

Meeting Summary

Parkdale LAC Meeting #1



Parkdale Main Street Heritage Conservation District Plan
March 8, 2022, 6:00 – 8:00 pm
Online and by phone via WebEx

Overview

On Tuesday March 8, 2022, the City of Toronto hosted the first Local Advisory Committee (LAC) meeting focused on the Parkdale Main Street Heritage Conservation District (HCD) Plan. The purpose of the meeting was to: recap the Parkdale Main Street HCD Plan purpose and process, review the Draft LAC Terms of Reference, and discuss draft statements of cultural heritage value & heritage attributes and objectives as well as draft key policies and guidelines for the HCD Plan (see Appendix A for agenda). Due to the on-going COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting took place on WebEx.

10 out of the 12 invited organizations participated in the meeting (see Appendix B for the participant list). Other participants included City of Toronto staff from Heritage Planning and Community Planning as well as a representative from Councillor Perks office.

Following a land acknowledgement from Councillor Perks' office, Ian Malczewski from the independent facilitation team Third Party Public reviewed the agenda and Draft LAC Terms of Reference and facilitated a round of introductions. Pourya Nazemi and Megan Albinger from the City Planning Division then presented the Parkdale HCD Plan purpose and process recap, draft HCD statements and District resources, and a review of key policies and guidelines. The City divided its presentation into two parts, each of which was followed by questions of clarification and a plenary discussion.

Participants were encouraged to send any additional feedback to the Third Party Public team by March 15. This summary written by Third Party Public summarizes feedback shared during the meeting — both during the discussions and through the chat box — as well as feedback shared afterwards. It is not intended as a verbatim transcript.

What we heard overall

This section summarizes key points we heard in the meeting. They are high-level takeaways only – readers should review them in the context of the broader, more detailed feedback that follows.

It's important that the City clarify the opportunities and limitations of an HCD Plan. LAC members were interested in understanding how the City can meaningfully conserve Parkdale's intangible heritage, saying this information is important in informing how they can best participate in this HCD Plan process. Also, the long timeline of the HCD process can be frustrating, so knowing what efforts can be made to protect the cultural heritage of Parkdale today is helpful.

Art and creativity, cultural diversity, affordability, and an entrepreneurial spirit are key elements of Parkdale's intangible culture. LAC members said these are intangible attributes of the community's character that they would like to see conserved.

Parkdale has several under-used public spaces that could help support the conservation of the community's heritage, including the leftover spaces at the corners where north-south streets intersect with Queen Street West. The HCD Plan should consider providing opportunities for dynamic public art created by local artists.

LAC members did not raise any strong concerns about the key policies and objectives in the draft HCD Plan. LAC members emphasized the rich history of the neighbourhood as a vibrant and multicultural community, and the important role it plays in Toronto as a historic thoroughfare.

Questions of clarification

Throughout the meeting, participants asked questions of clarification. Questions from participants are in **bold** text, responses from the project team follow each question in *italicized* text.

- **Were the chapters presented the same ones the City shared in advance of the meeting?**
Only Chapter 4 (which includes the objectives) was sent to participants ahead of the meeting. The presentation will be shared with participants after the meeting.
- **How is this discussion different from previous City-led conversations about Parkdale's heritage (such as those held during the HCD Study)?** *This conversation is different in that the City is asking for feedback specifically on the intangible aspects of heritage that need protection. Previous meetings focused on tangible aspects, like the physical features of buildings and the public realm. This discussion is also different in that the City has invited new organizations that might bring different perspectives on heritage. The previous Working Group meetings (as part of the HCD Study and Queen Street West Planning Study) were*

focused on looking at the entirety of Queen Street West between Bathurst and Roncesvalles and discussed the overall community values.

- **When is the earliest the City can implement the HCD Plan?** *After Council approves the HCD Plan, there is a 30-day period in which someone might appeal the Plan. If there are no appeals, the Plan would be in force after that period. If there are appeals, implementation timing will depend on the number of appeals and the complexity of the issues expressed.*
- **There are many things that make up Parkdale’s culture, including affordability, newcomers, and mental health organizations. How is the City defining culture in this HCD Plan? Does it relate only to the physical aspects of Parkdale?** *The term culture is intended to help the HCD Plan be expansive and inclusive in describing what makes Parkdale unique. The term “cultural heritage value” encompasses both the physical and intangible aspects of the area’s character. For example, the HCD Study identified mental health services as part of Parkdale’s social and community cultural value.*
- **What are the criteria used to identify a landmark property?** *For the purpose of the HCD, the City is considering: architectural detail, architectural quality, location, and social importance to the community. If LAC members feel other buildings should be considered, please let the team know the addresses.*

How will the Province’s new Planning Act impact the HCD Plan? Is the City anticipating any Council decisions about the HCD Plan to be challenged by the Province? *Response added after the meeting: The amendments to the Ontario Heritage Act (OHA), as part of Bill 108, came into force as of July 1, 2021. The revisions made to the OHA did not result in any changes to the Heritage Conservation District designation process (under Part V of the OHA). It impacted the Part IV heritage designation process, for properties individually designated under the OHA, but not the Part V properties (designated as part of the Heritage Conservation District).*

Detailed summary of feedback

The discussion in the meeting covered three topics:

1. The HCD Plan’s statement of cultural heritage value & heritage attributes, and statement of objectives
2. Key proposed HCD Policies and Guidelines (related to contributing and non-contributing properties and parks and public realm)
3. Other feedback and process advice

The summary below is organized under these three topics. Participant feedback and suggestions are included first. Responses from the project team, where provided, follow in *italicized text*.

Feedback about statement of cultural heritage value & heritage attributes, and statement of objectives

In the first part of the meeting, the City shared excerpts from Chapters 3, 4, and 5 of the emerging HCD Plan, covering District Significance (including statements of cultural heritage value and descriptions of heritage attributes), District Boundary and Resources (including building typologies, architectural styles, and others), and a Statement of Objectives. The City asked LAC members to comment on the extent to which these chapters adequately identified and supported social and community values and to share advice on what statements (if any) could be improved.

LAC members did not raise any strong concerns or major suggestions to the statements. They focused the bulk of their feedback on sharing examples of Parkdale's intangible characteristics (its social, cultural, and community attributes) that should be protected, including:

- **Artistic and creative culture.** Artists gather in Parkdale (for example, at Gallery 1313) and the community's artistic and creative culture is something that should be conserved. An important part of conserving this culture is providing access to physical space: community members have had to turn down many artists interested in exhibiting their art over the years due to shortages of space for public art.
- **Cultural diversity.** Parkdale is home to many nationalities, making it vibrant, socially diverse, and socially "safer" for many diverse communities, including Filipino and Tibetan communities. "The community is so woven and intertwined. It creates a strong fabric".
- **Affordability.** Several LAC members said affordability is a fundamental part of the "social fabric of Parkdale", saying the presence of "different communities" (newcomers, artists, people navigating mental health, and substance users) is a reflection of the area's overall "affordability and affordable access" to space. They said they would like to see the City conserve affordability, both in terms of physical space and Parkdale's broader social fabric affordability is especially important since, over the last two decades, there has been an enormous change in "who can run a business or afford to live in Parkdale".
- **An entrepreneurial spirit.** Parkdale is home and has long supported new and creative businesses. Conserving this "entrepreneurial spirit" (by "preserving storefronts", for example) is important as it keeps shopping local and "makes the neighbourhood more walkable".

Throughout the discussions, LAC members said they "don't want to preserve just a veneer of Parkdale"; instead, the true, authentic cultural fabric of the district should be conserved. They said they wanted to avoid seeing the area becoming "art themed" or "multicultural themed" while the social and cultural fabric changes from people being displaced. Several LAC members wanted to better understand what tangible influence this HCD Plan would have in conserving Parkdale's intangible heritage attributes. *The City shared examples of how it has identified and conserved intangible heritage in other HCD Plans, including the Garden District HCD Plan (which identified "innovation" and "community social services" as intangible aspects of the neighbourhood) and*

the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood HCD Plan (which described streets as having an important role in supporting public gatherings, events, civic activities, and pedestrian amenities). The City said it would provide a table that will clarify the opportunities and limitations of an HCD Plan and what types of topics could be addressed through other policies and planning tools.

Feedback about the proposed HCD Policies and Guidelines

In the second part of the meeting, the City shared an overview of Chapters 6, 7, and 8 of the emerging HCD Plan, covering policies and guidelines focused on managing change for contributing (heritage) and non-contributing (non-heritage) properties (massing, building materials, storefronts, and other topics) and parks and public realm (streetscape, nodes and focus areas, views and gateways, and others). The City asked LAC members to comments on the degree to which it had captured different potential development scenarios and which aspects of parks and public realm should be conserved.

The City staff presentation explained how the HCD Plan is intended to conserve and maintain the existing fine grain fabric, historic main street character and continuous streetwall along Queen Street West. It included a range of different hypothetical opportunities for new development and additions on contributing and non-contributing properties including infill/mid-block properties, corner properties and landmark properties. The HCD Plan is intended to conserve the cultural heritage value and heritage attributes of the District while accommodating growth along Queen Street West as a prominent historic main street in downtown Toronto. LAC members did not raise any strong concerns about (or suggest any additions to) the proposed development scenarios the City shared, though they said it would be helpful to understand what aspects of those development scenarios are open for influence to help them comment on the scenarios. One LAC member shared a detailed list of suggested properties the City could identify as local landmarks that could be considered in identification of significant views to be conserved in the HCD Plan (included in Appendix C – suggestions about specific properties).

The City staff presentation emphasized the importance of parks and public realm in the Parkdale area and how an HCD Plan can help conserve and enhance the heritage attributes identified in these public spaces. Most of the discussion focused on helping the project team to gain a better understanding of the public spaces from a heritage perspective and on hearing suggested strategies to achieve these objectives.

Streetscape improvements

Bring life to the dead-end corners of empty space on Queen Street. The streets that go north-south from Queen have dead ends with patches of concrete that get used for parking. Many of these spaces were transformed by CaféTO and showed what could be possible in the future. There are also 7 City-owned, BIA-managed parklettes that have potential to support conserving Parkdale's heritage. Adding trees, bicycle racks, fountains, sculptures, or seating may have a positive visual impact on the streets and encourage use of these plots of land for people to gather as a community. These spaces could also include interactive plaques for pedestrians to engage with the history of what is around them. For example, plaques explaining the history of Parkdale, including the history of specific buildings, could help preserve and keep the history of Parkdale alive.

Earmark areas as being flexible spaces to host public art, like murals or statues. LAC members stated that it would be helpful for this HCD Plan to support ephemeral, "dynamic public art" (as opposed to static, fixed installations). For example, in Montreal, there are buildings designated for murals to be added to (and changed) annually as part of a mural festival.

Nodes and focus areas

Consider strategies to conserve and share the history of important intersections, including the intersection of Brock Avenue and Queen St West (one of the oldest intersection in Parkdale) and West Lodge Avenue and Queen Street West (where estate houses stood).

Investigate ways to use and improve the amphitheatre at Queen and Dufferin, which is beautiful, but underused and loud.

Speaking more broadly, some suggested the City include and highlight Indigenous histories in public spaces, including the amphitheatre or in the parkettes. *The City said that, as part of the HCD Plan process, it will be engaging with Indigenous audiences.*

Other feedback and process feedback

Over the course of the meeting, LAC members shared broader feedback about heritage in Parkdale and the HCD Plan, including:

- **Concern that the Province may have different objectives and goals** than the City (and could over-rule any City-created policies and guidelines).
- **Concern about demolition by neglect.** Within the HCD boundaries, there are several properties where it appears the owners are allowing their building to deteriorate so they can sell it, tear it down, or otherwise redevelop it. The HCD Plan should include guiding principles that prevent or prohibit landowners from allowing a building to deteriorate to point where it cannot be repaired and/or use poor conditions as an excuse to demolish a building. *The City said there are broader policies that prohibit intentional demolition or demolition by neglect and that language to discourage demolition by neglect is included in the HCD Plan. The City will discuss these in more detail in the next round of engagement.*
- **Consider Niagara-on-the-Lake as an example of preserving heritage.** Their heritage plan does not allow for big transnational corporations to operate in the main heritage district area. *The City responded that its HCD Plans do not typically have policies that restrict national chain stores.*

LAC members also shared advice about the HCD Plan engagement process, including:

- **Consider re-visiting the presentation.** While some LAC members said they appreciated the detailed information in the presentation, others said it was difficult to follow, the

presentation was fast, and that it wasn't clear what the important parts of the Plan are (and what components are open for influence from participants' feedback). Participants asked the City to consider sharing more information before the meeting to help LAC members offer more detailed and nuanced responses. *The City said it will consider this advice when it develops the presentation for the community meeting.*

- **Make sure the land acknowledgement is Parkdale-specific.** The City should consider tailoring its land acknowledgement for Parkdale. Parkdale is the territory of the Wendat or Wendat (Huron) and Petun First Nations, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit. The territory was the subject of the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and Confederacy of the Ojibwe and allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. It is now part of Treaty 13.
- **Consider capturing the oral histories of different groups,** like the Filipino and Tibetan communities, and provide spaces where they can be presented to the public.

Next steps

City staff and the Councillor's office thanked members of the LAC for attending the meeting and sharing their feedback. The City committed to sharing the presentation with LAC members the next day and explained that a second LAC meeting would be held on April 5, followed by a public meeting on April 20. Ian reminded LAC members to share any additional feedback by email by March 15 and explained that a draft summary of the meeting would be shared with participating LAC members in draft before it is finalized.

Post meeting note: LAC members did not have questions or raise concerns about the Draft LAC Terms of Reference. As a result, the City has finalized the Terms of Reference. The LAC Terms of Reference may still be revised if either LAC members or the City see a need.

Appendix A: Agenda

Parkdale Main Street HCD Plan

Local Advisory Committee (LAC) Meeting #1 of 2

March 8, 2022 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. (Online and by phone)

Meeting purpose:

To recap the Parkdale Main Street HCD Plan purpose and process, review the Draft LAC Terms of Reference, and discuss draft statements and draft key policies and guidelines for the HCD Plan.

Proposed Agenda

6:00 Welcome, introductions, land acknowledgement, and agenda review

Councillor Perks, City staff, and Third Party Public

6:10 Terms of Reference review

Third Party Public

Questions of clarification

6:20 Draft HCD Plan: Process, District Significance and Resources

City (Heritage Planning)

6:35 Discussion

Questions of clarification

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you feel Chapters 3-5 adequately identify and support the social and community values so that we can conserve and enhance them?
2. What areas in the Statements (Chapters 3-4) can still be improved and how?

6:50 Draft HCD Plan – Review of Key Policies and Guidelines

City (Heritage Planning)

7:15 Discussion

Questions of clarification

Discussion Questions:

1. In our key policies around new development and additions on contributing and non-contributing properties – have we captured all of the different scenarios (for example, situations involving corner properties, landmarks, etc.) based on your knowledge of the District?
2. What aspects of Parks and Public Realm (Chapter 8) should be conserved and enhanced based on your experience living and working in the Parkdale area, for example:
 - a. Streetscape Improvements
 - b. Nodes and Focus Areas (from a heritage perspective)
 - c. Views and Gateways
 - d. Public Art
 - e. Others?

7:55 Wrap up and next steps

8:00 Adjourn

Appendix B: Participant List

The following organizations were invited to apply for LAC membership. The organizations that attended the first LAC meeting are in **bold** text.

Parkdale Activity Recreation Centre (PARC)

Parkdale Village BIA

Parkdale Residents Association

Sunnyside Historical Society

Kababayan Multicultural Centre (KMC)

Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust

Parkdale Community Economic Development Project/People's Economy

Gallery 1313

Toronto and East York Community Preservation Panel (TEYCPP)

Unlawful Development

West Neighbourhood House:

Artscape - Parkdale Arts and Cultural Centre

Appendix C: Suggestions about specific properties

Following the meeting, some LAC members shared suggestions about specific properties in the Parkdale Main Street HCD area, including suggestions to classify some contributing properties as landmarks and to consider others as contributing properties:

Contributing properties recommended to be classified as landmark properties

LAC members suggested the following properties be classified as landmarks (alongside their HCD Plan classification as contributing properties).

- **1243-1249 Queen Street West:** Originally two separate buildings constructed in the 19th century, this property was the long-time home of the Elm Grove House hotel. Since 1994, it has housed the Rhino bar and grill.
- **1255 Queen Street West:** Originally home to the first Mayor of Parkdale, this building is well-known within the community and unique within the HCD. It was most recently associated with the Stones Place rock and roll bar.
- **1291 Queen Street West:** Originally a carriage factory, this building serves as an architectural vista for the southern terminus of Brock Avenue.
- **1300-1308 Queen Street West:** Originally known as the Parkdale Hotel and Timms Block, this building is central within the Parkdale Main Street Heritage Conservation District.
- **1408-1410 Queen Street West:** This ornate Italianate building serves as an architectural vista for the northern terminus of Dunn Avenue. The building is visible for a fair distance south. This line-of-sight to the building and its prominence should be preserved.
- **1482-1486 Queen Street West:** This Gothic Revival building anchors the intersection of Jameson Avenue and Queen Street West. The building also serves as a partial architectural vista for the northern terminus of Jameson Avenue, albeit is not fully aligned with the intersection.
- **1496 Queen Street West / 3 Macdonell Avenue:** This building, originally the Metropolitan School of Music, anchors the western edge of the HCD and the northeast corner of Macdonell Avenue and Queen Street West.

Suggested additional contributing properties

1414-1416 Queen Street West: Originally, the 3 buildings from 1412-1416 Queen Street west were all part of a continuous row, however only 1412 is a contributing property in the Draft Parkdale HCD Plan. Originally built in 1883, they are some of the first buildings on the northside of Queen Street West between O'Hara Avenue and West Lodge Avenue. 1414-1416 were covered in cladding, but the rear appears to be original. The building should be examined to determine if the original façade is intact underneath the modern cladding and the City should consider adding 1414 – 1416 Queen Street West to the list of contributing properties along with 1412.