A proposed five-kilometre park stretching across the west end is getting closer to reality. A study for the “Green Line,” a stretch of parks and trails that would provide green spaces along a hydro corridor north of Dupont Street between Landsdowne Avenue and Spadina Road, is expected to begin later this year.

Jake Tobin Garrett, manager of policy and research at Park People, told Metroland Media Toronto his organization has been advocating for the park since 2014. “Right now, it’s kind of a series of disconnected spaces that includes some parks, but the vision is really to create a connected linear park and trail that people can move through,” he said. “After ‘Green Line’ could run from EarlsCourt Park to the Annex

AARON D’ANDREA
adandrea@metroland.com

Songstress Jully Black raises student voices at the ‘We are Canada’ campaign launch/3

‘Green Line’ could run from EarlsCourt Park to the Annex

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See PARK page 10
5 things to do this weekend

The Toronto Mendelssohn Choir is giving a free concert in which they’ll be testing out five conductors.

**Free Concert**
WHERE: 3 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.
WHERE: Yorkminster Park Baptist Church, 1585 Yonge St.

Toronto Mendelssohn Choir and Elora Singers chamber choir conducted by the five conductors attending the TMC’s Choral Conductors’ Symposium. Live webcast. First come, first seated. Doors open 2:15 p.m.

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**Heart Health**
WHERE: Four Villages CHC, 3446 Dundas Street West
CONTACT: 416-252-1928 Ext.299
COST: Free

Educational Program on Heart Health, presented by West Toronto Diabetes Education Program team. Light snack and tokens provided to those using public transit.

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Youth rally together to celebrate Canada 150

WE movement co-founder Craig Kielburger (left) talks with Olympian Penny Oleksiak during the launch Monday, Jan. 23 of the nation-wide WE are Canada sesquicentennial program at Bishop Marrocco/Thomas Merton Catholic Secondary School.

Kielburger added $10 will be donated to support WE’s local and global programs with every pledge that is made. The school component take their pledge, take their action and celebrate that.”

WE are Canada program aims to build compassionate future

AARON D’ANDREA
adandrea@metroland.com

Ricardo Leca, 16, is pledging to help people in need to do the best they can in making a difference in the world.

“It’s the way I was raised,” the Grade 11 student at Bishop Marrocco/Thomas Merton Catholic Secondary School (BMTM) told Metroland Media Toronto. “I try to help as many people as I can.”

Leca’s pledge is part of the WE organization’s “We are Canada” campaign for Canada’s 150th birthday.

WE co-founder Craig Kielburger, Olympic gold medallist Penny Oleksiak and several WE members joined hundreds of Toronto students at BMTM on Jan. 23 for a youth rally ahead of the program’s launch on Feb. 1.

The initiative aims to provide Canadians with a deeper understanding of Canadian issues, and hopes to inspire the public to make a difference in their communities and across the country, WE said in a news release.

The program is also providing schools across Canada with a service-learning program that offers curriculum to teachers and students with resources and activities to learn more about Canada, the release added.

“We’re asking schools, individual schools, in essence to replicate what we just did (youth rally),” Kielburger said. “We’re asking every student to take their pledge, take their action and celebrate that.”

Kielburger added $10 will be donated to support WE’s local and global programs with every pledge that is made. The school component

Cleaners leave stain on UP Express noise walls

RAHUL GUPTA
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Residents will have to wait until the weather improves before a “translucent white residue” is removed from the train noise walls along the rail tracks near Dundas West GO Station, says Metrolinx.

The opaque substance which resembles ice frosting, appeared late last year following the most recent scrubbing of the noise walls to remove graffiti tags, the responsibility of Metrolinx which operates the UP Express rail service.

A spokesperson for the provincial transit planning agency said there is no permanent damage to the transparent panels making up the walls located approximately north of Ruskin Avenue, but they will require buffing and polishing to remove the lingering stains.

“The damage isn’t permanent, fortunately,” said Anne Marie Aikins in a statement last week. “The etching and the remaining diluted paint can be removed by mechanical buffing using a light polishing compound, however, it can only be performed in warm weather. It will be done in the next few months once the warmer weather arrives.”

Aikins said the residue is made up of left-over paint from tagging “and the resulting removal process damaging the surface, as well as diluted paint remaining”.

The situation represents the latest black mark in the eyes of residents living along the West Toronto Railpath against Metrolinx, which has yet to release details about a long-term graffiti removal strategy for the noise walls, which have proven a frequent target of tagging since they were completed back in 2015.

Kevin Putnam of the Junction Triangle Rail Committee who first alerted Metroland Media Toronto to stains, said Metrolinx has failed to live up to its commitment to properly maintain the noise walls, despite personal assurances from the likes of CEO Bruce McCuaig.

Putnam said recent emails sent to McCuaig in the new year about the noise wall cleaning have so far gone unanswered despite past promises to address the issue.

“Bruce came out here and personally assured us (the noise walls) would be taken care of,” said Putnam, a Junction resident. “I think the buck stops with him, this is not a mid-management decision.”

Aikins said Metrolinx currently spends $250,000 on graffiti removal throughout its network, which includes GO Transit, but was unable to disclose how much is spent specifically on maintaining the West Toronto noise walls.

She said offensive and racist graffiti found on buses and trains get top priority, forwarding an image of a heavily vandalized GO train compartment as an example of what gets removed.

“My pledge would be to still inspire kids to better themselves and better Canada as a whole,” she added.

For more information about the WE are Canada program, visit we.ca.
Information, funding needed for rail safety

Rail carriers are working under a shroud of secrecy, putting Ontarians at risk every day. Information regarding what hazardous materials are shipped through our communities remains elusive. At any given moment, emergency responders and local governments have no idea what, exactly, is being transported through municipalities across the province. Yet they are the ones tasked with keeping the population safe in the event of a disaster.

The continued secrecy is putting the public at unnecessary risk and it is not a theoretical risk. The danger is very real.

In 2015, 144 rail-related accidents occurred involving dangerous goods in Canada. The five-year average is 140. One need only look to the disaster at Lac-Mégantic to see how very real and devastating such disasters can be. When the unattended freight train derailed, it left 47 people dead and half of the community’s downtown destroyed.

That train had previously passed through the densely populated GTA. The disaster prompted renewed calls from municipalities for more up-to-date information about what dangers their first responders might face. And those first responders need adequate training about what dangers their first responders might face.

There have since been improvements to information-sharing, but has it gone far enough?

Emergency responders in municipalities have access to historic data of what has come through their community. From that they can undertake disaster planning.

The burden - and cost - of preparing for these potential disasters falls squarely on the shoulders of municipalities. Not only must our towns and cities prepare without knowing when, how often and what materials companies are transporting, they must also find a way to pay for managing the dangers these private rail carriers pose.

For security reasons, real-time information is not available. And what information is shared with select municipal officials is not intended to be shared with the public. No one wants to tip off a potential terrorist about the exact location of specific chemicals. And the rail carriers don’t want to panic the public.

Not only are emergency responders faced with a lack of information, the public remains largely in the dark about what dangerous goods are rolling through their communities. This culture of secrecy does not allow residents to make informed decisions or adequately prepare for possible disaster scenarios.

More information is needed. The public needs to have general data regarding what is regularly transported through their backyards. Municipalities need more up-to-date information about what dangers their first responders might have to battle. And those first responders need adequate funding to defend against the worst case scenarios.

Rail lines are an important part of this country’s economy, but the dangers they pose need to be better managed. It shouldn’t take another Lac-Mégantic to bring about these much-needed reforms.

MIKE ADLER
Edges of Toronto

What’s happening in Thorncliffe Park is what’s happening in Toronto’s other highrise neighbourhoods, only more so. Its problems can’t be solved, only patched.


Thorncliffe’s aging: 43 apartment buildings in a horseshoe of land on the Don River. They were built long ago, like St. James Town, Flemingdon Park, and Scarborough’s Markham Road highrises, when Toronto apartment towers rose at the rate condos are popping up today.

Thorncliffe’s overcrowded: grandparents and cousins are shoehorned in. Families rent rooms in other people’s apartments. Designed for 12,000 residents, the neighbourhood has 30,000, possibly 45,000.

Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne, the area’s MPP, pronounced the overcrowding unsolvable, except through “community conversation,” last week when Thorncliffe tenants and landlords met.

“We don’t even know exactly how many people are in these communities,” she said.

So much of Toronto lives like this, and will continue because, while the gap between renters and homeowners widens, few apartment towers are built.

Daryl Chong of the Greater Toronto Apartment Association told Thorncliffe tenants most of them are in Thorncliffe “because we haven’t built any new (apartment) buildings in 40 years.”

“If you had more choice, you would vote with your feet.”

Apartments pay three times the property taxes houses do, Chong and political representatives added, so people in the city’s poorest areas are subsidizing Rosedale.

“One of the reasons it’s a long road (to changing that) is that homeowners vote,” said Jon Burnside, Thorncliffe’s councillor.

Landlords want property tax breaks, or big cuts in development charges before they build apartments.

Tenants who live in Thorncliffe, or anywhere there are roaches or the hot water cuts out when people are showering, can mostly look forward to more of the same. But they’re tired of landlords being awarded rent hikes above inflation while renters get no raises at work, work orders that see months go by without results, and a tenant board seemingly weighted toward landlords.

If they’re lucky, they’ll get tougher city enforcement – thanks to a new landlord bylaw – and rebuilt elevators that beep angrily when overcrowded, until enough people step off.

Edges of Toronto is a column about how people see life in Toronto differently, depending on where they live. Reach Mike Adler at madler@insidetoronto.com
Cut management, boost auditing: budget committee chair

DAVID NICKLE
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Toronto’s bureaucracy could see a cut of 10 per cent to its management ranks, and the city’s Auditor General office will see a $1 million boost to root out waste, under a going-forward plan announced by Toronto’s budget committee chair Gary Crawford Jan. 23.

“This is continuing the work that’s already been happening,” said Crawford in a Jan. 23 interview. “This year we’ve already saved $170 million through attrition and modernization and we’re asking the city manager to come back with a report on a way to look at reducing management by 10 per cent.”

Crawford made the announcement as his committee prepares to finalize its recommendations on Toronto’s 2017 operating and capital budgets, before the executive committee and Toronto Council deal with it over the next month.

Through that budget, Toronto departments were asked to look at 2.6 per cent cuts to help deal with a budget gap of more than $700 million.

The new plans are looking forward, to 2018 and beyond. At this point, Crawford said that council is looking at a gap at a rate of $400 million. The instruction to look at a 10 per cent management cut - mostly middle management - is one way that he hopes to deal with that.

“Good work’s been done but more has to happen,” he said.

As well, he said that the city will be looking at strengthening the Auditor General’s office - an independent oversight office that investigates city practices to look for ways to be more efficient and effective.

The boost would see $1 million added to the budget over three years.

“Hopefully that million will bring back tens of millions of dollars in savings,” said Crawford.

Mayor John Tory, travelling out of country, weighed in with his support of the plan. “We need to look every day for opportunities to modernize city government so we can use available funds on the services and projects that really count,” said Tory in a news release. “That’s what the accountability and affordability plan put forward by the budget committee is really all about. Making sure we streamline management and service delivery in every way possible.”

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Revue Cinema in Roncesvalles has started a new monthly program to bring Toronto’s refugees together.

Eric Veillette, Revue’s programming director, said the theatre partnered with the Roncesvalles Refugee Relief organization to launch its new series called “Newcomers Family Cinema.”

“We want everybody to feel safe and included in our community,” he said. “Come to the cinema and just enjoy a morning and afternoon out at the movies just like you would on any given day.”

The non-for-profit theatre’s goal is to connect newcomers with the community and with one another, Veillette said. Revue will be showing family-friendly films, with an emphasis on kids programming, he said. The next scheduled screening is for Feb. 12 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Guests will be given free admission, along with complimentary popcorn and soft drink, he said. “One of the things we’re focusing on is really building that sense of community,” he said. “So whether its people from different refugee organizations getting to meet one another, getting to meet our staff, getting to meet our volunteers and just sort of engaging in a happy couple of hours at the Revue.”

Bonding through film at Revue Cinema

AARON D’ANDREA
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Runnymede Library closing for renovations on Jan. 30

Runnymede Library on Bloor Street West in Bloor West Village will be closing on Jan. 30 for renovations.

The library was scheduled to close in November, but after delays, the library will close at the end of the month for approximately four months of renovations, Parkdale-High Park Councillor Sarah Doucette said in her newsletter.

Several renovations will be made including the replacement of the service desk, relocation of the self-service checkout, a new automated self-service check in, reconfigured space for public workstations, additional seating, a study space and new flooring and finishes and more. Doucette added there will be alternate service during the closure period.

Those services include:
- Hours of operation at Annette Branch will be expanded from 50.5 hours to 63.5 hours, and will include service on Sundays.
- Hours of operation at Swansea Memorial Branch will be expanded from 28 hours to 57.5 hours.
- Ready for Reading story-time programs to be delivered at Swansea Memorial and Annette branches.
- Youth Advisory Group (YAG) program to be delivered at Annette Branch.
- Adult book club program to be delivered at Swansea Memorial Branch.

Customers can stay up-to-date of the closure on the library’s website: www.torontopubliclibrary.ca

The front of Runnymede Library with wheelchair access is pictured here in this undated photo.

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Park project links ‘disconnected spaces’

Continued from page 1

two years of advocacy and working with the community, the City of Toronto has initiated an implementation study.”

The implementation group consists of landscape architects DTAH, Workshop Architecture, Dillon Consulting, Toni Paolasini, ASI Heritage and A.W. Hooker, a post on Park People’s website said.

“It's really exciting. We’ve seen small steps towards this in the last couple of years,” he said. “But the initiation of this study is a big step forward in that in lays out a path for how this project can get built over time.”

Davenport Councillor Ana Bailao said the park will create new green spaces and help connect communities.

“The Green Line is vital to the west end and the city as a whole,” she said. "The creation of more cycling infrastructure and new community green spaces are critical pieces to building a connected, inclusive and vibrant Toronto."

She added in her newsletter the city’s proposed 10-year capital plan has funds available to conduct a study of the proposal and help to construct some of the elements included in the plan. The idea for the Green Line originated out of a design competition created by Helena Grdadolnik of Workshop Architecture in 2012.

She previously told Metroland Media Toronto she wanted to get the community at large excited about the prospect of linking the scattered green spaces in the area.

“I live in the area and my office is in the area, so I was personally really interested in seeing the spaces improved and linked,” she said. "More information about the project can be found on parkpeople.ca."

With files from Justin Skinner.
Stewards mark 20 years of conservation in High Park

AARON D’ANDREA
adandrea@metroland.com

Environmental protection was top of Sharon Lovett’s mind when she volunteered for the High Park Stewards group in 2000.

"I was always interested in ecology and environmental issues, and I spent quite a long time not really doing much about it," she told The Bloor West Villager. "I was going back to my roots (when joining the Stewards) of things that I was interested in for a number of years, but didn’t do much about."

The High Park Stewards have been working with the City of Toronto since 1996 to protect and restore the remaining native areas of the park, including large areas of savannah with black oak trees and more, the group said on its website.

During the spring, summer and fall, the group plants and collects seeds, and removes invasive species from the park.

According to the Stewards’ website, the invasive plants currently threatening the park include garlic mustard, tall sweet white clover, oriental bittersweet, Himalayan balsam and European buckthorn.

“There’s very little of it left (High Park’s habitats),” Lovett said. “It’s important to protect those.”

On Sunday, Jan. 22, the group celebrated its 20th birthday with a party at Howard Park Tennis Club, where dozens of city staff and current and former volunteers discussed the group’s work over the years. Parkdale resident Bill Montague, 60, told The Villager he joined the Stewards five years ago because he wanted to find a “positive way to get involved in the community.”

“It’s something I care about, which is ecological restoration,” he said. “It’s been a really wonderful experience.”

He added he enjoys working with other volunteers who share similar interests, like native plants.

“The people are really interesting and they’re really giving a lot of their own free time - they’re there because it matters to them. They’re not there because they have to be,” he said.

Lovett said the Stewards have had over 11,000 participants working over 30,000 hours throughout its history.

“The fact that we’ve been able to do this for so long and we keep getting people who want to participate, it’s really rewarding,” she said. “I’m glad that we’re still here.”

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2nd PLACE
Eric Schnell
“I can safely say that being a carrier helped me improve my skills as a contributor to my community.”

3rd PLACE
Abisha Balachandran
“By bringing awareness, acknowledging successes, as well as providing opportunities, local newspapers contribute to ultimately driving our community towards unity.”

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Bloor West Village Avenue Study begins

Community consultation meeting, open house on Feb. 27

AARON D’ANDREA
adandrea@metroland.com

The long-awaited Bloor West Village Avenue Study is underway.
The study will assess land uses, transportation, servicing infrastructure, community services, facilities, built form character and redevelopment potential for Bloor Street West between Keele Street and the Humber River, the city said on its website.

A consulting team has been formed and is led by landscape architects DTAH and includes R.E. Millward + Associates Ltd., WSP | MMM Group Limited, Swerhun, Taylor Hazell Architects and J.C. Williams Group.

“They will be doing all the background work and looking at the current situation,” said Greg Byrne, a senior planner with Toronto and co-lead for the project. “We will be holding community consultation meetings to discuss sort of the important features of that street.”

The study will evaluate existing conditions, develop a vision for the study area and establish recommendations for future development and infrastructure improvements, a post on the city’s website added.

Byrne added that the city is hoping to have the study complete by the end of the year.

“We’ve been wanting this for quite a long time,” said Jamie Isbister, chair of the Bloor West Village Residents Association. “It’s finally happening.”

On July 8, 2014, city council approved a motion to request the chief planner and executive director of city planning review the area.

The study has four phases, and is currently in phase one: existing conditions assessment.

Isbister told The Bloor West Villager the results of the study will help “preserve and enhance the character” of the area.

“Any new buildings coming should sort of recognize that there’s a character to the village, and try to fit it rather than be totally different,” he said. “We recognize that development is going to happen, but we just want the best possible (outcome) to actually happen.”

The first community consultation meeting and public open house will be held from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Monday, Feb. 27, in the gymnasium at St. Pius X Catholic School, which is located at 71 Jane St.

The city has also created a website where the study’s progress can be monitored.

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