

Web folk back in action here

The View from Bloor West

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World19.com is back in orbit, and not a moment too soon for residents and neighbourhoods of west Toronto.

A few weeks back, this pioneering organization, which appeared on the scene in the mid-1990s using the Internet as its primary communication tool back when the medium was still crawling on all-fours — hosted a successful forum at Swansea town hall that probed the question “How do we build a great city and how do we pay for it?”

More than 100 residents took the time and interest to attend. They were treated to the views of a trio of experts from the media, academia and publishing world, who offered up their prescriptions for getting our ailing city back on its feet again. Even David Miller made a cameo appearance.

A few days later, world19.com operatives were at the Gladstone Hotel

participating in the “YIMBY Festival” — YIMBY standing for “Yes, In My Backyard.”

For a variety of reasons, the people who engineer the informative website www.world19.com retreated from public discourse the past couple of years. But, with the Swansea forum and a resumption of their well-written and email newsletters, they’ve signaled it’s time to make their voice heard on issues affecting lands east (and west) of the Humber river and south (and north) of St. Clair.

World19 is not another west end residents’ association, even though its key players all reside in Swansea and Bloor West Village. The folks behind it do not see themselves as simply ratepayers. They are not a single-interest organization out to stop something — unless by stopping, we mean public apathy about issues affecting our familiar neighbourhoods, as well as the sprawling urban mess stretching beyond.

The group came together in 1997 at a time when the Mike Harris regime at Queen’s Park was force feeding Toronto a diet of amalgamation for

which the citizens of this city clearly had no appetite. Using the nascent technology of the Internet and email, World19 fostered a virtual community of online readers keen to keep up on developments happening in the west end of Toronto but who were not learning about these changes through the self-serving pamphleteering of local politicians, or by the happy news coverage of local community publications. World19 was originally titled, ‘Ward One Residents for Local Democracy — WORLD’.

“World19” came about following amalgamation when west end Ward 1 became Ward 19.

The group then baptized itself as “World19.” A couple of years later, bureaucrats stepped in and renumbered the city’s wards and what was Ward 19 became Ward 13. “Enough already,” the web meisters at world19 complained. “We’re sticking to ‘world19’.”

In short, the folks and online contributors who keep world19.com alive like to think small — and big. They can be just as concerned — and critical or supportive — about the direction

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Virtual community online

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Toronto is heading as they can be with, for example, the unofficial campaign underway to restore a heraldic symbol recently removed from the fire hall on Keele Street near Annette and Dupont streets.

Because of its reach into hundreds of local households, aspiring candidates for public office have sought, without luck, the endorsement of those who produce world19.com. Good for them. Partisanship would only diminish the

effectiveness of this e-savvy community bulletin board.

It’s been a year since voters went to the polls to elect their new city council. It won’t be long before those taxpayer-funded, glossy householders begin appearing on your doorstep extolling the magnificent job your local councillor has been doing — out of eyeshot — down at city hall.

Don’t be fooled by their spin. For a dose of reality, visit www.world19.com.