



October 23, 2023

Planning & Housing Committee

Subject: Item - 2023.PH7.5

Request to Amend the Official Plan and Zoning By-law – Application Number 22 241856
STE 04 OZ

Dear Committee Members,

The Parkdale Residents Association (PRA) would like to address the proposed amendment to the Official Plan and rezoning application for the Parkdale Hub. This site includes 1303, 1313, 1325, 1337, and 1345 Queen Street West, and 212, 220, and 224 Cowan Avenue.

The Parkdale Hub encompasses the Parkdale Public Library, Masaryk Cowan Community Centre, Parkdale Arts & Culture Centre (1313 Queen St. W), a Toronto Parking Authority parking lot, and Dollarama (1337 Queen St. W). The total site area is 4.24 acres, situated at the intersection of Queen Street West and Cowan Avenue, with significant street frontage on Queen Street.

The PRA, along with other local community groups, has actively participated in surveys, community meetings, and working groups (both virtual and in-person) since 2016. We have organized independent events and surveys to gather information and engage with the community and the City to maximize the benefits of this location. Our primary goal is to leverage the capital assets of various City properties to better serve the current and future needs of our Parkdale community.

We have two major areas of concern regarding the Parkdale Hub project as presented to you:

First: The diminished consideration for the Parkdale Arts and Cultural Centre (PACC) and a reduction in artists' live/work units on the site.

Second: The commitment to ensuring that at least 50% of the housing units across the whole site are affordable.

Regarding the first concern (PACC):

- Initially, the design adhered to the 6-storey (20-meter) height limit specified by the West Queen West Planning Study - Official Plan Amendment 445 (OPA 445) and Site and Area Specific Policy 556 (SASP 556).
- This design included 107 housing units, which encompassed the existing 9 live/work spaces for cultural workers (8.4%) and consideration for incorporating PACC into the design.
- The community agreed that more affordable housing was necessary on the Hub site, aligning with City Council's 2020 directive to "Maximize the creation of new affordable-housing opportunities on city-owned lands near existing transit."
- Subsequent revisions increased the height limit to 10-storeys (32 meters) in the West section, resulting in 171 affordable housing units and a minor increase in live/work units to 10 (5.9%).
- The most recent revision raised the height limit to 16-storeys (50 meters) in the West section, bringing the total residential units to 231 but reducing the number of artists' live/work units back to the original 9 (3.9%) for only 20-years.
- This change also eliminated the concept of live/work spaces for artists and replaced it with the generic term - rental dwelling units. We believe this should be reconsidered. Given the increased housing capacity allowing the original percentage of units of live/work units to be retained (8.4% = 19 units).
- More attention should be given to the cultural component of the Parkdale Hub site to ensure that artists remain a vibrant sector of the community.

Furthermore, with Councillor Perks now serving on the Artscape board, which is the sole lease tenant at 1313 Queen Street West, negotiations with Artscape should be a priority to represent the cultural component of the Parkdale Hub project. Given Artscape's uncertain future due to potential receivership and bankruptcy, it's essential to have a clear representative for the cultural component.

Currently, the emphasis is on the Parkdale Public Library and Parks and Recreation Centre, with minimal attention to the cultural component. We request equal representation for all three vital institutional components: Parkdale Public Library, Parks and Recreation Centre, and the Parkdale Arts and Culture Centre (*see Appendix 1*).

The Parkdale Arts and Culture Centre has been the cultural heart of our community for 26 years. We aim to enhance its significance within the Parkdale Town Square (Parkdale Hub), not diminish it.

Regarding the second concern (50% Affordable Rental Units): During community consultations and working groups, there was a clear understanding that CreateTO and Housing Now were in sync with the community's desire to maximize the number of units designated as affordable. We have recently learned that Housing Now may only require a minimum of 30% affordable housing units on the site. To ensure the community's vision is upheld, we seek assurances that the 50% minimum will be maintained, as it has been discussed in numerous meetings with community stakeholders.

In closing, we would like to thank the Committee for the opportunity to present the thoughts of local residents.

Sincerely,

Ric Amis

Chair, Parkdale Residents Association

Appendix 1: We draw your attention to Item 3 of Top Priorities from a report commissioned by CreateTO and authored by Argyle Public Relations, titled "Parkdale Community Hub: Feedback, Insights, and Next Steps," dated June 28, 2019:

Top Priorities: 3. Prioritize artists – The role of local artists was frequently discussed, focusing on their influence in Parkdale's culture but also in discussions of prioritizing public art. The community made it clear that they consider artists to be a core aspect of Parkdale, and would like to see a focus on spaces where the public can enjoy and interact with art. This included gallery space and making spaces available for outside exhibits. Some individuals mentioned a desire for (*more*) affordable artist workspaces to be included in the community hub, as well as spaces for performance and exhibitions...