

**From:** [Julie Mathien](#)  
**To:** [Toronto East York Community Council](#)  
**Subject:** Submission June 29 TEYCC  
**Date:** June 24, 2022 4:22:48 PM  
**Attachments:** [TEYCC.final.24June.pdf](#)  
[ATT00001.htm](#)

---

Ellen Devlin  
Toronto City Hall  
100 Queen St. W.  
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Ms Devlin,

Pleased find attached a submission from the Huron-Sussex Residents' Organization regarding Item 8 (University of Toronto St. George Campus Secondary Plan - Official Plan Amendment Application - Final Report) on the June 29 agenda for the meeting of the Toronto and East York Community Council.

Sincerely,

Julie Mathien  
Huron-Sussex Residents' Organization



# HURON SUSSEX RESIDENTS ORGANIZATION

24 June 2022.

## **University of Toronto St. George Campus Secondary Plan and Urban Design Guidelines.**

Note: Recommendations appear on page 5.

To the Chair and Members,  
Toronto and East York Community Council:

### **1. Introduction:**

Huron-Sussex is a small, residential community in the north-west corner of the area covered by the St. George Campus Secondary Plan area and appears as one of the Character Areas in the documents submitted for your approval. The neighbourhood, like many in Toronto's west downtown, dates from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. As a community within the University of Toronto precinct, and, largely, owned by the university, institutional development impacts us directly and often.

At one time Huron-Sussex was known as “the neighbourhood that almost wasn't” because the University of Toronto originally assembled ownership of properties here with the intention of demolishing the housing to expand academic and administrative buildings. In the meantime, they were kept as rental properties.

After a four-square block of houses was demolished to build the John P. Robarts Library, University development slowed significantly and Huron-Sussex has remained residential, primarily rental, with most houses owned by U of T. In the late 1980's, the University began to offer vacant rental housing to new faculty members for terms of three years, now increased to four as a result of advocacy by the Huron-Sussex Residents Organization (HSRO). Most of the remaining long-term tenants have lived here for upwards of 40 years.

The housing in Huron-Sussex contained approximately 170 units; in 2020, when the university was in full operation, 95 units were occupied by new faculty, visiting faculty or students. None of these tenants, who occupy close to 60% of units in the neighbourhood, is allowed to live permanently in Huron-Sussex.

Fifteen houses are privately-owned. Four houses are occupied by university administrative offices. There are two university-affiliated child care centres and in Huron-Sussex, and one community child care centre. A new graduate student residence will be under construction on Harbord St. very soon.

With the goal of increasing predictability for future planning in Huron-Sussex, HSRO requested that the University work with the community to develop a long-term plan for the neighbourhood. As a result, the *Huron-Sussex Neighbourhood Planning Study* was developed over four years and approved in 2014 by both the University of Toronto and the HSRO. It “serves to guide the design, location and appropriate mix of future development, including residential, commercial and open space in the Huron-Sussex neighbourhood” and sets forth “a clear direction for the evolution of the neighbourhood, that responds equally to the University’s need for residential and academic space and community residential needs and other interests”. **As part of our approval of the planning study, the community agreed to extensive intensification in the form of mid-rise University housing on main streets and low-rise laneway and infill housing in the interior of Huron-Sussex.**

HSRO would like to see the *Huron-Sussex Neighbourhood Planning Study* acknowledged in either the Secondary Plan or the Urban Design Guidelines as a contribution to planning in Huron-Sussex.

## **2. Secondary Plan and Urban Design Guidelines:**

HSRO has been involved in developing all three University of Toronto Secondary Plans, including this one. The following section contains our comments and recommendations for the proposed new Secondary Plan and Urban Design Guidelines.

We support many of the recommended directions in the two documents under consideration. In particular, the strengthened public realm directions, including enhancements for pedestrians and cyclists, and protection and enhancement of green spaces, are welcome, as is the increased support for heritage preservation. We support the strengthened language regarding Indigenous engagement and placemaking and have included a recommendation for further action in this regard.

In particular, we strongly support the two designated Key Open Spaces at Huron and Washington and at Huron and Glen Morris that are identified in the Secondary Plan.

### **A. Process:**

While City staff have been energetic in consulting with residents’ associations and very responsive to questions that we have about the proposed plan, we have had less than a month to read the documents, consult with our boards and,

where possible, community members to consolidate what we hope are thoughtful organizational positions into documents such as this one. Our organizations are non-profit and fully voluntary. Responding constructively to important public initiatives is a civic obligation that takes time and effort. The turnaround time for responding to this important initiative that will affect our communities has been too short. In addition, we are concerned that the Secondary Plan and Urban Design Guidelines will be adopted prior to a full study by Heritage Planning.

## **B. Site 1: Huron-Sussex Character Area**

Site 1 or Block L runs east-west from Huron St. to Spadina Ave. and north-south from Bloor St to the back walls of the houses on the north side of Washington Ave. Originally, the southern boundary of the site was the north side of the laneway that runs directly behind the houses. The current extended permission in the 1997 Secondary Plan was obtained by the University from the City at the end of the Secondary Plan process after HSRO had signed off on the draft plan.

HSRO continues to oppose the expansion of Site 1 and its encroachment on Huron-Sussex. From what we know of the University's plan for the site, the back yards and laneway behind the houses on the north side of Washington Ave. (#2-22) will be replaced by a mid-rise building that will, other than a small setback, be attached to the houses.

While the facades of the houses may remain--if they can withstand the construction behind them--the neighbourhood will lose 21 rental units, some housing residents who have lived there for decades. In addition, in the current plan a row of four semi-detached houses with eight units on Spadina (#705-711), will be demolished to make space for another, taller structure on Site 1, one of two towers.

Heritage protection and conservation is another critical concern. The houses in question comprise quite intact examples of late Victorian streetscapes in Toronto. While the facades on Washington Ave may be saved, they alone don't make a streetscape. We will lose the landscape and viewshed directly behind the existing low-rise, residential buildings. In addition, heritage conservation is not only about buildings, but also about uses. For over 50 years, these buildings have represented the existence of a stable, long-term rental community and we believe that this is worth saving.

Heritage Preservation has yet to assess either the Washington or Spadina Ave houses. Ten buildings in Huron-Sussex Character Area are listed on the Heritage Register. Most of the other buildings are presented in the Secondary Plan as having potential to be included on the Register.

HSRO has worked with the University, and will continue to do so, to preserve the rental housing and the heritage integrity of Huron-Sussex while also working to help make the new community that will be situated on Site 1 a great place to live downtown. As of now, we don't believe that we have achieved an appropriate balance. For this reason, we will continue to recommend that the permission given in 1997 be rolled back and that the southern boundary of Site 1 be the north side of the laneway.

### **C. Open Space**

Site 1 will add an estimated 600 housing units to the corner of Bloor and Spadina. Many of the University faculty, staff and students who will live there will have children. The University development is one of three major housing developments that will be built at this intersection in the next five years. The current plan for Site 1 includes very little green, recreational open space at grade. The planned rooftop green space will not be accessible to the surrounding community.

At present, our community has one small parkette, currently under construction after being decommissioned during the expansion of University of Toronto Schools. This is a community that includes not only many young children who live in the neighbourhood, but also those children who attend the three child care centres.

The Huron-Sussex Plan identifies two additional open spaces in the interior of the community, each approximately the size of a housing lot, which is what they were until the houses on them were demolished. The open space at Huron and Washington is the site of the temporary parkette in use until the permanent, original larger parkette across the street is finished. The other open space (at Huron and Glen Morris) is the site of a vibrant and active community garden with 16 beds and 30 members, as well as a City-funded pollinator garden.

We recommend that the two neighbourhood green sites at Huron and Washington and at Huron and Glen Morris be designated Key Open Spaces in the proposed Secondary Plan, especially in light of the anticipated significant local population increase.

### **D. University Housing Strategy**

Section 7.2 of the proposed Secondary Plan states that, “Within three years of the adoption of this Plan, the University of Toronto will provide to the City and will update as necessary over time a housing strategy that describes how it intends to address institutional housing demand.” This statement is followed by four directions for the content of the strategy.

HSRO strongly supports this recommendation and would like to add the following observations which should be considered in the development of the strategy.

- The University has, twice in the past 10 years, encroached on downtown residential communities to build large student residences, rather than use available space on campus.
- In Huron-Sussex, in particular, the University has committed to creating long-term tenancies and opportunities for home ownership in the low-rise, residential core of the neighbourhood and ending the artificial churn that takes place as most new faculty are forced to depart after four years. We made some progress recently when the University agreed to a limited number of eight-year rentals for new faculty. The housing strategy should support the commitment to a more stable population in Huron-Sussex.

- New faculty and student residents in Huron-Sussex are not protected by the provincial Residential Tenancies Act (RTA). Students in any university housing are specifically excluded under legislation. New faculty are excluded due to mandatory membership in a University housing co-op where, unlike most housing co-ops, all but one member of the Board of Directors are U of T staff. We are concerned that an increase of University-affiliated tenants, such as that anticipated in Site 1, will result in a large population renting without the protection of the RTA.

### **E. Indigenous Reconciliation and Engagement**

While City staff have drawn on past consultations with Indigenous communities in drafting the new Secondary Plan and Urban Design Guidelines, there is a stark discrepancy with the focussed and regular meetings held with local residents associations. We very much appreciate these opportunities to ask specific questions about the Secondary Plan and Urban Design Guidelines documents during this stage of revisions. Such focussed, in depth input and guidance from Indigenous communities is necessary for equity and reconciliation, and in our opinion, would make for a much fuller and more sustainable planning document.

Such engagement would also provide important consistency with Councillor Layton’s motion TE29.88, “Addressing Development Pressure at Bloor Street West and Spadina Avenue,” which was adopted by City Council in December 2021. The decision includes the following: “City Council request the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning to initiate Indigenous-led engagement to inform the redevelopments at the Spadina Avenue and Bloor Street West intersection.”

### **3. Recommendations:**

To summarize, HSRO recommends that:

- the permission regarding the boundaries of Site 1 given to the University by the City in 1997 be rolled back and that the southern boundary of Site 1 be the north side of the laneway behind Washington Ave.,
- the buildings in Huron-Sussex Character Area identified in the Secondary Plan as having heritage potential be included in the Heritage Register;
- the two neighbourhood green sites at Huron and Washington and Huron and Glen Morris, be designated Key Open Spaces in the proposed Secondary Plan, especially in light of the anticipated significant local population increase.
- the University develop a housing strategy within three years of the adoption of the new Secondary Plan, taking our observations into consideration when developing the strategy;
- focussed and specific engagement take place with Indigenous communities on the Secondary Plan and Urban Design Guidelines;
- the Huron-Sussex Neighbourhood Planning Study be acknowledged in either the Secondary Plan or the Urban Design Guidelines as a contribution to planning in Huron-Sussex.

Submitted by the Huron-Sussex Residents’ Organization.