



Bachelorette Apartments in Parkdale: Evaluation of the Parkdale Pilot Project

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Executive Summary

Illegal bachelorette apartments have been a contentious issue in Toronto's Parkdale neighbourhood for over three decades. After a mediation process in 1999, the community agreed on a solution to deal with these units: the Parkdale Pilot Project, a program designed to regularize illegal bachelorette apartments in Parkdale.

This report evaluates the Parkdale Pilot Project and its impact on the affordable housing stock in Parkdale. The evaluation draws on qualitative data from 34 key informant interviews, as well as information from Statistics Canada and from the City of Toronto's Municipal Licenses and Standards Division. The report shows that the program was poorly implemented over the last eight years thanks to a lack of resources, which led to a high turnover within the pilot team. The project was also hampered by poor record keeping and monitoring of rental reductions and an inability to deal with noncompliant landlords and relocated tenants. Yet despite these shortcomings, The Parkdale Pilot Project undoubtedly improved the overall quality of many bachelorette apartments in Parkdale.

The outcome of this evaluation is important because, as the program has finally drawn to a close, many other neighbourhoods in the City of Toronto are contemplating similar projects to deal with illegal forms of rental housing such as rooming houses and secondary suites. The Parkdale Pilot Project, however, is not a one-size-fits-all program that can be easily applied across the city. The project was designed specifically for Parkdale by its residents due to the unique characteristics of the neighbourhood that are not replicated anywhere else in the city.

The community consultation out of which the Parkdale Pilot Project arose, however, is a process that can be implemented throughout the city. Through this form of discussion, communities can develop neighbourhood-specific projects to deal with local housing issues. Communities can also apply other lessons learned from the Parkdale experience to future housing initiatives, including the importance of: strong community and City support; a dedicated staffing team whose sole responsibility is the administration of the project; well-defined timelines for the project and its enforcement; and strategies to prevent displacement.

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Introducing the Parkdale Pilot Project

The legitimacy of bachelorette apartments in Toronto's Parkdale neighbourhood has been a contentious issue for several decades. In the 1970s, homeowners began to complain about the unattractive appearance of bachelorette buildings, the number of cars parked around these buildings, and the behaviour of the tenants who inhabited them. Meanwhile, tenant advocates and social service providers argued that this type of affordable housing was essential to the survival of its impoverished inhabitants. This conflict continued in the community for two decades, with the City of Toronto issuing several different reports and policies in an attempt to defuse and control the ongoing disagreement.

Despite the City's efforts, tensions between those who opposed and those who supported bachelorettes erupted at an October 1998 public meeting. It was after this meeting that the City organized a conflict mediation process to develop a strategy for dealing with these illegal units. The conflict mediation process continued for a year with involvement from tenants, landlords, homeowners, social service providers and the City.

On October 22, 1999, Toronto Community Council considered a report entitled, "Parkdale Conflict Resolution Process." This report informed City Council of the outcome of the mediation process and outlined an approach, decided by those involved in the mediation process, for regularizing small units that had existed for a number of years and for improving and enforcing standards for safe, high-quality housing in Parkdale. The report included 19 recommendations for Council to adopt. Council unanimously accepted all 19 recommendations, paving the way for the Parkdale Pilot Project.

This current issues paper examines the process and the impact of the Parkdale Pilot Project, uncovered through 34 open-ended interviews and the examination of City of Toronto documents, planning reports and minutes from Parkdale Housing Committee meetings held over a seven year period.

Context: Bachelorette Apartments and the Neighbourhood of Parkdale

Legal bachelorette apartments are independent, habitable rooms containing either food preparation facilities or sanitary facilities, but not both. They are essential pieces of Toronto's affordable housing stock, providing some of the city's least expensive private rental accommodations. Rooming houses, on the other hand, offer private rooms with shared access to food preparation facilities and sanitary facilities. Since 2000, there has been no legal distinction between these two housing types. In fact, City of Toronto By-law 438-86 defines a rooming house as a building that contains dwelling rooms designed or intended for use as living accommodations for more than three persons. This building may also contain one or more dwelling units (City of Toronto 2009).

Over the years, many landlords have converted legal rooming houses into illegal bachelorette apartments by adding either kitchens or bathrooms to one-room units without the appropriate building permits. Others have created illegal bachelorette units by constructing new apartments without the necessary permits.

Toronto's South Parkdale neighbourhood (bordered by Dufferin Street, Roncesvalles Avenue, the Gardiner Expressway and Queen Street) has a particularly high concentration of these units due to its supply of extremely large houses, its real-estate market, which until recently, has been relatively weak, and its high number of marginalized, low-income residents (Barna 2007, 5).

Current Housing Stock in Parkdale

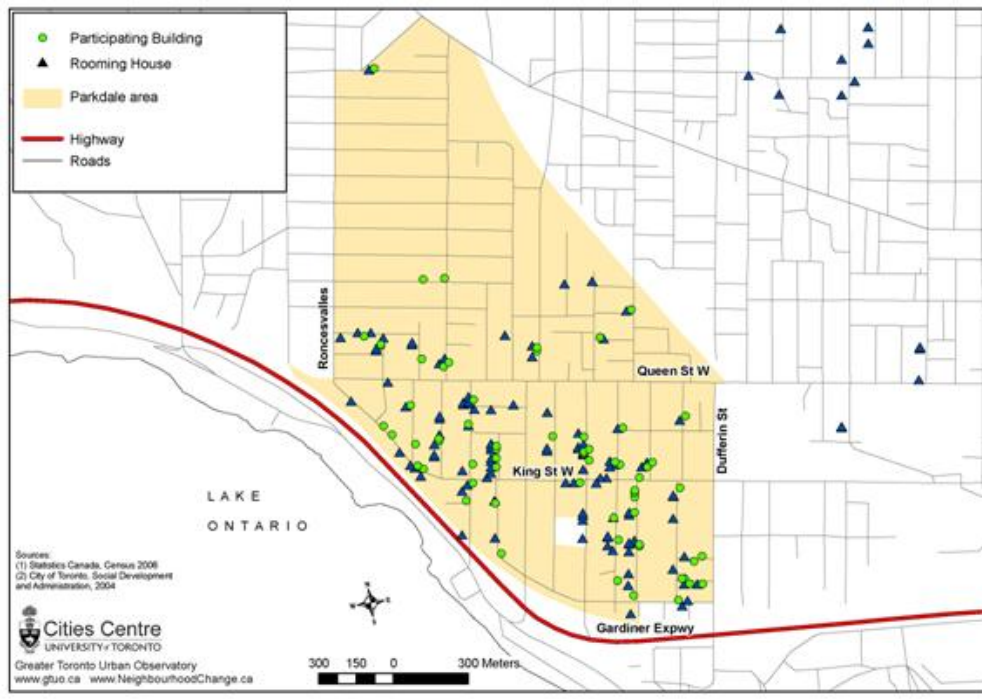
Parkdale is one of the most diverse communities in Toronto in terms of its residents and housing stock. Nearly every form of housing is available and the neighbourhood continues to be one of the most affordable in the former City of Toronto. The 2006 Census reports that 91% of all private dwellings in South Parkdale are rented, while only 9% are owned. Sixty-one percent of the dwelling types are apartment buildings with five or more storeys, and 31% are apartment buildings with fewer than five storeys. Meanwhile, only 8% of all private dwellings are single-detached, semi-detached, row houses, detached duplexes or other housing types (City of Toronto

2007). The average monthly rents in Parkdale, however, were \$766 per month, 81% of the CMA average (CMA average in 2006 = \$948)¹ (Statistics Canada 2006).

Low rents attracted low-income tenants. In 2006, the average individual income of persons 15 years and over in Parkdale was \$31,437, or 77% of the CMA average (CMA average in 2006 = \$40,704). The average household income for the same time period was \$54,951, or 63% of the CMA average (CMA average in 2006 = \$87,820). Parkdale's high concentration of rental units, low-income population, and small average household size, fuel the demand for rooming houses and bachelorette apartments (Statistics Canada 2006).

As of January 1, 2009, Municipal Licenses and Standards reported that 66 of the 381 licensed (or pending application) traditional rooming houses in the City of Toronto and all 64 of the licensed (or pending application) converted houses (former bachelorettes) in the City of Toronto are located in Ward 14 Parkdale-High Park (see Map 1).

Map 1: Location of Licensed Rooming Houses and Bachelorettes in Parkdale



Source: Richard Maaranen, Cities Centre, University of Toronto 2009.

¹ Monthly Rents in the Census include both private market rental and subsidized rental housing where the rents are geared to the occupants income.

Parkdale's Housing History

Historians have described Parkdale as the former village by the lake. Starting in the 1870s, wealthy families built large homes in the neighbourhood so that they could spend their weekends relaxing on the beaches of Lake Ontario. The village was close to downtown, but far enough away to make residents feel as if they had escaped the stress of the big city. However, the construction of the Gardiner Expressway in 1964 changed this idyllic 'village by the lake' by demolishing entire residential communities and cutting Parkdale off from the lake. Following this development, many affluent families left the neighbourhood for more stable communities (Barna 2007, 7). Many of the large mansions were "demolished to make way for the high-rises. Others were abandoned by owner occupiers and sold to absentee landlords or investment firms who divided them into smaller apartments, and some properties remained vacant as the neighbourhood went into economic decline" (Slater 2004, 309).

During the 1970s and 1980s, a different kind of resident moved in. With the shutdown of many psychiatric facilities in and around Parkdale, thousands of patients were discharged into the neighbourhood. Many chose to stay in the area to be close to outpatient services at local institutions, while others simply could not afford to leave. In fact, researchers estimate that by 1981, between 1000 and 1200 former patients lived in South Parkdale, "in a neighbourhood which by 1985 contained only 39 official 'group homes'. This meant that there were approximately 30 people for each group home"² (Slater 2004, 309). The changes brought on by deinstitutionalization, as well as many years of disinvestment in the neighbourhood, added to the ongoing devaluation of South Parkdale's housing stock. These factors also increased the number of low-income residents and the demand for rooming houses and bachelorette apartments in the area.

Not all researchers agree with this version of South Parkdale's history, however. Whitzman and Slater argue that the neighbourhood has always had a higher proportion of low-income and single individuals than the rest of the city, and that "the majority of Parkdale's houses were subdivided into flats or rooming houses by the late 1930s...and the neighbourhood had a

² According to Provincial law, a group home is a licensed dwelling in which three to ten unrelated residents live as a family under supposedly responsible supervision (Slater 2004).

concentration of small apartment buildings” (Whitzman and Slater 2006, 681). While the authors do not dispute the influence of urban renewal and deinstitutionalization, they claim that the historical myth of Parkdale as a stable, affluent suburb by the lake has acted as:

Justification for planning policies that seek to re-orient Parkdale’s population back to a healthy balance found in the lakeside village. Slater and Whitzman argue that this narrative positions the single-family middle class resident as natural and belonging and the low-income rooming house tenant as a temporary and misplaced aberration to the norm. They assert that the late 20th century ‘moral panic’ over rooming houses, bachelorettes and a concentration of social services was an echo of a sense of entitlement that has been manifested during Parkdale’s supposed golden age and therefore was an enduring approach to justifying particular exclusionary policies reliant on a concept of historical belonging (Barna 2007, 9).

Parkdale’s History of Legislation and Regulation

Regardless of the history of converted bachelorette units, they became illegal for many reasons. In some cases, the conversions were done without a building permit and did not meet fire and building code standards. Some of the fire code violations included the lack of fire exits, fire doors or hard-wired smoke detectors. The building code violations included inappropriate materials used in renovations, outdated electrical systems, a lack of lighting and railings. The units were also very small, often with only enough room for a dresser, bed, toilet, sink and counter top. Some of the larger homes had up to 15 units in one building, which was a violation of the zoning for those particular homes (Schaffter 2008 & MLS 2008).

The City of Toronto’s plan to solve the perceived problem first began in the 1970s. In November 1974, the City passed two by-laws following a series of rooming house fires the preceding winter that had claimed the lives of more than 20 tenants (Campsie 1994). The first, By-law 412-74, stipulated that any owner of non-owner-occupied houses with five or more units must obtain a license and pass yearly inspections. The city’s second piece of legislation, By-law 413-74, outlined the fire and maintenance standards with which rooming houses must comply.

By 1977, 582 of Toronto’s 1202 rooming houses had gone out of business due to the passing of the two by-laws. In order to avoid the expense of bringing their units up to code, “many owners of rooming houses had sold out to developers, decreased the number of tenants to fewer than

five, or rented their properties to single families. A few made the improvements, but paid for them by upgrading the entire building to create luxury units with higher rents” (Campsie 1994, 4).

Despite the sudden decrease in the number of rooming houses, the City passed By-law 67-78 in 1978, prohibiting rooming houses in South Parkdale (City of Toronto 1999). The by-law stipulated that no building could be altered or created if it contained six or more units. The by-law also stated that all new dwelling units’ in South Parkdale must meet an average minimum size of 700 square feet or 65 square metres (City of Toronto 1979). This legislation, along with the 1974 by-laws did not achieve its goal of putting an end to small, single-occupancy dwellings. Instead, legal conversions of rooming houses ceased and the number of illegal bachelorettes dramatically increased (Barna 2007, 18).

Several other reports and programs followed in an attempt to rid the neighbourhood of illegal bachelorette apartments. Many of these reports stated that the reconversion of illegal buildings to create a ‘balanced’ mix of units, including family-sized units, would resolve the bachelorette problem (Barna 2007, 11). In an attempt to create this ‘healthy’ mix, the City of Toronto passed an Interim-control By-law prohibiting the development of any residences in South Parkdale other than detached and semi-detached units on December 13, 1996. Many members of the community reacted with anger and frustration. Residents and social service providers— fearing the loss of affordable housing and closing of additional rooming houses and bachelorette units— were determined to fight further restrictions (Barna 2007).

However, following the passage of the Interim-control By-law, the City of Toronto Urban Development Services released the 1997 *Ward 2 Neighbourhood Revitalization Draft* introducing a completely new zoning system for the entire ward (except for two streets already dominated by high-rise apartment buildings). The new zoning would “limit the number of dwelling units or rooms to two per lot...Existing apartment buildings would continue to be permitted as legal uses...However, the proposed zoning by-law would not permit new apartment buildings as of the date of the passing of the by-law” (City of Toronto Urban Development Services 1997, 26). This plan met tremendous opposition from the community, so the City

revised the maximum units per property from two to three in the Parkdale Planning Initiatives Report, published in September 1998.

Competing Interests in Parkdale

Although the “content in both the 1997 and 1998 documents is largely consistent with the preceding 20 years of planning reports, these plans ignited a controversy distinct from that which had come before” (Barna 2007, 16). The 1998 report not only targeted the tenants of illegal bachelorette units, but also all of the renters in South Parkdale, a group comprising 91% of the area’s total population (City of Toronto 2007). Within a matter of weeks, different interest groups formed to fight the by-law. One such organization was the Bachelorette Owners Association, who joined Parkdale Legal Services, Bachelorette Tenants Association and the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty to form ‘the common front’. They handed out flyers to tenants warning them that the City was trying to shut down all rental housing (Schaffter 2009). They were met with opposition from the existing homeowners and new ‘gentrifiers’ who believed that the removal of rooming houses and illegal bachelorettes would also result in the removal of drug dealers, sex workers and an over-concentration of social services in the neighbourhood. Many homeowners, to this day, insist that there is an over-concentration of housing for marginalized people in Parkdale and that this concentration should be reduced and the units spread out throughout the City of Toronto. As could be expected, tensions rose between different interest groups, reaching a boiling point during a public meeting on October 7, 1998.

The Conflict Resolution Process

The City wanted a solution but could see that pleasing one group would likely alienate the other. It was its hope that an appropriate dispute resolution method would lead to a mediated agreement that could result in a long-lasting outcome (Schaffter 2008). The City called in a neutral mediator, John Schaffter, to arbitrate the housing dispute in Parkdale. Schaffter describes the scene as follows:

There were at least five distinct, organized, community stakeholder groups and five city departments, which had entrenched and conflicting positions about the bachelorettes. There was open hostility between community groups and universal suspicion and distrust of city departments. In conflict resolution terms, a hurting stalemate existed – no one was happy, but there was no way to move ahead without starting a massive conflict (Schaffter 2008).

Through a series of interviews with residents and service providers, Schaffter was able to uncover the different stakeholders and their perspectives on bachelorette buildings in Parkdale. Interest groups ranged from housing activists, who supported legalization without conditions, to conservative members of the residents' associations, who hoped to shut down the buildings. More moderate voices suggested allowing bachelorette buildings to remain, but insisting that landlords increase unit size, add amenities and that the City require licensing.

Through his interviews with stakeholders, Schaffter was able to recognize a small area of shared interests. All parties hoped to:

- Avoid de-housing;
- Come up with solutions that were clear, legal and implementable;
- Ensure housing quality, safety and standards;
- Ensure the availability of affordable housing.

Through 15 evening and weekend mediation sessions, the various groups reached a consensus. All parties felt that at least some of their interests had been met. Bachelorette owners agreed to comply with a regulatory framework of licensing and inspection. In return, they received site-specific rezoning as rooming houses, which increased their property value and lowered their property taxes. Community groups gave up on closing down the buildings in return for a transparent process where they could give input into the licensing of the buildings (Schaffter 2009).

Outcome of the Conflict Resolution Process

A zoning by-law change or an appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board would have produced simple, clear, win-lose outcomes. In contrast, the final mediation resolution included a strategy for dealing with the root causes of the problem: creating and maintaining high-quality housing options suitable for a wide range of households at affordable rent levels.

Through consensus, the mediation group produced a report entitled “Parkdale Conflict Resolution Process” on October 22, 1999, and presented the report to Toronto Community Council and then later to Toronto City Council. The report outlined 19 recommendations (appendix 1). One full day of deputations regarding this report were read at council (Schaffter 2009). Although one affordable housing activist group expressed concern with the mediation process, they felt that the outcome of the process was a step in the right direction:

This report does not represent the end of the road but instead a good starting point. We are optimistically giving our support and endorsement not so much for the report but the process that the report recommends: that is, a Parkdale specific group that can forge Parkdale specific solutions (Schaffter, Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Municipal Government 2008).

Two important recommendations of the report were the creation of the Parkdale Housing Committee, with broad community representation to consider housing issues in South Parkdale and provide input to the recommended review process of the legalization of each building, and the creation of a dedicated and funded City Pilot Project Group to deal with housing issues in Parkdale as a high priority. City Council unanimously adopted all 19 recommendations, initiating the Parkdale Pilot Project (see Table 1).

Table 1: Parkdale Pilot Project Objective

WHAT
Retain housing
Improve building and housing safety and standards
Community improvement
HOW
Regularize existing bachelorettes and illegal rooming houses
License regularized bachelorettes and rooming houses
Ensure ongoing compliance with standards
WHEN
NOW!!!

(City of Toronto 1999)

The Parkdale Pilot Project

The overall objective of the Parkdale Pilot Project was to raise and then maintain the quality of housing across Parkdale through the introduction of appropriate standards, licensing and continued inspections. The implementers of this approach attempted to preserve the existing range of units and make them safe, while ensuring that future building operation and maintenance would be subject to community input. Once those parties involved in the mediation process had determined how they would like to see the project implemented, the City of Toronto developed a Pilot Project Group. The 1999 Conflict Resolution Final Report included a mandate to which the Pilot Project Group would adhere. The mandate was as follows:

- Make recommendations to Council about detailed strategies and costs for dealing with illegal rooming houses in Parkdale;
- Develop an implementation program for regularization of bachelorette units in accordance with Council's direction;
- Advertise the program in the community;
- Approach all the known owners of illegal buildings and inform them of the opportunity for regularization and the consequences if they do not come into compliance;
- Receive and conduct an assessment of applications for regularization using information and documents available from the City records and other sources including the Housing Committee;
- Inspect properties to determine compliance with the regularization guidelines and with Building Code, Fire Code, Housing Standards, Health and any other applicable standards
- Determine what steps must be taken by an owner in order for the property to be regularized;
- Establish a time frame for compliance;
- License properties that have met regularization requirements;
- Ensure that a housing and relocation service will be available for any tenants who may be displaced;
- Co-ordinate legal enforcement of standards where necessary.

The same report requested that the team include City staff whose only function would be to complete this project. The team was to include one full-time director, one research clerk, one clerical staff member, one full-time tenant-landlord liaison staff member (if the need for tenant relocation arose later in the process), one full-time buildings inspector and one full-time housing standards inspector. When necessary, this group would have priority access to staff within the

City specializing in housing and tenant relocation, licensing, legal enforcement and fire inspection. The proposed budget for this small group was \$410,000 per annum for two years.

The first step of the pilot project team was to identify all bachelorette properties and invite the property owners to participate in the pilot project. Once on-side, a property owner would submit an application for regularization to the Parkdale Pilot Project Group. Given as access to Legal Services, Fire, Buildings and Municipal Licensing and Standards, the Pilot Project Group was able to develop a streamlined application process. The process was as follows:

- The application is received with eight sets of architectural drawings;
- The assigned Team Inspector checks the property for plan accuracy and Housing Standards compliance;
- The Examiner reviews the application and confirms that it complies with Parkdale Pilot Project criteria, and Building Code and zoning;
- The Examiner forwards two sets of plans to the Fire Department for review for compliance with Fire Code and retrofit requirements in consultation with the Examiner;
- The Director of the Parkdale Pilot Project, Fire and Housing Inspectors, the Plans Examiner and the owner of the property meet to discuss the work, if any, required to bring the property into compliance with Building Code, Fire Code and Housing Standards;
- The Examiner prepares a summary of recommendations for the Housing Committee meeting;
- Members of the Parkdale Housing Committee discuss the property;
- A notice of community meeting is sent to property owners within a 120-metre radius of the property;
- A meeting is held to obtain community input;
- Notice of a statutory meeting is sent to owners within a 120-metre radius of the property;
- The owner posts notice of the statutory meeting on the property;
- A report and draft by-laws are presented at the statutory meeting held by Community Council;
- Community Council's recommendations are forwarded to City Council and if approved, by-laws are passed;
- Notice of passing is sent out.

Source: Harris Ramrup, City of Toronto 2009.

Components of the Parkdale Pilot Project

The report adopted by Council in 1999 included several different components that needed to be included in the Parkdale Pilot Project. This section of the evaluation reviews each of those original goals and how they were expected to be fulfilled.

Development Standards Criteria

Since the legislative history of Parkdale was so varied, the Pilot Project Group developed different approaches to evaluate illegal bachelorette units built before 1978 and those built after 1978. The reason for this distinction is that before 1978, the construction of rooming houses was legal. Thus, units built before this time are assumed to have been previously approved. Units built after 1978 could not be approved in the same way. Table 2 and 3 display the development standards for the two categories.

Table 2: Development Standards – Units Built Before 1978

Property owners must demonstrate that the units legally existed in 1978 using City authorized plans and/or permits.

Any amenities (i.e. a laundry room, tenant storage, common space) that appeared on the original plan must be replaced.

Any units that were not on the original plan must be made safe or be removed.

Any units that were not on the original plans must conform to the Building Code.

There may be fewer units than on the original plans but there may be no more than four additional units.

Each building must have an on-site superintendent.

The original parking requirements must be met and additional spaces must be provided, if appropriate, for the new units (for pre-1978 rooming houses the parking standard was zero).

The building must be licensed.

(City of Toronto 1999)

Table 3: Development Standards – Units Built After 1978

These buildings will be eligible for rezoning provided that the owner can prove that the conversion date was between 1978 and 1996.

The average unit size must be 20 square metres (220 square feet)

To ensure a mix of unit sizes within a building, a maximum of 20% of the units can be less than 20 square metres or more than 46 square metres (500 square feet).

The minimum unit size is 19 square metres (200 square feet).

If there are more than six units in the building, there must be a minimum of one square metre (ten square feet) of indoor amenity space and one square metre of outdoor amenity space for each unit, with a maximum of ten square metres of interior and 20 square metres of exterior amenity space.

The buildings must meet all appropriate Building and Fire codes.

Relaxed parking standards must be met.³

Street parking permits for the building must be limited to the number of complete spaces that span the width of the property.

The building must be licensed.

(City of Toronto 1999)

Site Specific By-law

Once each building had qualified as a pre- or post- 1978 building and the owner had demonstrated an ability to meet the appropriate standards, the Pilot Project Group would prepare a report recommending the adoption of a by-law. The by-law would identify the approved buildings on a site-by-site basis. As required by law, these buildings would then be subject to the notification and approval processes currently followed by Council, including a public meeting. If there were an appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board, the City would support the rezoning.

Licensing

The bachelorettes would be licensed under the provisions of the City of Toronto's Rooming House By-law. According to this by-law, the units had to meet applicable law under the *Fire*

³ Since each property received site specific rezoning, the parking requirements were often reduced depending on the size of the property. Many bachelorette tenants do not own vehicles, therefore it was not necessary for the landlord to offer one parking spot for each unit.

Marshal Act, Fire Code, Building Code 1992, the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* and any other regulations made under these acts. The units would be inspected on an annual basis to ensure compliance with the law. Each license up for renewal would be presented at the Committee of Adjustment where community members and tenants could voice any concerns that they may have with the building or their opinions as to why the license should not be renewed.

Along with licensing came several responsibilities for the owner. These responsibilities included:

- Designating an agent to contact in cases of emergency or with respect to the operation of the rooming house.
- Posting conspicuously and maintaining posted the following in the entrance to the rooming house:
 - The licence;
 - The name, address and phone number of the owner or the owner's agent;
 - The fire safety plan;
 - Any licence condition that is applicable to the operation of the rooming house;
- Allowing inspections as described in the by-law;
- Allowing access for the service of the notices to tenants that are required by this by-law;
- Obtaining and posting a fire safety plan in a conspicuous place in the rooming house;
- Maintaining the rooming house premises in accordance with any site and floor plans filed with the application;
- Giving the Licensing Commissioner written notice of any of the changes set out in § 285-20 of the by-law
- Giving the Licensing Commissioner written notice of any change of ownership.

(City of Toronto 2009)

Taxation

As negotiated through the mediation process, licensed bachelorette apartments would be taxed at a residential rate. The lower tax rate provided a further incentive for property owners to come forward and retain these buildings as a form of affordable housing. Rooming houses and bachelorettes had been taxed differently as they were in different property classes. Rooming houses had historically been assessed and valued as being similar to other residential houses and were therefore taxed at the lower residential rate. They were assessed based on the market or sale value and not on the income generated.

In contrast, bachelorettes were considered to be fully self-contained apartment units from an assessment policy point of view. As a result, assessors valued them as income-producing properties. If there were more than six units in a building, they were included in the multi-residential class. Any property with six units or less was included in the residential class. The lower tax rate would decrease landlords' property taxes and therefore tenants' rents. Revenue Services would automatically send letters to all bachelorette tenants notifying them of the reduction.

Enforcement

The idea was that any building that did not participate in the Pilot Project would face enforcement once the Pilot Project was completed. This was one component of the Parkdale Pilot Project that many neighbours insisted on since they felt strongly that there needed to be some repercussions for operating outside the law.

Minimizing the Impact of Tenant Disruption and Resettlement

As part of the mediation process a number of groups stressed that the normalization and enforcement processes should not lead to 'de-housing' of existing tenants. The intent was that the necessary work to achieve compliance could be completed during the normal turnover of units.

Ideally, units would be vacated through natural turnover, and any displaced tenants would be resettled within the same building. This assumption was to be carefully monitored. If the legalization of a bachelorette building resulted in the need to resettle tenants, the landlord had certain obligations under the *Tenant Protection Act*. For example, if landlords did need to empty the unit, they had to provide 120 days notice and the current tenant had the first right to return to the unit.

Affordability

As each unit was evaluated for legalization, the Parkdale Pilot Project would consider the current rents, the costs required to meet legal standards, and the potential impacts on rent. The notion of reduced taxes was thought to result in rent reductions in some cases, a process that should happen automatically through Revenue Services.

Landlords were encouraged to apply for the City of Toronto's Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP) which provides federal funding for housing repairs to assist owners with the costs of bringing their buildings up to code. Offering forgivable loans to landlords as long as rents remained affordable, the program would allow building owners to renovate without increasing rents (City of Toronto 2009).

Participating Buildings

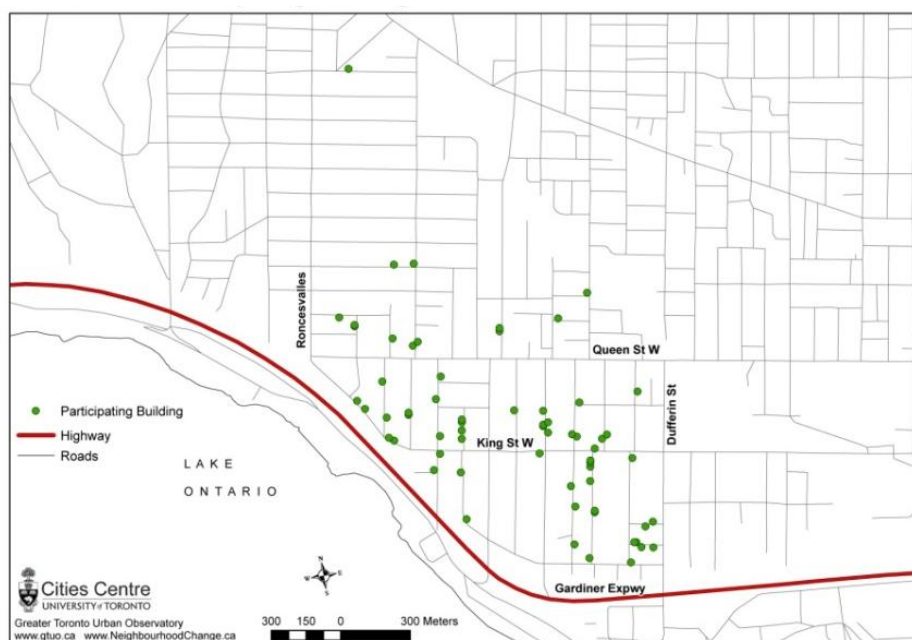
While the Parkdale Pilot Project initially identified 200 properties containing bachelorettes, only about 110 properties were eligible for the program. The other buildings were already licensed, contained units that were too large or, had fewer than four units.⁴ Of the eligible 110 properties, 80 agreed to apply to the Parkdale Pilot Project. Sixty-six have already completed the process and 14 are expected to finish by the spring of 2009 (see Map 2 and Appendix 2). The City stopped accepting applications on January 1, 2009 and the program ended officially on January

⁴ The development standards as set out by the Parkdale Pilot Project required an average unit size of 20 square metres (220 square feet). No more than 20% of the units could be more than 46 square metres (500 square feet).

20, 2009. The remaining 30 buildings, should they still exist as illegal bachelorettes, will face legal repercussions in the coming months. How the City will carry out this portion of the Parkdale Pilot Project, without de-housing any tenants, is yet to be determined.

Of the 66 properties that have gone through the project to date, 14 have been sold to new owners. However, only four properties have been converted into non-rooming houses, which mean that the other ten properties that changed hands were maintained as licensed rooming houses (Councillor Perks office 2008 and MLS 2008).

Map 2 Location of Participating Parkdale Pilot Project Buildings



Source: Richard Maaranen, Cities Centre, University of Toronto 2009.

Evaluating the Parkdale Pilot Project

The stakeholders present through the mediation process agreed that an evaluation of the Parkdale Pilot Project should be completed after the first six months and then after the first year. No such evaluation ever took place. Now, nearly ten years after the project's launch, the current evaluation will serve as a report card on how well the City of Toronto implemented the initial agreement. The evaluation will review each component of the project, its impact on the housing stock and its applicability to other neighbourhoods throughout the city of Toronto.

Methods

In order to evaluate the Parkdale Pilot Project, the evaluator interviewed 34 key informants. Of these participants, ten are City of Toronto staff that are or have been involved in the Parkdale Pilot Project; five are service providers who work with low-income tenants in Parkdale; ten are tenants who live in buildings that participated in the Parkdale Pilot Project; three are landlords who have participated in the Parkdale Pilot Project; and six are residents who are either members of the Parkdale Residents' Association, members of the Roncesvalles-Macdonnell Residents' Association, or members of the Parkdale Housing Committee.

Evolution of the Pilot 2000-2009

The original Parkdale Pilot Project team included one Director (Sylvia Watson) an Administrative Assistant (Norma Deeton) a Plans Examiner (Harris Ramrup) and two Inspectors (Humberto Toledo and Leigh Adams). The team's first step was to identify all illegal bachelorettes in Parkdale by reviewing the existing files at City Hall and walking through the neighbourhood to identify any multi-residential buildings by counting the number of mailboxes and bells. The Pilot Project team sent letters to 110 property owners to notify them of the opportunity to bring their buildings into compliance. As well, the Parkdale Pilot Project team set up many face-to-face meetings with property owners to explain the process. Many eligible landlords were already aware of the project since they had participated in the mediation process.

The project began with a lot of energy and enthusiasm on both the part of the City and the community. Nineteen applications were processed during the first two years of the project (see appendix 3). However, over the years, the Pilot Project went through many changes. In 2002, Sylvia Watson left the Parkdale Pilot Project. The Director position was passed to different people; nobody stayed more than six months. Eventually, all the seconded examiners and inspectors were returned to their original posts, leaving one staff member, Harris Ramrup, to oversee the work on his own. In 2005, Ramrup decided that he could no longer act as the coordinator for the project and returned to his position in the Buildings department.

Meanwhile, the City provided little support to the group. The original budget of \$410,000 for the first two years was halved before the Parkdale Pilot Project even began. Staff salaries were paid for by their seconded departments and no extra money was given for advertisements or meeting space. As a result, some preliminary meetings with landlords had to be held in coffee shops in the area (Colautti 2009).

In addition to the lack of a budget, the record keeping was inadequate. The Ward Councillor changed three times throughout the Parkdale Pilot Project and the records that each councillor gathered throughout his or her term were considered private and therefore were not passed on to the next councillor (Perks 2009). In addition, there was so much staff turnover at City Hall due to amalgamation that records were not kept in one place. Many reports were lost and the City, on occasion, asked the Parkdale Housing Committee, a well-organized volunteer group, for copies of certain City documents (Voogd 2008).

With no dedicated staff members, no budget and poor records, the Parkdale Pilot Project lay dormant for a couple of years. When a new councillor, Gord Perks, was elected in 2006 the Pilot Project was resurrected. Hoping to complete the few outstanding applications, Councillor Perks brought new city staff into the project, but again, there was high turnover with very little transfer of knowledge between parties.⁵ Many members of the community had lost faith in the program, since many elements had been neglected, such as enforcement and measures to prevent de-housing of tenants (Perks 2009).

The Councillor, his staff, the Parkdale Housing Committee and the City of Toronto employees involved in the project had to work hard to re-engage the community. Another letter was sent out to all bachelorette owners, offering one last chance to apply for legalization. The City received no new applications. However, there were still 14 outstanding applications, some submitted as far back as 2002, from landlords who had yet to go through the Project. Some were still on the books because they were not as straightforward as earlier ones. Others required major renovations and were highly controversial. An example of the latter situation is 1510 King

⁵ Even during the six months of research leading up to this report, the evaluator has seen several staff changes in MLS and the Planning Department.

Street West. The owner of this property applied for regularization under the Parkdale Pilot Project and was approved by the Parkdale Housing Committee. However, concerned residents did not agree with the number and size of the units approved and appealed the decision to the Ontario Municipal Board, which later approved the application (City of Toronto Planner 2009).

Today one city planner, in addition to his regular workload, is acting as the coordinator and is trying to recreate the earlier model in which staff were dedicated to the project and were able to streamline the process for the applicants. Municipal Licensing and Standards is heavily involved in the project as is the Parkdale Housing Committee.

Did the Parkdale Pilot Project fulfil its mandate?

The Parkdale Pilot Project fulfilled parts of its mandate, but not all. It did develop an implementation program for regularizing bachelorette units. It advertised the project in the community through open houses, a website, and many letters sent out to potential applicants. As time went on, however, new residents in the community were unaware of the Parkdale Pilot Project, the website was dismantled, and fewer meetings took place. As one Parkdale Residents' Association (PRA) member says, "I moved to Parkdale five years ago and I did not know about the Parkdale Pilot Project until I joined the PRA" (2009).

At the beginning of the process, the initial Parkdale Pilot Project team worked hard to bring as many property owners into the program as possible and held many face-to-face meetings with landlords to explain the process and the benefits of participation. The Pilot Project team carried out inspections for Building Code, Fire Code, Housing Standards, Health and other standards for each building. As one participating landlord, Murray Lowe, mentions, "These were not your average inspection. Every last thing was looked at and evaluated from fire escapes to loose screws on the wall" (Lowe 2009).

As the project progressed, it became clear that the initial two years allotted for the regularization of Parkdale's bachelorettes were not enough. Although some properties were easy to regularize and landlords received a license within six to eight months after making an application, other

properties took several years to process, due to the complexity of the work needed to bring them up to code (Ramrup 2009).

Also, it proved increasingly difficult to get landlords to participate. Many noncompliant property owners knew that the City was not yet penalizing those who did not comply, so they were quite happy to continue operating outside the law. Several interviewees suggest that if the Parkdale Pilot Project had maintained its original timeline and been more aggressive in pursuing those who did not comply, it could have regularized more properties, because illegal landlords would have seen examples of the consequences of not complying and would have been more inclined to participate. (Perks 2009).

The following section will evaluate each component of the Parkdale Pilot Project as set out in the 1999 document that was approved by City Council.

Table 4: Evaluation of the Parkdale Pilot Project

Components	Evaluation
Site-specific by-laws	Succeeded at developing site-specific by-laws for each participating property
Licensing	Succeeded at licensing the majority of properties that have participated in the project although there are still several landlords that need to apply for a license
Taxation	Failed to monitor rental reductions due to a reduction in property taxes
Enforcement	Failed to enforce any noncompliant landlords or develop an enforcement strategy
De-housing	Succeeded at limiting the impact of tenant disruption and resettlement even though the project failed to develop a tenant relocation strategy
Affordability	Succeeded in maintaining affordable rents in bachelorette apartments in Parkdale

Site-specific by-laws

The Parkdale Pilot Project did develop site-specific by-laws for each participating property (see appendix 2). The site-specific zoning included the number of units and the size of units that had

been agreed upon by the Parkdale Housing Committee. The property and its drawings would be presented and the Parkdale Housing Committee would determine whether or not it supported the application. If it did, it sent a letter to Council indicating its support. In some instances, items such as landscaping and physical upkeep were added to the by-law. In other instances, the Parkdale Housing Committee provided conditional support if there were items that still needed to be addressed (Ramrup 2009).

The majority of the properties that applied to the Parkdale Pilot Project received site-specific zoning. Nevertheless, in some instances, properties brought up to Building and Fire Code did not receive a change to their site-specific zoning because they did not meet the development standards of the project (see Table 2 and 3). The Parkdale Housing Committee and Council can reject any application if it does not meet the standards set out by the Parkdale Pilot Project.

Licensing

In accordance with the rooming house by-law, all licensed rooming houses must clearly post the rooming house licence, the fire safety plan and a contact number for the landlord or the superintendent in case of emergency. According to the tenants and landlords interviewed, each property either has a superintendent on-site or one who lives near the property. In addition, the fire plan and emergency contact information is visible in all buildings. Despite these requirements, some tenants are unsure if there is a copy of the rooming house license visibly posted (tenant and landlord interviews).

No property owners have refused entrance to MLS staff to inspect the property during annual inspections and notice has been given to the tenants when such inspections occur (tenant and landlord interviews).

The licensing of bachelorette apartments in Parkdale has undoubtedly improved the health and safety standards of these units. Through licensing, each property must meet Building and Fire Codes on an annual basis. Property owners are fined for each infraction that the inspectors observe at the time of inspection. In addition, through licensing, neighbours can call MLS at any

time and request an inspection of the property. They can also make a deputation when the license is up for renewal.

Not all properties whose landlords applied through the Parkdale Pilot Project have received a license. Some applications have been denied. Other property owners still need to apply for their licenses. At the beginning of the project, property owners did not get site-specific zoning until they had applied for licenses. However, since changes to the project's administration process in 2005, it has been the other way around: many owners do not apply for licenses even though they have received the site-specific zoning (Ramrup 2009). To date, there are seven property owners who have received site-specific zoning but still need to apply for a license. According to Municipal Licenses and Standards (MLS), of the 66 Parkdale Pilot Project properties processed to date:

Table 5: Rooming House License Status

One rooming house application has been refused
Three properties do not require a rooming house license (due to the number of units or unit sizes)
Two rooming house applications have been submitted and are pending
Seven properties that received site specific zoning have not yet applied for a license

(MLS, 2009)

Taxation

Although the Parkdale Pilot Project was not responsible for adjusting the property owners' taxes, it did anticipate a reduction in tenant rents. In this regard, the Parkdale Pilot Project failed. The participating buildings are now taxed at a lower rate, but the City has not followed up to find out if these savings were ever passed on to the tenants. Tenants of the landlords who participated in the early phase of the project did receive letters from Revenue Services explaining that their landlords had received a reduction in property taxes and should be reducing rental rates. However, these letters were not distributed to the majority of the participating buildings. Appendix 3 identifies those properties that did receive a tax reduction which should have resulted in cheaper rents. Unfortunately, the City failed to monitor this aspect of the program. A

Planner with the City says he is not sure why the City stopped sending letters; “Sometimes when someone moves on, there is no transfer of knowledge. That is why it is so important to have someone that just runs the show, a coordinator. There needs to be a coordinator that keeps on everyone all the time and knows everything that is going on. It just needs to be one person” (City of Toronto Planner 2009). The City of Toronto is now taking stricter precautions to ensure these letters are sent out to the remaining properties still to go through the project.

Enforcement

The Parkdale Pilot Project never developed an enforcement strategy to deal with landlords who did not take part in the project. In this regard, the Parkdale Pilot Project failed. The Parkdale Pilot Project was expected to last only two years. At the end of that time, all owners of properties that were not in compliance were to face some sort of fine. As the project end date was pushed further into the future, the enforcement component was as well.

In 2005, the Parkdale Housing Committee wanted to complete the project and begin enforcement. MLS even developed an enforcement strategy. Over several months, the committee decided to enforce by injunction and prosecution. The owners of one or two problem properties would receive a court order to comply with the various codes (injunction) while the majority of the properties would be issued a ticket with a maximum fine of \$500 to \$600. For subsequent prosecutions, fines could be as high as \$25,000 to \$60,000. Final letters were to be sent out in the spring of 2005 and enforcement was to start July 1, 2005 (Parkdale Housing Committee Minutes 2000-2008). Due to staffing changes at the City of Toronto, however, enforcement never took place, nor did the Pilot Project end. MLS is currently working on an enforcement strategy and hopes to begin prosecution for owners of illegal buildings in spring 2009 (MLS 2008).

The tight housing market in Parkdale was part of the reason for the lack of enforcement since there were no options for re-housing tenants. Had the City developed an enforcement strategy in 2005, or earlier, there would have had to be a plan in place to provide housing for all tenants who were at risk of being de-housed. Otherwise, where would these tenants have gone? Woodgreen

and Shelter Housing and Support might have provided short-term emergency accommodations, but neither group could provide permanent housing.

Minimizing impact of tenant disruption and resettlement

Although the Parkdale Pilot Project failed to develop a tenant relocation strategy, it did succeed in limiting the impact of tenant disruption and resettlement. Of the 66 properties (731 units) that were legalized through the project, only three properties have had to reduce the number of units (Parkdale Housing Committee Minutes 2000-2008). To date, only one property has incurred de-housing, since two of the units in the property were too small and needed to be converted into one unit. This property is still under review at Council. In another instance, the unit was vacant and tenants did not have to be de-housed. In a further case, two units needed to be merged into one and the two existing tenants chose to be roommates.

One element of the Parkdale Pilot Project that was never completed was the development of a tenant relocation strategy. Fortunately, the project has not yet required one. But with the remaining noncompliant property owners expected to face enforcement in the next few months, it is crucial that displaced dwellers have a place to go. The Councillor's office is working with Woodgreen and Shelter Housing and Support to develop such a strategy. This component, however, should have been developed years ago.

Affordability

The Parkdale Pilot Project did succeed in maintaining affordable rents in bachelorette apartments in Parkdale. According to the landlords and tenants who were interviewed for this evaluation, the rents charged for these units have changed very little, if at all, over the last ten years. The majority now range from \$425 to \$700, all falling below the average rent for the dissemination area, \$766 per month (see map 3). Many landlords and tenants stated that their rents have not changed much in the last eight years. It is difficult to know, however, if this was the case for all participating buildings, since the City of Toronto does not keep track of the rents of licensed rooming houses. This is another flaw in the system, as there is no mechanism in place to ensure that the rents remain affordable. Landlords who did use RRAP (Residential Rehabilitation Adaptation Program) funding to upgrade their buildings are required to maintain affordable rents

for the duration of the forgivable loan. If not, the loan becomes payable. However, once the loan period has ended, there is no system in place to ensure that these units remain affordable or even more important, remain rooming houses.

Map 3 Locations of Participating Buildings in the Parkdale Area and Average Monthly Rents of Dissemination Areas in 2006



Source: Richard Maaranen, Cities Centre, University of Toronto 2009.

Evaluation

The Parkdale Pilot Project failed at completing an evaluation. As mentioned above, an evaluation was to take place after the first six months and after the first year of the Pilot Project. The City was to carry out the evaluation using municipal money. Instead, the Pilot Project was neglected for several years. The Parkdale Housing Committee, a volunteer group, organized this evaluation, in cooperation with the Councillor’s Office, in 2008. Due to the group’s lack of resources, they had to enlist the time and effort of a planning student to conduct the evaluation.

Had an evaluation happened earlier, the City would have been more aware of the program's limitations and the areas that needed improvement. What's more, perhaps more properties could have participated or more options for improving the affordable housing stock in Parkdale could have been developed.

Other Shortcomings

The City neglected the Parkdale Pilot Project in many regards. The City Planner who has been working on the program for the last three years, states that "The Parkdale Pilot Project had a checkered history with many ups and downs. The really unfortunate part is that it chose a model, right or wrong, but didn't follow through with it. It started to languish and people started to question it, and it caved" (City of Toronto Planner 2009). The original model included a dedicated team that was staffed with the appropriate expertise and commitment to assist landlords in bringing these units up to code. The consultation available to these landlords was unlike any other project available at the City. Bruce Voogd, chair of the Parkdale Housing Committee, says, "We bent over backwards to get property owners to apply and get on board" (Voogd 2008).

According to Harris Ramrup, the coordinator of the project after the director position was dissolved, says the type of consultancy that was available with the original staffed team is not available to landlords today.

The assurance that the work ie. repairs, they will do will result in a licensed building is not there today. The clarity, commitment and assurance is not there right now. At the beginning, it was. That is why today, not too many licenses have been issued. Owners are not convinced anymore (Ramrup 2009).

The Parkdale Pilot Project became 'the orphan child of the City' says Voogd. After Sylvia Watson, the original director of the project, left in 2002, it seemed as though the City no longer cared about the project. After 2002, "No one took ownership of the project and it fell in the lap of MLS and was passed on to different staff persons, with no budget...The City really let us down. On paper, the program had great potential, but here we are in 2008, almost 2009, and we are still not done" (Voogd 2008).

Impact on affordable housing stock

Although the program had its shortcomings, the Parkdale Pilot Project has had a positive impact on the quantity and quality of affordable housing in Parkdale. To date, the Parkdale Pilot Project has brought 733 units into the legal housing stock. Although these units had existed for some time, they were never legitimate. In terms of quantity, the Parkdale Pilot Project has maintained the current stock and may have reduced the number of de-conversions, although the City does not track de-conversions in Parkdale. One social service provider states that it was the original intent of the Parkdale Pilot Project to monitor de-conversions in Parkdale, but due to severe resource cuts and very little staff continuity during the eight years of the project, this never happened (Anonymous 2009).

As well, some residents argue “There are fewer units of affordable housing in Parkdale today than there were ten years ago. There are also fewer rooming houses, but it’s hard to say if the PPP was the reason, although, as regularization happened, it led to some units being removed due to minimum standards” (Willis 2009). Other property owners of illegal bachelorettes may have decided to de-convert their buildings instead of going through the Parkdale Pilot Project. Thus, we do not know how many units were lost and how many people were de-housed. Each one of these de-conversions is a loss of affordable housing. Since the Pilot Project began, only four properties have changed their use and are no longer licensed rooming houses. Landlords are more inclined to invest in their properties and continue to rent out the units at affordable rents. The site-specific zoning and the efforts of the landlords to bring the buildings up to code have also contributed to the maintenance in stock.

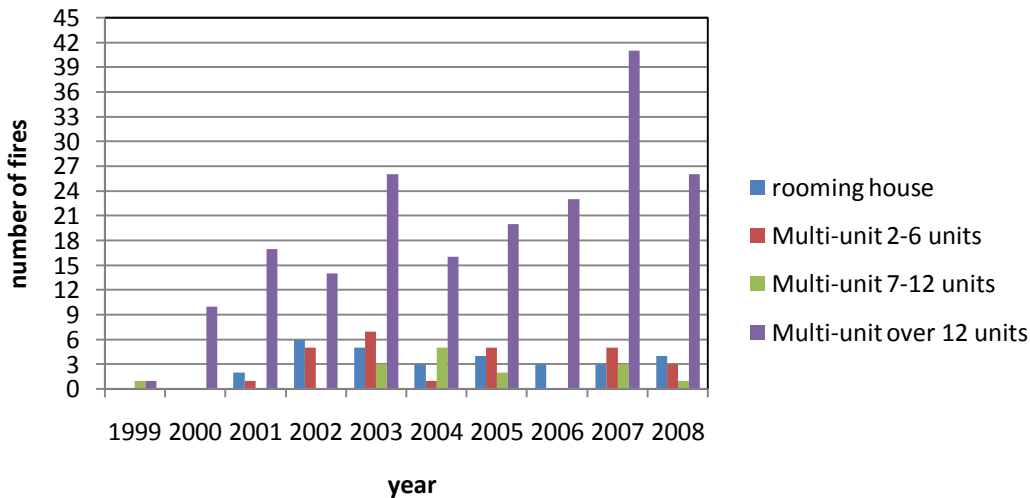
In terms of quality, there is no doubt that the units have improved. The buildings have to meet rigorous inspections and must comply with building and fire requirements each year. Many of these requirements for licensed rooming houses are more stringent than those for single family homes and therefore, much safer. For example, licensed rooming houses must meet the evolving fire code each year, whereas single family homes only need to comply with fire code to qualify for refinancing or resale (Kotelnikov 2009).

In addition, the maintenance and general upkeep of these units have increased. Victor Willis, Director of PARC, says, “The culture of expectations has slowly changed. This has led to tenants and tenant advocates demanding better care of the dwellings...The PPP has improved the expectations of tenants for the quality of available units” (Willis 2009).

According to the fire statistics for Parkdale (see figure 1), the number of fires in multi-unit apartments with two to six units and seven to 12 units has decreased and the number of fires in rooming houses has also been on the decline. Fires in buildings with more than 12 units, however, are on the rise.⁶

“As standards and quality have increased, so has the visibility of these building forms for students and local service workers” (Willis 2009). By maintaining the housing stock and providing quality housing, fewer people are driven to substandard housing and more people are given the opportunity to live better lives.

Figure 1 Number of Residential Fires in Parkdale 1999-2008



Source: Toronto Fire Services, 2009

⁶ Many interviewees stated that the living conditions within the high-rise apartments in South Parkdale were much worse than any rooming house. Absentee landlords and ongoing inspections from the City are two possible explanations

Generally the Parkdale Pilot Project led to improved size and standards and meant that if someone wanted to create a unit that did not meet the standard there was now a benchmark to conform to. I also believe that there was a net loss of affordable units due to the PPP but the overall improvement to the process and the regularization of units is an acceptable trade-off (Willis 2009).

Is it better to have fewer affordable units of higher quality or more affordable units of poorer quality? And how do you draw a balance? This is a contested debate among affordable housing providers. In the case of the Parkdale Pilot Project, for now, the overall quality of housing has improved while minimally affecting the supply. However, as each one of these apartments is renovated, there is no mechanism in place to ensure that it remains affordable. Because these apartments are privately owned, the landlord has the option to convert the property to a non-affordable use at any time. As the demand for city living rises and so do rents, there is an incentive for landlords to upgrade these affordable units into luxury housing. For the properties that were the subject of site-specific zoning, there is nothing to prevent landlords from renovating those units to create luxury bachelor suites. Over time, property owners may add high-end finishes to their units and begin charging much higher rents, making the units no longer affordable to the type of tenant that previously sought out this housing.

Serving Different Interests

As identified above, many stakeholders had different interests in the Parkdale Pilot Project. As the Parkdale Pilot Project evolved, the program became increasingly contentious in the neighbourhood. Some residents saw it as a program that benefitted landlords only. Others did not see any change to the quality of housing and many residents were very disappointed in the lack of enforcement and monitoring of rent reductions that were to be carried out as part of the reduction in property taxes. But, after speaking with many different key informants, this evaluator feels that the Parkdale Pilot Project has positively served many different interest groups.

Tenants

Prior to the Project's initiation, tenants were concerned with the health and safety of their units and did not want to be de-housed or to face rent increases. Some tenants stated that they were in constant fear of losing their homes due to the uncertainty of the property. The Parkdale Pilot Project successfully served these people's interests. According to MLS and The Toronto Fire Department, the health and safety of converted bachelorette units have improved tremendously. One reason is that now that the units are licensed, inspectors can inspect the homes whenever there is a complaint, something they were not able to do prior to licensing. As well, annual inspections ensure that any health or safety hazards have been detected and avoided.

The Parkdale Pilot Project also met the needs of the tenants by causing little to no de-housing. Many participating property owners worked on only one unit at a time, avoiding the mass displacement that might accompany building-wide renovations. As individual units were renovated, tenants were given the option to move to vacant, newly renovated units in exchange for the same rent. Once their original units were completed, inhabitants had the option to return to their units. Of the interviewed tenants who have lived in these buildings both before and after the Parkdale Pilot Project, all agree that the quality of their homes has improved. Although the Parkdale Pilot Project was not able to counter the effects of gentrification and the de-conversions of bachelorette units, it was able to improve the conditions of 733 units in Parkdale.

Landlords

The Parkdale Pilot Project has served the interests of all landlords who participated in the project. Many were members of the Bachelorette Owners Association and were heavily involved in the mediation process leading up to the Parkdale Pilot Project. These landlords were aware that if they did not participate in the mediation process, they would have no input in the outcome of their buildings. One landlord mentioned that, "If no agreement was reached and the City decided to prosecute us, we would have to take our chances in court" (Van Eenoooghe 2009).

The most important goal for the landlords involved in the Parkdale Pilot Project was to legitimize their stock. Many landlords expressed difficulties in securing financing and insurance for their buildings because the legal status was unknown. At the beginning of the mediation

process, landlords did not want their properties licensed as rooming houses since they considered the classification inaccurate and they did not want to undergo annual inspections. As well, one landlord mentioned that the re-sale value of a rooming house is much lower than the re-sale value of an apartment complex. However, after much negotiation, the majority of landlords decided that they would accept licensing in exchange for a property tax reduction. This deal did not benefit all property owners equally. As Lowe notes, landlords of small bachelorette buildings had already been paying residential tax rates for many years, despite their legal status (2009).

The project helped many compliant landlords in another way as well: the length of tenancy increased. Since the program's implementation, tenants are now staying much longer than they used to in former illegal bachelorette units. Although one landlord stated that the average tenancy is roughly six months, some tenants are staying for many years (Kotelnikov 2009). In addition, vacancy rates are relatively low in these types of units since they are in high demand in the Parkdale area (Lowe 2009). As well, the type of tenants who rent these units has changed. This may be attributed to a change in the landlords' selection process. "Landlords are now more discriminating when selecting a tenant because it is better for the property owner to have a more responsible tenant (Van Eenoooghe 2009). This, of course, suggests that those most in need of affordable housing, are no longer able to secure rental accommodation in these units.

Thus, although the process was lengthy and very expensive for the landlords, it was a worthwhile process. Now that the landlords are confident in their real estate, they are more inclined to invest in it. Many landlords have accessed RRAP (Residential Rehabilitation Adaptation Program) funding to further improve their properties. Although the Parkdale Pilot Project required landlords to bring their buildings up to minimum code, many explained that the program provided the perfect opportunity to do more renovations and therefore go beyond the minimum requirements (Lowe 2009).

The mediation process leading up to the Parkdale Pilot Project also created an avenue for landlords and neighbours to get to know each other and discuss their concerns together. Van

Eenooghe states that this process has allowed neighbours to recognize that being a landlord is a legitimate business and that many landlords do care about their tenants (Van Eenooghe 2009).

Neighbours

The Parkdale Pilot Project has also benefited those living near regularized bachelorette units by giving them more input into the ongoing management of these buildings. As properties come up for inspection, neighbours have an opportunity to make deputations stating why or why not the licenses should be renewed. As well, they can complain to MLS at any time, knowing that MLS can investigate the issue since the property in question is now licensed.

Due in part to a newfound pride of ownership – as well as increased monitoring both from neighbours and from annual inspections – many landlords have begun taking better care of their newly licensed properties, investing in formerly neglected services such as garbage disposal and landscaping. As a result, many neighbours interviewed mentioned that the physical appearances of these properties have improved to the point where regularized buildings now blend in with surrounding structures, therefore improving the look and value of the entire area.

Community

Although the community is not homogeneous in its interests, the Parkdale Pilot Project did serve the overall interests of the community. The Parkdale Pilot Project was designed specifically for Parkdale by Parkdale residents. It was an opportunity for different stakeholders to come together to address illegal bachelorettes. Many residents desired a healthy neighbourhood that featured a mix of housing types and people. Other residents wanted to ensure that the vulnerable population that exists in Parkdale were safely housed, and were concerned with the effects of gentrification on the supply of affordable housing in Parkdale. Many community members feel that although the Parkdale Pilot Project has done some good in this respect, its impact was marginal since it could not offset the effects of gentrification (Poesiat 2009).

The Parkdale Pilot Project has improved the quality of bachelorette apartments thanks to annual inspections from Municipal Licenses and Standards (MLS). It has also stabilized the stock to

some extent. Although 14 owners have sold their properties over the course of the pilot, only four properties have changed their uses and are no longer rooming houses. Landlords are investing more into their buildings and tenants are staying longer.

Although some landlords who had been operating legal rooming houses for many years were quite upset with the Parkdale Pilot Project and felt that it was simply a slap on the wrist for all the illegal landlords, they did see a benefit in the project. As one owner notes, the “program was able to improve the overall quality of housing in Parkdale, which is a good thing” (Anonymous, 2009).

The creation of new rooming houses is still prohibited in South Parkdale. At a time when little new social housing is being built, the Parkdale Pilot Project was able to improve the pre-existing units and therefore augment the overall well-being of Parkdale. Bruce Voogd, chair of the Parkdale Housing Committee and member of the Roncesvalles-Macdonell Residents Association, says, “Overall, as imperfect as it was, it did benefit the community” (Voogd 2008).

City of Toronto

The City of Toronto has also benefited from the Parkdale Pilot Project because it now has more control over the health and safety of the legal bachelorette apartments. Many of these buildings had been inaccessible to City Inspectors for the past 20 to 30 years. But with legalization, Municipal Licensing and Standards is able to inspect buildings following any complaints. According to one by-law officer who works in Parkdale, 60% of the complaints that the City receives are from tenants, many with concerns about lack of heat. Another 30% come from neighbours who are concerned with the physical upkeep of the properties and about loitering, garbage and debris outside the buildings. The remaining 10% of complaints comes from landlords themselves who have issues with particular tenants neglecting their properties. Municipal Licenses and Standards can now issue warrants directly to the tenants and therefore hold them accountable for the damage. As well, through annual inspections, MLS can ensure that the living standards in the buildings are improved and that the owners are held to those standards year after year (MLS 2009).

The City has also benefited by avoiding hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal fees. Expropriating these buildings would have been very costly for the municipal government had illegal bachelorette buildings closed down. If each one of these properties were to apply for a rezoning, be denied and pursue the case at the Ontario Municipal Board, the City would have to expense a lot of staff resources for each trial. As well, the ongoing battle in the community that has lasted over 30 years has cost the City several million dollars in staff resources. The Parkdale Pilot Project, although very poorly funded, was able to save tax payers' dollars by giving landlords an opportunity to comply with Building Code, Fire Code, and Health and Safety Standards at their own expense.

Applicability to other neighbourhoods

As of October 1, 2008, City records indicate that there are 445 legal rooming houses in Toronto (including licensed bachelorettes) that are either licensed or that have applied for licenses. The majority of these rooming houses are in the former City of Toronto. Yet, the number of rooming houses has been on the decline: in 1985 there were 870 licensed rooming houses, while in 2003 there were 501. The current 445 licensed rooming houses are estimated to contain approximately 7,100 rooms, accommodating about 8,900 individuals (City of Toronto 2008).

Most of these rooming houses are privately owned, though fewer than 20% of the licensed rooming houses are owned by non-profit housing corporations. While estimates of illegal rooming houses are speculative, a 2004 report for the City *Rooming House Issues and Future Options* concluded that there “was evidence suggesting the widespread existence of illegal rooming houses across the amalgamated City” (City of Toronto 2008, 3). A June 2008 report, *Shared Accommodation in Toronto*, points out that there are 165,000 low-income single adults in Toronto, for most of whom rooms are the most affordable accommodation. After accounting for the probable number that lives in licensed rooming houses, supportive housing and other forms of rent-gear-to-income housing, the report concludes that many of the remaining 100,000 low-income individuals are likely to live in unlicensed rooming houses, many of which are in North York and Scarborough where rooming houses are illegal and city officials have no right to enter to inspect their conditions (City of Toronto 2008).

Clearly, there is a need for illegal-housing reform in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). As a result, the City of Toronto is in the process of drafting a zoning by-law that would harmonize rooming house by-laws across the GTA. The new by-law would require rooming houses to meet all Building and Fire Codes, as was the case in Parkdale. Many City officials have asked if the Parkdale Pilot Project could serve as a model to bring these buildings – and other illegal properties – up to code.

Unfortunately, the Parkdale Pilot Project cannot be implemented as successfully in other areas because its components were a direct response to the area's unique situation. Specifically, the project arose out of 30 years of community unrest, due in large part to the unusually concentrated nature of bachelorette buildings. People were desperate to change the situation. As a result, they collectively negotiated and agreed upon the outcome of the mediation process. This community buy-in ensured a measure of success.

However, not all neighbourhoods suffer from the same level of frustration over the state of illegal affordable units – in part because not all neighbourhoods have such a high concentration of illegal accommodations. As a result, not all neighbourhoods could benefit from the same cooperation. Simply put, community members in other areas might be too apathetic to fully participate in such a program. Similarly, since most owners of bachelorette buildings already pay residential tax rates, there might not be enough incentive for landlords to cooperate.

At the same time, those designing future programs for normalizing illegal housing can learn a lot from the program's successes and failures. The Parkdale Pilot Project, through development standards and licensing, was successful at stabilizing the existing housing stock in Parkdale, maintaining the affordable units in the area and allowing the City greater control over these units without displacing tenants. It did, however, fail to prosecute illegal landlords and ensure housing options were available for any tenants that were de-housed as a result of the Parkdale Pilot Project.

By tweaking certain components of the Parkdale Pilot Project, it could be implemented on a neighbourhood-to-neighbourhood basis as long as the components of the project and the stakeholders involved represent the neighbourhood in question. For a similar project to work there would need to be some form of community consultation and buy-in from the local residents. The neighbourhood would need to have several meetings to develop an approach that would work best for that community. The development standards would need to be designed based on the legislative history in that neighbourhood. Parkdale is unique in that rooming houses were a permitted use until 1978. The average size, parking requirements, and common area requirements reflect the changes made to Parkdale planning policies since the 1970s. These same requisites would be inapplicable in other areas.

There would also need to be incentives for landlords to participate other than lower taxes, since this option may not be applicable in other neighbourhoods. The Parkdale Pilot Project was a voluntary program that landlords could participate in. Perhaps in lieu of rewards for participation, penalties such as fines for non-participation could be re-enforced and made an incentive. And there would need to be incentives for neighbours and community groups to get involved, even though this form of housing is not as visible in other parts of the City such as Scarborough and North York.

Certain aspects of the Parkdale Pilot Project may work well for one neighbourhood in the City but not all. The Parkdale Pilot Project serves as a good example of how community engagement can lead to change. It also serves as an example of how illegal housing issues can be solved on a neighbourhood-by-neighbourhood basis.

Recommendations

The prospect of implementing the Parkdale Pilot Project in other neighbourhoods needs to be well thought out before it can be executed. Yes, it is a good idea to regularize illegal units by requiring the buildings comply with Building Code, Fire Code and Health and Safety Standards.

But several changes need to be made to the program in order to ensure it achieves its goals. For starters, there needs to be a dedicated staffing team at the City of Toronto that is responsible for the administration of this project. This group needs to include staff persons with knowledge of Building Code, Fire Code and Health and Safety Standards. The team should have a strong knowledge of issues surrounding this form of housing as well.

Apart from staff salaries, the team requires its own budget to administer the project. This budget should cover such costs as advertisement, information sessions, general administrative costs and staff resources to ensure that certain impacts of the project, although not exclusive to this project, are monitored. These include ongoing communication with Revenue Services regarding rental reduction letters to tenants. As well, some sort of supervision is necessary to ensure that these rental reductions are actually carried out. Also, the team should keep track of all de-conversions in the neighbourhood so as to have a handle on the loss of units in the area. In addition, the dedicated team should record rents charged in licensed bachelorettes to monitor their affordability, and use resources to develop a tenant relocation strategy should any tenant be de-housed as a result of the work being done in the building. A feasibility study should be carried out to determine how much budget is required.

As well, there should be a very clear timeline as to when the opportunity to enter the project ends and when enforcement begins. The City must stick to this timeline and commence enforcement as soon as necessary.

Before the project can begin, however, there needs to be some capacity building among the community to understand the project and its strengths and weaknesses. It is one thing to administer a program city-wide but another to work with the community to ensure that it is aware of the project and what it can do in the neighbourhood. The more acceptance there is for the program, the more willingness there will be to participate.

In addition, there needs to be some sort of educational component for future rooming house owners. Several landlords state that this form of housing requires more work on the landlord's part due to the nature of the licensing and the tenants that it attracts. Before an owner establishes

a legal rooming house, he or she should be aware of how to properly operate the building. (Colautti 2009 and Lowe 2009).

As for continued work in Parkdale, bachelorettes are only one form of housing that exists. Many interviewees suggest that the Parkdale Pilot Project was just one approach that could have been taken to encourage and maintain the affordable housing stock in Parkdale. Other suggestions include co-operative housing, social housing and rent-to-own programs. It would be beneficial for the community of Parkdale to develop a Parkdale Housing Strategy. As many residents are beginning to see the signs of gentrification slowly encroaching on the community, a neighbourhood-specific housing strategy would be valuable.

Final Thoughts

The Parkdale Pilot Project was intended to rezone bachelorettes, provided that they were upgraded to meet specified requirements. The intent of the Pilot Project was also to upgrade and protect some rooming house uses in Parkdale, thereby maintaining low-cost housing in the area. Although the administration of the project was not perfect, for the many reasons outlined above, the Parkdale Pilot Project was generally successful. It settled a decades-old dispute and put a mechanism in place to vet and recommend units to be acceptable by the standards set by the community, units that otherwise would still be debated as illegal or unacceptable.

The Parkdale Pilot Project was an imperfect success that offers an exciting model of community transformation. Given the lack of resources committed to the process, it is possible to imagine how well the project could have been carried out had the momentum of its first few years continued. The Parkdale Pilot Project demonstrates the benefits of investing in local solutions to local problems by engaging the community and developing a community-specific strategy for a perennial issue.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – City of Toronto Staff Report October 22, 1999

19 recommended strategies for dealing with the bachelorette units:

1. Establishment of a ‘Parkdale Housing Committee’ with broad community representation, to consider housing issues in South Parkdale and provide input to the recommended review process. The mandate of the Committee should include:
 - a. Input to the Pilot Project Groups’ consideration of the existing units for rezoning;
 - b. Input on property maintenance and licensing issues;
 - c. Considering opportunities for the creation of additional affordable housing within the community;
 - d. Acting as a ‘clearing house’ for other housing issues as they arise;
 - e. When providing input, the Committee should try to reach a consensus position that represents the community view. However, it is acknowledged that this will not always be possible. Community members may present alternative views when appropriate; and
 - f. The Parkdale Housing Committee should be added to the agenda mailing list for the Committee of Adjustment to enable the Committee to comment where they believe it is appropriate.
2. Creation of a dedicated and funded City Pilot Project Group to deal with housing issues in Parkdale (bounded by Lakeshore Blvd, Dufferin Street, the rail lines, Dundas Street and Roncesvalles Avenue) as a high priority. The mandate of the Pilot Project Group would include:
 - a. Making recommendations to Council about detailed strategies and costs for dealing with illegal rooming house in Parkdale
 - b. Developing an implementation program for regularization of bachelorette units in accordance with Council’s direction
 - c. Advertising the program in the community
 - d. Approaching all the known owners of illegal buildings and informing them of the opportunity for regularization and the consequences if they do not come into compliance
 - e. Receiving and conducting an assessment of applications for regularization using information and documents available from the City records and other sources including the Housing Committee
 - f. Inspecting properties to determine compliance with the regularization guidelines and with Building Code, Fire Code, Housing Standards, Health and any other applicable standards.
 - g. Determining what steps must be taken by an owner in order for the property to be regularized

- h. Establishing a time frame for compliance
 - i. Clearing properties that have met regularization requirements for licensing
 - j. Ensuring that a housing and relocation service will be available for any tenants who may be displaced
 - k. Co-ordinating legal enforcements of standards where necessary
3. Building owners to be provided an opportunity to prove that the existing units, save for the addition of culinary facilities, were built in conformity with Building Permits issued before the 1978 by-law which outlawed rooming house units.
 4. The Pilot Project Group to conduct the review to legalize the pre-1978 units as 'self-contained rooming house units' with input from the Housing Committee.
 5. Those buildings that are not proven to be legal pre-1978 rooming houses to be subject to further review against new criteria related to unit size, parking, landscaping and common space. The Pilot Project Group would also conduct this review, with input from the Housing Committee.
 6. If successful, those units defined in point 5, to be legalized through the building permit process and be subject to rezoning and the licensing process set out below.
 7. Both categories of approved units to be subject to a by-law that contains site-specific provisions. This rezoning process would include the normal notification and public consultation process.
 8. Buildings that were created after 1978 but before the Interim Control By-law (November 1996) to have the option of applying to the Committee of Adjustment or applying for a rezoning to regularize their units where they do not meet the new standards. However, the City will vigorously defend its policy at any related Committee of Adjustment hearings.
 9. Buildings that were converted after the introduction of the Interim Control By-law in 1996 were to be considered illegal conversions. These buildings should be subject to review, using the current by-law standards, and prosecutions where necessary.
 10. In order to minimize tenant relocation, successful owners to be provided an extended period of time within which to complete renovations. When necessary, the City would continue to assist with tenant relocation, bearing in mind that the goal is to avoid tenant relocation.
 11. On-going maintenance to be ensured through licensing, including regular inspections. The inspection process should be streamlined to include a co-ordinator single inspection of each property.
 12. Where a high standard of maintenance has been consistently met, a property to qualify for less frequent inspections unless special circumstances require otherwise.
 13. In order to simplify on-going maintenance, each licensed building to be required to display visibly in the lobby telephone numbers for a superintendent or staff contact, Fire Certificates and other required licenses as well as how to contact Police, Fire, etc.

14. Where buildings are not legalized through this process, and where they continue to operate in contravention of Building, Fire or Health Code regulations, the City to seek to bring the units into compliance, including prosecution if necessary.
15. All of the buildings that meet the established standards and are licensed to be classified as rooming houses
16. The conflict resolution process supports the City's efforts to have rooming house units qualify for a reduced tax rate. The City will vigorously advocate this position with the Province to resolve this issue. When the tax rate is adjusted, a portion of the savings will be passed on to the tenants.
17. Current zoning by-law standards, including the prohibition on rooming houses and the 65 sq.metres. (695 sq.ft.) average unit size and gross floor area standards to remain in place for future conversions and new units in South Parkdale. The City will vigorously defend its policy at any related Committee of Adjustment or Ontario Municipal Board hearings. An exception to this position could be made in the case of applications for other forms of affordable housing which have the support of the Housing Committee.
18. The criteria developed to evaluate existing units to also provide input to the development of standards for single-person housing units in other parts of the city.
19. Confirmation of the development standards that apply to additional units in pre-78 buildings respecting unit size, parking standards, and amenity space to remain pending.

Appendix 2 – Parkdale Pilot Project Legalized Bachelorettes

No.	Address	Units/Rooms	Parking Spaces	By-Law
40	BEATY AVE	27	3	428-2001
42	BEATY AVE	5	3	67-2004
62	BROCK AVE	13	2	115-2002
15	CALLENDER ST	3		66-2004
164	CLOSE AVE	11	2	117-2002
57	COWAN AVE	9		941-2001
93	COWAN AVE	3	0	718-2002
94	COWAN AVE	14	1	259-2005
149	COWAN AVE	28	11	423-2001
156	COWAN AVE	10	3	365-2002
119	DOWLING AVE	8		108-2003
143	DOWLING AVE	10	3	107-2003
166	DOWLING AVE	6	1	769-2006
181	DOWLING AVE	10	2	256-2002
189	DUNN AVE	13	4	260-2005
196	DUNN AVE	6	3	208-2003
198	DUNN AVE	12	3	1046-2001
203	DUNN AVE	7	2	1048-2001
216	DUNN AVE	6		1049-2001
6	ELM GROVE AVE	7		207-2003
11	ELM GROVE AVE	11	2	103-2003
11A	ELM GROVE AVE	12	4	105-2003
2	GLENAVON RD	3	0	212-2002
90A	GRENADIER RD	4	1	519-2002
59	GWYNNE AVE	4	1	68-2004
61	HARVARD AVE	6	0	871-2005
1302	KINS ST W	32	7	554-2001
1363	KING ST W	11	2	716-2002
1510	KING ST W	20	3	
1512	KING ST W	31	4	872-2005
1518	KING ST W	5	3	873-2005
1544	KING ST W	4	3	770-2004
1554	KING ST W	26		257-2005
26	LANSDOWNE AVE	5	2	262-2005
30	LANSDOWNE AVE	11	3	113-2002
30	MAPLE GROVE AVE	6	2	942-2001
14	MAYNARD AVE	10	3	424-2001
20	MAYNARD AVE	16	2	425-2001
26	MAYNARD AVE	15	3	550-2001
28	MAYNARD AVE	20	7	109-2003
74	MELBOURNE AVE	8	2	697-2000
86	PEARSON AVE	3		72-2004
10	SORAUREN AVE	5	2	65-2004

13	SORAUREN AVE	4		519-2003
108	SORAUREN AVE	4	1	265-2006
18	SPENCER AVE	4		769-2006
63	SPENCER AVE	16	3	717-2002
65	SPENCER AVE	9		1045-2001
102	SPENCER AVE	11	1	669-2001
116	SPENCER AVE	35	7	70-2004
120	SPENCER AVE	7	2	486-2004
122	SPENCER AVE	8	1	487-2004
124	SPENCER AVE			
22	SPRINGHURST AVE	15		531-2003
114	SPRINGHURST AVE	9	0	546-2001
155	SPRINGHURST AVE	11	2	258-2005
8	TEMPLE AVE	13		519-2006
15	TEMPLE AVE	12	4	700-2001
5 OR 7	THORBURN AVE	29	0	548-2001
15	THORBURN AVE	13		210-2003
22	THORBURN AVE	4	1	484-2004
24	THORBURN AVE	4	1	485-2004
60	TRILLER AVE	6		60-2004
62	TRILLER AVE	22	2	61-2004
151	TYNDALL AVE	9		1044-2001
15	WILSON PARK RD	7	2	266-2006
70	WILSON PARK RD	25	6	64-2004
TOTAL			733	
AVG. NUMBER OF UNITS			11.28	

Source: The City of Toronto 2008

Appendix 3 – Number of applications approved each year (2000-2008)

YEAR	NUMBER APPROVED
2000	1
2001	18
2002	10
2003	10
2004	13
2005	8
2006	5
2007	0
2008	3
TOTAL	68

Source: The City of Toronto, 2008

Appendix 3 – Ward 14 List of Rooming Houses that experienced Tax Reduction due to Property Tax Conversion (MT to RT).

**Buildings in blue are those that have participated in the Parkdale Pilot Project.

Assessed Address	Number of units	Year Property Class Converted (MT to RT)	Year Tax Reduction Posted to the Account	Tax Reduction %	Rent Reduction %
40 Beaty Avenue	26	2004		26.2%	5.2%
62 Brock Avenue	13	2004		37.2%	7.4%
57 Cowan	9	2004		50.0%	10.0%
94 Cowan	14	2005	June 2006	22.8%	4.6%
149 Cowan	28	2004		62.6%	12.5%
119 Dowling	8	2007		42.9%	8.6%
157 Dunn	12	2006		45.1%	9.0%
189 Dunn	13	2005	Dec 2005	20.6%	4.1%
191 Dunn	11	2004	May 2005	41.1%	8.2%
193 Dunn	13	2004	May 2005	38.8%	7.8%
198 Dunn	12	2005		62.9%	12.6%
11 Elm Grove	12	2004		54.9%	11.0%
11A Elm Grove	12	2004		55.1%	11.0%
1512 King St W	32	2007		63.0%	12.6%
1554 King St W	26	2006		69.3%	13.9%
30 Lansdowne	12	2004		44.7%	8.9%
2 Laxton	52	2004	April 2005	42.9%	8.6%
10 Maynard	19	2004		52.1%	10.4%
20 Maynard	16	2004		53.1%	10.6%
26 Maynard	15	2004		45.2%	9.0%
28 Maynard	20	2004	May 2005	39.0%	7.8%
63 Spencer	17	2004		55.8%	11.2%
65 Spencer	9	2004		6.2%	1.2%
102 Spencer	11	2006	Aug 2007	50.9%	10.2%
116 Spencer	35	2004		37.9%	7.6%
22 Springhurst	15	2004		41.2%	8.2%
155 Springhurst	11	2006		64.3%	12.9%
8 Temple	13	2007		56.8%	11.4%
15 Temple	12	2008		62.8%	12.6%
5 Thorburn	12	2004	Nov 2005	43.8%	8.8%
15 Thorburn	13	2004	May 2005	41.6%	8.3%
62 Triller	28	2005	Jan 2006	46.4%	9.3%
70 Wilson Park	26	2004	May 2005	40.9%	8.2%

Source: Ward 14 Councillor Perks Office 2008

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