

Corktownner

SPRING EDITION

CORKTOWN'S SEASONAL NEWSPAPER

MARCH 01, 2013

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When will **Cherry Street** finally **Blossom?**

by Arthur E. Sinclair, P.Eng



Aerial view looking north east on the construction of the West Don Lands and Cherry Street

Photograph by Dan Phillips

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PARKS AND PUBLIC SPACES

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ARTISTS & ENTREPRENEURS

Cherry Street has been closed for about a year now. Its closure and the associated construction has been the subject of frustration for many residents of Corktown, especially those in the Distillery District, as well as anybody else who traverses the stretch of Eastern Avenue which intersects Cherry Street.



Future Cherry St. (note the Canary Restaurant) from the West Don Lands – Transit Class Environmental Assessment, City of Toronto, Waterfront Toronto, Toronto Transit Commission, February 2008

When everything is done, it should be a very attractive boulevard complete with a streetcar line, bike paths and a pedestrian friendly streetscape. But before everything is all shiny and new, the construction headache is only going to get worse.

To understand what is going on with Cherry Street we need to go over the recent history of the area:

2003 Toronto City Council approved the *Central Waterfront Secondary Plan*. That plan outlined the need for expanded transit along the waterfront and the Port Lands, as well as a way to connect them to existing transit infrastructure.

2005 Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation prepared the *West Don Lands and East Bayfront Precinct Plan*. This plan recommended a streetcar line on Cherry Street to be terminated with a loop just north of the train tracks and eventually connecting to lines in East Bayfront along Queens Quay East and the Portlands.

2008 The City of Toronto, Waterfront Toronto and the TTC completed the *West Don Lands – Transit Class Environmental Assessment*. This plan laid out the strategy for Cherry Street.

The picture below left shows a rendering of this plan with the dedicated transit line on the east, cars on the west, bike lanes and wide sidewalks.

Now comes the hard part – getting it built. To make this work, Cherry Street needed to be widened, along with imposing numerous traffic manoeuvre limitations and development restrictions to facilitate the movements of streetcars.

2010 City Council approves the *West Don Lands, Phase 2 Draft Plan of Subdivision*. This plan outlined land swaps, road designs and building restrictions along Cherry Street to enable the streetcar to be on one side of the street rather than down the centre.



At the present, this is where we are. (looking south at Eastern)

Photograph by Arthur Sinclair

2011 The City approved a series of leases, licences and land transfers to facilitate the construction along Cherry Street. Construction included a huge storm pipe which is part of an innovative storm water management network. This storm water management system is the reason for all the recent construction along Lakeshore Boulevard east of Cherry.

Where are we now?

After a year of construction, the big storm pipe is installed along with all the sewers and water mains needed for the new development. But road construction is about to start so don't expect any relief from construction any time soon.

In a recent meeting of the West Don Lands Construction Liaison Committee (which the CRBA is part of), the construction team laid out the proposed schedule for the road construction. This will keep work on Cherry going for the foreseeable future, and it will restrict Sumach Street between King and Eastern. The plan for Sumach has construction starting in May 2013 for the west lane then moving to the east lane in March 2014. Final paving is not scheduled until October 2014. The TTC track-laying schedule has not been released yet.

Construction schedules almost never happen faster than planned but this does need to get done before the 2015


Pan-American Games. The contractor was able to reopen all lanes of Eastern for winter plowing but you can expect that both King Street and Eastern will be closed completely at some point as they install tracks in the intersections.

Even though construction is well on its way, there are still some details to be worked out.

The City and TTC still haven't said how they plan to get the streetcar under the train tracks so that a future Queens Quay East streetcar or LRT and the Cherry Street Line can connect. No matter how they go about it, it's going to be very expensive. In a city where penny pinching has become the norm, this connection is still far from certain.

It turns out that Metrolinx plans to pretty up the rail underpasses in advance of the Pan-Am games but other than that nothing tangible has been announced.

An email from Councillor Pam McConnell's office said "the timing of this work is being sorted out". It continued that "Public Realm staff are working on improvements to the underpass (Cherry Street, Parliament Street and Sherbourne Street) and I have asked that they coordinate with Waterfront Toronto on Cherry St especially. We want to make sure we are protecting for the eventual expansion of the tunnel to connect the streetcar line south."

Waterfront Toronto and the City have committed to mitigating the effects of construction on local residents and business as much as possible though, just like making laws or sausage, the process can get a bit ugly. With any luck the finished product on Cherry Street will be well worth all the effort and will transform the neighbourhood. 

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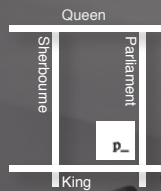
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Corktown Development Report

By Larry Webb, CRBA Past-President

CRBA's Development Committee activities have not been as intense this past year as previously, but it's still been busy. Here are some highlights on what's been happening in our community.

King Street East Commercial

King Street retail and commercial improvement has really taken hold in 2012 and will continue in 2013. In the stretch between Berkeley and Sumach, *italinteriors* commercial division is still struggling with the schedule for its new building but things are moving and it looks like a spring completion is possible. *Body Blitz* opened in November and provides some welcome eyes on the street and visible night-time activity. Plus we have new retail outlets at the base of the new condo at King and Parliament.

It should be noted that, just outside Corktown, the planned large-scale commercial-only redevelopment of the former Sun Building at 333 King East is a strong sign that business is moving east. All this activity provides promising signs for that stretch of Corktown.

East of Sumach, the Streetcar buildings, while full residentially, are still struggling commercially.

.....
We now have not one but two car dealership "boutiques" here, however we're confident that these are temporary uses that will eventually give way to more suitable neighbourhood uses.

In the meantime, while the retail market is clearly not strong enough yet, it's good to have life in those spaces, far better than empty. The weight-loss clinic in 569 King East did not last long; *Platis Cleaners* has moved into that same building. No other retail has appeared yet and it is near impossible to get reliable status on leasing from the developer; we do know that at least one hoped-for coffee shop deal has fallen through. Two storefronts appear to have construction activity inside but until we see them open, we're not counting on anything.

At a presentation to the CRBA public meeting in June, we were disturbed to hear of TCHC's "stand back" approach to the retail/commercial leasing in their development at River Street. However, in presentations to the West Don Lands Committee more recently, they have confirmed that they are taking the community needs more seriously – we don't have up-to-date leasing information and there likely isn't anything definite at this stage. We keep pressing.

Queen Street East Commercial

There is a strong retail revival occurring on Queen Street centred around the Parliament Street intersection. It started with *Adornments on Queen* over three years ago and in 2012, a number of new or relocated stores appeared close by. At the start of 2013, there are two storefronts undergoing construction work. And on the former mattress store, the building permit and liquor licence notices for a new restaurant are clearly displayed; this is good news for the area.

Further east between Sumach and River, we have started the process of trying to locate the owner of the former Display/Graphics company at 511 to 517 Queen. If we cannot get some satisfactory dialogue going there about the impact of an empty storefront on the neighbourhood, then we will approach the City to start enforcing by-law regulations. That is a great stretch of Queen Street and needs to be treated properly.

West Don Lands

Construction work for the PanAm 2015 Athletes' Village got under way in 2012 and all five buildings are progressing quickly, three of them well out of the ground. The major impact on area residents and business in 2012 and which will continue in 2013 and beyond is road work. The latest word from Waterfront Toronto and the developer Dundee/Kilmer, is that Cherry Street will be closed for the rest of 2013 although current construction is supposed to be complete around June. But then the improvement of the rail corridor underpass will likely start and continue for the balance of the year.

Parks-in-lieu Monies

Development over the past few years has generated a substantial fund of monies paid by developers in lieu of providing the required parkland for each development, which is impractical downtown.

.....
We are working with Councillor McConnell's office and the City Parks department to assemble a comprehensive vision for the parks needs for Corktown.

This will then enable allocating those funds to specific projects. This will become more definite in the months to come but will be a big focus of attention for the CRBA and the community.

New Development

We know there are several new development enquiries currently being reviewed at the Planning Department, however they are all preliminary and thus confidential. One exception: the *Sing Tao* newspaper building at Power and Adelaide Streets has been sold to Great Gulf; there will be a development

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application coming forth and the CRBA will endeavour to be front-and-centre in those discussions both with respect to design issues as well as the allocation of parks-in-lieu and possibly Section 37 monies that are forthcoming. (Section 37 monies are those paid by a developer in return for increased density and/or height and they can be allocated to very specific uses in the community providing the community is proactively involved.)

River City Phase 1, at King on the east side of River St is nearing completion and the developer has said they expect occupancy in May of this year. Also, the TCHC seniors' building on King west of River and the TCHC family housing behind it on both River and St. Lawrence is also progressing well and is due to be occupied in late summer 2013. These projects will hopefully provide the tipping point of new residents which will trigger some greater retail leasing activity in this part of Corktown.

Committee Structure

And lastly, a big thank-you to *Jon Goode* who was at the helm of the Development Committee in 2010 and 2011 and was still active in 2012 as well as being the CRBA representative at the West Don Lands Committee and West Don Lands Construction Liaison Committee. Jon is concluding the last of his three years on the CRBA Board and his leadership and contributions will be missed, although he has promised to maintain involvement in some form. Thanks Jon.

Development is a busy and crucial part of the CRBA's work and we encourage anyone who has an interest in this field or some related expertise to volunteer at whatever degree of intensity is possible – all help is welcome. The more people who lend a hand, the more issues we can pursue and the greater our positive impact on the development of Corktown, both now and in the future. To get involved, come out to a CRBA monthly meeting or email info@corktown.ca.

POPPED



Let's hear your best Tarzan yell for the opening of the Regent Park Aquatic Centre!

This is a spectacular facility and a benefit to the entire area, including Corktown. The building looks beautiful and inviting from the street. In addition to expected features such as a lap pool, leisure pool and diving board, the Regent Park Aquatic Centre has a water slide and Tarzan Rope. How cool is that?!



What is up with Shuter Street – will it ever be clean again?

It seems like forever that it has been a dusty, dirty, bumpy road. Now River Street is a mess, too. Complaints to our councillor and TCHC haven't helped. Any suggestions on how to get the streets cleaned? And not just once a year. There are a few more years of construction left. I don't know about you but I can't bear the thought of enduring this mess until all of Regent Park is rebuilt.



Woohoo! A drycleaner!

Corktowners have been wishing for a drycleaner for many years and it makes me truly happy to see Platis Cleaners open up in our neighbourhood. It's located at 569 King Street East on the ground floor of one of the new condos. Let's hope that this is the first of many new helpful retailers and services in Corktown.



Really? More car dealerships?

I suppose the new "boutique" car dealers look nice and are better than empty storefronts. But I can't say that I'm out shopping for a new car every week. Wouldn't it be great to have the car stores replaced with businesses that serve actual Corktowners? Maybe a greengrocer, card store, butcher shop, bank, hardware store... More drinking and dining options are always welcome, too. Really!

Corktown Displays Its Creative Side

By Sandra Iskandar, CRBA Board Member, Arts and Culture Committee

On January 8th, the Corktown Residents and Business Association's Arts and Culture Committee held its first Arts and Culture Night.



Attendees enjoying the evening's presentations. Photograph by Eric Morse

It was an entertaining night and a resounding success! The room was buzzing with smiles and laughter. Chairs were pushed away and pews were emptied to make place for the presenters. The eclectic mixture of presenters blended well together and showcased Corktown's rich arts community.

In all, there were four performers and six speakers spanning fine arts, theatre, dance, music and history.

First up, *Gary Smith*, artist, teacher and mentor presented the recently unveiled Corktown mural, located in Sackville Park, as well as a range of his other work. Gary's generous body of work focuses on local architecture, portraiture and landscapes. Thank you Gary for generously donating an original painting as a prize! www.escapewithgary.com.

Father and son, *Paul and Ian McCulloch*, presented a skillful and soulful guitar piece that brought smiles to all. Ian wrote the

instrumental piece and taught it to his father the day before their performance, just further evidence of what a talented 14 year old he is. Starting at age 4 with the violin, Ian now plays guitar, trombone, drums and piano. He honed his skills at the Cabbagetown Community Arts Centre, Regent Park School of Music, and more recently, the Elite Music Academy at Jones and Danforth. Now in grade nine at Rosedale Heights School of the Arts, Ian is a member of a few bands that he's formed with friends. His father, Paul, is also a talented musician and the conductor of the Corktown Chamber Orchestra.

Bradley Lepp from **Luminato** began with an upbeat video showing the international multi-arts festival for people open to having art change their outlook on the world. Highlights were an exhibit at Fort York and large Art Installations made of discarded sandwich boards. The next Luminato Festival is to be held June 14-23, 2013. Thank you Brad for your generous donation of a Luminato Coffee Table book. www.luminato.ca

Sam Wesley from the **Parliament Interpretive Centre**, part of the Ontario Heritage Trust, gave a brief history of the First Parliament Site with instructive tidbits of information about the rich Canadian history that lies within Corktown's boundaries. Corktowners are encouraged to visit the Interpretive Centre, located at the southeast corner of Berkeley and Front. Thank you Sam for your generous donation of two tickets and a book.

Steve McNie led a seven piece combined band made up of members from the **Corktown Ukulele Jam** and the **Corktown Chamber Orchestra**. The group consisted of a singer, three ukuleles, two cellos, a violin and one guy bent over rubbing a box (correctly called a Cajon) with a brush. They performed truly unique renditions of Beatles songs. The Ukulele Jam meets every Wednesday at the Dominion. They have over 1400 members and believe in democratizing the arts through participation. Thanks for such a great performance! www.torontoukes.com.



Steve McNie and the band. Photograph by Eric Morse

T.J Tasker and Katie Saunoris from **Soulpepper Theatre Company** and **Young Centre for the Arts** showed an informative slide presentation. Both organizations share

continued on page 8

space in the Distillery District. Soulpepper is an artist-founded classical repertory theatre company with a three-tiered mandate: to present the world's greatest stories in vital Canadian interpretations; to train a new generation of theatre artists; and to inspire and enrich youth through mentorship and access programs. Thank you to both for the pair of tickets to see a show! www.soulpepper.ca & www.youngcentre.ca

How to top the musical performances? With a fabulous ballet pas de deux performance, of course! Performed by *Jennifer Nichol* and her colleague *Tyler* from **Hit and Run Productions** and the **Extension Room**. We were in complete awe. The Extension Room offers a unique and diverse array of ballet, fitness and dance classes, workshops and special events guided by professional dancers, yet it's designed for everyone at all fitness levels. (See the review of a Ballet Boot Camp class in this issue of the Corktowner.) The Extension Room also provides an open concept loft design that can be rented for any event. It's the perfect setting for intimate dance and music performance, choreographic workshops, and photographic exhibits. Jennifer is particularly interested in all aspects of the arts and often likes to combine visual arts with dance. Who knows, perhaps one day the Arts and Culture Night will be held at the Extension Room. Thank you Jenn, for donating a free class to everyone in attendance. www.extensionmethod.com

From **Cahoots Theatre Company**, *Kawa Ada and Kate Ann Vandermeer* presented a slide show of stills from previous theatrical shows. They emphasized Cahoots' dedication to the creation, development, and production of new works that investigate the complexities of Canada's cultural identity and diversity, and that examine the intersections of these cultures. Cahoots proudly presents their next show which runs May 25 - June 16, 2013 and is titled "*Sister Mary's a Dyke?!*" Thank you Cahoots for generously donating rental hours in your newly renovated space. www.cahoots.ca

Our Arts & Culture night ended with another wonderful dance performance, this one a video trailer for the "*House of Mirth*" featuring *Laurence Lemieux*, native Quebecer and co-owner of **Coleman + Lemieux Compagnie**. Laurence gave



Laurence Lemieux makes her presentation.

Photograph by Eric Morse

a warm presentation and shared an update on her company. Coleman + Lemieux purchased The Citadel, a historic building on Parliament and gave it extensive renovations. The Citadel is home to dance studios, a yoga space, office space and residences. CL defines contemporary dance with work that is eclectic, daring, technically sophisticated, richly visual, and emotionally driven. Thank you Laurence for your generous donation of a pair of tickets to see "*The House of Mirth*". www.colemanlemieux.com

The CRBA Arts and Culture Committee would like to thank all presenters and volunteers for making this a night such a success. Be sure to join us for the next Arts and Culture Night scheduled for May 2013. If you represent an Arts Group and are interested in presenting, supporting or joining the Arts & Culture Committee, please contact Sandra Iskandar at artsculture@corktown.ca.

Don't miss any Corktown meetings!

NEXT MEETINGS:

April 2nd & May 7th

Our meetings begin at 7 p.m., generally the first Tuesday of every month. The meetings are held in the back room of the Dominion on Queen, at Queen St. and Sumach.

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Café Haiku

by Alex Bartlett

What is this dish? The winning entry wins the entrée!

This is our first Café Haiku contest – a poem and photo to celebrate a particular restaurant in Corktown. Identify the restaurant and dish and win a gift certificate to the restaurant for the value of the dish.

*Mussels, shrimp, scallops
see tart tomatoes, fresh herbs
hearty, rich pasta*



To enter, send your guess to editor@corktown.ca or go to www.corktown.ca and look for Café Haiku.

The winner will be chosen at random from all correct entries. If no one gets it right, the winner will be chosen from all entries so increase your chances with multiple entries! The dish and restaurant featured in this Café Haiku will be revealed in the next issue of the Corktown where you will also find the next Café Haiku featuring Corktown delicacy.

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WHAT

Allegro Ballet Boot Camp

Allegro Ballet Boot Camp at “The Extension Method”

By the Corktown Critic, Writer of Anonymously Honest Reviews

If it hadn't been for a dare, I wouldn't have gone. But since the dare was set, I rationalized that I would have some fantastic content to dish on for my review afterwards.

The Extension Method is a boutique gym housed in the upstairs of an ugly-as-all-hell industrial building at Eastern and Sackville. I had never heard of it before. Apparently I should have though as I walked up the stairs and into the studio where various magazine covers boasted it as the must-try workout in Toronto. Whoops. My bad.

Their Ballet Boot Camp class is touted as Toronto's newest and hottest workout, an innovative ballet fitness class of physical conditioning and rehabilitative techniques based on the fundamentals of classical ballet.

There were no tutus and ballet slippers required for the ballet boot camp class I stepped into. Thank god since I wouldn't have the slightest idea where to buy such things in Toronto. I was set up with a one-class-pass and assured that my zero dance experience and complete lack of coordination in sport would be no problem. Somehow I doubted that, wondering what on earth I had gotten myself into, when Jennifer Nichols, founder and my instructor for the class, demonstrated how to do a pirouette. She was the epitome of a ballerina: graceful, lean, fit and mesmerizing to watch. I am nothing of the sort.

But what transpired over the next hour was in all actuality, fun. The music was catchy, the other participants in the class were of varying ages and fitness levels, the instructor was kind and completely patient with my dancing dorkiness, and I was so busy concentrating on mimicking her moves that I hardly noticed my butt and abs get a full body workout.

I will admit, it surely couldn't have been pretty to watch me at times. My feet doing a dance entirely separate from the rest of my body with my arms dangling at my side, as I attempted to copy Jennifer. And there was definitely nothing close to form in my attempt at a pirouette. But through it all I felt myself having fun. A lot of fun. I will definitely go back.

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The Berkeley Three

by Mary Wentz

The January meeting of CRBA at the Dominion on Queen was no ordinary meeting! It was a true Arts & Culture night, and everyone there seemed delighted not only by the number, but also the quality and variety of the presentations: visual arts, dancing, musicians – even a wonderful ukulele band, who morphed into the Corktown Chamber Players!

We now have an Arts and Culture committee, and the Corktown team has promised to tell us more about some of the great entertainment happening on our very doorstep. Here is some news of what will be coming in live theatre in the next couple of months.

Berkeley Street, which forms our western boundary, is home to no fewer than three theatre companies:

Furthest north, at #70, is **The Alumnae Theatre**, which, from March 6 – 24, is running its 25th Annual *New Ideas Festival*, offering a chance for budding playwrights to see their work in production. Scripts are submitted for one-act plays (or scenes from full-length works.) Over 100 submissions were received this year from both Canada and the US, and 15 were selected. There is a new program each week, and admission is only \$15 a week, or \$35 for the whole three-week Festival.

From April 12 to 27, on the Alumnae's Mainstage, we can see *"The Killdeer"* by James Reaney, "a sharp social satire that mixes the macabre with comedy to tell the tale of an Ontario town's tangled web of murder and mystery."

Phone: 416-364-4170 www.alumnaetheatre.com

Be careful, though! ...Faites attention! ...particularly if you think you're going to be late! It's happened more than once that eager patrons come panting up to the Alumnae Box Office with tickets to a puppet show at Canadian Stage, only to find that the curtain is going up at the Alum on an Oscar Wilde play!

At 26 Berkeley, south of King, two theatres have their home base: the Canadian Stage and the French Theatre of Toronto.

From March 18 – April 13, **Canadian Stage** will be showing us a new Canadian play, *"This"*, written by Melissa Gibson, and directed by Matthew Jocelyn.

Jane's husband has died over a year ago but his ashes are still sitting on top of her fridge. Struggling to raise her young daughter alone, she's having problems. Her friends try to cheer her up with party games and blind dates but they're desperate for fun themselves. We meet an honest portrait of a group of "30-something" friends, navigating their way through death, parenthood and adultery. Jocelyn points out with wit and grace the absurdities of modern life.

Performances: Mon.- Sat. 8pm. Matinees, Wed. and Sat. (\$22-\$47) Mon. (Pay-what-you-can) Phone: 416-368-3110 www.canadianstage.com

From April 17- 28 the **French Theatre of Toronto** will be presenting the Michel Tremblay classic *"Albertine en Cinq Temps"*. *Seventy-year-old Albertine is visited by all the women she used to be: angry at 30; bitter at 40; finding renewal at 50, and in despair at 60.*

The play is in French, but some performances will have subtitles in English. Phone:416-534-6604 www.theatrefrancais.com

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