



SOUTH ROSEDALE RATEPAYERS' ASSOCIATION

# NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2007

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It is a wonderful time of year in South Rosedale as Spring turns to Summer and we are able to enjoy every shade of green in the spectrum.

This issue of the Newsletter addresses a number of concerns that have been brought to our attention by local residents, including:

- The removal of boulevard trees;
- The demolition of houses;
- The Don Valley Transportation Master Plan;
- The enforcement of City by-laws.

We are pleased to report that our annual renewal of SRRA memberships is progressing well with many members having included an extra financial contribution for special projects, which is much appreciated. Our thanks to residents who have renewed their membership and a warm welcome to those who have joined the SRRA.

We would also like to thank everyone who participated in the community clean-up day, held in conjunction with Earth Day, on Saturday, April 21st. Enthusiastic volunteers joined to remove litter and debris from the Rosedale subway station area, the ravine and Craighleigh Gardens.

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, C.A.*

*President*



## WHAT'S INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

**DVTMP "ON HOLD"**  
**URBAN FOREST UPKEEP**  
**BYLAW ENFORCEMENT**

**HERITAGE GRANT**  
**APPLICATIONS DUE**  
**JUNE 18<sup>TH</sup>, 2007**

## THE FALL OF THE HOUSES OF ROSEDALE

The Directors of the SRRA as well as many South Rosedale residents have been puzzled and frustrated by the extreme difference in community consultation between that required for demolition of a house when compared to a proposed minor variance to the building and zoning by-laws.

In a request for a minor variance, a Notice is posted by the City and all householders within 400 feet of the subject property are notified in writing of the request at least two weeks before the Public Hearing is held in a forum known as the Committee of Adjustment (“C of A”). Immediately impacted residents can make written submissions and/or ask questions and make presentations at the C of A Hearing. Decisions by the Committee of Adjustment can be appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board by either the Applicant or neighbours. The subject matter of this open and highly consultative process can be as minor as a request for a 15 square metre gable addition.

In contrast, for a demolition permit to be issued, the only requirements are that a Notice be posted and a building permit for a replacement building be approved and issued. No notification is required to be sent to immediately affected households. The reason for this vast difference in consultation is complicated, but it basically arises from the fact that each re-development process is governed by a different provincial act, with little/no coordination between the two.

Over the past several years very few demolition permits were granted in South Rosedale and, when they were, the SRRA has tried to mitigate this situation by informally arranging notices of demolition applications to be sent to neighbours by the local

## CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY IN SOUTH ROSEDALE

Summer is construction season, so please be aware of the following planned activities:

**ROAD RESURFACING:** Crescent Road (East of Cluny), South Drive and Rowanwood Avenue (Yonge to Thornwood) are being resurfaced, with work being scheduled for completion by early June.

**ROSEDALE SUBWAY STATION:** Both the north- and south-bound platforms are being rebuilt, commencing in July. Work is scheduled to keep the station fully operational, but please watch for TTC-generated updates on progress.

Councillor’s office. Residents and the SRRA could not prevent a demolition, but they could express opinions and perhaps influence the design of replacement buildings: not a perfect solution but it encouraged dialogue between parties.

This situation has slowly begun to change because of the creation of the South Rosedale Heritage Conservation District and the general rise in downtown property values.

A heritage district designation combined with a central urban location almost guarantees an increase in property values. As property values rise, the ratio of location and lot value relative to building value increases. This is especially true for unrated houses in the heritage district.

To the residents on a street, the demolition of even an unrated house is likely to be controversial, and to have it occur without any effective notice and/or consultation adds insult to injury.

A recent example occurred on Pricefield Road. An unrated house was sold and was ultimately torn down. Even though the purchaser of the property met the minimum requirements for demolition, the process was very disturbing and upsetting to the immediate neighbours.

The Board of the SRRA will continue trying to improve the communication process regarding demolition and replacement of South Rosedale homes.

## TORONTO HERITAGE GRANT PROGRAM

The Toronto Heritage Grant Program has been set up to encourage the conservation of buildings with heritage designations. It is administered by the Heritage Preservation Services Unit of the City Planning Division.

Grant funds are provided to owners of heritage rated properties to preserve the exterior façades. Up to 50% of the estimated cost of conservation work may be covered by the grant (to a maximum amount of \$10, 000 for individual residential properties).

To be eligible you must complete the required application form and comply with the requirements set out by the Heritage Preservation Service. If you are interested in this program please visit the website at [www.toronto.ca/heritage-preservation/grants](http://www.toronto.ca/heritage-preservation/grants) or call (416) 338-1078. A reminder that the deadline for applications is the 18th of June.

## BY-LAW CONFUSION

At first glance, many land use, zoning and land development disputes in South Rosedale appear to be private property disputes between neighbours. However, these are often not disputes but simply involve property owners intentionally or unintentionally doing something the by-laws prohibit. Thus, the ultimate impact is on the wider community, not only the immediate neighbours. But the perception persists that most situations are “private property disputes”. There are at least four reasons for this.

**1. ENFORCEMENT:** City officials maintain that they do not have the staff to monitor by-law violations and then achieve enforcement. Thus they assert that the process of enforcement must be initiated by complaints. This complaints-based system is ineffective because residents are hesitant about complaining (a.k.a. snitching) on their neighbours, even though they may be irritated, even incensed, by some situations. Consequently, residents often urge the ratepayers’ association to become the “complaining neighbour” when they believe a by-law or policy violation has occurred or seems to be imminent. In this case, the ratepayers’ association can hardly ignore the member residents’ concern.

**2. PROCESS:** The spacial arrangements at The Committee of Adjustments accentuate the perceived dispute between neighbours by setting up the room with the Minor Variance appellant on one side and the opponents/complainants on the other. There is probably no other way to arrange the facility but it does emphasize an adversarial quality that is really not at the heart of the Committee’s role: to work out something reasonable.

**3. INTERPRETATION:** City Councillors may interpret complaints about by-law violations as disputes between neighbours when they really do have broader impacts on the community. They may inadvertently support damaging exemptions to the by-laws; for example recently a Councillor supported a wall system that was almost 100% in excess of the permitted height because it was viewed as just a “private fence dispute.”

**4. PRIORITY:** Even when complaints are submitted to City departments, they may be dismissed as trivial, low priority, or unenforceable. There may be no response from the City officials responsible for the by-law and the complaints apparently disappear. Our local Councillor has described the departmental responses to complaints about front yard parking as “appalling.”

What does this mean to residents of South Rosedale who see what might be violations of building, landscape or land use by-laws? The Directors of the South Rosedale Ratepayers’ Association urge you to either contact Ryan Lahr (416-392-7903) at Kyle Rae’s office or David Townley, SRRA President dtownley@ccwi.ca to take the issue forward.

## DON VALLEY TRANSPORTATION MASTER PLAN

Due to pressure from both the SRRA and the Drumsnab/Castle Frank/McKenzie Concerned Residents Group, City Transportation Planning staff requested a “time-out” with respect to the Terms of Reference for the Don Mills Transit Environmental Assessment submitted to the Ontario Ministry of the Environment.

Joint and individual submissions to City staff, Councillor Kyle Rae and Mayor Miller’s office by the above mentioned groups caused the City staff to reconsider specific requests.

While we were unsuccessful in achieving a full adoption of our concerns, we are pleased to report that on at least a temporary basis, all work appears to have been suspended on the Don Mills Transit project (including the retention of consultants) until such time as the recently announced Transit City Light Rail Plan (“LRT”) has been considered by City Council and its potential impact on transportation initiatives such as the Don Mills Transit project.

We are guardedly optimistic that the LRT plan will provide the basis for a rational review of Toronto’s mass transit requirements and force the abandonment of any idea of using the Castle Frank Subway Station as a mid-town bus terminus.

## LEAFY STREETS

Beautiful tree-lined streets are one of the defining characteristics of Rosedale that make it unique. In recognition of Ontario's Arbor Week (27 April – 6 May 2007) and in response to enquiries from residents who have noticed that seemingly healthy trees are being removed from the boulevards, the SRRA asked the City "how the urban forest is managed?"

The trees that line boulevards are owned by the City. There are about 500,000 City-owned trees on Toronto streets and another 2.5 million in ravines, natural areas and parks. The job of the City's 'green team' (also known as Urban Forestry Services) is to inspect, evaluate, protect, prune, water, fertilize, remove, plant and monitor the health of these trees.

Routine removal occurs due to old age, poor health, and/or hazardous conditions. The City advises that to maintain the health of mature trees, one should avoid using weed trimmers and lawnmowers around the trunk. These inflict small wounds to the trees and allow disease and insects to enter. Water trees well in the evening or early in the morning to ensure that they are able to absorb all the water they need. Avoid using chemical fertilizers or pesticides on your trees. The more you do to maintain the health of these trees the longer they will live and the fewer that will have to be taken down.

To counter balance tree removal the City will plant trees for free on City land in front of your property. If you are interested in this service please call (416) 338-8733 or visit [http://www.toronto.ca/trees/pdfs/FreeTree\\_Final.pdf](http://www.toronto.ca/trees/pdfs/FreeTree_Final.pdf).

The Local Enhancement and Appreciation of Forests (LEAF) is another group that will help homeowners add trees and shrubs to their property. This not-for-profit organization offers native trees and shrubs at a subsidized cost. Educated staff members offer advice on which types of greenery to plant for the best results. Since 1996, this organization has planted over 10, 000 trees in Toronto. Contact LEAF at [www.leafontario.org](http://www.leafontario.org) or (416) 413-9244 for more information.

## CHECK US OUT ON-LINE

Visit the South Rosedale Ratepayers' Association website at [www.southrosedale.org](http://www.southrosedale.org).

## FEDERATION OF URBAN NEIGHBOURHOODS HOLDS THEIR AGM

The South Rosedale Ratepayers' Association would like to congratulate the Federation of Urban Neighbourhoods on its recent Annual General Meeting.

The AGM was held on Saturday, May 5th at the North York Civic Centre, featuring Barry Koen-Butt as the guest speaker, and with a luncheon sponsored by the SRRA. Koen-Butt is an Executive Lead and does Communications for the Secretariat of the Citizens' Assembly. In fact, he leads the team that is responsible for media relations, the web site and documenting the work of the Assembly. The AGM proved to be a great success.

**Based in Ontario, the Federation of Urban Neighbourhoods was founded in 2001 as an umbrella organization consisting of community and neighbourhood associations. It promotes awareness and spearheads projects that benefit those living in urban environments.**

## SOUTH ROSEDALE CLEANS UP

South Rosedale's parks and ravines are cleaner and greener thanks to the efforts of volunteers. Community Clean-Up Day took place on April 21st, 2007. Armed with bags and gloves, about 35 members of our community – and a few from other parts of the City – picked up litter and debris in Craighigh Gardens, Budd Sugarman Park and nearby ravine lands. Dozens of bags were filled with litter that had accumulated in the parks over the winter.

Community Clean-Up Day was organized in Rosedale by your ratepayers' association, and was one of many that took place in communities throughout the city. A big thanks goes to Rosedale Public School, which helped promote the event to students and their families.



SRRA Directors and other volunteers.