

The push from developers: will PARA escape?

by Ed Jackson

Recent developments along the main streets bordering the PARA district have raised concerns about the impact of land development, both commercial and residential, on our unique neighbourhood. The PARA-Little Italy residential streets are quiet, tree-lined, and full of comfortable Victorian and turn-of-the-century homes, but they are bounded by three major thoroughfares: Bloor St W, College St and Bathurst St. Anyone taking note of the countless new high-rise condo towers going up everywhere in the downtown area knows that pressures to expand beyond the central core are going to increase. And with it will come, if we let it, an incremental undermining of quality of life as we know it in our neighbourhood.

Let's look at two relatively benign local examples of Toronto's current real-estate pressure cooker movement. On the surface, they seem like okay projects but with them will come greater density, traffic and noise right on our doorstep.

B-Street Condos: This 9-story, 195-unit condo development with a stepped-back roofline on top of sidewalk-level retail is on the east side of Bathurst St just south of Bloor (hence "B-streets"). It's a choice location just steps from the subway, with a design by award-winning Hariri Pontarini Architects. There's no doubt it will be a dominant visual addition to that part of the street.

Nero Condos and Townhouses: This 8-townhouse/8-story 103-unit condo development is taking over the ML Lumber and Building Supplies lot at the corner of Dundas St West and Manning Ave. It's a conservative modernist dark and light-grey



Changes on our doorstep: B-Street condos is a new development slated for the east side of Bathurst Street south of Bloor

edifice with townhouses inching up Manning. It's a solid project although it has not met with universal approval in the neighbourhood, either for its looks or its height.

But look at these situations:

Kromer Radio Site: A site along the bleak west side of Bathurst south of College, including the current location of Kromer Radio, has been assembled by Rio-Can and Trinity Developments for the purposes of erecting a 3-story urban retail building with underground parking, several smaller retail stores on the street level and a larger "big box" space on the second and third floors. The chief concerns of neighbours are traffic and TTC delays on Bathurst St, emergency vehicle hold-ups (Western Hospital is across the street), trucks in the laneway and on Bathurst, and impact on local businesses, particularly in nearby Kensington Market. Councillors Adam Vaughan and Mike Layton, along with PARA and Trinity-Bellwoods Community Association, have been meeting

to strategize around deputations at the Committee of Adjustment on these issues. Whatever the eventual resolution, traffic will be significantly backed up further north into PARA's precinct.

Centre for Social Innovation (CSI): This unique organization, which recently moved to an attractive five-story building at 730 Bathurst St, offers shared office and meeting space for individuals and organizations working for social change in Toronto and around the world. It's an admirable concept but parts of its operation have caused some angst for neighbours on nearby Markham St. CSI is renting out its first floor as a special-occasion social event space, with the result that noisy events have been going into the early morning with music so loud it shakes the windows of houses directly behind it, an example of the law of unintended consequences. With input from PARA and Councillor Layton, CSI have recently proposed new plans to the residents for resolving the problem.

Are there other potential development sites on the horizon? Here's a couple to watch:

Bathurst and College parking lot: This is a prime intersection and the lot will certainly be in the crosshairs of a developer looking for a new low-rise condo or retail location.

Honest Ed's complex: There has been much speculation about the fate of this assemblage of ramshackle structures at Bloor and Bathurst. It is only a matter of time before the iconic retail building and property are sold. A development complex will change the entire area dramatically.

You can trust PARA to give residents a strong voice if new proposals come up for review. [PARA](#)

IMAGE: COURTESY OF HARIRI PONTARINI ARCHITECTS

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

The Push by Developers	1
Mike Layton Updates; Scarfo Lane; PARA Spotlight	2
Bloor Hot Docs Cinema; Institution Milestones	3
Welcome to the Neighbourhood	4

ABOUT PARA

PARA (Palmerston Area Residents' Association) is a volunteer organization of residents committed to strengthening and preserving the stability, distinctive character and quality of life in the Toronto neighbourhood bounded by Bloor and Bathurst, College and Clinton Streets.



Updates from Mike Layton, City Councillor, Ward 19

Toronto City Hall has been in the news daily. People have never been so engaged on city-wide policy. Through all of this I am committed to working locally in the ward and your neighbourhood. Some of the areas my office has focussed on:

City Hall Update

Despite the promise of deep cuts to the 2012 budget, we saved many of our public services. We stopped cuts to our libraries, saved three shelters, including a women's shelter in our ward, kept three city-run childcare centres open, saved recreation, maintained crucial funding for the arts and programs for seniors, youth and immigrant women, and much more. In the last few months we have also stopped the sale of nearly 1,000 Toronto Community Housing stand-alone units and ensured that we stayed on track with plans to build rapid transit across Finch, Sheppard, and Eglinton. We have also successfully stopped unfair park permit costs for sports groups and farmers' markets. I am working to stop the closure of Ontario Place and the addition of Casinos in our City.

Bickford Centre

I have been holding meetings about both the TDSB Bickford building on Bloor St at Christie as well as Christie Park itself. Our office has been working on revitalizing the building to make it a more welcoming space that becomes an active part of our community. I

have also been holding public meetings to work with local residents on improving the park, discussing off-leash dogs, graffiti, park infrastructure and much more.

Good Neighbours

I am working with residents along Markham Street and representatives from the Centre for Social Innovation (CSI) to help this invaluable community hub better integrate with our neighbourhood. I am also doing my utmost to ensure local businesses applying for patio licenses are good neighbours. I've done this by working directly with PARA and other residents' associations to develop locally customized patio conditions restricting hours, noise and the sale of alcohol. We have also formed a working group regarding a development at 420 Bathurst Street. The property has been purchased by RioCan, which may bring a big box store into the neighbourhood. The working group is doing its best to ensure that the commercial development is a positive contribution to our neighbourhood.

Getting in Touch

I am available by appointment to meet with community members every Saturday at the CHIN building, 622 College Street, 11:00 am to 1:00 pm.

Please email me at councillor_layton@toronto.ca, or call me at (416) 392-4009 or visit my website www.mikelayton.to to sign up for my e-newsletter.

Scarfo Lane named for long-time resident



Alaneway off Harbord St between Euclid Ave and Palmerston Blvd now carries the name of a resident who lived nearby for nearly half a century. **Scarfo Lane** was unveiled Jan 23 by Angelo Scarfo's son Sam, along with Councillor Mike Layton and Angelo's extended family.

The late Angelo Scarfo immigrated to Canada from Italy in the 1950s and raised a family of nine children at 609 Euclid Ave. Scarfo was well known and respected in the neighbourhood. His son remembers how proud he was of his homemade wine. Neighbours would gather in the laneway with the garage doors open and share his wine.

Joe Pantalone, the former city councillor who championed the lane naming at city hall, observed at the unveiling that it recognizes not only Angelo Scarfo but all those who came to the city seeking a new life. "When we name a lane Scarfo Lane, we are honouring Angelo Scarfo, but we're also honouring every immigrant who has made this city what it is," Pantalone said.

PARA SPOTLIGHT



Stroll down Clinton Street on a December night and you're likely to see some of the best Christmas lights in the PARA catchment. But the lights aren't the only bright spot on the street. Frank Annibale, the man behind them, has been an active member of the community since he and his family arrived from Abruzzo, Italy in 1957. "I was five years old at the time and we moved onto Henderson Avenue - we were all Italians in this part of town," says Frank. At the age of 11 Frank took on full-time employment at the legendary San Francesco Foods. "I worked 8 hours a day, Monday to Friday after school and 16 hours on the weekend," he says. It was there that in 1972 he met a pretty girl named Emma who lived on Mansfield Avenue. One year later, they married and bought a place on Clinton Street, where they raised four children. In addition to his job as a pizza maker, Frank worked in mechanical service for the TTC for 30 years, always keeping active with charity work for the United Way. In retirement he continued to serve the community by working as

the crossing guard at Clinton and Harbord. Though he's moving a little bit slower these days, Frank still keeps busy with his three grandchildren. "This is a great community, a great city and a great place to raise your children," he says.

And those Christmas lights? Expect more of the best next December!

- By Heather Schramm

PHOTO: (TOP) JOSE SAN JUAN, CITY OF TORONTO; (BOTTOM) DON SCOTT

Bloor Hot Docs Cinema Springs to Life Again



(Left) The original Madison Theatre; (centre) the refurbished state-of-the-art interior 2012; (right) a rendering of the new marquee

sound equipment, and a new vertical sign on the exterior front.

The cinema was one of many Toronto movie houses built in the early part of the twentieth century, most of which have now disappeared. Opened in 1913 as the Madison, the building has gone through a number of name changes and renovations since that time. The building was demolished and rebuilt in 1940 under the direction of theatre architects Kaplan & Sprachman, leased by 20th Century Theatres and re-named the Midtown. It continued as a popular neighbourhood movie house throughout the Forties and Fifties, and was famous for its packed weekend matinees and horror double-bills.

The Sixties saw a change in movie-going

habits across North America with the advent of television. The Bloor Street house became the Capri in 1967, keeping the programming policy of the Midtown until 1973, when it was renamed the Eden. The building ran as a soft-core porno theatre until 1980, when it was taken over by Carm Bordonaro and Festival Cinema's Jerry Szczur and Tom Litvinkas, who introduced the successful model of memberships and classics and genre programming. Festival Cinemas operated the space until 1999, when Bordonaro and his brother Paul returned to manage the cinema and then to purchase it in 2010 to prevent it from being sold to a developer.

Finally, a corporate angel was found in the form of the Blue Ice Group, a film financing and production company who saw the value in salvaging the old dame on Bloor St. In partnership with the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival, the new owners have renovated the cinema under the careful guidance of well-known architect Harari Pontarini.

The result is a smashing success. The renovation is sensitive and thoughtful, returning the space to its Art Deco origins, including replacing the glass wall on the rear wall opening into the lobby. Hot Docs will run the theatre as the year-round home of first-run documentaries, as well as special presentations like the popular Doc Soup series. The latest Hot Docs festival is currently in full swing.

We're lucky to have this facility so close to home. And now it's up to all local lovers of cinema to regularly fill the 710-seat space to ensure its continued success. [PARA](#)

With the March re-opening of the Bloor Hot Docs Cinema in the Annex, the PARA neighbourhood is fortunate to welcome a second revitalized theatre in its immediate vicinity, following on the heels of the successful rescuing of the Royal Cinema on College St in 2007. The Bloor Hot Docs Cinema, on Bloor St just east of the Bathurst St intersection, is now the permanent home of the Hot Docs Festival, the largest documentary festival in Canada. It opened March 14 to great acclaim after an extensive \$2.6 million renovation which included new plush seating, a larger screen, expanded washroom facilities, state-of-the-art projection and

Harbord Collegiate celebrates 120



Circa 1930



2012

PARA is the home of a number of institutions with a long and distinguished history; milestone anniversaries for several of them are coming up. 2012 sees the 120th anniversary of **Harbord Collegiate Institute**, which boasts an illustrious roster of famous graduates, including Charles Best (discoverer of insulin), Stephen Lewis, Bob Rae, Morley Safer (CBS news reporter), actor Kiefer Sutherland, and comedians Johnny Wayne and Frank Shuster. Nearby **Central Commerce Collegiate Institute** also marks its 100th anniversary in 2012, although the current building was not built until 1916. Next year (2013) marks the 125th anniversary of both **Clinton Public School** and the **Church of St Mary Magdalene**.

PHOTOS: (LEFT) CITY OF TORONTO ARCHIVES, FONDS 1231, ITEM 0806; (TOP CENTRE) JOSEPH MICHAEL; (RIGHT) COURTESY OF BLOOR HOT DOCS

PHOTOS: (LEFT) CITY OF TORONTO ARCHIVES, FONDS 1257, ITEM 0238

WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Business ventures along the commercial streets in the PARA neighbourhood are constantly changing. We welcome new businesses that bring a greater range of services closer to our homes.

It's surely a sign that our neighbourhood demographic is changing with the launch of **Playful Grounds**, a unique kid-friendly coffee shop that has opened at 605 College St, the former home of I Feel Like Crepe. It offers a play area and baby-proof furniture for the kiddies while their parents can be comfortable enjoying a break for snacks with coffee or wine.

The Mirvish Village has three new boutique shops that opened within the last year. **Pretty Beauty & Books** at 587 Markham features a collection of clean cosmetics and a selection of beauty books. **Coco & Lily Flowers** at 590 Markham offers floral arrangements and creative bridal accessories and is an offshoot of Coco & Jules Boutique in Rosedale. **Coal Miner's Daughter** is a boutique at 587 Markham that showcases Canadian jewellery and clothing designers.

The most recent business in Mirvish Village and the biggest is **Lapierre Toronto**, a high-end bicycle store at 610 Markham offering sales, service, training and fitness testing and featuring the Lapierre brand. The shop is owned by Brad Hunter, who moved to Toronto after running



a bike shop in Orangeville for 16 years.

The latest franchise to hit the 'hood is **Wild Wing** at 614 College St, a harbinger of social change on the street. This family-style restaurant serves 101 kinds of wings, along with salads and fries.

The old Negroni/Carpano location at 492 College St has a new occupant. **BruDa Restaurant** is owned by Neil DaCosta and Victor Brun, two veterans from the neighbourhood, and features a varied European menu.

Sichuan Secret Restobar has taken over the ill-fated Axis Gastropub space at 585 Bloor St West (at Markham) and features an extensive Sichuan-style fusion menu, a large space for a patio, and a lounge for wine and beer.

The former Olivia's at Fifty Three, in a Victorian townhouse at 53 Clinton Ave north of Café Diplomatio, has been taken over by **The Fuel House**, a casual bistro specializing in sandwiches and high-end pub food. There are plans for a brunch menu in the back patio come summer.

Korea Town has a charming new resident. **Hanji Handmade Paper and Gifts** at 619 Bloor St West is filled with collections of handmade Korean paper lamps, cards and books as well as mother-of-pearl mirrors and candlesticks. Hanji is the Korean word for handmade mulberry paper.

Dragon Lady Comics has closed after many years on the College St strip (it moved here in 1996) but it has gained

a new lease on life by moving to a second-story spot nearby at 587A College St. It has been reincarnated as **The Comic Book Lounge and Gallery**, sharing space with The Cartoonist Workshop and Guerilla Printing, and touting itself as a "one-stop shop for comics, graphic novels and original art."

Ice Gear Fitness Apparel at 617 College St offers trendy exercise wear for men and women, manufactured right here in Toronto.

Bang Bang Bar has taken over the old Public Restaurant & Bar space at the northwest corner of College and Clinton. It styles itself as a tapas grill, tequila and martini bar.



Just You – Sarah and Tom have moved their gift and toy shop to a larger space at 634 Bloor St West, just a few stores away from their previous location in Korea Town. They sell plushie toys, posters, pencils and other cutsie gift items.

The College St strip welcomes a new antiquarian bookstore. **Sellers & Newel Second-Hand Books** opened its doors at 672 College St last November with an inventory of 30,000 books. Peter Sellers and David Newel come

to the antiquarian book store business after years of experience in the trade and as collectors in Toronto and Stratford.

Souz Dal (636 College St), one of the longest lasting martini bars on the strip, is closing and merging with its sister establishment **Sutra Tiki Bar** at 612 College St.

The latest restaurant bar in the neighbourhood, offering \$10 plates of pub food, is called **Johnny Jackson** (587 College St).

Short-lived Briscola restaurant, at 501 College St, is becoming **La Carnita**, the permanent home of one-night-only pop-up street-food sensation Andrew Richmond. UNO, his latest event at the Evergreen Brickworks, specialized in tacos and drew overflow crowds.

Briefly noted: * Acadia Restaurant, which opened last summer at Clinton and College, is getting raves this year. It was voted the best restaurant in Toronto for 2011 by *Where* magazine, and one of the ten best in Toronto for the year by *Toronto Life*. *Woodlot Restaurant, on Palmerston just south of College, was successful in getting approval for a patio and construction is now complete.

Watch for Planet Palmerston
Saturday, June 9
(rain date Sunday, June 10)
& Party in the Park
Sunday, June 10
(rain date Sunday, June 17)

NEWSLETTER MISSION

- We want to inform, educate and support our community on local issues
- Help develop a sense of belonging and enjoyment in a safe community
- Promote community betterment through active participation of residents
- Support the growth of PARA membership

PARA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Allan Reynolds (Chair); Paul Unterman (Treasurer & Membership Coordinator); Doug Lowry (Secretary); Emerich Kaspar (Zoning & Bylaws); Donald Scott (Communications, Newsletter and Website Coordinator); Ed Jackson (Communications, Newsletter Editor); Fernanda Pisani (Communications, Newsletter Design); Graham Lewis (Greenspace & Beautification); Rachael MacKenzie (Healey Willan Park Project); James Choy (Planet Palmerston); Paul Maclean, Heather Schramm. **For electronic versions of the newsletter content and additional information on PARA, visit our website at www.palmerstonara.org. Email us at info@palmerstonara.org.**