

February 2003 Newsletter

From the President of the NRRA

The mandate of the North Rosedale Ratepayers Association is to promote the welfare of North Rosedale and our wonderful quality of life. We are a not-for-profit volunteer organization, blessed with dedicated, knowledgeable volunteers. We serve as a focal point for community concerns and provide a common voice in lobbying and dealing with governments and municipal departments.

Let me give you some examples of our activities, which you can read about in more detail in the pages of this newsletter.

We started a campaign called "Be a Nosey Neighbour" as our response to the significant increase in home burglaries and car thefts experienced in our community. Conceived by advertising executive David Harrison of Binscarth Road, a long-serving NRRA director, this campaign is designed to make us all aware of how vigilance in our community can help reduce crime. We organized a public meeting in January, at which 175 people attended, to discuss public safety with senior police officers.

One of our initiatives this year is heritage preservation. Long-time resident of London England, John Hogarth of Edgar Avenue is leading this initiative. It's an outgrowth of the concern we all feel when new property owners tear down homes or make other changes that result in new dwellings that are not in keeping with their surroundings.

Sheila Shaw, a long time North Rosedale resident of Douglas Drive, and Andrea Meynell, raised in North Rosedale on Scholfield Avenue, together put in many hours as part of a long-overdue process to rehabilitate vegetation along the CPR tracks just north of Summerhill Avenue and west of McLennan. I think that most people now agree that the new landscaping represents an improvement over the previous overgrowth, although I'd be the first to agree that we need a couple of good growing seasons for all plants to reach more optimum heights.

Your Association has established a policy about development and renovation in our community. The full text of our policy is available on our website and will be printed in a future issue of North Rosedale News. Some would argue that its subtlety might evade a direct and simple proposition.

But it represents the unanimous view of NRRA directors: ***positive change is something that should be managed and its successful conclusion is worth celebration.*** Geoff Shaw of Edgewood Crescent is our expert dealing with the complex world of zoning and building.

But we face other issues. Our local Summerhill retail strip is feeling some pressures. Among the pressures, a proposal for a new restaurant with a liquor license created controversy among residents (both for and against!) and was recently abandoned by its proponent. NRRA director Chris McGirr of Edgar Avenue organized a public meeting to hear views about this proposal.

Your Association opposed an earlier plan - now discarded - to extend Leslie Street through to Bayview Avenue because of its potential for greatly increasing traffic on our streets. A more recent plan to extend Redway to Bayview is now being quietly proposed. I have an open mind, but the position adopted by your Association is that any proposal must result in reduced traffic volumes in North Rosedale. To say there will be "no impact" of this extension on North Rosedale is simply unacceptable to the majority - if not all - of North Rosedale residents. Long time resident and NRRA director Bill Deacon of St. Andrews Gardens knows all about this issue.

A lot of effort has been put forward by NRRA director Erik Mathiesen (Summerhill Avenue) in developing and keeping up our website (www.north-rosedale.org). This website, which has been recently redesigned, provides up-to-date information about the issues facing your association and provides useful links to other sites. It's worth a bookmark and a regular visit.

The role of your Association is to maintain the quality of our community life that we currently have. If you haven't joined, there's a membership form as part of this newsletter. Our hard-working secretary, Jean Weihs of Edgar Avenue, will be glad to receive your \$30 membership fee...***It's the best bargain you'll ever get!*** Finally, we have allowed advertising in our newsletter for the first time. Our policy is to accept advertising from companies, organizations and/or individuals whose business comes primarily from the greater Rosedale community. Please help by supporting our advertisers

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Assessments: Another Big Increase for Rosedale!

Property owners in North Rosedale received their assessment notices in the mail during the last few weeks. For most home owners, the estimated value of their property has jumped very significantly, which will inevitably result in another increase in property taxes.

Every three years, the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation prepares an assessment of all properties in Ontario to a common valuation date. This assessment process takes place

every three years and the new common valuation date is June 30, 2001.

The latest assessment values for properties will be used by the City of Toronto in calculating 2003 property taxes.

"Even if the mill rate remains unchanged, an unlikely scenario, home owners in North Rosedale are going to pay more property taxes as a result of the latest assessments," said Patrick Howe, NRRRA president. "The assessed value of a property on the June 2001 valuation date is supposed to be the same as its market value at that time."

A property owner has two options if he/she does not agree with the most recent assessment value.

1. Filing a Request for Reconsideration form, which will result in an informal staff review
2. Appeal the assessment to the Assessment Review Board, an independent tribunal.

**** The deadline for acting is March 31, 2003****

Policing and Safety in North Rosedale

The North Rosedale community experienced a significant increase in the number of home break-ins and thefts of luxury cars late in 2002. Police told us that professional thieves had started to work in our neighbourhood.

To alert the community about the incidence of crime and the need for greater awareness, the NRRRA launched a "**Be a Nosey Neighbour**" campaign to encourage cooperation in making a quick and dramatic reduction in burglaries and car thefts.

A letter was distributed to all households in North Rosedale outlining actions that residents should take to safeguard their - and their neighbour's - property.

Here's what the police told us about the recent rash of burglaries:

- ◆ Most incidents seemed to occur during the dusk and early evening periods (4-9 pm) when nobody is in the home.
- ◆ There was some evidence that these criminals watch a targeted residence from a nearby vantage point from some period of time before acting.
- ◆ Burglars cut outside phone lines to disarm security systems and disabled outdoor lights before entering the premises.
- ◆ Robbers were discriminating: they looked for expensive jewellery, cash and items of real value that could be carried away.
- ◆ These criminals looked for car keys lying in conspicuous places, suggesting they might return at a later time to steal a car, particularly if it's a luxury model.
- ◆ Thieves did not leave fingerprints and trashed a residence if no valuables were easily found.

Here are some tips from the police to prevent criminal activity in our neighbourhood:

- ◆ Be on the look out in your neighbourhood for unfamiliar people and phone police **immediately** if you suspect something is not right. **The quickest police response comes with a call to: (416) 808-2222**

We're told that police don't mind answering false alarms if it eventually results in apprehending a criminal caught in the act.

- ◆ Challenge strangers in your neighbourhood by inquiring politely what their purpose is in being there. Professional thieves are generally not dangerous to your safety: they make it a point not to be seen, and confrontation with a resident is a threat to the anonymity they need to go about their business with impunity.

- ◆ Safeguard the keys to your automobiles by not leaving them in open or obvious places in the home. Don't leave your car running and unattended in the driveway as this has proven an open invitation for one of two thieves working together to drive away with your vehicle.

- ◆ Ensure your ground floor windows and doors are locked when you are not home. Hardware stores, including Home Depot and Canadian Tire, sell simple items that can be attached to sliding doors and prevent a burglar from lifting a door off its track with a crowbar or screw driver.

- ◆ Dogs, particularly ones that bark loudly, are good deterrents to burglars, as are stereos left on when nobody is in the house. Professional burglars do not take chances that somebody may be home and will make a hasty retreat if they hear a dog barking, a stereo playing music or see the flickering of a television set.

The Story Behind "Be a Nosey Neighbour"

The NRRRA's "Be a nose neighbour" campaign caused much discussion as the bright yellow and black signs found their way into the neighbourhood.

"They were noticed right away," says David Harrison, NRRRA director. Harrison, who is Chair of HYPN, along with NRRRA resident Ted Nation of Goodgoll Curtis (both firms are advertising agencies), developed the campaign that is designed to encourage cooperation in making a quick and dramatic reduction in burglaries and car thefts.

While the campaign resulted in many taking greater precautions, it's hard to know whether it contributed to the significant reduction in burglaries and thefts since Christmas. "The police captured a group of criminals in January, whom they assumed were responsible for the recent crime wave to hit North Rosedale," says Harrison.

The lasting benefit is a more alert community, says Harrison. "Good locks, expensive security systems and other actions are all effective - but are not 100% guaranteed - in making criminal activity in our midst more difficult. We can make these actions more effective by being aware of what's happening in our neighbourhood and calling police immediately if there's any suspicious activity."

Policing in North Rosedale is the responsibility of 51 Division - a large and busy area that takes in some high crime areas to the south of us. Your 2003 membership card will include a quality fridge magnet with the number to call. On-duty uniform officers will respond quickly if somebody phones and reports something unusual.

North Rosedale - A Heritage District - The Start of a Process...

North Rosedale could become designated as a heritage district within two years as a result of process now underway.

"The greatest area of concern occurs when an older home on a larger property is demolished and developers replace it with a dwelling that is not in keeping with the existing streetscape," says John Hogarth, NRRRA director and Chair of the Heritage Committee. "Not only is the character of the neighbourhood changed, but there's a likelihood that property values on that street can be affected."

In order to develop a process that protects the integrity of our community, the North Rosedale Ratepayers Association sponsored a public meeting on November 12 at the Rosedale United Church. Its goal was to begin the work to designate North Rosedale as a heritage district that would create a process that would seek to preserve its character.

"We had become aware of the efforts in South Rosedale, the Annex and Wychwood Park to gain designation as a heritage district. The City has a process to follow that includes identifying an inventory of properties with significant historical merit, developing guidelines for preserving heritage structures and their best features, and creating a way to balance individual property rights with a broader community interest," said Hogarth.

About 70 people attended the meeting, and the vast majority favoured moving ahead with the actions needed to create a heritage district. The meeting heard from Mike McClelland of ERA Architects, which has acted as project manager for South Rosedale's heritage initiative. His slide show included maps and photographs of heritage properties in South Rosedale, and explained an innovative method of categorizing them that is the core of a booklet produced as a result of the study.

Councillor Kyle Rae provided strong support for a heritage study in North Rosedale, stressing its importance in maintaining a community's character. Public support for the initiative also came from world famous architect Eb Zeidler, a long time North Rosedale resident.

Mr. Hogarth points out that the designation of North Rosedale as a heritage district will not prevent property owners from undertaking major renovations or building new buildings. "The intent is not to place roadblocks in front of change, but to assess applications for changes or demolition to house frontages in our neighbourhood against a standard to preserve the community's character."

Much of the work for the study is expected to be done by volunteers; developing a mini history of North Rosedale and a process for preserving the community's character. A steering committee will oversee the fund raising process and the organization of the volunteer effort. The North Rosedale community is invited to participate in the research and to make comments and suggestions throughout the entire approval process.

Once volunteers have completed their research into the architectural and historical significance of each home using the city archives and other sources, the information will be collated and put into a formal study by Mr. McClelland and his firm. Following approval by the North Rosedale community, the study then goes to the City Preservation board, Community Council, City Council, and finally the Ontario Municipal Board.

Further details and notices for public meeting are available on our

website at www.north-rosedale.org.

www.north-rosedale.org It's Worth a Bookmark!

In 2001, the NRRRA introduced our website as a vehicle for community communication and information sharing. The site has recently been enhanced to include more community links and neighbourhood-specific reference material. Site visits have increased markedly and are currently averaging over 200 hits per day.

Residents of North Rosedale are invited to register their e-mail address to receive electronic notification of community meetings and occasional alerts about more immediate community news. This can be done on the website itself or by providing your e-mail address on the membership form.

We welcome suggestions and comments on how the site could better serve the North Rosedale community. In the coming weeks, the NRRRA expects to supplement the site with more tips on community safety, as well as an electronic version of our newsletter. Worth a bookmark!

New Library Branch for Community Proposed

Councillor Kyle Rae has thrown his support behind the initiative for a new library branch proposed by Jim Gelcer of MacLennan Avenue.

A letter was sent from Councillor Rae's office to Chief Librarian Josephine Bryant at the Toronto Public Library requesting her thoughts on the possibility of opening a new community library branch.

Mr. Gelcer said he contacted Councillor Rae's office last August about his idea. "My reasoning behind this was that it is a fairly long drive to the nearest branches, and in view of the number of senior citizens and families with small children we have in our neighbourhood it would be nice to have a branch within walking distance."

The NRRRA supports the idea and is planning a campaign to get the branch in North Rosedale. However, the Chief Librarian has so far rejected the proposal but that will not deter the NRRRA and residents who want to see a new branch library in the community.

NRRA Works with Hydro One and Residents to Improve Scenery along CPR Tracks

The North Rosedale Ratepayers Association sponsored a process that involved Hydro One and the City of Toronto as well as interested residents to develop a plan to replace and rehabilitate vegetation along the CPR tracks north of Summerhill Ave. After months of effort, new vegetation is in place and the rail corridor has a much improved appearance.

The Summerhill landscape project, despite a brief flurry of controversy late in the process, has resulted in a wonderful facelift to the north side of Summerhill between McLennan and Mount Pleasant. The NRRA organized a committee of residents, primarily from Whitehall Road, that met on several occasions with representatives of Hydro One. Since many of the taller trees along the tracks threatened the wires; and additionally had the potential to affect their ability to conduct electricity, Hydro has been forced in recent years into a regular, expensive and difficult pruning exercise.

According to Andrea Meynell, NRRA director with fellow director Sheila Shaw, the result is a "win-win."

"Residents found a way to preserve a number of the old pine trees, while Hydro was able to come up with a plan to plant a variety of new species, which will not reach heights that will interfere with the safe operation of the power-lines," she said.

However, the new plantings will need a couple of seasons to grow in and reach heights that will shield the railway tracks. Hydro will be maintaining the area and will replace plants that die over the next two years. After this two-year period, maintenance of the area reverts to the City.

"Over time, the cedars and other vegetation will provide an even more effective noise and visual screen between the residents and the railway lines," says Andrea.

The Association wishes to thank Hydro One, City staff, Councillor Kyle Rae and his dedicated assistants, and the committee members for their hard work in making this a successful project.

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City Launches Don Valley Traffic Study

The City has retained the firm, **Cansult Hanscomb Projects Inc.**, to undertake a year-long traffic study in the Don Valley corridor. One of the key issues of the study is to review the current configuration of the intersection of the Don Valley Parkway and Highway 401, according to Rod McPhail, the City's Director of Transportation Planning. With such a wide-ranging study area, he says that the consultants will be looking at all arterial roads adjacent to the DVP for ways to improve transportation flows, including streets adjacent to Leaside and Rosedale.

According to Leaside Councillor Jane Pitfield, Leaside's traffic problems are long standing and result in a lot of traffic making its way through residential streets during peak travel periods. A previous plan to ease traffic flows through Leaside by extending Leslie Street to Bayview Avenue near the intersection with Nesbitt Avenue is officially dead.

However, the extension of Redway Avenue to Bayview Avenue, also intersecting near Nesbitt Avenue, is designated in Toronto's new Official Plan as a "planned but un-built road." While not the massive and heavily traveled arterial road proposed by the Leslie Street extension, Councillor Pitfield believes that it has the potential of solving many of Leaside's traffic problems.

However, residents of Rosedale aren't so sure that this proposal will result in more cars on Rosedale's streets.

The NRRRA successfully opposed the Leslie Street extension because of its potential for significantly increasing traffic in Rosedale. Your Association is on record as opposing any extension of Redway Avenue without proactive measures that reduce traffic volumes in Rosedale.

"I sense that the NRRRA and the people of Rosedale would not accept turn restrictions put in place with signage because people tend to ignore them," said Bill Deacon, Chair of NRRRA's traffic committee. "And it's not enough to tell people in Rosedale that there will be no impact from a Redway extension. People want proof."

The NRRA will be monitoring this issue over the next few months and plans to participate in any public meeting organized by the consultants.

