

January 2020 - SERRA News

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SERRA 2020 – BUILDING STRONGER NEIGHBOURHOODS TOGETHER

Dear Resident,

We would be remiss not to wish you a happy, healthy and prosperous 2020. Perhaps this is the year we achieve 20:20 vision for our area?

Our year started on a sad note – for us personally and for our larger community. On January 20th, long-time board member and Green/Environment working group leader Rosemary Corbett passed away unexpectedly.

Rosemary was a passionate advocate for maintaining and enhancing our green space and public realm. Through her efforts with the Tree for Me program, hundreds of native saplings found homes in yards and on balconies. At the spring Tree for me Event 132 trees and saplings were distributed to residents of Davisville and to others in the city. Rosemary reminded us that at maturity, these trees will be of a \$10,790.00 value, representing 88,966 gallons of stormwater capture and 8,246 pounds of carbon capture.

Rosemary was also an active participant in the Friends of the Belt Line, and helped SERRA map potential greenways throughout our area. She helped to launch our SERRA green efforts, which we promise to carry on in her name and in her spirit.

2019 in review

2019 was a very busy year for our midtown neighbourhood. We continue to feel the effects of the construction of the Eglinton Crosstown LRT. New tall and mid-rise towers are springing up and leaping onto the drawing board. A number of residential homes are being replaced, renovated, and remodeled in our area. And the pace of change only looks to intensify in 2020.

2019 also saw increased congestion at peak times on the Yonge Line 1 subway

and unsafe conditions on neighbourhood roads and sidewalks, in good measure because of all the construction vehicles in our neighbourhood. Many midtown intersections now feature safety guards, and an area City construction coordinator has been appointed to coordinate all construction movement in the Y-E area.

Because of the exponential growth in Midtown, the Toronto District School Board is resorting increasingly to busing students to schools outside our district and have publicly stated that we need a new elementary school for our area.

In our 50+ years of existence we, at SERRA, have focused primarily on ensuring new development in our area is reasonable, meets City planning regulations, and fits with the general character of the neighbourhood.

These are still major SERRA priorities, but more and more our focus is on ensuring that ours is a "livable" area. For instance, our midtown neighbourhood has always been known for its green canopies, varieties of housing, access to excellent schools, great transportation options, and a wealth of recreational and social facilities and retail services.

Unfortunately, with the addition of more than 21,000+ new condos/apartments (since 2016), bringing more than 35,000+ new residents to our area, we are experiencing a major strain on those very features that make our area so attractive.

Last year's AGM was well-attended and informative



So, what is SERRA doing about this?

SERRA has created new working groups to help us tackle these challenges. Please continue reading for details.

Best wishes for 2020!

Andy Gort,



President, SERRA

SERRA's working groups

Get to know what we do.

SERRA is already structured into four major working groups:

- Tall/Mid-rise development (dealing with development applications from proposal through construction)
- Residential infill development
- Heritage
- Green and Environmental Initiatives (parks, open and green spaces, tree canopy, pedestrian pathways and so-called mid-block connectors that enhance walkability)

In 2020 we are broadening the scope of the Green and Environmental Working Group as well as introducing two new working groups:

- Vision Zero 2.0 (Local traffic safety and design, and aligning with the City's goals and vision)
- Transportation (inside our neighbourhoods and throughout the Yonge/Eglinton corridor)

In addition, we will continue working with our ward school trustees to keep abreast of school capacity issues and other developments.

We have a strong relationship with the three Midtown Councillors and their staff, our school trustees, and the staff at relevant City departments. We also work closely with other midtown residents' groups to coordinate wider efforts. And we endeavour to keep lines of communication open with area developers even while frequently opposing their development proposals.

Heritage is interesting and important!



How can you help SERRA reach our community's goals?

Recently we have recruited new volunteers to strengthen our ranks, but we need more help.

Do you have:

- communications skills
- event planning background
- heritage and architectural interest
- planning or legal expertise
- green/environmental interests
- construction issues expertise
- traffic, transportation and transit focus

If so, we want to hear from you!

Tall and mid-rise: Development Update

Although there haven't been many new applications for additional developments in our area, there continues to be plenty of activity on existing applications.

Bayview and Merton/ Balliol

A proposal for an 8-storey mid-rise development at **1408-1420 Bayview** was recently approved at City Council. The proposal complied with the much more stringent (Midtown-in-Focus) planning requirements that City Council had adopted in July 2018. During the review process, the developer agreed to many changes requested by the community.

Davisville apartment neighbourhood area

For the **265 Balliol** development application (one of 8 applications in the Davisville area) a negotiated settlement was reached at the LPAT (Local Planning Appeal Tribunal – previously called OMB). SERRA, together with the City solicitor and planner, and Councillor Matlow felt that achieving major changes to the proposal was better for the community than risking losing all those improvements at a LPAT contested hearing. The settlement was reviewed with residents of the adjacent area and the general sentiment was in agreement with it.

Here are some of the improvements:

- reduction in height of the tower
- 1/3 reduction in height and in footprint of the podium
- construction of a mid-block pedestrian walkway with the potential for a second mid-block connection
- a small retail or service commercial use at grade facing Balliol Street
- 10 percent of the new rental dwelling units as affordable rental units, including 40% as two or more-bedroom units
- a cash contribution of one million dollars (\$1,000,000) for the Davisville Aquatic Centre
- improved and upgraded facilities for the residents of the existing 265 Balliol tower

Also approved was an 18-storey tower development at **140 Merton**, the future site of an affordable housing location and part of the City-wide drive to increase affordable housing stock (Housing Now). The site will include two floors for community services and potentially, a small grocery store. Heritage features of the existing building will also be preserved.

Reviews are continuing for the following tall and mid-rise development applications (SERRA is involved in all):

- Davisville area: 30 Merton, 22 Balliol, 141 Davisville, 155 Balliol, 276 Merton, 1951 Yonge and 24-26 Imperial St
- Yonge-Eglinton area: 2100 Yonge, 2128 Yonge
- Eglinton/Mt Pleasant area: 700 and 733 Mt Pleasant

SERRA doesn't stop fighting to improve development applications, but remains active throughout the development construction phase as well. One way is through participations in CCLCs.

What's a CCLC?

The CCLC has become an integral part of the construction process for tall and midrise developments in our area.

Community Construction Liaison Committees are a great way for residents to have a say in major construction projects during the actual construction process, from site plan approval to opening.

The CCLC is a voluntary working group of local residents, developer reps, and someone (usually the person in charge of infrastructure) from the councillor's office, meeting every 6-8 weeks during the entire course of the project construction from pre-construction to completion.

SERRA is currently involved in three CCLCs for midrise and high-rise developments in our area, and recently finished working with another, the Art Shoppe Condos near Soudan/Hillsdale and Yonge. This CCLC met for close to three years and was a very successful process...on all sides. We built good working relations with the developer. It's this mutual trust and "partnership" that encourages developers to follow the rules, take care of issues that arise in a timely fashion, and generally build good will among the local residents.

Setting up a CCLC early in the construction process helps to foster good will in the neighbourhood during the difficult years of constant construction. But, just as important, having the developer as part of a working group encourages the sub-trades to be more mindful. We feel that CCLCs should play an even bigger role in the construction cycle in our busy area as they encourage safety practices.

Membership: Time to join, time to renew

We are only as strong as our membership, so please – if you are already a member (thank you!) and do renew your membership – or join us as a new

member (for only \$25 per family). And spread the word to your neighbours and friends to join SERRA, one of the most active residents' associations in the city!

Please visit our website and fill in the online form: <https://southeqlinton.ca/membership/>

Of course, donations are also welcome so that, when required, we can hire experts to provide legal and urban planning advice to participate at development appeals at the Local Planning Appeals Tribunal (formerly known as the OMB).

Heritage: This is not just another old building



SERRA member, Mary Turcotte, writes in her Davisville Post blog about the Belsize/Crest/Regent Theatre.

"There was a time in the City of Toronto - long before streaming, cable, and even televisions with rabbit-ear antennae, when locals would flock to their little neighbourhood movie theatre to be entertained. ...

On Mount Pleasant stands one such theatre whose future is uncertain, but its history is rich."

Please visit Mary's website at <https://www.davisvillepost.ca/home/2019/11/23/belsize-crest-regent>

Neighbourhoods: Residential Infill Development



SERRA has a working group that is focussed on Residential Infill development. This working group has created resource material and tutorials to assist our residents who may be dealing with proposed new developments on their street.

For residents who are facing their first Committee of Adjustment hearing or a TLAB hearing, this can be a daunting experience. Please reach out to us if you need any assistance or guidance for these hearings or other residential infill matters.

Our Residential Infill group can be reached at the following email address: tallhomes@southeqlinton.ca

Save the date!

**The next SERRA Annual General Meeting set for
Monday, May 11, 2020.**

Once again we will be holding our SERRA Annual General Meeting at Greenwood College School. Please save the date and plan on attending on Monday, May 11, 2020.

SERRA takes the cake at our last AGM.

This delicious (and nut-free) cake was from Flaky Tart on Mount Pleasant Rd.



[Click here to go to our website](#)