

Housing Justice

2024 Parkdale Community Planning Study

Assets (3)

1. Tenant organizing networks
2. Community stewardship
3. Community benefits organizing and advocacy for development without displacement

Needs (3)

1. Rent control and tenant protections
2. Affordable, community-owned housing
3. Development without displacement

Directions (8)

1. Pursue and support the development of new affordable and supportive housing
2. Promote public education on tenant rights through a Tenant Resource Centre
3. Establish a proactive eviction prevention framework across Parkdale
4. Build solidarity with tenant-led organizing and grassroots encampment support in Parkdale
5. Provide community-based education and advocacy for the expansion of the co-operative housing sector and community land trusts

6. Reclaim vacant units and properties through expropriation for social housing
7. Decommodify housing such as rooming houses, small rental buildings, and tower rentals through community-led acquisition
8. Revise and update the *Parkdale Community Benefits Framework* and sustain community benefits campaigns across new developments

Housing unaffordability is a mounting challenge in Parkdale. 74% of Parkdale residents are renters, with many living in high-rise apartment buildings. As of November 2023, the average advertised rent for a one bedroom in Parkdale is \$2,298. Annually, this rent amounts to over 76% of the average income (\$36,090) of a South Parkdale resident. For those residents who are on social assistance it is even more dire.

The escalating commodification of housing is the main cause of these rent increases. Large corporate landlords and real estate investment trusts, each motivated to increase the profit they make from renters, own 71% of privately held apartment towers in the neighbourhood as of 2022. Housing policy enables the profit-seeking behavior of these landlords. Vacancy decontrol, the ability of landlords to set any price on new leases, incentivizes landlords to evict or push out long-standing tenants who are left without affordable alternative housing. Above guideline rent increases allow landlords to raise rents higher than the annual allowed increase set by the province, giving landlords a tool to raise rents faster than they otherwise would. Changes made to provincial policy under the Ford government have further contributed to trends of increasing gentrification and unaffordability, endorsing a supply-based approach to providing housing which makes no provisions to keep housing affordable. The result of such intense financialization of housing is residents being displaced from their neighbourhood, dilapidated living conditions, and increasing homelessness.

The experiences of tenants in Parkdale show us what kind of change is needed. Pervasive evictions call our attention to the need for improved protection for tenants and the return of real rent control. The widespread struggle to afford a place to live serves as an imperative to decommodify housing and expand community ownership of land in Parkdale. Members of the Parkdale community have consistently called for development without displacement, emphasizing how developers neglect to invest in the communities they operate in.

Parkdale residents have a vision of a welcoming neighbourhood where people can build community. Though rising rents and gentrification persist, Parkdale has made proven strides in protecting affordable housing and resisting gentrification. Networks of tenant activists work against the power of landlords. The Parkdale Neighborhood Land Trust safeguards affordable housing stock while putting more property into the hands of the community. Collective actions have helped win community benefits, like funding for the Multi-Unit Residential Acquisition program.

Looking to the future, much work remains to be done to strengthen tenant protections, increase the availability of community-owned affordable housing, and ensure new development does not lead to displacement.

A banner created by artist Rocky Zenyk at a Skale development site at Queen and Close, advocating for affordable housing in Parkdale.

