and requests payment in advance.

In many circumstances, the promised work is undone or uncompleted after payment. In addition, there are numerous reports of missing ladders, tools and other items.

Mayfair 2013: Mayfair Around the World

Mayfair 2013 will celebrate cultures, costumes and food from around the world. So get ready to embark on a voyage of adventure at Rosedale Park on Friday, May 10th (5-9 p.m.) and Saturday, May 11th (all day).

In case you haven't been to Mayfair in the last couple of years, the Friday evening is a giant neighbourhood party you shouldn't miss. The carnival rides will all be running, and they look great under the lights! There'll be a special re-gifting Silent Auction. All the Mayfair food venues will be open. And the Beer Garden will be operating from 5 p.m. till closing – a great place to meet friends!

Saturday morning starts with the Mayfair Parade, which collects kids and families from Rosedale and Moore Park, arriving in the park at 9 a.m. There will be prizes for kids in the parade who dress up in costumes from other parts of the world.

The day continues with rides for all ages, games with awesome prizes, bingo, home baking, track and field events, and the Kiddie Zone in the rink - with bouncy castles, face painting, wacky hair, the Round the World pavilion, and the silent auction. Plus there is the beer garden, food court, live music on the main stage... and more!

All this happens only because over 1,000 volunteers make it possible. If you can volunteer at Mayfair please call the Volunteer Hotline at (416) 922-3714 ext 310, or email Katharine Lake-Berz, at volunteer@mooredale.on.ca.

Dog Owners: Do the Right Thing

Ahh Spring, birds chirping, flowers bursting from the earth, melting snow and....DOG POOP!

All of us know that we should pick up after our pooch. Not only is it the right thing to do, but it's also the law. But for some reason, some people don't make the reach. True, it's not the most pleasant of tasks. But if you own a dog, it comes with the territory.

Even with all the development and other issues facing South Rosedale, the dog poop left behind by inconsiderate pet owners is one of the top complaints in our neighbourhood.

For those that only pick up when someone else is around, remember that "if a tree falls in the forest and no one else is around, it still makes a sound." And here's another little thing that gets under the skin of many homeowners: just because you pick up doesn't mean you can lay your "gift" on top of someone's leaf bags. Please, take it back to your own garbage bin or leave it in one of the City trash cans.

BRANKSOME HALL SCHOOL – GARBAGE COMPACTOR UPDATE

The City's Planning Staff has confirmed that certain conditions will be legally secured as part of Branksome Hall School's Site Plan to relocate the two large garbage compactors currently located on the School's ravine property.

In the Fall of 2012, the SRRA had strongly objected along with many surrounding neighbours to the Park Road location for the compactors, as they are highly visible from Park Road. As noted in the Fall Newsletter, the SRRA met with senior members of the School's Administration and their project architect to express our concern and the need to explore alternative locations. These concerns were also shared with the City Planning Department.



Photo: Garbage compactors behind fence (Branksome Hall)

City Staff advise that the garbage compactors will be allowed to remain in their current location as a "temporary condition" pending completion of the new Athletics and Wellness Centre, but in any event, no later than the Fall of 2014.

The compactors will be permanently moved to a location accessible for service from Mt. Pleasant Road. In addition, the asphalt pad currently inside the Waldie Gates on Park Road will be removed and the area re-naturalized with grass and additional tree plantings.

The SRRA is pleased that the School has accommodated the concerns of both the Association and the neighbours, and that City Planning Staff have enforced the relocation plan and natural ravine remediation requirement as part of the overall School Site Plan.

Spring = Tree Planting Time in South Rosedale

It's time to start thinking about planting a new tree on your property.

The magnificent trees that give so much beauty and character to our South Rosedale streetscape are rapidly succumbing to old age. Individual property owners are urged to take action to fill newly formed and long existing gaps in the urban forest.

Front yards: The City's Urban Forestry Services plants trees on publicly owned street allowances fronting residential properties. Best of all, it's free! To order a tree, visit http://www.toronto.ca/trees/pdfs/FreeTree_Final.pdf or call 311.

Back yards: If you would like to plant a tree in your back yard, an excellent resource is LEAF (Local Enhancement and Appreciation of Forests), a non-profit group dedicated to improving Toronto's urban forest.

LEAF offers subsidized backyard tree planting, including on-site advice on appropriate species and planting location, a 1.2 to 1.8m tall native tree, and planting services. Native shrubs are also available. Contact LEAF at 416-413-9244 or at www.yourleaf.org.

If you want to plant a larger tree, there are several local nurseries and services to choose from.

As a general guideline, the best times to plant trees are Spring and Fall, before and after they are in leaf.

New Initiatives to Improve Our Trails and Ravines

Two projects are underway to improve the ravines and trails that run through South Rosedale and connect with other parts of the City.

Ravine Hillside Remediation Initiative

SRRA has joined forces with four neighbouring residents' associations in a ravine hillside remediation program.

The widespread incursion of invasive tree and plant species such as the Norway Maple has caused significant hillside erosion, topsoil loss and ravine slope degradation. This not only harms the visual beauty of the ravines, but also increases the risk of landslides.

The initiative, still in the early stages, is exploring ways to engage private ravine landowners to reforest and replant the slopes with native species and reinforce the ravine hillsides to prevent erosion. The project working group, which includes residents' associations representing Moore Park, North Rosedale, Bennington Heights, Governor's Bridge and South Rosedale, seeks to harmonize its activities with initiatives to improve ravine hillsides on public lands as well.



Photo: Ravine Slope with fallen trees

One of the first activities is to identify current best practices for hillside remediation, in particular drawing on the experiences of private and public landowners that have started, or successfully completed remediation projects.

For example, the shareholders at 7 Thornwood Road Apartments Ltd. (a co-operative) have approved funding for a seven year Ravine Restoration Plan in its privately owned section of the Vale of Avoca ravine, overlooking David A. Balfour Park. The project includes reforestation, erosion control and the removal of invasive plant species.

The broader initiative will also involve information gathering, engaging the support and assistance of the City and other public institutions, developing an overall plan, educating landowners about the issues and solutions, and ultimately implementation.

Kay Gardner Beltline Improvements

The ravine remediation project coincides with a City initiative to enhance the Kay Gardner Beltline, which connects to South Rosedale via the Rosedale Ravine/Mud Creek trail system.

The Beltline effort seeks to overcome years of heavy use and improper drainage that have caused the trail and adjacent natural areas to deteriorate. In addition, it will provide solutions to problems arising from the trail's original design. The problems include a lack of continuity, confusing directions, and unsafe road crossings.

More information on the project is available at www.toronto.ca/involved/projects/kay-gardner_beltline/index.htm.

SRRA Resumes Push for Park After TTC Suspends Rosedale Condo Plan

The TTC and Build Toronto have pulled back from plans to revive a condominium development on the Rosedale Subway Station lands. The decision came after the SRRA voiced strong opposition to a proposed mid-rise structure on the site.

A Build Toronto senior executive advised by email that, "the development of this site at this time is not feasible as the range of community, site, heritage and technical issues would be extremely difficult to overcome."

While this decision takes immediate development pressure off the site, the SRRA continues to push for expanded and enhanced parkland on the site that will provide a green oasis on the increasingly dense Yonge Street corridor while also permanently blocking development there.

The SRRA recently met with staff in Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam's office to explore new opportunities for a park that would encompass much of the Rosedale Subway Station lands and the adjacent Budd Sugarman Park. The vision also calls for integration of the new parkland with Ramsden Park on the West side of Yonge. This coincides with a City initiative to refurbish Ramsden Park in 2014.

Past development plans for the Rosedale Subway Station have encountered strong opposition from SRRA and residents in other nearby communities. Two previous proposals were rejected by the Ontario Municipal Board following interventions by SRRA and others.

The Rosedale Subway Station is a designated heritage property that is zoned G (green space). The land in front of the Station, along with the adjacent Budd Sugarman and Ramsden Parks, is the only substantial break from the virtually continuous urban development along Yonge Street from St. Clair to the waterfront.

Community Clean Up Day: April 20, 2013

South Rosedale's annual spring clean up is just around the corner.

As the snow gives way to warmer weather, the SRRA is once again organizing Community Clean-Up Day. All residents are invited to join us on Saturday morning, April 20 at two locations – Craighigh Gardens and the Rosedale Subway Station.

Community Clean-Up Day depends for its success on the efforts of volunteers. Participants spend an hour or two picking up litter and debris that has accumulated over the Winter.

The Clean Up starts at 10 a.m. on April 20th. Garbage bags will be provided.

We hope to see you there!

WANTED: YOUR OPINION

WE WANT YOUR OPINION ON HIGH-RISE DEVELOPMENT. PLANNING AND DISCUSSIONS ARE MOVING FORWARD ON A NUMBER OF HIGH-RISE CONDOMINIUM DEVELOPMENTS ON THE BORDERS OF SOUTH ROSEDALE.

PLEASE TELL US WHAT YOU THINK BY CLICKING ON THE LINK ON OUR HOME PAGE AT:
WWW.SOUTHROSEDALE.ORG.

WE WILL SHARE YOUR VIEWS IN OUR
NEXT NEWSLETTER.

MEMBERSHIP IN SRRA

It is springtime, so it is the time for renewing your membership in SRRA and for joining our organization if you are not already a member. Enclosed with this newsletter is a letter from SRRA President David Townley describing the SRRA's work on behalf of South Rosedale residents, along with the Notice of Dues.

Please join or renew your membership to keep your Association strong and vibrant!

We are planning a membership drive. If you would like to volunteer to talk to neighbours on your street about the SRRA, please send an email to secretary@southrosedale.org.

We welcome your input and participation!
www.southrosedale.org

SRRA Board of Directors, 2013

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Visit www.southrosedale.org for information about SRRA and news about your neighbourhood.