

George St. Builds New Reputation

The north end of George St. has had a bad reputation for years; deservedly so. There were two murders in August, just eight days apart, and the street hosts a legion of drug dealers and addicts. But big changes are in the air.

There are new housing developments being built at Jarvis and Dundas. The city is planning to demolish Seaton House and replace it with a hospital-like facility. And the residents of George St. are building Take Back George Street (TBGS).

Take Back George Street started as an effort to showcase the changes that have happened at 291 George St. It's a TCHC building that used to be ruled by drug dealers and pimps. Today, it is the most improved building in the entire TCHC portfolio. Tenant Representative, Conrad Hall, decided to launch Take Back George Street to build on the good things happening in his building.

There is also a long list of organisations lining up to join the effort to reclaim George St. They include the Salvation Army, Garden District Residents Association, Toronto Zoo, 51 Division, Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment Foundation, The 519, City of Toronto, and TCHC. Conrad plans to add a lot more local agencies and businesses to that list.

TBGS is happening in the back yard at 291 George St. this year. Saturday, 10 September from noon until two. Conrad thinks this will be the last year for hosting it at 291 George St.

"We're hoping to get 250 people out to TBGS this year, and that's going to be a tight fit in the back yard. Glen Murray's is already on board for letting us use the courthouse parking lot, so we're looking at being across the street next year."

The plan for TBGS is to grow into a full street festival. Conrad wants to be ready for when Seaton house is re-developed and the new building opens. "When the new building opens, we want to be at the level where we can close George St. and connect Allan Gardens with Moss Park. We want to do something that makes this place safe and fun for families again."