

Annex Residents' Association

July 8, 2015

City of Toronto Preservation Board
City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Members of the Preservation Board:

Re: Madison Avenue Heritage Conservation District Study, Part One of the West Annex Heritage Conservation District

The Annex Residents Association (ARA) sought and gained Council approval in 2004 to have Madison Avenue studied with the objective of making it the first street in an overall West Annex Heritage Conservation District. The Association raised the funds in the early years to hire Catherine Nasmith as the consulting heritage architect. Under her guidance and great expertise, members of the ARA spent hundreds of hours researching and photographing the properties. The result is our report, which you have before you.

A mere three blocks long, extending from Bloor Street to Dupont Street, Madison is an almost entirely intact example of a late 19th/early 20th century tree-lined streetscape with a treasure of heritage buildings, many designed by the finest architects of that period. E. J. Lennox, architect for Old City Hall, designed 37 Madison in a manner so original that the term “Annex Style” was coined and its influence can be seen on this street and in other parts of the Annex to this day.

The name Madison, chosen by Simeon Janes, the original developer, spoke to the upscale dreams of a burgeoning middle class who lived there in close proximity to the University of Toronto, major cultural institutions, the Provincial Legislature and the financial district—politicians, religious leaders, doctors, lawyers, academics and leaders of finance and industry. The street speaks of an understood civility where builders aligned their buildings to a common setback and built architecturally compatible structures without any strict design codes. The street is a jewel of the Annex, Toronto’s first planned urban suburb, and is both an architectural and cultural snapshot of an era of the City’s history.

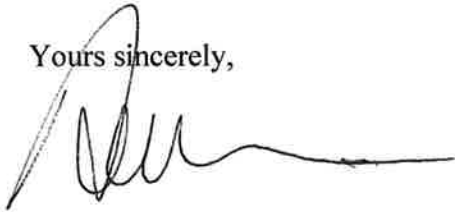
We almost lost Madison over the route plans for the Spadina Expressway. Even though Spadina Road still exists between Dupont and Bloor one block west of Madison, its streetscape was badly degraded by the initial widening and demolition of stately homes as a first step in the development of the expressway. Madison would have been next. While some Madison buildings were hastily listed in the City’s heritage inventory in 1974 after the cancellation of the expressway, none is designated.

Madison is, as the case for the rest of the Annex, under extreme pressure from large-scale development proposals on Bloor Street, which totally ignore the heritage merits of the established neighbourhood to the north and the guidelines of the City approved vision study along the main transportation corridor. A similar trend is emerging on Dupont. It is critically important to put in place any measure available, such as the Heritage Conservation District bylaws, required for good planning as the area becomes more densely populated.

It is also important that Madison not be left a "heritage conservation orphan" isolated from the East Annex Conservation District, which extends from Bedford east to Avenue Road. The streets east of Madison and west of Bedford should be the next phase of the West Annex Heritage Conservation District plan. Council approved the study of the West Annex as a heritage conservation district extending from Bedford west to Albany in 2005. The Annex is one of the largest heritage neighbourhoods in Toronto, and one of its greatest architectural assets.

We are proud of our collective achievement but truly regret that after all of this time we cannot share your discussion at the Board meeting because of previous commitments that could not be changed. We hope that the study will meet with your approval and thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Harrison', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David Harrison,
Chair
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c.c. - Councillor J. Cressy, Catherine Nasmith, ARA Board