

GLENN LOWSON FOR NATIONAL POST

Tall trees and scenic city views, life on Russell Hill Road is dandy.

*St. Clair Ave. W. to Cottingham Road,
Russell Hill Road to Avenue Road*

Folks on this fine hill are no fools

SOUTH HILL

BY SUZANNE WINTROB

The official hill is situated on Avenue Road, remnants of historic Lake Iroquois's shoreline that faded into Lake Ontario thousands of years ago and left behind a forest with creeks and waterfalls. By the late 1800s, mansions had sprung up on the lush land, many built into the ridge and perched high for spectacular views. They are still there today, albeit modernized to suit the luxurious lifestyle of their wealthy but private owners.

Average house price With large 50- or 75x170-foot lots boasting tall trees and city views, it's no wonder people pay millions to get a piece of the action. On sale is a "typical" five-bedroom, 5,500-sq.-ft. early 1900s modernized home on Russell Hill Road with grand rooms and old wood-and-leaded-glass charm. Price: \$2.5-million. Swanky updated original and infills on sought-after Poplar Plains, Clarendon Avenue and Balmoral can fetch \$3-million. Several private streets are cared for by residents, including the gated Clarendon Crescent where a five-bedroom, 5,000-sq.-ft. renovated mansion on a half-acre double lot has been for sale since January. Price: \$3.9-million. The 1950s Boulton Drive homes on 35x125-ft. lots are being discovered by builders — get one for \$750,000 and put up a stone-front, 3,500-sq.-ft., four-bedroom for \$2.3-million. Townhomes go for \$1.5-million, while the 73 condos at Avenue/St. Clair's 19-floor The Avenue range from \$840,000 to \$6.9-million for 1,115 to 4,250 sq. ft. (move in March '09).

Demographics Affluent CEOs who like being downtown but want the anonymity they can't find in Rosedale or Forest Hill.

Local schools Publics Brown Jr. with French immersion, Deer Park Jr. and Sr., and Oakwood Collegiate, walk to private Mabin School or carpool to Upper Canada College, Bishop Strachan, De La Salle College or York School.

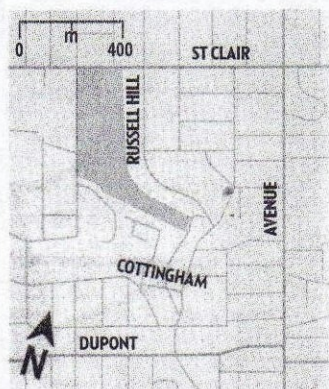
Local parks Who needs a park when your big backyard backs on to a ravine? Still, families and dogs head to Winston Churchill Park and Nordheimer Ravine for trails, tennis and tobogganing.

Transit Steps to St. Clair trams, but most drive their fine cars.

Retail Yorkville for Pusateri's, Whole Foods and designer boutiques; Bloor Street for Tiffany, Louis Vuitton, Holt's (and Winners, but don't tell anyone), and Dupont for tailor/dry cleaner, Camillo & Victor's Barber Shop, South Hill Furniture and LCBO; flowers at Davenport Garden Centre and Summerhill Nursery.

Dining Two hangouts at two extremes: fine dining at Scaramouche's pasta bar and grill gets equal time with People's Foods burger joint on Dupont. Delectable pastries at Frangipane.

Other attractions Brown Community Centre, and a striking 1906-built municipal pumping station that houses the city's central control for water distribution.



JONATHAN RIVAIT / NATIONAL POST

Local trivia Much to neighbourhood dismay, the Ontario Municipal Board has approved plans for two condo buildings totalling 22 units plus underground parking where a large Russell Hill Road house now stands. According to the OMB decision: "Neighbours may believe that they live in a homogeneous, single-family neighbourhood, but they do not." Watch for tree huggers when the demolition crew turns up.

Sources: Anne Levenston, Royal LePage Real Estate Services Ltd., Johnston & Daniel Division; Jimmy Molloy and resident Georgina Ratcliffe, Chestnut Park Real Estate; torontoneighbourhoods.net; lostdrivers.ca.

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