

Regent Park Neighbourhood Association



Regent Park Neighbourhood Association Inc.

585 Dundas Street East, Toronto, Ontario
M5A 2B7 – 3rd Floor
rpna.info@gmail.com
(437)-928-7154

December 2nd 2024.

Mayor Olivia Chow

Toronto City Hall, 2nd Floor
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Members of the Toronto and East York Community Council

Toronto City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Subject: Regent Park Phases 4 & 5 – Zoning By-law Amendment (Item 2024.TE18.7)

Dear Mayor Chow and Members of the Toronto and East York Community Council,

The Regent Park Neighbourhood Association (RPNA), representing over 17,000 residents - market tenants, homeowners, social housing tenants in the Regent Park community, is writing to address item **2024.TE18.7, the proposed Zoning By-law Amendment for Phases 4 and 5.**

Key Concerns and Requests:

1. Balanced Housing Mix and Delivery of RGI Units

We strongly oppose the addition of 98 new market units, as indicated in the amended Housing Issues Report, without a proportional increase in Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) units. During the February 29, 2024, Regent Park Community Update Meeting, Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC), represented by Peter Zimmerman, committed to a 50/50 mix of RGI and market units for any additional housing proposed. The current proposal violates this commitment, as no new RGI units have been included.

Additionally, while the updated Housing Issues Report outlines 637 affordable units adhering to the OPA 558 income-based affordability definition, these units are contingent on funding

from various levels of government. To date, the City has committed funding for only 135 affordable units in Building 4A. We call on the City to prioritize securing funding and partnerships to deliver the full complement of 637 affordable units and to uphold commitments to RGI housing.

Request: Ensure that at least 50% of the proposed 98 additional units are designated as RGI and advocate for securing funding for all 637 affordable units.

2. Reviving and Expanding Homeownership Opportunities

Homeownership has always been a critical pathway to stability and wealth-building for low-income tenants in Regent Park. However, the suspension of key programs like the Daniels Boost Affordable Homeownership Program and the TCHC Foundation Homeownership Program has drastically limited access.

Recent Announcement by Daniels Corporation:

We commend the recent announcement by Daniels Corporation of a \$5 million commitment to the **Partnership for Affordable Homeownership program**, which has already enabled nine current or former TCHC residents in Regent Park to become homeowners through Daniels on Parliament. This initiative is a step in the right direction, but more needs to be done to expand access.

Concerns Over Rent-to-Own Programs:

Recent comments by Peter Zimmerman dismissing the demand for rent-to-own programs misrepresent the community's interest in homeownership. A pilot Rent-to-Own Housing Program for low-income TCHC tenants could provide an innovative pathway for residents to transition into homeownership.

Key Facts on Past and Current Programs:

- **Daniels Home Investment Program (HIP):** Helps tenants save for their first home and demonstrates a commitment to supporting affordable ownership.
- **Foundation Program:** Between 2009 and 2014, \$1.61 million in federal funding enabled 15 households in Regent Park to purchase homes through down payment assistance loans averaging \$121,000. None of the recipients defaulted, highlighting the program's success.
- **Daniels Boost Program:** Provided critical support to prospective buyers but was suspended due to rising costs and limited funding.

While these programs have demonstrated significant benefits, the limited scale of their implementation—only 17 Regent Park residents have accessed homeownership opportunities through such initiatives—shows the need for more robust support.

Request: Expand the Daniels Partnership for Affordable Homeownership program, reinstate affordable homeownership programs like the Foundation Program, and pilot rent-to-own housing initiatives for low-income tenants.

For further context, please refer to:

- **Daniels Corporation Announcement:** [A Pathway to Future Homeownership](#)
- **Impact Report (2021-2022):** [Daniels' Partnership for Affordable Homeownership](#)

3. Community Spaces and Needs

The Regent Park Space Needs Assessment, commissioned by RPNA and the Community Building Working Group of the Regent Park Social Development Plan, highlights a severe shortfall in community spaces. Currently, only 3,714 square meters of community space are planned, despite the increased population density from the redevelopment.

We request an additional 2,000 square meters of community space and recommend governance through the **Association of Community Centres (AOCC)** model. This approach will ensure community oversight, accountability, and alignment with local needs, as successfully implemented in other downtown communities like 519 and Scadding Court.

Request: Increase community space allocation by 2,000 square meters and implement AOCC-style governance for these spaces.

4. Developer Accountability and Community Benefits

The \$325 million subsidy proposed under City Council's EX18.2 motion should be redirected to prioritize rent-geared-to-income housing on City-owned land. Subsidizing private developers detracts from public investment in sustainable, affordable housing solutions.

Furthermore, community benefits from Tridel must be clearly defined and aligned with the new community benefit charge framework to ensure meaningful contributions to Regent Park's redevelopment.

Request: Redirect developer subsidies to fund RGI housing on City-owned land and define community benefits in line with the new framework.

5. Child Care and Social Infrastructure

The 2017 Downtown Community Services and Facilities Strategy indicates a need for an additional 3,700 child care spaces by 2031. With 3,246 units planned in Phases 4 and 5, we estimate the need for at least 62 child care spaces to accommodate the growing Regent Park population.

Request: Include at least 62 child care spaces and develop a comprehensive Community Services and Facilities Strategy for Regent Park.

6. Commitment to Affordable Housing

The RPNA reiterates its expectation that all social housing units in Regent Park remain as such in perpetuity, with a minimum tenure of 99 years for affordable units under OPA 558's income-based definition. The City must work with other levels of government to secure subsidies and ensure deeper affordability.

Request: Secure a 99-year minimum tenure for all affordable units and advocate for additional subsidies to deepen affordability.

Broader Implications

The RPNA is deeply concerned about the ongoing commodification of housing and the growing reliance on private developers to deliver essential housing. The City must prioritize public-led development models, such as community land trusts, to safeguard affordability and ensure housing serves the public good.

Closing.

Regent Park's redevelopment must remain rooted in equity, inclusivity, and affordability. Expanding homeownership opportunities, restoring the housing balance, and enhancing community spaces are essential to meeting the needs of Regent Park residents.

We urge you to address the concerns outlined in this letter.

Thank you for your attention and commitment to the needs of Regent Park's residents.

Sincerely,

Walied Khogali Ali
Chair, Board of Directors
Regent Park Neighbourhood Association
(416-625-7712)

Shahan Ahia
President
Regent Park Neighbourhood Association
(416-918-4385)

Attachments:

- Housing Issues Report Addendum (September 9, 2024)
- [Regent Park Space Needs Assessment](#)

About the Regent Park Neighbourhood Association

The RPNA seeks to foster an inclusive, diverse and healthy neighbourhood in which all residents feel at home. The RPNA also recognizes that Toronto Community Housing (TCH) residents had a vibrant community in Regent Park prior to the redevelopment and seeks to build on that history of grassroots initiatives, resident led ventures, and strong networks. To ensure that this heritage is not lost, TCH residents serve in half of the RPNA Leadership Team positions. The RPNA's advocacy was central in negotiating and winning a commitment from TCHC to include a \$26.8M Community Benefits Agreement as part of Phase 4 and 5 of revitalization in Regent Park.

The RPNA seeks to foster an inclusive, diverse and healthy community through...

1. **ADVOCACY** - to provide a strong voice for residents on issues that will benefit our entire community.
2. **COMMUNITY BUILDING** - to bring our culturally diverse and mixed-income community together.
3. **COMMUNICATION** - So much is happening in Regent Park! It's important to keep residents informed.

