

Property tax debate
Panel weighs in on CVA

Raccoon invasion
City offers solution?

TWRC hosts public events
Waterfront designs to be unveiled

Novæ Res Urbis

CITY OF TORONTO EDITION

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TORONTO VOTES 2006

Not much new blood expected, but rebate rules have changed

Although city council will have three new faces—Ward 41, Scarborough-Rouge River (former Councillor **Bas Balkissoon's** seat), Ward 20, Trinity-Spadina (former Councillor **Olivia Chow's** seat) and Ward 26 (mayoralty candidate Councillor **Jane Pitfield**)—the municipal election in November will not result in much new blood at city hall it appears.

Ward 20 is currently represented by interim councillor **Martin Silva**, who was appointed to the position by council in the fall of 2005 with the understanding that he would not seek election. And Ward 41 is represented by interim councillor **Paul Ainslie**.

Nomination papers do not have to be filed until September 29, and a number of incumbents have yet to file papers including Etobicoke North councillor **Rob Ford**, Etobicoke Centre councillor **Doug Holyday**, Willowdale councillor **David Shiner** and Scarborough Southwest councillor **Gerry Altobello**.

NRU was able to confirm, however, that Ford, Shiner, Palacio and Holyday plan to file their papers. Altobello is not saying as yet, but Davenport councillor **Cesar Palacio** and York West councillor **Peter Li Preti**, both former hold outs, registered this past month.

Although he admits it is definitely an incumbent's game, candidate **Rob Newman**, who has managed four campaigns for the Green Party, is running against long-time St. Paul's councillor **Michael Walker**.

"I realize it's a long shot, but I am putting together a

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RESCUING ORPHAN SPACES

Winning design stitches together divided area

By Anne Marie Aikins

As part of the its festival of architecture and design, the City of Toronto and its Clean and Beautiful City Secretariat partnered with the **Design Exchange** to present a charrette intended to inspire teams to re-interpret orphan spaces throughout the city. Of the unique presentations, one was chosen to receive the \$10,000 prize from **Starbucks Coffee Canada**. The design team for Cliffside Slips (**Sweeny Sterling Finlayson Co.**) won the judges hearts for its easy to implement and exciting solutions to orphan spaces, and its humorous and "quirky tone," said DX president **Samantha Sannella**.

"This is a wonderful partnership, an opportunity to dream about how to make these orphan spaces and our communities better places," said Mayor **David Miller** at the opening of the event at the Design Exchange on Wednesday.

"Public spaces are an incredible expression of our diversity and strength in Toronto. This event is an opportunity to pool our resources to help make Toronto a better place to live," said Miller, who was joined at the event with councillors **Michael Thompson** and **Suzan Hall**.

The city identified eight underutilized spaces throughout Toronto in areas that are not represented by business improvement areas, but which are located in neighbourhoods that are economically or "urbanistically" underdeveloped, have tremendous cultural or historical

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MARK THESE DATES

MONDAY MAY 15

Central Waterfront Design Competition, TWRC, BCE Place, 181 Bay Street, 6:30 - 9:00 p.m.

TUESDAY MAY 16

In the Skin of a Building, Royal Ontario Museum Theatre, 100 Queens Park circle, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Policy and Finance and Administration Joint Committee Meeting, Committee Room 1, 10:00 a.m.

Policy and Finance and Economic Development and Parks Joint Committee Meeting, Committee Room 1, 2:00 p.m.

Community Social Planning Council of Toronto AGM, 20 Toronto Street, 6:00 p.m., 416-351-0095, ext. 223.

GTA Forum: Cities, to Brand or Not to Brand, City of Toronto Archives, 55 Spadina Road, 4:00 - 6:00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY MAY 17

From Roof to Mouth: The Nitty-Gritty of Rooftop Urban Agriculture, University of Toronto, Innis Town Hall, 7:15 p.m., 416-877-7463.

City State: How Much Power Does Toronto Need? St. Lawrence Centre Forum, 27 Front Street East, 7:30 - 9:30 p.m., 416-366-1656 ext. 274.

TTC Meeting, Committee Room 2, 1:00 p.m.

THURSDAY MAY 18

Toronto the Good Party at Historic Fort York, ERA Architects, Spacing Magazine, {murmur} and Fort York, \$20, gates open at 6:30 p.m., 416-536-9202.

ArtsLink Open House, Toronto Board of Trade, Gladstone Hotel, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Property tax debate heats up

Property taxes are the main money maker for municipalities, but property owners of all classes charge that the system is flawed. Residents appeal to the **Municipal Property Assessment Corporation** as the red-hot real estate market results in skyrocketing residential taxes, while the business sector argues that it is footing too much of the city's tax bill, and it is time for residential properties to shoulder more of the load.

Can it be done better, and will reforms proposed under a provincial private members bill do anything to alleviate the ire of commercial and residential ratepayers? Solicitor **Peter Milligan (Miller**

Thomson), economist and **University of Toronto** lecturer **Peter Tomlinson (Peter Tomlinson Consulting)** and *Globe and Mail* urban affairs columnist **John Barber** weighed in on the property tax debate at a recent session hosted by the **Canadian Urban Institute**.

"Property tax is rated as the most unpopular of local taxes," but there is not a jurisdiction in North America that does not levy the charge, Milligan told the crowd.

With more downloading of provincial services, Toronto, like other cities, will continue to lean heavily on property taxes, which account for about 55 per cent of municipal revenues.

With more downloading of provincial services, Toronto, like other cities, will continue to lean heavily on property taxes, which account for about 55 per cent of municipal revenues.

Unlike the sales tax, which Milligan deems a "creeping tax," property taxes are lumped into one sum, making the tax more visible to taxpayers, which results in a greater possibility for perceived inequity.

Until the Conservative government introduced assessment reform in 1998, Toronto and other municipalities lagged behind in

property value assessments, Milligan said. The present system of current value assessment also includes the introduction of caps and clawbacks, which let non-residential properties facing large tax increases pay incrementally, while properties slated for tax decreases picked

up the tab for the difference.

"The clawbacks are just a transfer of wealth," Milligan said. "The system works for properties increasing in value, when the burden is transferred to properties that are stable or decreasing in value."

"Some municipalities applied 100 per cent clawback, so properties in need of fair taxation do not get it."

"There is no sunset clause for the policy, which is compounded by a lack of a pure current value assessment," he said "It is not a fair and equitable tax system," he added. "Tax caps were introduced to avoid burdens on taxpayers, however now we have a structure where we have problems

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strong team and think I have a good chance,” Newman told *NRU*. “The city has changed the rebate program rules, which gives non-incumbents a slightly fairer shot.”

However, many candidates, incumbents and newbies, seem confused about the new rules, which council voted on last October. Toronto’s

election office suggested every candidate read the candidate’s guide a little more closely. (*See sidebar.*)

Newman, who is a broker’s assistant with **Nesbitt Burns**, would also like to see a return of regional government for the City of Toronto. Newman likes the idea of an executive committee, but would prefer that the city be divided into 8 – 10 areas and that local councillors elect their own representative to sit on the executive committee.

The city changed its rebate program rules because the province never got around to reforming election financing rules. Walker, who has been a member of council for the past 24 years, certainly worked very hard to champion changes that would make it less an incumbent’s game. But even he has a \$10,000 surplus left over from the last election. Will he use it?

“Yes, of course I’ll use it,” Walker told *NRU*. “But I really try to raise only what I’ll need and should be spending only \$25,000 for this election, which will be my last.”

“The province just wasn’t listening to people about what changes are needed in election financing rules. And they are pushing ahead on extending the terms,” Walker added.

The omnibus bill that contained the clause extending municipal terms from three to four years was passed this week at Queen’s Park. The first speaker at the two-hour public hearing was Mayor **David Miller**, who spoke in support of the term extension.

“He had no mandate from council to do so,” Walker added.

“I realize it’s a long shot, but I am putting together a strong team and think I have a good chance. The city has changed the rebate program rules, which gives non-incumbents a slightly fairer shot.”

Rob Newman

2006 election contribution rebate program

In October 2005, city council voted to amend the rules for the 2006 Election Contribution Rebate Program:

- Corporations and trade unions be deemed ineligible to receive contribution rebates for donations to candidates;
- In-kind contributions are ineligible to receive contribution rebates;
- As provided for by subsection (82)(5) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, the campaign surpluses of candidates participating in the program become the property of the City of Toronto as a condition of their participation in the rebate program.

Source: Toronto Election Office

On Wednesday, supporters will be gathering at the **Steam Whistle Brewery** for Miller’s official launch of his re-election campaign.

His only real contender, Councillor Jane Pitfield, who had her official launch last month, is facing some pressure from the **Toronto Disaster Relief Committee** and members of Toronto’s homeless advisory committee to resign as committee co-chair. Housing advocates are angry about Pitfield’s attempts to pass a motion to bring about harsher laws and more enforcement against panhandlers. •



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Candidates for November 13 election as of May 11

(Note: new candidates since April 1 are in bold)

Mayor	David Miller, Jane Pitfield, Nicholas Brooks, Douglas Campbell, Diana-De Macted, Rodney Muir, Duri Naimji, Adam Sit, Bob Smith, Scott Yee, Dave DuMoulin and Lee Romano Ryan Goldhar, Monowar Hossain, Kevin Clarke, Peter Styrsky, and Ratan Wadhwa.
Ward 1 - Etobicoke North	Suzan Hall, Rosemarie Mulhall, Andre Lucas
Ward 2 - Etobicoke North	Cadigia Ali
Ward 3 - Etobicoke Centre	Peter Kudryk
Ward 4 - Etobicoke Centre	Gloria Lindsay Luby, Arthur Price
Ward 5 - Etobicoke Lakeshore	Peter Milczyn
Ward 6 - Etobicoke Lakeshore	Matthew Day, Mark Grimes, George Kash, Rosalie Chalmers
Ward 7 - York West	Giorgio Mammoliti, Fred Culter, Holly Cartmell
Ward 8 - York West	Garry Green, Brian Henry, Peter Li Preti, Hau Dang Tan
Ward 9 - York Centre	Maria Augimeri
Ward 10 - York Centre	Michael Feldman, Craig Smith, Alex Dumalag
Ward 11 - York South-Weston	Frances Nunziata, Rocky Gualtieri, Paul Ferreira
Ward 12 - York South-Weston	Frank Di Giorgio, Keith Sweeney, Nick Dominelli
Ward 13 - Parkdale-High Park	Bill Saundercook
Ward 14 - Parkdale-High Park	Rowena Santos, Sylvia Watson, Jimmy Talpa, Walter Jarsky
Ward 15 - Eglinton Lawrence	Howard Moscoe, Ron Singer
Ward 16 - Eglinton Lawrence	Karen Stintz, Steven Bosnick
Ward 17 - Davenport	Alejandra Bravo, Fred Dominelli, David Faria, Cesar Palacio
Ward 18 - Davenport	Adam Giambrone, Nha Le, Nick Boragina
Ward 19 - Trinity-Spadina	Joe Pantalone
Ward 20 - Trinity Spadina	Dan Tweyman, Tam Goossen, Helen Kennedy
Ward 21 - St. Paul's	Joe Mihev
Ward 22 - St. Paul's	Michael Walker, Rob Newman
Ward 23 - Willowdale	John Filion, Andrew Miller
Ward 24 - Willowdale	Ed Shiller
Ward 25 - Don Valley West	Cliff Jenkins, Tony Dickins
Ward 26 - Don Valley West	Mohamed Dhanani, Jessica Lambert, Debbie Lechter, John Masterson, John Parker, Bernard Tanz, David Thomas, Csaba Vegh, Stephen Watt, Abdul Ingar, Razaul Jabbar, Geoff Kettel
Ward 27 - Toronto Centre-Rosedale	Kyle Rae, Gary Leroux, Cam Johnson, Chris Reid, Rob Bezanson
Ward 28 - Toronto Centre-Rosedale	Pam McConnell, Howard Bortenstein, Lance Lockwood
Ward 29 - Toronto-Danforth	Case Ootes, Steve Soloman, John Richardson, Diane Alexopoulos
Ward 30 - Toronto-Danforth	Paula Fletcher
Ward 31 - Beaches-East York	Janet Davis, Leonard Subotich
Ward 32 - Beaches-East York	Sandra Bussin, Alan Burke, John Greer
Ward 33 - Don Valley East	Shelley Carroll
Ward 34 - Don Valley East	Denzil Minnan-Wong, Atiya Ahmed
Ward 35 - Scarborough Southwest	Adrian Heaps, Michael Kilpatrick
Ward 36 - Scarborough Southwest	Brian Ashton, Eddy Gasparotto, Greg Crompton
Ward 37 - Scarborough Centre	Michael Thompson
Ward 38 - Scarborough Centre	Glenn De Baeremaeker
Ward 39 - Scarborough-Agincourt	Mike Del Grande, Wayne Cook, John Wong
Ward 40 - Scarborough-Agincourt	Norm Kelly, George Pappas, Sunny Eren, Winston Ramjeet
Ward 41 - Scarborough-Rouge River	Chin Lee, Sonny Yeung, Thadsha Navamanikkam, David Robertson
Ward 42 - Scarborough-Rouge River	Raymond Cho, Kumar Nadarajah, Mohammed Ather
Ward 43 - Scarborough East	David Soknacki
Ward 44 - Scarborough East	Gay Cowbourne, Donald Blair

Source: City of Toronto

Masked bandits terrorize neighbourhoods

By Anne Marie Aikins

My neighbourhood for the past eight years has been Leslieville—the South Riverdale area—considered one of the “in” places to invest in real estate these days. The community has escaped the recent gang and gun violence of late, I suspect largely due to the consistent presence of the Hells Angels clubhouse on Eastern Avenue. We have not escaped, however, another band of masked hoodlums, who have been wreaking havoc in my front yard most days—raccoons and those wannabe gang bangers, who feed off their leftovers, skunks.

The little critters aren't new to the hood—they have both always loved my garbage, but ever since the green bin was introduced the problems, and their offspring, have multiplied at rapid speed. I have tried the bungee cord trick to make it more difficult for remarkably dexterous paws—even without opposing thumbs—from opening the “raccoon proof” boxes. I am convinced I can hear a distinct giggle as they quickly remove the apparatus before chowing down on my wet garbage.

Currently, I have taken to piling rocks and bricks on top of the bin and sandwiching it between my blue boxes and garbage can so at least I can hear the beasts whipping them down the sidewalk. This usually wakes me so when the skunks come by during the night to nibble on the raccoons leftovers I have time to dive under the covers before the eye-stinging smell is released.

Like public transit, I use green bins, in spite of the sometimes crazy-making inconvenience, because it is good for the environment. But, I am human and thus innately lazy and becoming desperate for a solution to my ritual germicidal clean up most mornings.

I have read the city's statistics. The city has distributed 510,000 green bins, and apparently a review found few complaints with its design. My food leftovers can't be that much more appetizing (just ask my family). I strongly suspect others didn't complain because they were too busy cleaning up the mess, gave up on the green bins, or the city only canvassed neighbourhoods with garages to store the bins in between weekly pick-ups.

The city claims the green bin is designed to be “animal resistant” and is durable with a tight-fitting latch. “One could say raccoons cannot cause problems unless we allow them to do so,” the website states. Ouch. And **Toronto Animal Services** says I should be able to live in harmony with the city's wildlife, including raccoons, which are no longer just nocturnal feeders and are mating as we speak.

Solid waste director of policy and planning **Geoff Rathbone** was very sympathetic with my plight. Apparently, I have the second generation of green

bins—the company that designed the bins, **Norsman Plastics**, had developed a third somewhat more secure model by the time the program was introduced in the North York area in 2005. However, Rathbone readily admits there are problems especially in areas like mine, which do not

have many garages for residents to store the bins between weekly pickups.

“The city is breaking new ground and learning as we go,” he said. “We have to maintain a fine balance—if we make the bin too hard to open then people with arthritis or other disabilities will have trouble opening it.”

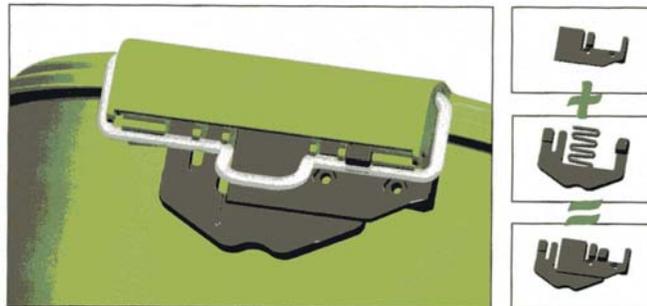
“We must also be conscious of making it easy enough for our collectors to open,” Rathbone added.

The problem is so significant that eager entrepreneurs have jumped on the opportunity. Bin Solutions has developed an attractive container they guarantee is raccoon-proof for both the green bin and garbage can, and a deluxe model that houses your blue bins as well. But the price—\$350 - \$477 and up—makes it a little undesirable for the pocketbook.

However, less expensive help is also on the way, Rathbone assured me. Norsman Plastics has developed a new locking device to add to the existing latch on the green bin. The company doesn't have its own test raccoons so 500 of the devices along with installation instructions are currently being field-tested. I have agreed to test the new contraption and will publish the results, positive or less than positive, in the near future.

It shouldn't take me or my harmonious wild friends long to figure out if the new device works. •

Newest raccoon proof security system



Source: Solid Waste Management Services

Orphan spaces continued from page 1

value and even more design opportunities.

The DX intends to provide the necessary assistance for the winning team to pursue a plan of implementation for their project's vision, which will be featured in *Canadian Architect Magazine*, Canada's national review of design and practice, said editor **Ian Chodikoff**.

The winning design team—**Chris Hardwicke** (SSF & Co), **Fung Lee** (PMA Landscape), **Hon Lu** (TEDCO), and **Lola Sheppard** and **Mason White** (Lateral Architecture)—wants to revitalize **Cliffside Village** by re-connecting the community.

Cliffside Village is a postwar main street that is bisected by a six-lane highway called Kingston Road. The stores on either side of the road are located asymmetrically in relation to the road. The buildings on the north side are typically located at the front of the lot in a normal main street form. On the south side, the buildings are set back from the street in a strip mall format.

The main street is divided by a vast open space as long as a soccer field. The distance presents more than a physical separation. It reinforces a psychological barrier between the north and south neighbourhoods reducing connectivity and discouraging shopping, strolling, and main street vitality, White said.

“The challenges for the Cliffside main street are clear. Cliffside is a highway; a place to move through,” the design team stated in their presentation. “Main streets are places to linger, to inhabit, to spend our time. We need to connect the north and south side of the main street and stitch these communities together. Cliffside needs a place to re-centre its revitalization.”

After speaking with community representatives, the team was struck by the energy and optimism of the area. Although the main street is not yet prosperous, the surrounding neighbourhood is healthy and increasing in value, they found. Close proximity to the lake and the bluffs is one of the main attractions of the neighbourhood and the residents felt that they deserved a main street not unlike the Beach neighbourhood.

Pocket parks were proposed to provide a place to stop, rest, and play. These parks could be rented or purchased by the city or the BIA to reuse undervalued land and add value to the adjacent properties and the rest of the street. The parks relate to adjacent businesses and shared public-private space, and could promote development of outdoor cafes, playgrounds and other activities.

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Danforth urban renewal kit

Another orphan space design team—

Aleksandar Janicijevic, **Ivan Martinovic**, **Una Janicijevic** and **Ali Malek-Zadeh**—came up with this urban renewal kit for the Danforth Avenue area from Westlake to Victoria Park.

SIDEWALK AND STREET CANOPIES

Install sidewalk canopies along both sides of the main street, connecting and unifying various styles and sizes of buildings. Canopies protect from the elements and are visual identifiers, separating sections of the neighbourhood.

RAISED CROSSROADS

Raise all side-street crossings to the same level as sidewalks and pave them in the same way. This adds to the security of pedestrians and slows down motorized traffic.

SIDEWALK PATTERNS

Install pavement pathways in dark brick laid in a simple fishbone pattern, in contrast to the white canopies above. Define edges of streets with flower planters, in white or very light grey concrete, similar to those existing throughout Toronto.

MOVABLE PARKS, PIAZZAS AND PLAYGROUNDS

Reclaim intermediate recessed spaces between the buildings along the street. Convert parking spots along the property lines to public use. Offer incentives for creating community spaces and forget the parking count. Reinvent spaces as parking lot gateways and incorporate them into the sidewalks, with simple and usable street furniture to separate parking from the street.

STREET GATES

Install simple fence posts on the street corners or elaborate archways over main intersections. They signify importance and define boundaries of space.

WATER FEATURES AND PUBLIC ART

Post murals on underutilized façades, anywhere, even in the smallest places.

COLOURED FAÇADES

Paint building façades in similar colours in order to distinguish the blocks and unify various building styles.

KIOSKS

Install kiosks and lockable vendor stands on available empty areas between buildings and in parking lots along the

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Tax debate continued from page 2

with taxation, rather than problems with valuation.”

Toronto’s business and commercial communities argue that the current tax system has resulted in a steady leak of jobs to outlying municipalities as Toronto businesses head to the 905 area in search of lower tax rates.

“This is very disruptive to Toronto’s economic development activity,” Milligan says. “For instance, Toronto has seen virtually no real office development in recent years—we have literally chased these important taxpayers out of the 416 area.”

Tomlinson agrees, noting that the introduction of the current value assessment system also caught small retail strips by surprise.

“A 40-year assessment freeze produces all kinds of distortions, some of them serendipitous, others not,” Tomlinson said. “One serendipitous result

was a low-effective tax rate on retail strips. This gave the city more retail strips than most cities have, a feature treasured by Jane Jacobs, among many others. The concerns she expressed led to tax capping for commercial properties, which has remained in effect to this day.”

The residential property valuation conundrum is a whole other issue.

Milligan puts the blame squarely on MPAC, which has raised the ire of residential ratepayers with its assessment of potential selling prices.

“There is a poor correlation between the tax and the ability to pay it, especially for residents on limited incomes, such as retirees or low earners,” Milligan said. “For property tax to work, the assessment process needs quality control.”

“We have a real lack of quality within the assessment valuation exercise,” Milligan said. “That has created tremendous disaffection among the taxpayers. There are whole neighbourhoods or streets filing appeals against assessments.”

Barber disagrees, and instead places the blame on volatile housing markets. The solution, he says, lies with

“We have a real lack of quality within the assessment valuation exercise. That has created tremendous disaffection among the taxpayers. There are whole neighbourhoods or streets filing appeals against assessments.”

- Peter Milligan

the introduction of a residential assessment cap.

Toronto’s housing market is so volatile that assessments go up at different rates across the city, Barber says. Older suburbs like Etobicoke and Scarborough have assessments decrease by up to 22 per cent, while downtown

residential rates skyrocketed.

“I think MPAC does what it is supposed to do,” Barber said. “Property valuations are increasing exponentially. That is not because the system is broken, but because it is working.”

“If we try to fix MPAC, we will only make the problem worse. We were told that current value assessment would solve our problems, but we do not have pure current value assessment. Neighbourhoods are being ruined by the current system—it is time to open up the issue of residential taxes.”

The system penalizes people for living downtown, Barber claims.

“Middle-class properties in the suburbs, which are more expensive to service, are seeing lower taxes than those with narrow frontages on downtown lots located close to services, Barber argues.

“The system forces homeowners out of downtown and into the suburbs,” he said. “The cost of amalgamation has been borne by downtown residents. The suburbs are riding free.”

According to Tomlinson “it is in the DNA of bureaucracies to pursue orthodox updated value assessments;” however, he notes that agitation for change may soon pay off with the creeping progress of a provincial private members bill that could act as a rallying point for activists.

Bill 75, known as the *Homestead Act, 2006*, proposes a number of amendments to the *Assessment Act*, including a cap of 5 per cent on residential land value increases and assessment reductions for property owners who are disabled or 65 years of age and older.

“Activists in favour of residential capping are building political muscle,” Tomlinson argues, noting that currently, Nova Scotia is the only province with a cap

“Middle-class properties in the suburbs, which are more expensive to service, are seeing lower taxes than those with narrow frontages on downtown lots located close to services.”

- John Barber

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Tax debate continued from page 7

for residential property taxes. “Estimated selling prices have become an issue for taxpayers. There will always be those who do not believe in the estimates coming out of the assessor’s model.”

“Within bureaucracies, there is a belief in the equity of current value assessment and that, in time, taxpayers will learn to live with it,” Tomlinson says, adding that the tax revolts and anxiety over current value assessment (not assessment practices) are also likely to continue.

“Ontario does seem poised to debate the assessment issue, and residential capping or other departures from pure current value assessment,” he said. “There is speculation that an assessment freeze (which is being promoted by **Ottawa** mayor **Robert Chiarelli**) is coming.”

The bill has passed first reading at Queen’s Park, but Tomlinson says that the contentious decision will likely be deferred until after the next provincial election in 2007. “Politicians are not willing to put seats at risk over this issue.”

Barber argues that the current system is unfair to residents.

“Taxpayer movements are important and powerful,” he said. “The assessment cap should be attacked directly—it will solve everyone’s problems.”

“No one’s assessed values are going down,” Barber added. “We have to find a level of economic distribution that we are willing to live with. The assessment cap will help—MPAC will have a lot less to do once an assessment caps system is introduced.” •

Clarification

The Scarborough Community Council agenda for May 9 incorrectly identified the consultants for the residential tower proposed by **Berkley Homes (Ellesmere) Inc.** at **3070 Ellesmere Road**. The consultants are **Marlston Urban Planning and Land Development Consultants** and **Rafael + Bigauskas Architect Inc.**

Orphan spaces continued from page 6

“Cliffside Slips proposes to re-localize the Cliffside neighbourhood by binding it together with a network of active public spaces to create a new urban marina where people will come to stroll the slips of Cliffside.

Local networks rely on individuals continued participation and activity to stay healthy. We believe that Cliffside is ready for change and that the residents can make Cliffside Slips a reality.” •

Danforth urban renewal kit continued from page 6

property lines (new piazzettas and squares), to add content and life to the neighbourhood. Create possibilities for lower-income families to start a small business.

PARKING TRELLISES

Replace a percentage of parking spots with planters, tree islands and information booths, require some trellis-covered parking spaces and walkways, and encourage change of levels to create dynamic spaces.

GREEN WALLS

Plant shrubs and climbers along streets between sidewalks and roadways. Climbers can be supported by wires stretched on light steel frames installed parallel to the street.

PUBLIC WASHROOMS COST

Install free-standing public washrooms to create truly memorable local attractions.

WIRE-MESH BUILDINGS

Create a vision for how the streetscape should look like in the next 20 years.

Architect Aleksandar Janicijevic explains his urban renewal plan for Danforth orphan spaces to Mayor David Miller



NRU Photo

STANDING COMMITTEE AGENDAS

POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

The Policy and Finance Committee will consider the following at its meeting at Toronto City Hall on Tuesday, May 16 at 9:30 a.m. in Committee Room 1.

REPORTS

New policies for appointment of councillors' relatives

A report from city integrity commissioner **David Mullan** recommends a number of changes to prevent the appearance of councillor nepotism at city hall. According to the report, the city currently lacks clear policies about the hiring or appointment of councillors' relatives to city positions. The report recommends new policies to prohibit the appointment of spouses and other relatives of council members to various city offices. Councillors' relatives and partners would be prohibited from holding a number of senior staff positions, including city manager, city clerk, city solicitor, chief planner, or director of internal audit, elections and registry services, corporate access and privacy, council and support services, auditor general or integrity commissioner. The same group also would be prohibited from appointments to city agencies, boards and commissions. Those currently appointed would be exempt from the proposed policy.

The report also recommends that councillors be required to declare a conflict of interest if a relative is a candidate for appointment for other city positions.

Further, Mullan recommends expansion of the current conflict of interest rules to include provisions to require councillors to declare conflict of interest and refrain from voting on matters in which a staff member relative is involved, such as collective bargaining agreements.

New policies for councillor references

A separate report from city integrity commissioner **David Mullan** recommends new rules for councillors regarding requests for employment references for city positions. While the city does have general policies about references, Mullan recommends additional provisions to prohibit councillors from providing references unless they have an employment or other relevant relationship,

(such as teacher or volunteer group supervisor) with the job applicant. Also, councillors would be prohibited from providing references for relatives or city staff, excepting staff from councillors' offices.

According to the report, the new policies would prevent councillors from using their political influence to help applicants gain employment.

"It is clear that the practice among members of council varies dramatically from those who never provide references to those who have no inhibitions to responding to requests from friends and family members, as well as constituents, who want their member of council to support them in their endeavours to obtain work or preferment with the city," the report notes. It further recommends that councillors be prohibited from providing references or lending the support of their office to candidates for external employment positions.

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This June ARTSCAPE in association with the CREATIVE CITY NETWORK present



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Artscape, in association with the Creative City Network, welcome top international practitioners to share the tools, strategies and projects that have anchored creative communities in their cities and towns for the Creative Community Building Workshop, taking place June 8 – 9, 2006 at the Ontario College of Art & Design in Toronto. Speakers include:

Colin Mercer CULTURAL CAPITAL LTD., LONDON, UK

Mark Lakeman CITY REPAIR PROJECT, PORTLAND, USA

Barbara Wheeler-Early HOTHOUSE/FREE FORM, LONDON, UK

Cheryl Hargrove HANDMADE IN AMERICA, WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA, USA

Ilse Treurnicht MEDICAL AND RELATED SCIENCES (MaRS) CENTRE, TORONTO

Geoff Cape EVERGREEN COMMONS AT THE BRICKWORKS, TORONTO

Graciously supported by The Canada Council for the Arts, The Ontario Trillium Foundation, the Ontario Arts Council, TEDCO, City of Toronto Culture Division and the Ontario College of Art & Design.

CITY IN BRIEF

Sneak peak at potential waterfront designs

The **Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation** will unveil its short list of five submissions by the world's leading urban and architectural design teams

for a revitalized central Toronto waterfront. TWRC planning and design VP **Christopher Glaisek** will host a media event at **Harbourfront Centre** this morning. The designs then move to the Allen Lambert Galleria in **BCE Place** for a two-week public exhibit as well as other

public locations throughout the GTA. A public forum will be held on Monday where all five teams will present their proposals.

The winning design will be selected on May 31. Construction of the concepts from the winning design is set to begin in fall 2006.

STANDING COMMITTEE AGENDAS

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New review framework for city programs

A staff report recommends a new framework for comprehensive due diligence reviews of city programs and services. As part of the proposed framework, staff would conduct independent reviews to ensure that the city's services are cost effective in addressing financial, public policy and customer service issues.

For each service, the city's role would be evaluated in the context of the new *City of Toronto Act*, as well as the roles of other governments and the private and non-profit sectors. Reviews are to be conducted by independent working groups comprised of staff seconded from various city departments, including financial planning, audit, strategic and corporate policy and human resources. Results of the reviews are to be presented to council through the policy and finance committee.

The report further recommends establishing a reserve to fund the incremental costs associated with undertaking the reviews, with an initial contribution by the city of \$2.5-million.

Toronto Atmospheric Fund grants

A report regarding grants from the **Toronto Atmospheric Fund** to fund energy efficient and renewable energy projects in city facilities. The report notes that the fund supplied grants totalling \$411,792 for projects to be completed in 2006. To be eligible for funding, projects must improve energy use—through demand reduction, increased efficiency or new technological approaches—directly improve air quality or reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and focus on implementation activities, such as capital improvement projects, pilot projects and feasibility studies for improved infrastructure development.

Eight projects were approved for funding in

December 2005, including solar heating for two city-owned indoor pools, ground source heating system at **Exhibition Place**, solar water heating for two Toronto fire halls, installation of a solar wall at the police garage and at the **Scadding Court** community centre, as well as a monitoring program for solar projects in city buildings and an energy efficiency showcase in city facilities.

POLICY AND FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEES

The Policy and Finance and Administration committees will consider the following at a joint meeting at Toronto City Hall on Tuesday, May 16 at 10:30 a.m. in Committee Room 1.

TEDCO to buy surplus city land

A staff report on the status of proposed terms of transfer of surplus city land to the **Toronto Economic Development Corporation**. The report recommends continued negotiation for transfer of three city-owned sites at **411 Victoria Park Avenue**, **1035 Sheppard Avenue West** and land between Midland Avenue and Brimley Road, north of St. Clair Avenue East. Two of the sites—Sheppard Avenue West and Victoria Park—have been identified as having potential for affordable housing. A number of development options are to be considered as part of the negotiations.

The site at 411 Victoria Park Avenue, located north of Gerrard Street East, was formerly a landfill. As a condition of transfer, TEDCO has requested an up-to-date environmental assessment of the property. The report recommends funding of up to \$100,000 for half of the costs of the assessment.

Two separate reports recommend authority to enter into agreements with TEDCO to transfer two surplus city-owned sites at **301 Rockcliffe Boulevard** and **3575 Danforth Avenue**. •

Modified height increase approved for Leaside home

In a decision issued May 3, board member **Joseph Sniezek** allowed, in part, the appeal by **Igor Lazarev** for variances to permit a single-family dwelling at **303 Laird Drive**, north of Eglinton Avenue East in Toronto.

The committee of adjustment had granted Lazarev variances to permit increased floor space index and lot coverage. However, the committee denied his application to increase permitted building height from 8.5 m. to 9.45 m. and he appealed to the board.

Neighbours **David Wong Keung Kwok** and **Yuk Fong Kwok**, who live across the street from Lazarev, appeared at the hearing to oppose the application. They were concerned about the height of the proposed residence, and told the board that the builder had ignored stop-work orders when inspectors realized that the by-law had been exceeded.

Vanessa Rose, constituency assistant to city councillor **Jane Pitfield** (Don Valley West) also appeared at the hearing to support Kwok on Pitfield's behalf. She told the board that the neighbourhood is undergoing considerable change as sites are redeveloped into more intensive properties. Rose expressed concern that allowing the proposed variance would result in similar projects in the area.

Franco Romano (Action Planning Consultants) provided planning evidence for Lazarev. He gave the opinion that the increased height would be similar when compared to the Kwok residence across the road. He noted that a previous OMB decision had granted a number of variances to permit increased floor space index and lot coverage, as well as increased building height to 9 m. at the Kwok residence.

He acknowledged that Lazarev's project met all by-law requirements except for height. According to Romano, the increased height had resulted in a misreading of plans by the builder. He gave the opinion that the resulting increase in height would be minor in nature.

The board found that a modified height variance of 9 m.—rather than the 9.45 metres requested—represented a more appropriate development of Lazarev's property. In its decision, the board said that it would grant Lazarev the same increase as that given to Kwok, thereby not creating an undesirable precedent. It allowed the appeal, in part, and authorized the amended variance.

Romano represented Lazarev. Kwok and Rose represented themselves. (*See OMB Case No. PL060024.*)

Increased GFA for Etobicoke addition

In a decision issued May 5, board members **Dragica Barbir** and **Joanne Flint** allowed the appeal by **Frank Gulli** and **Elizabeth Marcello-Gulli** for a variance to permit a residential addition at **30 Kylemore Crescent**, northwest of Eglinton Avenue West and Royal York Road in Etobicoke.

Gulli proposed a two-storey addition to the back of an existing 1960s side-split dwelling, as well as a second-storey addition to the building's east side. The committee of adjustment had previously approved variance applications for increased lot coverage, building depth. However, the committee denied a third variance application to permit increased gross floor area, from 0.45 to 0.65 times the lot area, and Gulli appealed to the board.

Planners for the city and the applicant agreed that most of the proposed gross floor area increase is contained within the two-storey addition, which is barely visible from the street.

Sabrina Salatino provided planning evidence for the city opposing the application. According to Salatino, Gulli had received a building permit for a one-storey rear addition, but had built the foundation larger than the approved plans and had added a second storey without a permit. Salatino gave the opinion that the variance should be denied because the resulting building mass would be too great. She added that allowing the increased gross floor area would create negative impacts on the surrounding area, and could create a precedent that would encourage similar applications. She gave the opinion that the house could be enlarged significantly within the by-law, or with a smaller increase.

Franco Romano (Action Planning Consultants) provided planning evidence for Gulli. He noted that the project had the support of ten area residents, including three who appeared before the board to support the proposal.

Romano told the board that the renovated and expanded house would remain within the permitted height limit, and gave the opinion that the increased building depth was also within the mid-range when compared with dwelling depths of adjacent dwellings. He said that the additions would be incorporated into the existing building design, which would retain its

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ONTARIO MUNICIPAL BOARD NEWS

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original side-split character. He added that the development respected established setbacks, and noted that the front and rear landscaping would remain unaltered. Noting that the largest part of the proposed addition is at the back of the house, Romano gave the opinion that the proposed increase of gross floor area would be imperceptible from adjacent properties.

In its decision, the board noted that a similar increase granted 10 years ago for an adjacent property had not

triggered a flood of similar applications. Permitting the variance would not destabilize the neighbourhood, it said, adding that the development was well designed and the proposed gross floor area was not large by neighbourhood standards. The board allowed the appeal and authorized the variance.

Solicitor **Tom Halinsky (Aird & Berlis)** represented Gulli. Solicitor **Kelly Matsumoto** represented the City of Toronto. (See OMB Case No. PL051204.) •

CITY IN BRIEF

In the skin of a building

On May 16, Toronto's building division, **Royal Ontario Museum** and **University of Toronto** will explore how to achieve a design vision through decisions of the building envelope. Speakers at the "In the Skin of a Building" forum will discuss how a building's exterior cladding is critical to fulfilling the overall design vision. Presentations and a panel discussion will explore ways designers work with particularly unique building envelopes.

Tourism forum tackles border security

Canadian and American business and political leaders will meet today to develop joint strategies for fighting a pending U.S. passport law, which they feel will damage tourism and trade in both countries. The forum, organized by the **Binational Tourism Alliance** and co-sponsored by the Ontario

Ministry of Tourism, will bring together more than 200 industry leaders and elected officials to learn the facts, hear how the passport issue will affect them and strategize on how to work for a more business-friendly security arrangement.

Biodiesel deal with TTC

Suncor Energy Products Inc. and the **Toronto Transit Commission** have teamed up to help clear the air in Toronto. An agreement has been reached for Suncor to supply biodiesel to the TTC's fleet of 1,491 buses. The agreement extends to December 2007.

City to host AIDS conference in August

Toronto will play host to AIDS 2006, the largest bi-annual conference, with an estimated 20,000 participants and 3,000 journalists from around the

world, for six days in August.

Senate urges more spending on affordable housing

A new senate committee study calls for a \$536-million a year investment for 10 years to help provinces make the transition from institutional to community-based services that focus on recovery for people living with mental illness. Nearly half that money—\$224 million per year—would be used to build affordable housing and offer rent supplements. The cash could come from a new alcohol tax, the report suggests. •

Erratum

In previous issues of *NRU*, city hall press gallery chief **Dave Nickle**'s name was spelled incorrectly. *NRU* regrets the error.

CITY PEOPLE

Corporate communications director **Valerie Chavossy** will be officially leaving the city as of June 5.

The appointment of provincial development facilitator **Alan Wells** has been extended by two years to August 2008. Wells was previously CAO of York Region.

Toronto Community Housing Corporation CEO **Derek Ballantyne** received **Canadian Housing and Renewal Association's CMHC** award of excellence.

Bruce Davis, consultant, school board trustee and *NRU's* founding editor, took on a new role last week, appearing as Vincentio in **Lakeshore Collegiate's** production of *Taming of the Shrew*.

