



SOUTH ROSEDALE RATEPAYERS' ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

Winter 2008

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Due to an abnormal number of heavy snowfalls in January and early February, combined with very cold temperatures, South Rosedale is literally buried under high snowbanks acting to narrow streets which have gone unplowed. While much of Toronto is experiencing similar problems, the situation in South Rosedale is exacerbated by the existing narrow width of many streets and curving nature of those streets. Despite the frustration (not to mention safety issues) that such conditions bring, we can all take solace that Spring will eventually arrive.

Since our Annual General Meeting in November 2007, the South Rosedale Ratepayer's Association ("SRRA" or the "Association") has been active on many issues that have the potential of impacting our neighbourhood. These include development/redevelopment matters and our initiative with the City to make South Rosedale a greener place to live.

Within this Newsletter, readers will see a request to contact the Association if they would be interested in participating as an SRRA Board Director. Due to the nature of the organization, we experience a turnover in our list of Directors and would welcome South Rosedale residents who have a genuine concern for the community to put their names forward. While the position comes without pay, the position does have its rewards in knowing that one is helping to keep South Rosedale a special place.

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. In that regard, Board members on a volunteer basis provide hundreds of hours of service to follow developing community issues and to ensure that our voice is heard at all levels of government, but most particularly, the City of Toronto. I personally welcome the contact of residents who may have any concerns as it relates to our neighbourhood and encourage all current members to renew their annual membership, which occurs coincident with the distribution of this Newsletter. South Rosedale residents who may not currently be members of the SRRA are warmly invited to consider joining the Association.

David M. Townley, C.A. President



WHAT'S INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

GOOD FENCES...

DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

URBAN FOREST PROJECT

50 YEARS AND STILL LOOKING GOOD

**IT'S TIME TO RENEW
OR JOIN!**

**2008 MEMBERSHIP FEES
INVOICE ENCLOSED**

GOOD FENCES...

On January 21, three members of the SRRA Board met with Preservation Services, at their request, to discuss the subject of front yard fences in South Rosedale. This was in response to the recent installation of several questionable fences in the neighbourhood as well as a request from one homeowner to erect a six foot fence around a property.

The City fence by-law states that a front yard fence (defined as that which runs in front of the house and up the sides of the property to the house) can be no higher than 1.2 metres for open fence construction that does not restrict sight lines and 1 metre for any other type. If the fence in the front yard is not within 2.4 metres of the front lot line, it may be 1.2 metres high even if it is of solid construction. For a fence in a flankage yard (corner lot – side yard to back of property), the maximum height is 2 metres for open fence construction and 800 millimetres for any other type. If the fence in the flankage yard is not within 2.4 metres of the side lot line or 2.4 metres of any driveway, it may be 2 metres high even if it is of solid construction. MOST IMPORTANTLY, in order to erect a front yard fence (or one enclosing a side or back yard visible from the street – ie corner lots) in a Heritage Conservation District such as South Rosedale, one needs to get a Heritage permit from Preservation Services.

We all know that good fences make good neighbours and the SRRA encourages property owners to consider the spirit and intent of the Heritage Character Statement for South Rosedale in planning new fencing. As stated in the Heritage Conservation District Study, “Many of the streets in South Rosedale are curvilinear and serpentine in keeping with the principles of picturesque garden design” (which) “enhances the experience of the architecture by allowing buildings to be viewed from different angles and perceived in the round, as opposed to a condition where only front facades are visible.”



Also, “Whether traditional or contemporary in design, the majority of the private landscapes throughout the area are either completely open to the street or only partially screened from it...In general, those private landscapes that appear to blend with or complement the streetscape as a whole make the greatest contribution to the serenity and park-like quality of the neighbourhood.”

In addition to height, and solid versus open construction, issues discussed included the importance of materials and designs appropriate to the District. Landscaping as a fencing alternative was not discussed. In trying to preserve the heritage feel of South Rosedale while considering fencing requests, much comes into play. In general, the SRRA would be opposed to the fencing in of South Rosedale and will support Preservation Services in its work to prevent fences which are higher than the by-law allows and also those which block the front of the houses and therefore interrupt the open streetscape. “No alteration or addition should visually overwhelm the building in question or neighbouring buildings.” (quoted from the original Study)

We would be interested in hearing from members on this subject.



UPDATE ON DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

Scrivener Square-It is our understanding that the developer has been working on a new proposal which we hope (and expect) will be more in accordance with the prevailing restrictions.

Don Valley Transportation Master Plan-Paraphrasing the remarks of Councillor Rae at the SRRA AGM: Whereas soon after the election, the Mayor directed staff to “lay down their pencils”, the City staff have apparently resurrected the project, attempting to integrate the DVTMP into the City work plan that emphasizes the use of light rail over buses. For South Rosedale, the over-development of the Castle Frank Station as a transfer point is the issue that must be monitored.

80 Crescent Road-The Hearing at the OMB on the proposal to build a house behind a house resulted in a rejection by the Hearing Officer.

Front Yard Parking, Driveway Widening, and Non-Permeable Landscaping-SRRA Directors continue to pressure Councillor Rae to demand enforcement of the by-laws by Municipal Licensing Services and Transportation Services. Little progress is being made. Sixteen months ago Councillor Rae and staff from the two Divisions agreed to report, as case studies, on 21 apparent violations of the front yard parking by-laws. There has been no response from either City agency and no apparent effort by Councillor Rae to stimulate a Report.

REMEMBERING AN SRRA DIRECTOR

Almost ten years ago, the South Rosedale community suffered the untimely passing of John Napier Grieve. Known as “Fatty” to his close friends (a tag he had enjoyed since grade school days), John was a distinguished solicitor for over thirty years at the firm of Osler, Hoskin and Harcourt. As well, he actively involved himself in the South Rosedale community serving as both President and Secretary of the SRRA.

John was passionate about South Rosedale and in his memory the SRRA planted a chestnut tree in Craighleigh Gardens. That tree is now almost twenty feet high. Many of John’s close friends and fellow members of the legal fraternity had expressed a desire that an appropriate memorial plaque be placed at the foot of the tree as a tribute to John. To that end, under the organization of Jack and Helen Ground, Bob and Ann Shaw and the City Parks and Recreation Department, over thirty of John’s family (including grandchildren) and friends met in Craighleigh Gardens on the afternoon of January 6th to lift a glass of single malt scotch (or white wine) in a toast and to unveil a plaque bearing John’s name. Afterwards, Jack and Helen Ground hosted a reception at their home in 21 Dale Avenue and many humorous stories were shared about John and his much cherished contribution to South Rosedale.

MEMBERSHIP FEES NOTICE

With the mailing of this Newsletter you will note that we have also included our invoice for the 2008 membership dues. These fees are used to cover our normal annual operating expenses as well as help defray the cost of professional services which we incur from time to time when the Association is called upon to take a position on various by-law, zoning and development issues which affect our neighbourhood. In order to meet these non-recurring expenses we have also relied on “extra contributions”, over and above the annual \$75 fee. Provision is made in the invoice for the inclusion of a voluntary extra contribution. In recent years we have found that about 25% to 30% of our members contribute in this way and we wish to thank those members for their generosity.

Normally our revenue (membership fees plus the voluntary extras) has been sufficient to cover our total costs. With the exception of deficits incurred in 2003 and 2006, when the Association incurred significant additional costs, in the form of professional consulting fees to organizations hired to meet specific situations, we have been able to add to our surplus in recent years.

We believe that the continued strength of our organization is directly related to our financial health. One of our members pointed out at the past Annual Meeting that a strong balance sheet is an important deterrent to those who might otherwise take the position that the Association may be weak and unable to defend the neighbourhood’s interests when the occasion arises. Please take this opportunity to send in your membership renewals and keep the SRRA strong.



FIFTY YEARS OLD AND STILL LOOKING GOOD

Kensington Apartments Limited, 21 Dale Avenue, has just turned 50 and is still one of the most sought-after apartment addresses in Toronto.

THE DALE

It is located on the site of the former mansion called “The Dale” which was built in 1866 by lawyer and businessman John Hoskin. A yellow-brick three-story mansion in the Gothic Revival style, it was built following Hoskin’s marriage to the daughter of his neighbour, Walter McKenzie.



KENSINGTON TOWERS

In 1957, ground was broken for the current red brick, modern apartment building. Called Kensington Towers, it was a rental apartment building developed, erected and operated by Kensington Industries Incorporated, a Montreal firm headed by Gerald Bronfman. Severe constraints faced the developers and their architects, Crang and Boake, in designing and obtaining permission to build Kensington Towers. A zoning by-law limited apartment buildings in the area to a height of 35 feet at street level. The obvious solution to the height restriction - building down the ravine - faced serious opposition even though the Arbour Glen apartments on Rosedale Valley Road had already been constructed on a similar model.

The South Rosedale Ratepayers’ Association questioned whether “apartment buildings should be built on picturesque ravine land in South Rosedale” and Margaret Scivener - who was later elected MPP for St. David’s - organized considerable opposition to the proposed apartments. Her group succeeded in having Toronto Council vote, on February 28, 1955, to expropriate the land. However, then, as now, Council did not necessarily have the last word; that decision went to the Ontario Municipal Board and the City never proceeded with the expropriation.

Lady Eaton was among the first tenants of Kensington Towers. She occupied a large upper floor suite on the east side. Her proximity to the new east-west subway was undoubtedly the catalyst that led her to mount a campaign for a sound-muting cover on the open-cut portion of the line. Her side won the day and the TTC erected a cover shortly after the line went into operation. Today the sound-muting cover on the section behind Kensington remains the only one in the TTC system.

KENSINGTON APARTMENTS LIMITED

On October 31, 1969, a small consortium called the Kensington Towers Development Company headed by Isadore Sharp of Four Seasons Hotels purchased Kensington Towers. The company’s intent was to sell apartments under co-operative ownership. Renaming the building Kensington Apartments Limited, Sharp said it was decided to sell shares rather than sell the units as condominiums because financing of the venture as a co-operative scheme was “more flexible.”



The company refurbished the lobby and corridors, landscaped the centre courtyard, added heated inside and outside swimming pools, two saunas and a whirlpool, and modernized kitchens and bathrooms.

The building may have been “top drawer”, but its original construction overlooked a major item that led to the condition known as the “Kensington plaster problem.” The building was one of the first in Toronto to have concrete floors that are also ceilings for the apartments below. The builders neglected to seal the concrete before plastering the ceilings. Ever since, some unlucky shareholders have had parts, or all, of a ceiling fall onto dining tables, carpets, grand pianos, even whole rooms. The reason: as moisture is drawn out of the plaster, adhesion to the concrete ends and gravity takes over. After 50 years, it is doubtful that even one original ceiling remains.

A SHAREHOLDER-RUN BUILDING

With stewardship of the building in the hands of shareholders, further alterations to Kensington have responded to two factors: the need to maintain peak performance in an aging building and the ancillary need to keep up and enhance its appearance.

Today there are few buildings in Toronto as well known as “21 Dale”, and few buildings anywhere as much loved by their residents. Kensington Apartments is as unique for its sense of community and co-operative spirit as it is for its ravine setting and fabled gardens. As Isadore Sharp once said about its distinctiveness, “You could never build another one like it.”

UPDATE ON DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

Scrivener Square-It is our understanding that the developer has been working on a new proposal which we hope (and expect) will be more in accordance with the prevailing restrictions.

Don Valley Transportation Master Plan-Paraphrasing the remarks of Councillor Rae at the SRRA AGM: Whereas soon after the election, the Mayor directed staff to “lay down their pencils”, the City staff have apparently resurrected the project, attempting to integrate the DVTMP into the City work plan that emphasizes the use of light rail over buses. For South Rosedale, the over-development of the Castle Frank Station as a transfer point is the issue that must be monitored.

80 Crescent Road-The Hearing at the OMB on the proposal to build a house behind a house resulted in a rejection by the Hearing Officer.

Front Yard Parking, Driveway Widening, and Non-Permeable Landscaping-SRRA Directors continue to pressure Councillor Rae to demand enforcement of the by-laws by Municipal Licensing Services and Transportation Services. Little progress is being made. Sixteen months ago Councillor Rae and staff from the two Divisions agreed to report, as case studies, on 21 apparent violations of the front yard parking by-laws. There has been no response from either City agency and no apparent effort by Councillor Rae to stimulate a Report.

REMEMBERING AN SRRA DIRECTOR

Almost ten years ago, the South Rosedale community suffered the untimely passing of John Napier Grieve. Known as “Fatty” to his close friends (a tag he had enjoyed since grade school days), John was a distinguished solicitor for over thirty years at the firm of Osler, Hoskin and Harcourt. As well, he actively involved himself in the South Rosedale community serving as both President and Secretary of the SRRA.

John was passionate about South Rosedale and in his memory the SRRA planted a chestnut tree in Craighleigh Gardens. That tree is now almost twenty feet high. Many of John’s close friends and fellow members of the legal fraternity had expressed a desire that an appropriate memorial plaque be placed at the foot of the tree as a tribute to John. To that end, under the organization of Jack and Helen Ground, Bob and Ann Shaw and the City Parks and Recreation Department, over thirty of John’s family (including grandchildren) and friends met in Craighleigh Gardens on the afternoon of January 6th to lift a glass of single malt scotch (or white wine) in a toast and to unveil a plaque bearing John’s name. Afterwards, Jack and Helen Ground hosted a reception at their home in 21 Dale Avenue and many humorous stories were shared about John and his much cherished contribution to South Rosedale.

MEMBERSHIP FEES NOTICE

With the mailing of this Newsletter you will note that we have also included our invoice for the 2008 membership dues. These fees are used to cover our normal annual operating expenses as well as help defray the cost of professional services which we incur from time to time when the Association is called upon to take a position on various by-law, zoning and development issues which affect our neighbourhood. In order to meet these non-recurring expenses we have also relied on “extra contributions”, over and above the annual \$75 fee. Provision is made in the invoice for the inclusion of a voluntary extra contribution. In recent years we have found that about 25% to 30% of our members contribute in this way and we wish to thank those members for their generosity.

Normally our revenue (membership fees plus the voluntary extras) has been sufficient to cover our total costs. With the exception of deficits incurred in 2003 and 2006, when the Association incurred significant additional costs, in the form of professional consulting fees to organizations hired to meet specific situations, we have been able to add to our surplus in recent years.

We believe that the continued strength of our organization is directly related to our financial health. One of our members pointed out at the past Annual Meeting that a strong balance sheet is an important deterrent to those who might otherwise take the position that the Association may be weak and unable to defend the neighbourhood’s interests when the occasion arises. Please take this opportunity to send in your membership renewals and keep the SRRA strong.



URBAN FOREST PROJECT

At the recent Annual General Meeting on November 27, 2007, the SRRA was pleased to have the support of the City's Urban Forestry Services in presenting a ground-breaking program to re-forest the communities of North and South Rosedale over the next few years. Dean Hart from Urban Forestry Services and Todd Irwin from LEAF (Local Enhancement & Appreciation of Forests - an incorporated, not-for-profit organization dedicated to the protection and improvement of Toronto's urban forest) made an informative and exciting presentation on what can be done for the perpetual greening of our neighbourhood.

Analyses have been completed which show that the current lush tree canopy we enjoy will diminish significantly over the next decade. Many of us see the current large trees losing major branches and dying off, without sufficient numbers of replacement trees planted to sustain the canopy. The initiative of Urban Forestry Services has been to take a wholesale approach to the situation in our area, and utilize manpower and available budget to maintain existing trees and to eliminate the "RFS-request for service" backlog.

In consultation with the SRRA, the City surveyed the entire neighbourhood during the Fall to catalogue City-owned boulevard/right-of-way gaps and to identify locations on private front yards suitable for tree planting. The City has agreed to conduct an intensive program to prune older City-owned trees and remove stumps to make way for planting in the Spring and Fall of 2008. As the locations abut private residential properties, it will be necessary to obtain "buy-ins" from homeowners for planting. There will be opportunities to plant larger-caliper "ball and burlap" trees in place of smaller bare root trees, if desired.

The SRRA is also working with LEAF, which provides subsidized planting on private property, to promote additional tree planting. In association with LEAF, the SRRA will investigate possible funding opportunities for these activities

Below is a small selection of the many websites that provide information on trees and the urban forest. Each of these sites links to many additional resources on trees and a broad range of topics, from the benefits of urban forests to tree care:

City of Toronto Urban Forestry Services -

<http://www.toronto.ca/trees>

LEAF - <http://www.leafortoronto.org>

Ontario Urban Forest Council - www.oufc.org

SRRA MEMBERSHIP

A question I am often asked when I mention that I am on the SRRA Board of Directors is - what does the Association do?

The easy answer is that we work to preserve our community heritage and the unique character of the South Rosedale neighbourhood in the GTA (Greater Toronto Area). As neighbours and residents of South Rosedale, we should all be concerned and supportive of our by-laws and programs that have been put in place for the betterment of our special community. The SRRA Board members have tasks, designated by their interests, with responsibility to report back to the Board or to the general community about what is happening in their portfolio. For example, building development, renovations, road maintenance, parks and parkettes, policing issues and many other areas are monitored by the SRRA.

Fifty percent of South Rosedale households are currently members of the SRRA and we hope to increase that number substantially within the near future. Our voice grows stronger as our membership numbers increase. If you or any of your neighbours have not joined yet please think of 2008 as being the year to do so! *Don O'Born*

INTERESTED PEOPLE NEED TO APPLY

From time to time, the Board of the South Rosedale Ratepayers' Association ("SRRA") experiences vacancies due to the expiry of terms of service, or changes in personal circumstances. In order to be better prepared to fill vacancies, we would like to develop a list of potential Board Directors who would be interested in serving the South Rosedale community.

Areas where the SRRA plays a role in the neighbourhood include: real estate development matters, road and traffic issues, trees, parks and other greenspaces, security and policing, as well as preservation of the criteria which make the South Rosedale area a Heritage Conservation District. If you would like to be considered for future Board membership on one of Canada's oldest ratepayer associations, please contact:

David M. Townley, C.A., President
dtownley@ccwi.ca

SOUTH ROSEDALE RATEPAYERS' ASSOCIATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Gina Brannan
Yvonne Catty
Geoffrey Dyer
Ellen Hand
Don Hogarth
Sheldon Hellin
Anne Kennedy
David Kerr

Barbara McGregor
David Moore
Alex Murray
Don O'Born
John Stewart
David Townley, President
Jennifer Wardrop