




# Mount Dennis Community Association



Could this be the new look for Weston & Eglinton's NW corner? See below.



Mount Dennis  
Eco-Neighbourhood  
Initiative

“To be a liveable, net-zero energy neighbourhood and inspire others to do the same.”



A map of Mount Dennis

## A STREETScape MASTERPLAN FOR WESTON ROAD

Last year, the Mount Dennis Business Improvement Area (BIA) received funding from Toronto City Hall’s BIA Office to assist in producing a *Streetscape Masterplan*. They hired PMA Landscape Architects, who had already done an impressive landscaping plan for the new City daycare at Weston and Glenvalley.

The BIA covers Weston Road from Ray Ave. to Lambton Ave. By making the area more inviting, safe and beautiful, the draft *Masterplan* aims to attract both residents and visitors to shop, eat, do business and “linger”. Its ideas are not limited to Weston Road itself, but include proposed landscape treatments on most side-streets where they connect to it. And it wants to see “green” design in terms of tree canopy, groundcover plantings and better storm-water management as well as a road that works better for “active transportation” such as cyclists and pedestrians.

The *Masterplan* recognizes that the BIA has a very limited budget, so its proposals are presented as a “kit of parts” that can be used as opportunities arise – for example, when new developments are proposed, or when the City is working on streets, sidewalks or sewers in the area. The kit’s six elements are: specialty paving, colour, trees, vegetation, seating and art. Most of these can be used in one or more of short, medium or long-term situations.

The above illustration is one of the *Masterplan*’s several “visualizations” of how its kit can be used. It also includes maps of short-term, medium and long-term opportunities. MDCA is excited about the *Masterplan*, and the way it relates to and expands on our own vision for the future of Weston Road.

To see our series of articles on Weston Road development in previous issues of this newsletter, as well the full BIA *Masterplan*, go on-line to [mountdennis.ca](http://mountdennis.ca) and follow the links.

## BIKE LANES FOR WESTON ROAD?


Bike lanes or paths will soon be built on Eglinton between Jane and Keele, and Mount Dennis Station will have bike storage areas. But despite claims of promoting “active transportation” like walking and cycling, **there are no plans** to make it safe and easy for people to bike along Weston Road to and from the station. Too many cyclists already use our sidewalks, and the LRT will likely make that worse!

MDCA believes the answer is to add bike lanes on Weston Road in our area. We looked elsewhere in Toronto to see what works, and like the example of Harbord Street which has had bike lanes for many years. Harbord St. and Weston are surprisingly similar from a transportation standpoint. Both are minor arterials with a bus route running on them, similar traffic volumes, on-street parking and street retail stores. Key differences? Harbord does not ban rush-hour parking, has permanent bike lanes, and is two metres narrower – which means Weston Road can likely fit all-hours parking on both sides, as well as bike lanes.

We believe Harbord-style bike lanes could be cheaply and painlessly installed on Weston Road. Harbord works by giving drivers space to get around a parked bus or a left-turning vehicle (*see illustration below*). And where there is no bus stop or need for vehicles to make left turns, it reverts to a single lane in each direction. This frees-up room for a safe cycling lane as well as parking spaces. Wherever two lanes of traffic are needed in one direction, the parking space is removed so the bike lane is not interrupted and flows around the vehicular lanes.

The only sacrifice in all this would be losing an extra traffic lane in rush hour. But we have noticed, the inside lane is rarely used for a continuous-travel lane, so the loss would be minimal. And a slight slowing of rush-hour traffic through our neighbourhood should improve pedestrian safety.

What do you think? Email us at [info@mountdennis.ca](mailto:info@mountdennis.ca).



**Hon. Ahmed Hussen**  
Member of Parliament  
for York South - Weston

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## WHAT'S UP WITH SCOTIABANK?

Now that CIBC is gone, Scotiabank at Weston and Eglinton is the only bank in Mount Dennis. So, when MDCA heard rumours that it had been sold, we were very concerned. We were also confused. This is a small property, the building itself is part of the City of Toronto's Inventory of Heritage Properties and the grassy area out front is designated “Public Open Space” in the City's Official Plan – so why would anyone want to buy it?

Some research told us that this was part of a set of seven Scotia bank branch properties in Toronto (and a few more in Halton Region) bought on May 18<sup>th</sup> last year by Silver Hotel Group (2629964 ONTARIO INC). The buyer confirmed the purchase was solely an investment and not intended as part of a redevelopment.

We asked Srinu Iyengar, our local branch manager, to explain, and here is what he told us.

Scotiabank's new policy is to rent rather than own many of its bank branch properties. Selling off the properties provides cash the bank can invest in other ways. Here in Mount Dennis they have signed a long-term lease with the new owners, and as far as Srinu knows there are **no plans to close the bank at the moment** (though he cannot guarantee what head office will do in the future). Srinu also pointed to the ongoing need for local banking services here, and the likelihood of new customers from LRT travellers, workers at the station and rail yard, and as a result of new development expected to happen in our area.

So, for now, at least, it is “business as usual” at Scotiabank, and we can stop worrying. Whew!



Councillor Frances Nunziata and City of Toronto

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**YONGE STREET MISSION:**

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Community is so much more than a shared postal code. It is a sense of belonging, with a web of connected relationships that impact our health, sense of identity and value. Yonge Street Mission (YSM) no longer just works in downtown Toronto. YSM works with community members and organizations from across the city to encourage positive change and support the development of strong and thriving communities that are community-identified, owned, and delivered. YSM is excited to have established their new office serving the neighbourhoods of Keele-dale-Eglinton West, Beechborough-Greenbrook, Weston, and Mount Dennis.

YSM looks forward to working with both community members and organizations in these neighbourhoods to create initiatives that will help neighbours get to know one another, or that will help community members to be more resourceful, more resilient, or more content. If you have skills or expertise that you would like to share with your neighbours – whether it’s gardening, cooking, sewing, event planning, advocating for social causes, or any number of activities that promote wellness, safety and equity - YSM would love to hear from you and to help you turn those dreams into reality!

To learn more or get involved, contact Michael Caldara, Community Partnership Coordinator at 416-797-9939 or [mcaldara@ysm.ca](mailto:mcaldara@ysm.ca)

**NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE  
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Hungry? Come visit the Mount Dennis Neighbourhood Centre (MDNC) at 1269 Weston Road at Ray Ave. MDNC offers free drop-in meals on Saturdays at 5:30 p.m. and Sundays at 10:30 a.m. They also offer housing support and referrals for healthcare and other services.

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## FIRE IN MOUNT DENNIS

On January 19<sup>th</sup> the house at 43 Lambton Ave. was destroyed by fire on one of the coldest nights of the winter, as temperatures dipped to -20C. The family in the house escaped unharmed, but all their belongings were destroyed and the family dog, rescued by firefighters, later died.

Fire services had a hard time putting out this three-alarm fire, leaving extensive water and ice on neighbouring properties and on the street. The two adjoining houses suffered damage both from water and from the flames and heat.

If you follow MDCA on Facebook or subscribe to our e-blasts, you learned of this the next day. You also heard about the fantastic work that followed, led by Erin Ronningen of the Black Creek Alliance, who launched a GoFundMe campaign that raised \$10,575 to support the family. Donations of clothing and household items were collected at St. Mary and St. Martha's, and those the family could not use went to others in need.

The extended family of six adults and eight children wish to remain in Mount Dennis, and are looking for permanent accommodation.

## TOASTMASTERS CLUB COMING

Mount Dennis is about to get a Toastmasters Club. Its start-up meeting will be at the Church of St. Mary & St. Martha (Weston Road at Eglinton) in mid-April. **Watch for details** or contact Al Farrington at 416-722-0254 [ur1withus1116@gmail.com](mailto:ur1withus1116@gmail.com) or Paul Ferreira at 647-290-3483 - [paulandtim@rogers.com](mailto:paulandtim@rogers.com).

Joining a Toastmasters Club can be a great way to improve your public speaking skills, and is especially helpful for those who may feel too nervous to speak in front of large groups or strangers. Toastmasters International has existed since 1924, has nearly 400,000 members and a very solid reputation. Membership is open to all those over 17, but anyone can attend meetings as a visitor.

**LOST YOUR SPECIAL RING?**  
If you think you may have dropped it in the Pearen Park Skate Hut this winter, call 416-614-3371



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## UNIVERSITY STUDENTS HELP OUT

Every winter a small group of students from the University of Toronto spends three days in Mount Dennis, as part of an optional "Alternative Reading Week" program. This gets them away from the campus to unfamiliar parts of Toronto, where they do three days of voluntary work for the local community.

This year's team was Tahasun, Anthony and Julia, seen here outside the Library with MDCA's Simon Chamberlain. The group worked on three things for us: helping transfer the MDCA web-site to a new software platform and doing some related upgrades; staffing the Community Rink as skate-fitters and on-ice coaches; and updating our annual survey of Weston Road retailers. Big thanks to all three of them, and to the University for making it all happen.



L-R: Anthony, Simon, Tahasun, Julia


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## GOODBYE ROSS – AND “THANK YOU”

Ross' No Frills opened in early 2006 in a brand-new building next to Photography Drive. Most people seemed to really like the new store. Some even ranked it as “Toronto’s best No Frills”, and there was on-line praise for its massive size, wide range of products, generously wide aisles, and fresh fish and meat counters. Its success soon led to more and more customers and huge line-ups on the weekends, but overall people seemed pretty happy about Ross' No Frills. Few customers knew or thought to ask who Ross was, or what role he played in making it work so well.



As the franchisee, Ross was responsible for all the details of how the store worked, including its staffing, and he was a startlingly “hands-on” manager. Regular shoppers got used to seeing him stacking groceries on the shelves, though many probably assumed he was just another staffer. But this anonymous physical work helped Ross stay aware of what was working well and what was not. Occasionally, if there were not enough tellers available, Ross would be the one at the till doing the check-outs and accepting payment. He was also hands-on with his problem solving. When a customer complained about a particular product that was out of stock, Ross realised Loblaw’s computerised product-ordering system was not meeting customer needs for this product, so decided the store would start ordering it directly.

We got to know Ross a little through arranging adverts for this *Newsletter* (see page 7). Our conversations were always brief, because Ross was the kind of person who never used two words where one would do, and he was usually multi-tasking: stacking shelves as we talked! His decisions were almost instant. He would decide immediately “Yes” or “No” when asked if we could run his ad in the next issue, and would wait for us to ask him about adding anything different, usually expecting us to figure out the advert’s slogan, such as “Get your **Flu Shot** here”.

Ross surprised us last summer by making a commitment in advance. He told us “You can run the exact same ad in the next issue”. He’d never done this before, but it made sense later when we discovered he had left in the Fall of 2018, and a temporary manager was running the store.

As we go to press we understand Loblaw is about to make the decision on the new franchisee, so the “Ross' No Frills” sign will give way to something different. But we think it is only right to acknowledge the effectiveness and hard work of a man who served most local residents for more than twelve years. In an on-line forum discussing which No Frills stores were the best, someone wrote: “I think it’s all due to the person who runs the No Frills, the proprietor”. We agree. So, we thank Ross for a job well done! The new franchisee will have a high standard to live up to.

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## WHAT WE CAN DO TO REDUCE FLOODING

As 20-year Mount Dennis residents, we have seen first-hand how flooding can devastate homes, especially in low-lying areas. Urban floods are mostly man-made due to poorly maintained drains, plastic debris clogging sewers, shrinking open spaces and storm-drains easily overwhelmed by heavy rains and large snow melts. Our storm water management systems are not big enough to handle the massive surges being caused by climate change.

While the Toronto Region Conservation Authority is the agency responsible for giving municipalities the information they need to prevent floods and respond to those that happen, we as local residents can do our part to reduce flooding.

**Grow gardens not driveways.** Gardens can soak up rain, but paving and concrete cause run-off to flow onto the street and into the storm water drains which cannot always cope and may cause flooding. The sandy soils of Mount Dennis drain well and are conducive to farming. We grow our own food on our front yard every year – vegetables like zucchini, peppers, tomatoes, beans, cabbage, kale, swiss chard, wild flowers like marigolds and black-eyed Susan's and an assortment of herbs. Bees feast on these herbs and flowers all day, pollinating the vegetables for higher yield. We've connected more with our neighbours as they stop by and chat while we're out there tending our garden, with parents showing their children where food comes from. In our back yard, a black walnut tree helps prevent erosion and provides cooling shade, but also provides nuts which we have turned into dozens of banana-walnut loaves.



**“Rainwater harvesting”** refers to the practice of collecting rainwater from a roof or other surface and using it to supplement fresh municipal water. We use rain barrels to collect storm water from our own roof which we then use to water the gardens. By doing so, we have realized water savings by reducing the use of treated municipal water, while also helping to reduce the amount of storm water runoff onto the streets and into the underground sewers. Diverting storm water runoff helps to reduce the amount of flooding and ghastly sewer back-ups. We have further reduced our impact by installing a French Drain beneath our yard, which diverts water away from the house and slowly releases it into the soil.

**Reduce plastic waste.** Drainage systems blocked by plastic bags have been identified as a major cause of flooding. Plastic pollution also ends up flowing into the Great Lakes, and like the oceans, much of what remains as floating trash is consumed by fish and enters the food chain. We have mindfully reduced our plastic waste consumption by:

- Carrying reusable shopping bags so we do not need single-use plastic bags for produce, bread and bulk items.
- Saying “no” to single-use plastic cups, straws, plates and cutlery – we bring our own ceramic or stainless-steel coffee cups when traveling, or minimize take-out from restaurants that do not use recyclable packaging.
- Eliminating plastic food wrap by using alternatives such as glass containers or stainless-steel bowls with matching lids, and re-usable and biodegradable food cloth made with recycled cotton and coated in beeswax.

We have seen that these small changes we've made have somehow made a difference, and we hope this article might inspire you to do something similar. Why not send an email to MDCA to tell us what YOU have been able to do to make our community better and safer? We'll be happy to post them on-line or include them in a future MDCA Newsletter.

*Don and Jona are long-time residents of Mount Dennis and are members of MDCA's board. They call themselves “food-loving eco warriors”. Follow them on Instagram @ecojavafoodie*

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2018 Easter Egg Hunt



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## UPCOMING EVENTS

### MARCH & APRIL: MDCA/*supercoffee* SPRING CLEAN-UPS #MDSpringClean

- Mar.30<sup>th</sup>** – Jane & Pinehill ravine edges. Meet 10 a.m., end of Bartonville nr. Jane.
- Apr. 6<sup>th</sup>** – Somerville & Sunnybrae ravine. Meet 10 a.m. West end of Glenvalley Dr.
- Apr.13<sup>th</sup>** – Dora Spencer & Emmett Ave. Meet 10 a.m. Weston at Dora Spencer Rd.
- Apr. 20<sup>th</sup>** – Lambton & Astoria ravine edges. Meet 10 a.m. Lambton at Astoria.
- Apr. 27<sup>th</sup>** – Eglinton south side. Meet 10 a.m.at SE Flats Park, parking lot entrance.

### APRIL 13<sup>th</sup> COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT DAY, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Sponsored by Councillor Nunziata and the City of Toronto. Eglinton Flats (N.W. quadrant), 101 Emmett Ave.

### APRIL 20<sup>th</sup> MDCA'S CHILDREN'S EASTER EGG HUNT, 2 – 3:30 pm (children ages 0 - 8)

S.E. Eglinton Flats Park, south of the Fieldhouse. Meet the Easter Bunny!

### TWO OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN MORE ABOUT MOUNT DENNIS & BEYOND

#### MAY 3<sup>rd</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> JANE'S WALK WEEKEND (led by local residents)

For details check [janewalk.org](http://janewalk.org) (or [mountdennis.ca](http://mountdennis.ca) for local walks)

#### MAY 25<sup>th</sup>–26<sup>th</sup> Doors Open Toronto (20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!).

Guided visits to buildings normally closed to the public. Details at [doorsopenontario.on.ca/en/Toronto](http://doorsopenontario.on.ca/en/Toronto) (& [mountdennis.ca](http://mountdennis.ca) if local)

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