

Parkdale Hub

Design Brief
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CreateTO

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1.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

This Design Brief will guide future development by illustrating key design objectives and principles. It was developed through CreateTO, the City of Toronto, and local community, and community partner inputs.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Parkdale Hub is a transformational City-building initiative that will deliver wide-ranging social, cultural and economic benefits to the Parkdale community. It is located at the intersection of Queen Street West and Cowan Avenue, and is home to an important cluster of City-owned facilities and community services, all of which are in need of significant capital investment over the next ten years in order to maintain projected service delivery levels. The site includes 1303 to 1345 Queen Street West as well as 220 Cowan Avenue.

1.2 PURPOSE OF THE DESIGN BRIEF

The purpose of this document is to support a City-initiated Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law Amendment (OPA/ZBA) for Parkdale Hub.

The Design Brief is intended to guide future development by illustrating key design objectives and principles to be reflected in future applications for Site Plan Control. These design objectives have been developed by CreateTO, the City of Toronto, and with input from local stakeholders and the broader Parkdale community.

After the City initiated OPA/ZBA process detailed design and construction of the Centre Block will be led by Parks Forestry and Recreation (PFR) and Toronto Public Library (TPL) and detailed design and construction of the East and West Blocks will be undertaken by a proponent selected by the Housing Secretariat.

1.3 HOUSING NOW INITIATIVE

Housing Now is an initiative that utilizes City-owned lands to deliver affordable housing and the highest possible public benefits within inclusive, complete communities. Initiated by City Council in December 2018, the program is intended to accelerate the development of affordable housing and mixed-income, mixed-use, transit oriented communities. The program is part of the Housing TO 2020-2030 Action Plan and includes the delivery of a mix of rental and ownership housing options, including new affordable rental homes which will remain affordable for 99 years.

The development of new housing through the Housing Now Initiative is guided by the following principles, which were adopted by Council:

- Develop the properties to achieve the highest possible public benefits.
- Optimize the development of housing, with a mix of unit types and sizes of market and affordable rental housing.
- Create homes affordable for a diverse range of incomes, including deeply affordable homes.
- Appropriately address and accommodate existing City uses and other operations on the 21 sites.
- Retain public ownership of the properties, including prioritizing long-term land leases.
- Secure affordability for new affordable rental units for 99 years.
- Engage City Councillors and local communities in the planning and developing of each property.
- Support the participation of non-profit organizations and encourage their involvement in the market offering process through a \$1-million fund approved by City Council.



Figure 1 / The HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan provides a blueprint for action across the full housing spectrum.

1.4 PROCESS

Parkdale Hub was initiated in 2017 through a motion to City Council brought forward by the local Councillor. As directed by City Council, City staff convened an Inter-Divisional Working Group to engage with the local community and develop a coordinated area-wide plan to enhance programming and service delivery spaces and help shape and define revitalization efforts.

The project has been undertaken in four phases highlighted in Fig. 2 (below) and summarized to the right.

Phase 1: Conceptual Design and Massing Study included the development of a community vision and design concept, and several preliminary stakeholder and community meetings to learn what Parkdale residents, community organizations and local City agencies wanted to see included in the future Parkdale Hub. The community vision, developed through these efforts, is a welcoming and vibrant space that serves Parkdale’s needs today, and is adaptive to evolving needs of the community in the future.

Phase 2: Feasibility Analysis and Program Review included schematic design, investigations into property acquisition, and exploration of opportunities for increasing affordable housing on the site. During this phase, a Local Advisory Committee was formed and coordination was undertaken with City Agencies (TPL, PFR, & SDFA) to determine the needs for their spaces. The Parkdale Hub site was approved as a Housing Now pipeline site in November 2021.

Phase 3: City Council Approval included the development of a Design Brief, a Demonstration Plan and a City-initiated Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendment process. Community meetings, pop-ups, and exhibitions were held to discuss the design concept. Council formally brought Parkdale Hub into the Housing Now Initiative adopting item PH3.6 in May of 2023.

Phase 4: Detailed Design and Approvals will be undertaken starting in late 2023. It will include the selection of a partner for the detailed design, permits and approvals of the East and West Blocks and the detailed design, permits and approvals of the Centre Block (Community Centre and Library).



Figure 2 / Study process.

1.5 CONTEXT

Parkdale Hub is located at the intersection of Queen Street West and Cowan Avenue, within the historic town of Parkdale. This intersection has been the focal point of civic and community life since Parkdale's early settlement as highlighted by the cluster of civic and cultural uses.

The north side of Queen Street West, and the south sides flanking the site, have a fine-grained main street character that primarily consists of continuous rows of two to three-storey commercial storefronts with narrow frontages and a zero-lot line condition.

By contrast, Cowan Avenue is primarily a residential street that transitions into an important node of civic and religious institutions in the heart of the historic Village of Parkdale. Cowan Avenue contains Masaryk Park and four listed or designated historic buildings identified in Fig. 10: the Masaryk-Cowan Community Recreation Centre (220 Cowan Avenue); the Cowan Avenue Methodist Church, now St. John's Polish National Catholic Church (186 Cowan Avenue); the former Parkdale Telephone Exchange Building (207 and 207A Cowan Avenue); and St. Mark's Anglican Church, now the Church of the Epiphany and St. Mark (201 Cowan Avenue).

Backing onto the west side of Masaryk Park, with frontage onto Dunn Avenue, is a 19-storey apartment building at 245 Dunn Avenue, operated by Toronto Community Housing.

Milky Way Lane runs parallel to Queen Street West between Dufferin Street and Cowan Avenue. It plays an important function in service access to the buildings along Queen Street West and as a pedestrian connection.

Parkdale Hub is located within the Parkdale Main Street Heritage Conservation District (the 'HCD' or the 'District') and contains two publicly-owned heritage buildings (1313 Queen Street West and 220 Cowan Avenue), which will be conserved and incorporated as part of the future Hub. These buildings have accommodated a broad variety of program uses over time and can continue to support and enrich community life through adaptive re-use. Together, these buildings speak to the rich life and cultural heritage of this part of Parkdale, and provide an incredibly valuable foundation upon which to build a future vision for revitalization.

Please refer to ERA Architect's Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) and Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report (CHER) for further history of the Hub, its relationship to the surrounding physical context and an overview of the existing heritage policy context.

Parkdale Hub is well served by public transit. The 501 Queen Streetcar runs along Queen Street and the 504 King Streetcar is a short walk to the south.



Figure 3 / 1313 Queen Street West



Figure 4 / 220 Cowan Avenue: the former Fire Hall No.18.



Figure 5 / World Peace Monument art piece



Figure 6 / Parkdale Hub today: aerial view (2020).

1.6 THE SITE

Parkdale Hub includes approximately 17,160m² of City-owned lands. Existing land uses and development patterns divide the site into three 'Blocks' and areas for public realm improvements as shown in Fig. 10. Each block has its own character and potential for redevelopment or adaptive re-use, enabling flexibility for phased development.

The West Block

The West Block is 2,063m² in size and currently includes the properties at 1337-1345 Queen Street West. The block is currently occupied by a Dollarama store that is being acquired by the City of Toronto to deliver additional housing and community spaces.

The Centre Block

The Centre Block is 4,456m² in size and currently includes the Masaryk-Cowan Community Recreation Centre (220 Cowan Avenue), the Parkdale Arts and Culture Centre (PACC, 1313 Queen Street West) and a Toronto Parking Authority surface parking lot (1325 Queen Street West). The site includes two properties in the City's Heritage Register. The first property, located at 1313 Queen Street West, is currently a listed heritage property and will soon be a designated property. The second property, situated at 220 Cowan Avenue, is designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act.

The East Block

The East Block is 1,710m² in size and currently includes the Parkdale Library Branch (1303 Queen Street West) and associated surface parking.

Areas for Public Realm Improvements

The areas for public realm improvements include:

- The sidewalks from the building face to the curb along Queen Street West.
- Cowan Avenue from Queen Street to Masaryk Park.
- A portion of Milky Way Lane (extending from Cowan Avenue to the eastern extent Parkdale Hub).
- The future service area between 245 Dunn Avenue and the West Block.
- The interface between the future Centre Block and Masaryk Park, including relocation of an existing cistern and transformer and improvements to the public realm adjacent to existing community garden plots.



Figure 7 / The East Block today. (2020)



Figure 8 / The Centre Block today. (2020)



Figure 9 / The West Block today. (2020)



Figure 10 / Study Area.

1.7 PARKDALE HUB POLICY CONTEXT

Design for the Parkdale Hub is governed by several City of Toronto policy documents that guide the integration of new buildings, the exterior character of renovations, additions to existing buildings, and investments in community services and public space. These policy documents include, but are not limited to:

- City of Toronto Official Plan
- OPA 445 and SASP 556
- Parkdale Main Street HCD
- City of Toronto Zoning By-law 569-2013
- Growing Up Urban Design Guidelines
- Toronto Green Standard Version 4
- Parks Forestry and Recreation (PF&R) and Toronto Public Library (TPL) Design Guidelines.

The Official Plan (March 2022). The Official Plan sets out the overarching development criteria and critical design considerations that apply to detailed design and reviews of Site Plan Applications.

Parkdale Hub is located along Queen Street West, which is designated as an ‘Avenue’ (Map 2-Urban Structure). Policies guiding the redevelopment of Avenues are outlined in Section 2.2.3 (Avenue: Re-Urbanizing Arterial Corridors).

Land Use Plan 18 designates the frontage properties abutting Queen Street West as ‘Mixed Use’, the Masaryk-Cowan Community Centre (220 Cowan Avenue) and the Toronto Community Housing Building (245 Dunn Avenue) as ‘Neighbourhood’ and Masaryk Park as ‘Park’. The OPA will re-designate a small portion of the north end of the West Block from ‘Neighbourhood’ to ‘Mixed Use.’

The policies within Chapter 03: Building a Successful City govern the built form, public realm, community services and facilities, housing, public art, heritage conservation, higher order transit, parks and open spaces, and the natural environment design of the Hub.

Official Plan Amendment 445 (OPA) and Site and Specific Policy Area 556 (SASP) (Adopted October 2020, under appeal). The policies within SASP 556 support opportunities for contextually appropriate growth and change within the Parkdale Main Street and West Queen West SASP while conserving and enhancing the cultural heritage value of the area. Parkdale Hub is located within The Parkdale Main Street Character Area, which includes Queen Street West, between Dufferin Avenue and Roncesvalles Avenue.

The SASP guides public and private investment in public spaces, informs City decision-making on transportation improvements, and encourages sustainable choices in development of new buildings and additions, and the reuse of existing buildings. OPA 445 is intended be read and interpreted with the Parkdale Main Street Heritage Conservation District Plan.

According to OPA 445, the Parkdale Hub has been identified as a Focus Area (6.1) that prioritize public realm enhancements. These improvements aim to enrich and reinforce its significance as a vital cultural and civic area.

On July 19, 2023, Council adopted item CC8.20 “West Queen West Planning Study (Bathurst Street to Roncesvalles Avenue) - Official Plan Amendment - Request for Direction”, which proposed a series of amendments to Policy 566 for lands generally fronting Queen Street West between Roncesvalles Avenue and Bathurst Street. The policies of OPA 445 (SASP 566) support opportunities for contextually appropriate growth and change. Amendments to the policies provide for further direction and flexibility where warranted. Item CC8.20 is available at this link: <https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2023.CC8.20>

In July of 2023, staff recommended Council adopt a revised SASP with modifications to the policies Council previously adopted in September of 2020. The revised OPA is intended to provide additional flexibility, where appropriate, and greater clarity and precision for the implementation of the policies while continuing to reflect the original intent and achieve the objectives previously endorsed by Council.

The Parkdale Main Street Heritage Conservation District Plan (Adopted July 2020, under appeal).

The HCD establishes a framework to conserve cultural heritage value through the protection, conservation and management of heritage attributes. The HCD will manage change within the District to conserve the area's cultural heritage through the implementation of contextual policies and guidelines. All properties within the HCD boundaries will be designated under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act. The HCD Plan is available at this link: <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2022/te/bgrd/backgroundfile-227694.pdf>

Parkdale Hub includes:

- Two properties which are currently on the City's Heritage Register: 1313 Queen St W (listed with intention to designate - [Item PH3.15](#), May 2023), & 220 Cowan Ave (designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act). These properties have been identified as 'Contributing Properties' and 'Landmarks' in the HCD Plan. (Page 42 & 63).
- Two Key Views: the view southeast towards 1313 Queen Street West from O'Hara Avenue (View 3); and the view southwest towards 1313 Queen Street West from the corner of Brock Avenue and Queen Street West (View 4). (Page 52)
- Cowan Avenue has been identified as a 'Focus Area,' and the lands surrounding the intersection of Queen Street West and Cowan Avenue are identified as a 'Historic Node.' (Page 54).

Parks Forestry and Recreation (PF&R) and Toronto Public Library (TPL) Design Guidelines.

The design and construction of the Centre Block is required to adhere to all PF&R and TPL guidelines and standards. TPL have their own Design Service Delivery Model, which outlines the standards, planning guidelines, and service levels for the library component.

2.0 VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Vision for Parkdale Hub was established during Phase 1 and 2 of the project following comprehensive engagement with stakeholders and community members

The 6 Guiding Principles that follow encapsulate their vision for this project.



Complete Cultural Community Hub

Create an accessible and integrated community gathering place.

Support community activities, programs, services and events and encourage synergies between uses.

Maximize the use of public lands for community uses.



Vibrant Public Realm

Reinforce this site as the heart of Parkdale and a public realm focal point along Queen Street West.

Revitalize the public realm to provide a range of indoor and outdoor places for community use.



Establish and Improve Connectivity

Improve inter-connectivity throughout the site and link together the various uses.

Strengthen physical and visual connections between: Cowan Avenue and Dunn Avenue through Masaryk Park; the Community Centre and Masaryk Park; Queen Street West and Cowan Avenue (in particular highlighting the landmark building at 1313 Queen Street West); and Cowan Avenue and Milky Way Lane.



Context Sensitive Built Form

Design new buildings to be compatible with Queen West's historic and evolving character, the City of Toronto Official Plan Policies and the Parkdale Main Street Heritage Conservation District Plan (HCD 2022).

Use new buildings to enhance the continuity and fill the gaps of the historic streetwall on south side of Queen Street West.



Celebrate Heritage

Reinforce the site's use as a civic node and community gathering place.

Integrate heritage buildings into new development through adaptive re-use. Distinguish new from original fabric.

Conserve heritage properties in accordance with the heritage policy framework and conservation best practices.



Support Diverse Housing Choices

Leverage the use of public lands to support a diverse range of housing opportunities that provide housing types for all income brackets, and accommodates housing choices throughout a person's life within the Parkdale Community.

3.0 BUILT FORM

OPA 445 requires the adaptive re-use of heritage buildings, new infill buildings and public realm improvements to reinforce a pedestrian-scaled and animated community hub in the heart of Parkdale.

3.1 OPA 445

As per OPA 445, redevelopment of the Parkdale Hub within the Parkdale Main Street site and area specific policy will:

- “Engage and consult community members, community-based organizations, Business Improvement Areas, City divisions, agencies, and other affected stakeholders.” (6.1.1.)
- “Have regard for the direction of the public realm, transportation and built form policies...in the overall design of the project.” (6.1.2.)
- “Ensure high-quality building design, materiality and construction practices.” (6.1.3.)
- “Provide contextually-sensitive and appropriate built form to integrate with its surroundings.” (6.1.4.)
- “Conserve on-site and adjacent significant heritage resources. The submission of a Heritage Impact Assessment and Conservation Plan will be required to demonstrate how the on-site and adjacent heritage resources are being conserved.” (6.1.5.)
- “Expand, enhance and improve connections in the public realm to accommodate all users.” (6.1.6.)

3.2 OPA 445: OVERARCHING DESIGN POLICIES

Below is a summary of the overarching OPA 445 built form policy direction in the context of the Parkdale Hub. The cluster of historic civic, cultural and institutional buildings that make up the Parkdale Hub are unique; and it's design must have regard to the broader Parkdale Main Street policy objectives. Section 3.4 of this Design Brief will identify deviations to these broader policies, which have been reviewed and approved by the City of Toronto through the OPA and ZBA process.

Built Form

Section 5 of OPA 445 recognizes the existing conditions of West Queen West, the Parkdale Main Street and provides built form direction on how growth will be encouraged.

In response, the Parkdale Hub includes the conservation of heritage values and attributes as outlined in Section 3.3 of this Design Brief, limits the extent and impacts of lot consolidation by incorporating vertical bays and articulation that respond to Queen Street West's main street character, and locates animated uses such as library, community centre and community agency space on the ground floor to support a vibrant street life.

New buildings on the East and West blocks of the Parkdale Hub provide a transition from established front yard setbacks, and their architectural elements reference the horizontal datum lines of adjacent heritage buildings at 1291, 1313, and 1347 Queen Street West. The new buildings and additions are situated and massed in a way that fits with the lower-scale streetwall character of Queen Street West, with deviations to the overarching policies detailed in Section 3.4 of this Design Brief.

Equipment and amenity spaces located on the rooftop will be situated and screened to minimize visual impact on the heritage buildings, and negative impacts on surrounding properties. Access to the site servicing and parking is provided at the rear of the buildings via Milky Way Lane and Dunn Avenue. Garbage storage will be incorporated within the buildings, while garbage collection and loading areas within the building are also encouraged.