

Monday March 1, 2021.

Attention : Planning and Housing Committee

Please see below letter signed by 25 agencies in support of the expropriation of 214-230 Sherbourne St for social housing.

Monday, November 2, 2020.

Abigail Bond
City of Toronto Housing Secretariat
Metro Hall
7th Floor, 55 John Street
Toronto, ON M5V 3C6

Cc: Kristyn Wong-Tam Councillor, Ward 27
Suze Morrison MPP, Toronto Centre
Marci Ien MP, Toronto Centre

Dear Ms. Bond,

We are a group of community based organizations operating in the downtown east end of Toronto. We are reaching out to you in the hope that you will support us in our on-going efforts to address the homelessness crisis which is particularly acute in our communities.

We witness on a daily basis the struggles of people who are homeless. We know how hard it is to help anyone find a place to live, or even a shelter space in the city. People are told to call Central Intake back every hour because there is no place to go. Women are being forced to stay in unsafe spaces just for a place to rest. People are unable to meet even their most basic needs, such as showers, bathrooms, telephones or laundry. To make matters worse, the crisis of homelessness is happening alongside the overdose crisis and now COVID-19, a global pandemic which has only exacerbated these conditions.

Just prior to COVID, many organizations had been advocating for a vacant lot at 214-230 Sherbourne to be turned into social, rent geared to income, housing. In March of 2018, a motion was passed to investigate the acquisition or expropriation of the properties at 214-230 Sherbourne St. and in July of 2018, Council passed a motion to make a conditional offer on the properties should they become available. On December 2019, (PH11.10) Council authorized staff to initiate negotiations to acquire the properties and to identify funding possibilities for acquisition. Additional information was to return to the planning and housing committee meeting in April of 2020, however this process was disrupted by the sudden onset of COVID.

It is unclear what has happened since this time. However, it is extremely clear that this effort to create housing at 214-230 Sherbourne is of even greater urgency in this new context we are facing. The recently released City reports on the City's plan for housing (PH16.8) include a recommendation for new housing through acquisition, renovation and "shovel ready" projects. We are writing to ask that you do all you can to ensure that 214-230 Sherbourne are included in any plan to acquire property. We also ask that you do all you can to ensure that there is funding to proceed with this project.

This vacant property continues to sit empty in the midst of the homelessness crisis in the City. It is an important location to save from the further gentrification of this area. It is the location where on December 17th, 1985, a homeless woman named Drina Joubert, froze to death in the cab of an abandoned pick-up truck. It is the location where hundreds of people who are homeless struggle to survive.

We urge you to take the needed action to ensure this location brings housing and safety to so many who are in desperate need of it in this community. We would appreciate your response with an indication of how you are able to support this important effort. We would be glad to have further discussion with you about how to do this. Please contact Michele Heath, at micheleh@regentparkchc.org if you are looking to follow up on this issue.

Sincerely,

Paulos Gebreyesus, Executive Director – Regent Park Community Health Centre
Kapri Rabin- Executive Director- Street Health
Neighbourhood Legal Services
Health Providers Against Poverty
Shelter Housing Justice Network
Sanctuary
Japanese Canadians for Social Justice
Ontario Coalition Against Poverty
S.E.A.S.
Centre for Social Innovation – Regent Park
The Neighbourhood Group Community Services
Toronto Drop-In Network
Elizabeth Fry Toronto
Agincourt Community Services Association
Cathy Crowe, RN, BAAN, MEd (Soc), C.M.
Street Nurses Network
Sherbourne Health
St. Jude Community Homes
Neighbourhood Information Post
Inner City Family Health Team
Yonge Street Mission
Pasan
Open Architecture Collaborative Canada
The St. Michael's Academic Family Health Team
South Riverdale Community Health Centre