

Community Meeting Minutes

Parkdale Pilot Project

Monday April 27, 2009

6:00pm Open House, 6:30pm Presentations

In Attendance: Councillor Gord Perks

Murray Smith, Municipal Licensing and Standards

Christopher Dunn, Community Planning

Lance Cumberbatch, Municipal Licensing and Standards

Approximately 20 members of the public

Location: Parkdale Public Library, Basement Auditorium, 1303 Queen Street West

Councillor Perks commenced the meeting at approximately 6:30pm.

GP: Brief overview of project and its objectives

Q: What is the difference between the Parkdale Pilot Project (PPP) and the committee of adjustment?

GP: Conditions that are accepted are project specific. Unlike the committee of adjustment the PPP is able to create site specific bylaws, as a result the PPP sites are required to have yearly inspections.

Q: When an owner makes an application are they liable for the costs of the retrofit?

GP: Yes they are. There is no city subsidy provided it is the responsibility of the landlord.

Lance Cumberbatch arrives at meeting and begins introduction of the first PPP property

59 Wilson Park Road

Lance Cumberbatch reviewed the history of the building.

An issue expressed was the need for an additional parking space with the addition of the 7th unit. There was a lack of info regarding the amenity space of property.

Q: How can the community make an informed decision? Denial of access to city officials from tenants and owners was a worry expressed by a community member.

LC: Fair Question. To make it clear there can be no approval if there is a lack of information regarding any property. Information must be complete and all requirements met in order to grant approval.

GP: It has been made clear to landlords that this is the last chance that if the required work is not completed there will be a move to enforcement.

Q: The landlord of Wilson park has been issued a license previously which he violated by building an additionally property. Why is the city rewarding the landlord by offering a second chance? Could there be fire issues if the 7th unit is maintained?

GP: Outlined the history of rooming house discussions and debates in Parkdale. The interim by-law passed was not effective, and resulted in community consultation meetings to balance the different interests. A unique process arose where community groups review applications and have input. The result was 3 main goals one of which was to avoid de-housing of present tenants. Additionally City of Toronto reports recommended that the zoning of properties be brought to acceptable and safe standards. Considerations for this property are in line with the most present council recommendations one of which is to maintain present housing while improving safety standards of existing properties.

Q: Why are we not telling forcing landlords to go through the regular process, especially if they have broken the rules and created these units illegally?

A: There are City of Toronto resolutions out of the process that I mentioned previously that recognize certain units were added, but as long as those properties meet the standards outlined by the community consultations and the Parkdale Pilot Project, then they are eligible to be legalized. This process was approved by City Council.

Q: Want an issue to be clarified whether 6 units are illegal if they are bachelorettes?

A: It is legal because the increase to 6 units was made under the Committee of Adjustment, but the 7th unit has been added however it is not clear when this took place.

21 Thorburn Avenue

Lance Cumberbatch outlined a brief history of the building.

The property is a pre 1978 building which originally had 13 properties but the landlord presently seeks a reduction to 6 units. The site specific by-laws required include parking space, landscape and depth of the building.

Q: Where do the tenants get their parking space from?

L: Under the PPP criteria there is no need for additional parking space required, due to the status of the property as a pre1978 rooming house.

Q: What happens to the tenants as a result of the unit reduction? Is the plan created by the owner?

L: There is a provision that requires tenants to be relocated; there must be a plan in place prior to unit reduction.

GP: One of the tools available to the City of Toronto if there is a reduction in units is that the city can require landlord to fulfill recommendations for tenant relocation. The property cannot be legalized until the relocation of tenants is dealt with.

Q: What happens in the interim?

GP: Previously the PPP had a carrot and no stick. The next phase of the PPP will move into enforcement.

Q: Hypothetically speaking what could happen if application does not pass?

GP: If it doesn't pass and stays as it is, the property becomes illegal. It then gets turned to the City of Toronto to move into the enforcement phase.

Q: What type of enforcement would this entail?

L: If the operation of the rooming house continues despite the failure to comply with standards, it is possible to receive fines arising from zoning and fire violations. By bringing properties into the PPP it makes enforcement much easier for City of Toronto officials.

GP: It is worth nothing that the standards for the PPP properties are much stricter than for ones are not part of the project.

Q: There is a concern over the health standards of the property. Additionally residents are not opposed to imposing standards on landlords of rooming houses but there is a real fear that there promises will be broken.

GP: We can require that public health be a part of the inspections. The properties cannot be legalized without the landlord meeting standards; if the promise to normalize property is broken then it becomes illegal. However if they are legalized, property owners are required to come in front of a tribunal with community members. At the tribunal additional concerns can be expressed along with the possibility to add particular conditions arising from new concerns. Licensing creates the opportunity to add additional requirements to legal rooming houses.

Comment from Community Member: 1551 Queen Street West was considered one of the worst in Parkdale. The compliance was a process of 2 years; currently it is considered a model residential unit. It is evidence that the system can work, considering this case

involves a reduction to a more manageable size of 6 units there is the potential for improvement.

Q: What is the data for off site parking applications for this property?

SA: Most properties don't have on street parking only some do. The on street parking can only be the equivalent of the property. The number of tenants does not necessarily preclude an equal need for parking space.

GP: The PPP imposes some of the strictest parking restrictions in the City of Toronto.

5 Glenavon Road

Lance Cumberbatch provides a brief history of the building.

Q: Can you speak to PPP minimum standard of 20 square meters. It is less than 1/3 of the City of Toronto standard.

LC: The standard arose out of the process of 1998 and the City of Toronto report in 2000. It was a decision reached by stakeholders agreeing that this standard applied to the properties concerned. The conclusion reached was that it would be more appropriate to create standards specific for Parkdale rather than apply citywide ones that were not sensitive to the particular situation.

Comment from Community Member: The standard of minimum space was settled through an innovative process. The Parkdale Tenants Association has generally not seen bad disrepair regarding rooming houses and the licensing process has been able to address safety standards effectively. The process was successful enough for the PTA to advocate for similar yearly inspections in apartment units. Once rooming houses are brought into the regulated system their standards improve.

Q: Is there evidence of Fire Building Code violations?

A: The property was retrofitted in 2008 and received inspections which revealed one deficiency currently under repair.

Q: What type of fire standards are the properties required to meet?

A: The properties are required to meet provincial wide fire standards, and the City of Toronto can only grant approval if all fire standards are met.

Q: Can a tenant refuse a fire inspection?

LC: The Fire Department has the greatest power of entry out of city departments. However there must be reasonable grounds to call for an inspection, if challenged the

court may rule that it was not proper. The PPP allows for greater power of entry on the part of the Fire Department.

Q: Is it possible for the community members to arrange for an independent inspection?

GP: It is not possible to inspect the homes of others due to privacy issues.

Q: Is it possible to receive a fire report?

LC: The fire department generally does not hand out reports.

Q: The house does not conform to surrounding properties on the street; this is a concern of residents and homeowners.

GP: The zoning laws that exist are there in order to ensure certain property standards; these can be met without conforming to the general surroundings. The City of Toronto is meant to facilitate the creation of acceptable standards of living for its residents; however it cannot enforce standards beyond those outlined in zoning laws, Building code, Fire Code, and property standards.

Q: Why can't the landlord do the same as some rooming houses? The city must enforce the fact that the property should be the same as the rest of the neighborhood. Why doesn't the city discuss the improvement of the façade?

GP: Chris will note the request for an inspection of the façade.

2 Elm Grove Ave.

Lance Cumberbatch outlines the history of the building.

No comments.

2 Spencer Ave.

Lance Cumberbatch outlines the history of the building.

Parking was mentioned as an outstanding issue.

LC: How many parking spaces are available?

A: There is a garage shown during original application if there is a need parking can also be provided on Cowan.

LC: It must still be decided how many spaces will be provided and maintained.

Q: The unit that was added after 1996, is it still possible that it will be approved?

LC: The owner would like to maintain the 6th unit, although it is still unclear as to when it was added.

8 Spencer Ave.

Lance Cumberbatch outlines the history of the building.

Comment by Community Member: When the present owner bought the property he managed to fix it up and eliminate many of the longstanding issues.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:20pm.

Notes by: Christopher Dunn, Community Planner