



ARECA
(Avenue Road Eglinton Community Association)
www.areca.info

I first got involved with my community in 1994. At that time a few of my neighbours invited me to a meeting. Since a proposed development affected me, I was happy to attend. We formed a small committee and became involved as stakeholders representing the whole neighbourhood. It was all quite normal then. Communities would band together, educate themselves or hire professionals and engage with the local councillor and the constituency office. We were successful in coming to a mutually respectful agreement with the developer.

During the process, our group joined en masse with the local community association, ARECA - its board members were extremely helpful. Many still live in my community and we became good friends.

Shortly after the 'heat' of the negotiations died down, ARECA had a choice to forge ahead with a well-stacked board of directors or fade away like so many associations do after a fight, especially one they lost. We've had a few of those! Thankfully, the ARECA board to this day is proud of how its scope of activity has developed beyond its own doorstep.

We meet at 7.30pm on a mutually convenient day once a month with time off for March Break and summer. There's an understanding that we meet to concern ourselves with the issues that might impact us, and our neighbours. Not every director can be involved if some business has to be conducted on behalf of the community but we always manage to draw on some experience or connection that helps us stay focused.

In the early years, community associations belonged to a city-wide umbrella group, CORRA. It would help out on any serious threats, like a truly egregious development or issues of public health or safety (Side walks, traffic lights). Since Amalgamation in 1998, it seems large community groups are being heard less and less, which seems a bit odd since we are the ones who vote. I've seen ARECA's position diminished over the years too. Gone are the days when a councillor couldn't hide from the constituents. Our position had always been to act as an organized liaison between the community and the Ward Councillor. Now it's quite common to see large groups of residents being ignored on anything from biking to skyscrapers. Gone too is any vestige of community planners who lived locally and were an essential resource to community associations.

But, I'm not complaining. And, I'd encourage anyone to become involved. You're welcome at ARECA's table anytime, even if you just want to listen. As one of my fellow ARECAns said at this month's meeting when we were faced with an unusual decision to make, "I think we should, it's what ARECA stands for!"

ARECA is a volunteer community association representing the views of residents in matters that affect our community in North Toronto. ARECA represents the area bounded by Eglinton Avenue West, Yonge Street, Roselawn Avenue, Avenue Road, St Clements Avenue and Chaplin Road. If you live in the ARECA area please join your community association. To join send a cheque for \$20 (\$10 seniors) for your 2011 membership, along with your name, address and phone number and email address to Avenue Road Eglinton Community Association, c/o Membership Secretary 23 Elwood Boulevard, Toronto M4R 1B8. Note if you wish to receive fax or email updates from ARECA please include these with your membership details or email us at information@areca.info.