

Dear Councillors and City staff,

I am writing on behalf of SPUHNTA, the South Parkdale UHN Tenants' Association, which represents tenants living in 5, 7, 9, 11, 13 and 15 Close Ave; 78 Springhurst Ave, and 74 Dunn Ave, all of which are owned by UHN and referred to in today's Housing Secretariat report.

Our members are gravely concerned about the severe shortage of affordable housing in Toronto, and have long advocated for UHN's currently vacant properties to be used for affordable housing. We welcome the development of new supportive housing at 1, 3, and 17 Close Ave, and on other vacant lands nearby, including the placement of modular housing on the UHN parking lot. We would be pleased to build community with the new neighbours that this development would bring.

At the same time, we are concerned that the Housing Secretariat report appears to envision a model of redevelopment that could include the large-scale demolition of an existing neighbourhood (including the houses we live in) and lead to the displacement of a community that has organically developed in these houses for over twenty-seven years.

We would like to briefly recap our community's history - and, to those councillors who have already heard this history at last week's Community Council meeting, we thank you for your patience. In 1993, a group of us rented 5 and 7 Close Avenue from the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, to house a queer-positive intentional community aspiring to live in accordance with the Catholic Worker tradition of non-violence, simplicity, and social justice. Until 2010, the community ran houses of hospitality that welcomed people in transition: refugees, newcomers, people facing homelessness or other life crises. The houses of hospitality attracted a larger community that soon moved into the surrounding houses. We made strong connections with the larger Parkdale neighbourhood, becoming part of the social fabric and the local economy. Although we no longer run houses of hospitality, we continue to thrive as a mixed-income community with strong relationships of mutual support. Many of us are vulnerable due to age, low income, or physical or mental illness, and the community offers us both practical and emotional support. We have helped one another through illness, hospitalization, bereavement, and psychiatric crisis, and we have celebrated life's big and small joys together. In other words, we have already been practising social medicine here for almost thirty years.

This kind of grassroots community cannot be created overnight or by institutional decree. It grows organically, and it can nurture further growth. We believe that our community is perfectly placed to support the development and integration of much needed new supportive housing in Parkdale, and we ask the Planning and Housing Committee to recognize the value of what we bring to this visioning process.

We appreciate the support that our City Councillor, Gord Perks, has expressed for an inclusive visioning and master planning process that will give SPUHNTA a real, meaningful, ongoing seat at the table. We assume that such a process would explore a variety of development models, including models that incorporate our existing homes. We ask that the Planning and Housing Committee commit to making this inclusive process a reality. Specifically, we request that the Committee:

- Include SPUHNTA and other UHN tenants in the selection process for choosing a future non-profit housing operator; and,
- Ensure that the visioning and master planning exercise for redevelopment of the lands is a community-led process, carried out in collaboration with local community agencies,

that recognizes SPUHNTA and other UHN tenants as crucial stakeholders and partners in decision-making.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests.

Best regards,

Esther Townshend, on behalf of SPUHNTA