



# NEIGHBOURHOOD NEWSWIRE

WEST LANSING HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION

Spring 2008

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## President's Message

First, let me apologize for the mid summer arrival of this "spring" newsletter. I hope it's better late than never.

Councilor John Filion wrote a column in the August NY Post titled "We're mad as hell" in which he calls for Toronto residents to complain to their MPP and the Premier for completely dropping the ball with the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) promised in the 2002 election. WLHA met with

MPP David Zimmer on this issue before the last election but again nothing happened. We're mad too.

Filion's rant was inspired by a recent OBM ruling on Gibson Square which totally ignored the City's Official Plan height restrictions and land use designation. Instead of office space, we're getting another two 45-storey condo's which will add to traffic congestion that's already excessive.

Decisions like this have been made all over the city, causing irreversible damage. They've been made repeatedly in North York City Centre and we're paying the price. The City's planning process is badly broken and must be fixed.

In my opinion, OMB reform is WLHA's largest single issue. Let me know what you think.

## Community Cleanup

West Lansing residents once again actively participated in the Mayor's (Friday) 20 minute clean up and (Saturday) Community Cleanup held in mid-April. Efforts were helped both days by beautiful weather as volunteers of all ages pitched in.



Jane Garner lead a crew that tackled Easton & Bogert on Friday and Wil Tranter's gang blitzed the green space surrounding the 401 ramps at Yonge St. north of the highway on Saturday. Wil also leads cleanups in June and September. It makes a huge difference and is a surprising amount of fun for all ages. Watch for details and pitch in if you can.

Our thanks to Sam, owner of the **Petro Canada** Station at Cameron and Yonge for encouraging the cleanup efforts by providing coffee and snacks to all our volunteers.

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Frank Bruni, Past President

## Community Safety Meeting



WLHA hosted a spring meeting on April 30 at Cameron Public School. Although the evening included a quick update on area happenings, and an open opportunity for Q&A, the “main event” was an interactive presentation from the Crime Prevention Association of Toronto (CPAT) on community safety.

CPAT’s Executive Director Gemma

Broderick tailored her remarks for our specific neighborhood and was ably assisted by two representatives from the Crime Response Unit of our local 32 Division of Toronto Police Services. Much of the discussion focused on tactics to discourage break and entries.

Many excellent ideas were shared but their most important point was to encourage everyone to report suspicious behavior to the Police Services non-emergency # 416-808-2222. Your calls really matter.

Our thanks to CPAT, Toronto Police Services, Cameron PS, and **Starbuck’s Coffee** for their generous support of this evening.

## CPTED Update

Last summer WLHA requested a CPAT “Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design” review of the Radine entrance to Gwendolen Park and the play ground area. Their report recommended a number of changes to deter undesirable late night criminal activities and make our park a cleaner, safer place to enjoy. Residents and City Parks have trimmed bushes, a street light was installed at the end of Radine, and with the support of Councilor Filion, a light will be installed by the play ground shortly. Well done !

## About Trees

We all know trees are good. Beyond being aesthetically pleasing, an average tree produces 260 pounds of oxygen per year, provides shade to reduce cooling costs, and can filter our 70% of air pollution in street setting. There are about 7 million trees in Toronto which sounds good but our tree count actually fell 24% between 1994 and 2004.

Development has taken it’s toll, and Toronto’s trees are just getting old. Many trees were planted on downtown streets nearly a century ago. As these mature, 23 meter high trees die, they’re replaced by 1.5 meter ones that will take decades to grow as large as their predecessors. We now have a mere 17% canopy cover for our city, compared with 27% in Ottawa and 40% in Washington DC.

What can we do to increase the canopy in our neighborhood? There are two programs worth checking out. The first is a City program which will plant a small, bare-root tree on the city street allowance on your property for free. Larger ball-rooted trees are \$424. Details are at [www.toronto.ca/trees](http://www.toronto.ca/trees). The second program is from a non-profit organization called LEAF (local enhancement & appreciation of forests) which does consultation and planting of trees for your backyard for a nominal fee (\$85-\$150). Details are at [www.leaf-toronto.org](http://www.leaf-toronto.org).



Following the October 07 AGM there was interest from several volunteers to establish a WLHA committee to investigate and pursue opportunities to enhance the appearance of our community’s public spaces. Jo-Anne Archibald, Steve Andrews and landscape architect Kathy Pask have solicited help from other residents to tackle two initiatives thus far.

The first was to apply for the City of Toronto’s “Neighborhood Beautification” program, which funds small projects on City property (excluding Parks) where the community takes an active part in making it happen. After extensive research and consultation, the group came up with several design ideas and potential locations for an attractive entrance sign to the Commu-

nity of West Lansing. The application was submitted and the group is optimistic about their chances for approval.

The second initiative is to leverage a little known City program (see “About Trees” article) to plant free trees on the street allowance land in resi-

dential neighbourhoods like ours.

Volunteers have inventoried the trees on street allowance land in West Lansing, and identified potential for planting an additional 200 trees. Work is underway to detail a planting plan by street that recommends specific species in keeping with the streetscape and physical limitations such as power lines, and to request individual homeowner consent.

Areas with the greatest potential for additional trees will be tackled first. As always, we welcome questions, suggestions and volunteers!

# Strength In Numbers: WLHA Joins FoNTRA

FoNTRA is a seven year old federation of 27 North Toronto Residents Associations. After a year of monitoring it's activities, WLHA officially joined FoNTRA this spring. Your board's goals in doing so were to keep us better informed and to strengthen our advocacy position on common interest issues such as:

- Upgrading the new Toronto Official Plan
- Ontario Municipal Board reform
- Toronto governance reform
- Property Tax Reform

FoNTRA believes that Ontario and Toronto can and should achieve better development. It's central issue is not *whether* Toronto will grow, but *how*.

It believes that sustainable urban regions are characterized by environmental balance, fiscal viability, infrastructure investment and social renewal.

FoNTRA does not believe in the negative Not In My Back Yard (NIMBY) mentality. It works to ensure that residents have a voice to help shape positive change. Working with the support of City Councilors, lawyers, and planning consultants, FoNTRA has achieved significant results and continues to fight the important fights.

Despite it's non-profit, volunteer nature, it's a respected, professional organization that WLHA is proud to support. You will no doubt hear more of our association with FoNTRA in the months and years ahead as we enjoy the benefits of strength in numbers.



Visit [www.westlansing.ca](http://www.westlansing.ca) for details, links, and updates.

## History Assignment

According to Patricia Hart's Book; Pioneering in North York (1968), Lansing developed as a cross roads village at Yonge and Sheppard Avenue, 8 miles north of Toronto, with early settlers operating taverns and inns in the late 1700's. The few pages in her book dedicated to our area's development are interesting, but we'd like to gather more facts, tales, and photographs from our community's past. Please contact [Kevin@westlansing.ca](mailto:Kevin@westlansing.ca) (416-590-1936) if you anything to contribute.

### **Bogert Apartments (SW of Easton & Sheppard)**

- Approvals granted by OMB for high density, multi tower residential complex several years ago
- Project remains on hold

### **Emerald Park (NW of Yonge & Poyntz)**

- Agent only marketing of units started early in July.
- Pre-application discussions between the developer and city suggest two 30 + storey towers of residential condos

### **TCDSB Elementary School (1 Botham Rd.)**

- Demolition of old convent building completed and site to remain fenced.
- Area review committee, including area parents, WLHA representation and school officials, established to review facilities needs for 4 area elementary schools. Recommendations expected by year end.
- Design & build process likely 2-3 years following TCDSB Supervisor's final decision

### **Willowdale Plaza (SE corner of Yonge & Sheppard)**

- Hallmark developer / applicant
- 2 towers (37 storey on Yonge & 45 storey on Shepp)
- 177 M tower (current official plan limit is 100 meters)
- Approx 825 units, 71% residential, 21% office and 8% retail
- 1249 parking spots including retail allowance
- Plaza currently has 51,000 sf of retail vs 65,000 proposed which should / could include a food retailer

### **Gwendolen Park Tennis Club - court # 4**

- 4th court planned for west side of clubhouse
- welcome addition to the club and community given commitment by City Forestry dept to plant trees to buffer noise and light for adjacent homes.
- Construction now expected to start in August 2008

### **264 Sheppard Ave W (at Senlac)**

- Proposal for 5 storey (14.6 M) 50 suite apartment building
- An extension to the Lansing Retirement residence for seniors requiring less assistance
- Access to underground parking through Senlac Rd parking lot



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**Goals of the Association**

- 1) To provide information to the membership that directly affects their homes, property, safety, or quality of life.
- 2) To represent the membership in its dealings with the municipal, provincial, and federal officials that are of broad community interest.
- 3) To provide community events for fun and community spirit.

## Education News

WLHA founder and past president Frank Bruni successfully mounted a campaign to have the TDSB review it's scant policies regarding homework and replace them with a comprehensive and sensible policy. Details of the draft policy adopted by the TDSB can be found in the documents section of [www.westlansing.ca](http://www.westlansing.ca). Frank is to be commended not only for the skill and perseverance shown in successfully moving a proverbial bureaucratic mountain, but for reminding us all what an important difference one person can make.

There is a great old saying that "no good deed goes unpunished". Frank is now representing WLHA on a Program Area Review Team (PART) which is the first of it's kind as the TDSB, through it's Program Revitalization process, attempts to face some big challenges.

PART is a team of representatives from area schools (4 in our case), parent councils, rate payer groups and board representatives participating in a series of meetings to determine "the best arrangement of future school programs and buildings to match the changing needs and changing population in the area".

Public School Trustee Mari Rutka has been a strong advocate for change. On-going intensification of the North York City Centre has enrolment in our area on the rise, whereas most schools in the city face declining enrolment and under utilized facilities. Details of our area's PART meeting agendas and minutes are at [www.tdsb.on.ca](http://www.tdsb.on.ca)

As noted in Development Watch, the Catholic board initiated a similar review for the it's area elementary schools with WLHA involvement.

## No Venison served at 5th Annual WLHA Canada Day Picnic



Local photographer Dianne Fair recently caught a deer in Gwendolen Park checking out a poster for the WLHA Canada Day Picnic. Our thanks (once again) to Michael Abramson of **theADLIBgroup** for designing and printing such eye catching posters. Over 200 people attended on a beautiful sunny day., smashing old attendance records.

Event organizer Mike Capotosto and his team of volunteers did a great job scrambling to get more food, as the bikes, trikes and strollers kept rolling into the park. It was wonderful to see many people show up to enjoy the day. Our thanks to the many individuals and businesses that contributed to make it happen.

### WLHA is growing - get involved!

We have increased the membership size and the scope of activities, so volunteers are needed for admin, activities, committees, and the Board. It's a great way to get more out of where you live. Contact [Kevin@westlansing.ca](mailto:Kevin@westlansing.ca) or 416-590-1936 if interested.