



March 12, 2020

Dear Toronto East York Community Council members:

Reference to Item 2020.TE14.5 - Queen West Planning Study OPA Final Report

We, the members of the Parkdale Residents Association write to express our opinions and thoughts on this Final Report.

We commend the hard work of City Planning and Heritage staff in attempting to accommodate the varied opinions of local residents, shop owners and property owners along this 3.5-kilometer stretch of Queen Street West.

We have several areas that we would like to speak to:

1. Over the past eight years the PRA and other local area residents associations have worked hard with the City to have some control over the effects of short-term speculative development on the fabric of the neighbourhoods along Queen St. West – especially the effects of large condo developments in the area between Ossington and Dufferin, which is dramatic.
2. The effects of this OPA will be long lasting (30-years and more). This will change the fabric of Parkdale - socially, culturally and economically. One thing to remember from a person who was well attuned to urban living – Jane Jacobs – neighbourhoods are about people not just buildings and who championed a fresh, community-based approach to city building. Not all knowledge and expertise is contained in the City’s professional consultants but also in the lived experience of citizens and residents in our neighbourhoods.
3. The PRA believes there is still time to attend to the problems and concerns listed below.
4. What we are currently seeing in Parkdale is mid to large developers moving in to consolidate and develop the larger, easy sites (empty lots, one and two storey properties). The original working group conversations were to promote small landowners/ developers in creating low density projects, using wood construction and adding one and two storey upgrades. The current four pre-development applications in Parkdale are all concrete construction in the six to eight-storey range. This is entirely antithetical to the city’s Transform TO target of “net zero” in GHG emissions by 2050.

5. The extended mediation and conciliation approach to community consultations continues to undermine diverse and meaningful participation. Important community groups were not interested in being at the West Queen West Area Study and HCDs working group table and more citizens and resident associations have further been frustrated into conciliation on Avenue Mid Rise standards. This was not their intent nor is it appropriate.
6. The impact of increasing the height in Parkdale currently 14m (3.5 storeys) to 20m (6-storeys) is dramatic – almost doubling the height. Compare this to the current height of 16m from Dufferin to Bathurst and the 16m height limit for the Queen West HCD (Bathurst to University).
7. WQW may be the longest mainly intact low-rise Victorian main street in North America. It should not be seen, in either the HCD or the non-HCD portions, as a target for interspersed mid-rise wherever one or more non-contributing buildings or lots happen to be located. The resulting ‘gap-toothed’ look would diminish and damage the heritage character of the district, countervailing the intent of the Heritage Act. Where competing provincial intensification policies require attention, a four-storey, low-rise limit on WQW provides, conservatively, for a doubling of the available GFA within the WQW lands, via vertical additions or sensitive low-rise infill.
8. The increased ‘as-of-right’ height allowance in this Final Report will influence MPAC assessments pushing for “best and highest use”. Without appropriate tax break programs for vulnerable community members, the effect of this new tax burden will enable displacement by making the area unaffordable to established businesses, residents and service providers that have already invested in the appreciating value of the neighbourhood..
9. The intersection of Queen with King, Roncesvalles and the Queensway is a locale of significant concern. The view corridor toward the Lake and view corridor looking West requires the swift adoption of policies to protect this view corridor by limiting heights, particularly on the terminal blocks approaching this intersection. Accordingly, we urge the swift adoption of policies to protect this view corridor by limiting heights, particularly on the terminal blocks approaching this intersection.
10. We recommend that Planning adopt suitable local “Cultural Heritage Landscape” policies for the WQW and Parkdale HCDs to identify non-architectural urban features like the neighbourhood's recognized "social heritage" which are crucial to Parkdale's distinct soul, character and roots.
11. Finally we request a one-year interim control by-law on land use development along Queen St. West. This would allow time for the OPA to be revised and HCDs to be finalized and to be implemented .

Thank you,

Ric Amis  
Secretary/Chair, Parkdale Residents Association