

Held. Together. Community Ownership. Community Benefit.

October 19, 2023

To: Toronto City Clerk
Members of the Planning and Housing Committee

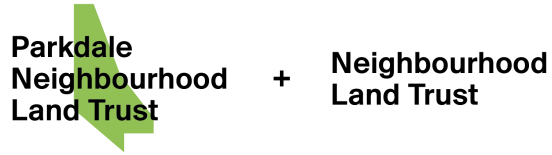
RE: 1303-1345 Queen Street West and 212-224 Cowan Avenue
Letter of Support to amend the Official Plan and Zoning By-law and allow the associated rental housing demolition and conversion

I am writing on behalf of the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust and the Neighbourhood Land Trust (collectively “the Land Trust”) in support of the Official Plan amendment and rezoning application for the Parkdale Community Hub redevelopment.

In 2016, the Parkdale People’s Economy project led a Community Planning Study that proposed the community-driven revitalization of this co-located set of City-owned properties to improve community facilities, provide community space for non-profit organizations, and build badly-needed new affordable housing. The Land Trust commends and appreciates Councillor Perks and the City staff team for championing the community’s vision since then. Throughout the Parkdale Community Hub planning process, hundreds of community members have been engaged in consultations and workshops, and we have been encouraged to see the City’s plans evolve over time in response to community input.

We support the Official Plan amendment and rezoning to allow the Parkdale Community Hub and believe that the redevelopment can help address important needs in the Parkdale community. In particular, the Land Trust’s 2023 Housing Needs Assessment Study and 2022 Parkdale Tower Rental Housing Study demonstrated a strong need for affordable rental housing, including family-sized units, accessible units, and units that are deeply affordable for those on fixed incomes.

However, we wish to note our concern that the minimum level of affordability for this project has changed. Throughout the community process, the project was presented as including a minimum of 50% affordable rental housing. Recently, the City reduced this to a minimum of 30% affordable units. We want to assert that based on the documented community need for affordable housing, and from the perspective of community expectations, a target of 30% of affordable units is not adequate. We urge the City to ensure, as part of the rezoning, that at least 50% of the units are allocated as permanently affordable units.



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In addition, we understand that there may be some community concern about the City's recent change to increase the height and density of the West Block. While we are conscious of the potential for the 16-storey West Block building to set a precedent for additional height on Queen Street, the Land Trust believes that the location of the tall portion of the West Block against the existing Toronto Community Housing apartment can mitigate this potential precedent. The increased height and density of the West Block responds to the Land Trust's early requests to maximize affordable housing in the Parkdale Hub, and we can support the additional height and density if it means more affordable housing for the community, and in particular, a return to a minimum 50% affordability target.

In summary, we support the Official Plan amendment and rezoning and look forward to the revitalized Parkdale Community Hub and the amenities and affordable housing that it will bring to Parkdale, with the important caveat that the need for affordable housing is great, and we strongly urge the City to work to maximize its target for affordable units.

Thank you for your consideration,

Joshua Barndt
Executive Director