



SAHRA Report for 2023 presented at the SAHRA Annual General Meeting April 29, 2024

Communications:

We normally publish one paper newsletter each year, and you should have received one in your mailbox in the last few weeks. Apart from those, all mass communication has been by email for the last several years. It is much less expensive and more timely. If you aren't receiving our weekly eBlasts, please contact us at info@sahratoronto.com or click on "[Subscribe](#)" on our website or register using the QR code on this slide.

For about a year now, we have been publishing the eBlasts weekly, usually on Saturday evenings. We also participated with other resident associations in publishing four professionally written articles based on interviews with various councillors. We are looking at continuing this in the future.

We are constantly updating our website so check it out frequently.

Community Safety:

Your community safety team includes Ron Johnson and me from SAHRA and Pam Main and Paul Freer from the Upper Avenue Community Association or UACA.

The biggest concern has become severe auto theft crimes.

[Home Invasion with Auto Theft](#)

In particular, the highest risk is a combination of break and enter when residents are home along with auto theft – in other words home invasions for the sake of finding auto keys or fobs. In SAHRA's neighbourhood, we are aware of a home invasion in December where the auto theft was foiled. There was a successful auto theft in March – we don't have many details but we believe it was a home invasion with a gun. We're also aware of an incident about a month ago where the home owner saw three masked men outside their house in the evening. As soon as the masked men realised they'd been spotted, they jumped into their escape vehicle and raced off at high speed, running a red light.

Home invasions take the severity of auto thefts to the next level. In response, police have increased their patrol cars in our area and added undercover officers during the night hours. Nine new officers have been added to 32 Division's roster.

Auto Theft

Carjackings are also on the rise in the City with a 91% increase from last year. We don't have any data on local carjackings.

Police officers are being injured during altercations with thieves during all these severe auto thefts.

As a result of these three severe types of crimes and their increasing numbers, auto theft is no longer seen as "just a property crime". All levels of government and other stakeholders are now engaged, some more than others. Recent auto theft summits in Ottawa and Peel Region have helped focus the spotlight and bring more resources.

The Toronto Police Service lists a number of preventive measures for home invasion auto thefts. As a basis, it's important to prioritise your safety over your vehicle. Here are the tips:

- If possible, park vehicles in a garage
- Ensure your driveway is well lit and keep exterior lights on all night
- Security cameras are an asset
- Install a home security system
- Have a motion detection alarm connected to your cell phone
- Put security film on glass windows and doors
- Have multipoint door locks on your doors
- Keep backyard gates locked and ground-level windows secured
- Do not post on social media when you will be away (you or your kids)
- Report suspicious vehicles/persons to police: Call 9-1-1 if an incident is underway, otherwise call the non-emergency number shown on the slide. This applies to all crimes, not just home invasions.
- More safety tips can be found on the TPS website. You can use the QR code to get there.

Auto theft is an issue across the City and many areas are worse than ours. We are cautiously optimistic that 2024 will be flat or better than 2023 but it is early days yet.

We collaborate with the UACA to track these data. For over a year, we have felt that a multi-jurisdictional approach is needed to combat this crime which is typically run by organised crime syndicates. That's why we were happy to hear of the auto theft summits in Ottawa and Peel Region. However, due to the complexity of dealing with the organised crime aspect, we've also been told that it will take time to make significant headway.

In the meantime, there is a number of auto theft prevention tactics which are available on our [website](#).

Équité, the investigative arm of the Insurance Bureau of Canada, publishes a top ten stolen vehicle list which can be found on their [website](#).

Some insurance companies are providing free tag trackers to their customers who own vehicles which are more likely to be stolen. You may want to talk to your insurance company to see what they might do for you. And if you are purchasing a vehicle, you might want to ask the

dealer what they and the manufacturer are doing to curb auto theft. The manufacturers seem to be dragging their feet.

Break and Enters

As for Break and Enters, house B&E's peaked in 2017. They reduced to zero during the depths of the pandemic when so many people were at home but they are now coming back. In the first quarter of 2024, SAHRA's area experienced 4 versus 3 in the same period last year. These include the home invasions referred to earlier.

Commercial B&E's on the Upper Avenue increased tremendously last year and continue in 2024. Thieves are after cash and point-of-sale terminals. Thanks to Deputy Mayor Colle for putting the spotlight on this issue with a summit at City Hall on March 1.

We are continuing to support Neighbourhood Watch Online and have several areas represented within our boundaries. However, we are still looking for others to step forward to be Group Captains in order to provide wider coverage. Please consider volunteering for this role, which doesn't take a lot of time or effort. We'll provide training and ongoing support.

Various

During parts of December and January, demonstrations took place on the Avenue Road bridge over Highway 401. The demonstrations had to do with the war in Gaza and there was a high level of stress in the surrounding community. The Toronto Police Service was out in force for several weeks to try to keep control. Finally, Chief Demkiw banned demonstrations on the bridge as of January 11. A few arrests took place the following weekend but there have been no demonstrations on the bridge since. Also on January 11, Deputy Mayor Colle organised a community safety meeting which allowed the community to voice its concerns. I commend the Councillor and believe that the meeting, together with the banning of demonstrations on the bridge, helped reduce stress in the area.

You may have noticed some mailboxes wrapped similarly to the photo at the right. These mailboxes have been vandalised and the mail stolen from them. This is a reminder that cash should never be sent through the mail. Consider mailing correspondence from internal mail services such as those at some Shoppers Drug Marts.

Thanks to an alert resident, we've contacted the Toronto District School Board about three lamp standards in the east parking lot at Armour Heights Public School. The resident brought to our attention that the bases of the standards were badly rusted and might fall over. The TDBS has instructed a contractor to remove the standards while new ones are manufactured.

Traffic and pedestrian safety:

Traffic continues to be an issue in our area, leading to concerns for pedestrian safety as well as vehicular safety. The outcome of a traffic study in our area, with the objective of traffic calming, found that our residential streets do not have more traffic than they are designed for and that speeding is not endemic. The study posits that pedestrians may feel they are more at risk

because most streets do not have sidewalks which would more effectively separate them from vehicles.

The recommendations of the study include the reduction of the speed limit on all “local” streets from 40 km/h to 30. All the residential streets within SAHRA’s boundaries are considered “local”, except Yonge Boulevard and Brooke, which are “collectors.” Those streets will remain at 40 km/h, although we are considering asking the Councillor to reduce the speed on Brooke as well.

These reduced speeds are being phased in on all Toronto local roads and SAHRA’s area north of Wilson has been converted. Watch for the new signs as they are installed. In the meantime, you don’t need to wait to adjust your maximum driving speed to 30 km/h.

Another recommendation is to ensure stop bar pavement markings are painted at all stop signs, as per the City’s standard. This should help motorists and cyclists identify where to stop – and that complete stops are required. SAHRA supports this recommendation.

The final recommendation is to follow the City’s policy which is to have at least one sidewalk on each street. This would likely only happen as the street comes up for a complete rebuild which is expected to be 5 to more than 15 years away. SAHRA’s position is to make a decision at the time of the rebuild.

For several years, a traffic calming sign has been missing on southbound Yonge Boulevard just south of Wilson. The replacement sign was finally installed last September. Thanks to the Councillor’s office in helping us make this happen.

Tragically, there was a pedestrian death from a vehicle collision in the north crosswalk at Avenue Road and Wilson on April 4. The pedestrian was known in the community and worked at several Upper Avenue retail businesses. Our condolences go out to the victim’s family and friends.

Enhancing the environment and social life in our neighbourhood

Neighbours Night Out returned last September after a few years when it was cancelled due to the pandemic. It was hosted on Hedon Avenue and was a great success with many neighbours turning out. The kids enjoyed the police car siren – many times – as well as the ice cream. The 2024 version will be held on Haddington near Harley in June. Stay tuned to your eBlasts for the date announcement – and then put in an order for good weather.

We are happy to report that the farmers’ market will return for the third year this summer to the Roe Bus Loop and the adjacent Green P parking lot. Last summer’s market was much more successful than Year 1 and this coming summer should be even better. Bring your friends and neighbours: this is a use it or lose it initiative. UACA is the prime moving force organising the market so thanks to them. More details to follow in our eBlasts and on our website.

We were happy to participate in the Upper Avenue Fall Festival last October 14. SAHRA had a table in front of Shoppers Drug Mart where we greeted residents and others with free cake. Always good to talk with our residents.

SAHRA has been working with UACA, Bedford Park Residents Organisation and Councillor Colle's office to enhance the Upper Avenue primarily through greening opportunities. We are recommending the transition of some paved areas to green, addition of a public bench, and improved soil conditions for trees. The City is also suggesting a coloured paver-looking treatment to part of the hashed areas in the centre median.

The City has changed regulations to allow nightclubs and other night economy venues in most areas of the city. SAHRA is cautiously supportive of this initiative as long as the businesses comply with the City's good neighbour guide. We also believe that the venues will be more likely to situate on Yonge Street than Upper Avenue due to better access to transit.

Development – presented by Gary Langdon

This will be a brief overview of what is happening in terms of DEVELOPMENT within SAHRA's "territory", and more broadly:

DEVELOPMENT RULES

GARDEN SUITES "as of right" are now legal and regulations are in place that allow a maximum of 2 storeys, a maximum building height of 6m (17 ft), a minimum side yard setback of 0.9m (3 ft) and a minimum back yard setback of 1.5m (4.3 ft). To date, there have been no known Garden Suite applications within SAHRA's boundaries.

LANEWAY SUITES - There are no laneways within SAHRA (unlike a few blocks south of us), and accordingly no applications.

MULTIPLEXES - The City is in the process of rezoning residential lots to allow Duplexes, Triplexes and Fourplexes.

MIDRISE ON AVENUES - The City is proposing replacement of the current requirement for ANGULAR PLANES, which was introduced years ago to protect neighbours from loss of sunlight and to make buildings more aesthetically pleasing. This change would allow for more "boxy" buildings that would go straight up, rather than graduated, delivering more units within the same footprint and costing less to build per unit. One concern is that this can shade the backyards of adjacent neighbours, for example existing houses behind retail buildings on the west side of Avenue Rd. There will be a Public Meeting held by the Planning & Housing Committee at City Hall on May 9 to get final (?) input on this and other City MIDRISE proposals. SAHRA will be represented by FoNTRA (Federation of North Toronto Resident Associations) at this meeting.

MAJOR STREETS in properties designated as being in Neighbourhoods - The City is proposing up to 6 storeys for apartment buildings in these locations. This could include Wilson Avenue

between Avenue Road & Yonge Boulevard, as Wilson is technically not an “Avenue” for planning purposes. This is also on the Agenda for the Public Meeting being held by the Planning & Housing Committee on May 9.

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESS - The province has mandated faster approvals of building applications, including through the elimination of the right of nearby Residents and Resident Associations to appeal Committee of Adjustment decisions to the Toronto Local Appeal Board (TLAB). This has led to a formal review by the City of its decision-making process, to make it fairer for residents and others. In-person meetings were held across the City in April, plus an online survey, to get public feedback.

Specific to CoA, one issue is that full information on an application is sometimes not available publicly until the weekend before the Thursday CoA Hearing, making it difficult for objectors to prepare their presentations effectively. Other concerns include too many applications scheduled within a Hearing Day, low familiarity with neighbourhoods among panelists, and Zoning Examinations not always being correct. FoNTRA has established a CoA Working Group to develop and present recommendations to the City this spring, on 15 areas of improvement within the CoA panel makeup and process.

CoA Hearings Within SAHRA

- North York CoA meets every 2nd Thursday. Approx 6 Hearings per year involve properties within SAHRA.
- North York CoA almost always allows the variances being requested. This was the case before the Ontario legislation of 2022-2023 to expedite housing approvals.
- Side Yard Setbacks require 0.9m (3 ft). These have usually been approved at 0.6m (2 feet) upon requested variance. This can be a factor in EXCAVATION work that frequently damages adjacent properties’ footpaths going from front to rear. Sometimes excavation damage is caused by builders’ negligence.

Major Developments - SAHRA area

We will finish off this Development overview by looking at major projects locally.

1. Avenue Road & Lawrence, northeast corner - Many of us shop there, or nearby, so this will impact us. Royal Lighting’s property was purchased by the developer and added to the others already part of the proposed development. The developer, First Capital, is appealing the proposal to the Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT) citing the City’s delay in approving the application. There are ongoing negotiations between the developer, the City, Lytton Park Residents’ Organization and Bedford Park Residents Organization.
2. 4050 Yonge Street (Yonge & Wilson, northwest corner) - While outside the SAHRA territory, its construction will impact traffic flow along both Wilson and Yonge Street, again impacting us especially at rush hour. There are two towers proposed, one at 14 floors and the other at 28, reduced from the originally proposed 21 and 35. There will be a 45-degree plane tiering back from Yonge Street, and increased setbacks from both Wilson and Yonge have been established. The developer, Gupta Group, has not responded with an estimated start of construction.
3. 190 Ridley Boulevard, the green space on the north side of Ridley, just east of Avenue Road. This is a second iteration of the original proposal for this land, owned by Starlight and affiliates, that was approved back in 2015 at the OMB. The amended proposal condo has four stories,

instead of three, plus a rooftop terrace, and will include 20 units instead of 30. Starlight appealed to the OLT also citing the City's delay in approving the amended application.

Thank You to our Membership Contributors and our Volunteers

Bob Williams expressed SAHRA's appreciation to our Membership contributors and our Volunteers. They all contribute to supporting SAHRA so that we can carry on with our mandates for protecting and enhancing our Neighbourhood.

On behalf of your Board of Directors, thanks for attending and for supporting SAHRA.

Respectfully submitted,
Jim Sadler
President