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BIA to restore Baby Point gates

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Bloor West Villager

by Lisa Rainford

This year marks the centennial anniversary of the historic stone gates at the Jane and Annette streets intersection, the newly established Baby Point Business Improvement Area's (BIA) namesake.

In recognition of this milestone, the BIA held a reception and ribbon cutting to officially launch a project to restore the gates, Wednesday morning, June 8.

The gates were erected in 1911 at the onset of the construction of the Robert Home Smith-designed subdivision to showcase the new neighbourhood, explained Jill Standish, president of the Baby Point Club. Once the houses were built and residents moved in, they liked the gates so much they wanted to keep them.

"Over time, they've gotten neglected and run down," she said.

The gates just "blend into the tree bark," said Dennis Maslo, BIA vice-chair at the event, held at Java Joe's Coffee Shop at the corner of Jane and Annette streets, across from the gates.

The BIA thought it interesting that in its inaugural year its namesake was turning 100 years young, said BIA



Chair Darryl Kaplan, and only fitting that its first major beautification project be the rejuvenation of its namesake.

On Wednesday, the BIA shared its vision with community members and local politicians by unveiling an artist's rendering of the newly restored gates. Restoration efforts will be funded by monies raised through fundraising events by the BIA board of directors, said Kaplan, along with funding from the city's beautification fund and a donation from the Baby Point Club.

A focal point of the BIA and the surrounding area, the gates will see the addition of new landscaping, upgraded and additional ground lighting not only for ambiance, but for safety as well, said Danica Loncar, chair of the Baby Point Gates Restoration and Rejuvenation Committee. Vintage reproductions of the current lanterns will be constructed, she said. The gates will be used for seasonal decorating at Christmas time and Halloween, she added. There will also be seating. A victim of graffiti, the gates' stone and mortar will be rehabilitated, she added.

Parkdale-High Park Councillor Sarah Doucette, a BIA board member, said she was impressed by the group's "enthusiasm and energy."

MPP Cheri DiNovo admitted that she didn't know the gates' history. She brought best wishes and a certificate she presented to Kaplan. MP Peggy Nash sent her regrets, but offered her support for all the BIA's efforts.

"Local businesses define the character of a neighbourhood," a representative from her office said on her behalf.

The BIA has more beautification projects on its agenda, including planters and banners, said Kaplan.