

# CO-DESIGN NOW!

*A Resource for Design Activism*

COMMON  
SPACE  
COALITION

# LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We would like to acknowledge the land on which we are virtually gathering is the territory of the Haudenosaunee, Petun, Huron-Wendat, Anishinabeg, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. These lands were protected by the “Dish With One Spoon” Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Anishinabeg and the Haudenosaunee. This land now referred to as Toronto (traditional Tkaronto meaning “the place in the water where the trees are standing”) continues to be the home to many Indigenous people across Turtle Island.

As landscape architects, we are constantly working on and with the land. Through our work at Common Space Coalition, we hope to expand the parameters of landscape architecture to create more inclusive and equitable professional practice. We commit to working on expanding our understanding of Indigenous theory and practice in landscape architecture, and the relationship between designers and Canada’s Indigenous peoples.

Lastly, we want to acknowledge that this land has been our nurturance, our safety, and has served as our homes. We, as people and particularly as landscape architects, have complicated histories with colonization, state violence in the name of progress, and displacement, and we are both subject to and complicit in our own ways to these processes. In order to move past performative land acknowledgments, we believe we must stand in solidarity with those who were, and are, being displaced and erased over statehood in both our personal lives and professional practice.

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# WHO WE ARE

## COMMON SPACE COALITION

is a newly established Toronto-based non-profit organization whose goal is to combat systemic racism in the landscape architectural professional practice.

CSC also serves as a small, independent research and design incubator to seek out grants and fundraising to facilitate opportunities for placemaking, awareness, and practice surrounding anti-racism in the built environment. We aim to forge cross disciplinary relationships between designers and community organizations to create a more just, equitable, and inclusive public space.

Our overarching goal is to conduct research that contributes to the future of landscape architecture practice and education, that is anti-racism and decolonized in order to dismantle the systemic barriers of oppression within our field.

## Rayna Sydney Syed (she/her), Co-Founder

Rayna is a Landscape Designer currently practicing in Toronto. Rayna is interested in the complexity of tensions that arise in the built environment, and strives to confront the polarizing issues of environmental and social justice for marginalized communities in the design and discussion of public space. Her work, research, and activism ultimately aspires to be of service to communities.

## Thevishka Kanishkan (she/her), Co-Founder

Thevishka Kanishkan is a landscape designer at PLANT Architect with a professional interest in the intersection between accessibility, equity, and good design. Thevishka has worked in Toronto's non-profit and activism sector with organizations focused on political advocacy, city-building, urban design policy, and the environment. She is optimistic for the future that landscape architects can create for the communities we live and work in.

## Brontë Mutukistna (she/her), Intern

Brontë is a recent graduate of the University of Toronto where she completed her B.A. in Architectural Studies. During her degree, she developed a passion for the intricate relationship between people, cities, and the natural environment. Dedicated to environmental justice, she believes public engagement is central to inspiring meaningful change. Brontë is currently pursuing a Master of Landscape Architecture at the University of British Columbia where she hopes to co-create inclusive and climate resilient landscapes.

# **CONTRIBUTORS**

## **Parkdale People's Economy: Planning Committee Members**

### **PPE Team**

Mercedes Sharpe-Zayas

Mirusha Yogarajah

Sebastián Mendoza-Price

Chemi Lhamo

Beryl-Ann Mark

### **Community Organizations**

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Hari (Parkdale Intercultural Association)

Phuntsok Chomphel (Parkdale

Neighbourhood Land Trust)

Angela Koh (West Neighbourhood Huse)

Colin Love (Toronto Region Conservation  
Authority)

### **Community Partners**

Sonam Chokey

Bernadette Rilloraza

Emma Clayton-Jones

Sha Ally

Shannon Copenace

## **Community Members**

Rayna Syed

Karlene Stubbs

Shane Phillips

Stephanie Francis

E.M. Uzoamaka

**Thank you to the residents of Parkdale  
who participated in the community mapping workshop.**

**Special thanks to Jamie Reford for editing contribution.**

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# INTRODUCTION

To date, the professions responsible for shaping Canadian urban environments are made up of individuals that represent only a small segment of the country's cultural diversity. This lack of representation has amplified established Euro-centric design ideals, which are further entrenched by the prevailing hierarchies and capitalist underpinnings that define contemporary professional practice and academia. The net impact of this established framework has placed landscape architects increasingly at odds with the communities that we wish to serve.

While numerous impactful design precedents, community initiatives, activists, and leaders of diverse origins operate successfully within this country, they have yet to be included within the recognized scope of contemporary Canadian landscape architecture. As a result, these critical assets remain largely isolated *from* and unrecognized *by* landscape architects, and by extension, their clients.

In response to the 2021 LACF grant topic - *Design, Speculate, Postulate, Question, Research, Theorize, Explore* – this project proposed delivering a free, accessible online tool for landscape architects to initiate contact and build relationships with the communities that they design for. The goal of the 'Common Space Directory' was to consolidate and celebrate past and present examples of grassroots activism within a free online map, creating and holding a space for the full and unfiltered scope of landscape and urban design potential within Canada.

Our approach to this work was inspired by the theory of Design Activism. By including principles of activism and inclusion in the landscape architecture process, the objective of this project was to provide a platform for our profession to challenge existing systems, design strategies, and power structures. Through incorporating and amplifying the work already being done at the community activist level, we have the potential to expand the scope of landscape architecture beyond the built environment and into the spheres of social justice and community resilience. The Common Space Directory represents a small but important first step towards this vision.

The fundamental goals of the Common Space Directory are as follows:

- 1. To explore opportunities for landscape architects to listen to and celebrate the stories, lived histories, and local knowledge of marginalized and racialized people**
- 2. To document, recognize and amplify the important, ongoing work and expertise adjacent to our profession that community activists are engaged in**
- 3. To promote interdisciplinary, participatory, and community-driven design processes by connecting landscape architects directly with their true clients - the community**
- 4. To provide a jumping-off point by which landscape architects can integrate community involvement throughout all stages of the design process (with emphasis on the importance of early engagement)**



A community owned garden in Parkdale where 200 diverse community members came together to co-create the design and future programs for the community garden.



# INTRODUCTION

## The Project

Our initial objective for this project was to develop a catalog of community groups and activists working in fields adjacent to landscape architecture. This was the first iteration of the Common Space Directory. However, it quickly became apparent that we would need to expand the scope and format of the directory in order to achieve our stated project goals. While an online database provided a solid point of departure for our objectives, it remained a passive tool that did not directly engage with potential community partners. To fully explore how landscape architects could initiate impactful and productive community engagement at a grassroots level, we needed to expand the project scope to include active engagement.

Our next step was therefore focused on building collaborative relationships directly with community groups. In doing so, our project evolved into a substantially more dynamic, rewarding, collaborative, and informative process. The Common Space Directory thus evolved into Co-Design Now, with the rapidly gentrifying neighborhood of Parkdale in Toronto's west end serving as the prime candidate for our expanded exploration. We hoped that through engaging with Parkdale's dynamic history, diverse demographics, and active community groups, we could develop a local framework for **participatory landscape architecture**.

What we learned from this process is described in the following pages. As we look for a path towards equitable design and practice, we hope that this project will encourage landscape architects to examine **how** we engage with communities that we might not belong to, but whose physical environments we shape. Further, we hope this project demonstrates that stories, local knowledge, personal histories, and lived experiences are critical elements of the site inventory and analysis phase that cannot be overlooked.



Taken in Parkdale - by Parkdale Life (former Instagram account by a local documenting the intricacies of the neighbourhood)

# TERMS USED

**Co-Design** - Co-design is about designing with community groups, not for. Co-design is about challenging the imbalance of power held by individuals, who make important decisions about others lives, livelihoods and bodies. Often, with little to no involvement of the people who will be most impacted by those decisions. Co-design seeks to change that through prioritizing relationships, using creative tools and building capability. It uses inclusive convening to share knowledge and power.

**Community Needs and Assets** - Community needs are gaps between what services currently exist in a community and what should exist. A community asset or resource is anything that improves the quality of community life.

**Design Activism** - Using design as a vehicle for activism. Rather than viewing design as a technical exercise, “design activism” or “design as activism” recognizes the potential and capacity of design as a tool for social and environmental progress. Using a lens of design activism allows us to challenge practice norms, create work that prioritizes uplifting community alongside professional practice and building business, and prioritize community and relationships over design ego or the bottom dollar.

**Displacement** - A byproduct of gentrification when residents can no longer afford to remain in their homes due to rising housing costs. Residents may also be forced out by lease non-renewals, evictions, eminent domain, or physical conditions that render homes uninhabitable as investors await redevelopment opportunities.

**Equity** - The practice of ensuring just, inclusive and respectful treatment of all people, with consideration of individual and group diversities. Equity honours and accommodates the specific needs of individuals and groups.

**Community Engagement** - The process of working in a collaborative manner with and through groups affiliated by geographic proximity, race/culture, shared vulnerabilities and/or a collective vision. All equity-based community engagement processes should positively contribute to the group’s wellness.

**Gentrification** - a process in which a poor area (as of a city) experiences an influx of middle-class or wealthy people who renovate and rebuild homes and businesses and which often results in an increase in property values and the displacement of earlier, usually poorer residents

**Inherent Bias** - Attitudes towards people or associate stereotypes with them without our conscious knowledge.

**Lived Experience** - Lived experience is an important form of expertise often underutilized in urban development processes. Individuals with lived experience of a place and/or social identity possess a deepened knowledge of neighbourhood strengths, challenges and opportunities. Lived experience experts are also the keepers of important place-based stories and rituals. When this form of knowledge is coupled with professional expertise and translated into design, programming and policy decisions—community transformation processes are more harmonious and productive.

**Marginalized** - Groups and communities that experience discrimination and exclusion (social, political and economic) because of unequal power relationships across economic, political, social and cultural dimensions.

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# **WHAT'S GOING ON IN OUR CITIES**

## **How 'landscape urbanism' is making gentrification look like fun**

The problems with the High Line and all its imitators.  
Washington Post, November 2019

## **Inequality is being built into cities: segregated playgrounds are just the start**

The Conversation, May 2019

## **Inequality in the Provision of Access to Urban Open Space**

Smart Cities Dive

## **How gentrification caused America's cities to burn**

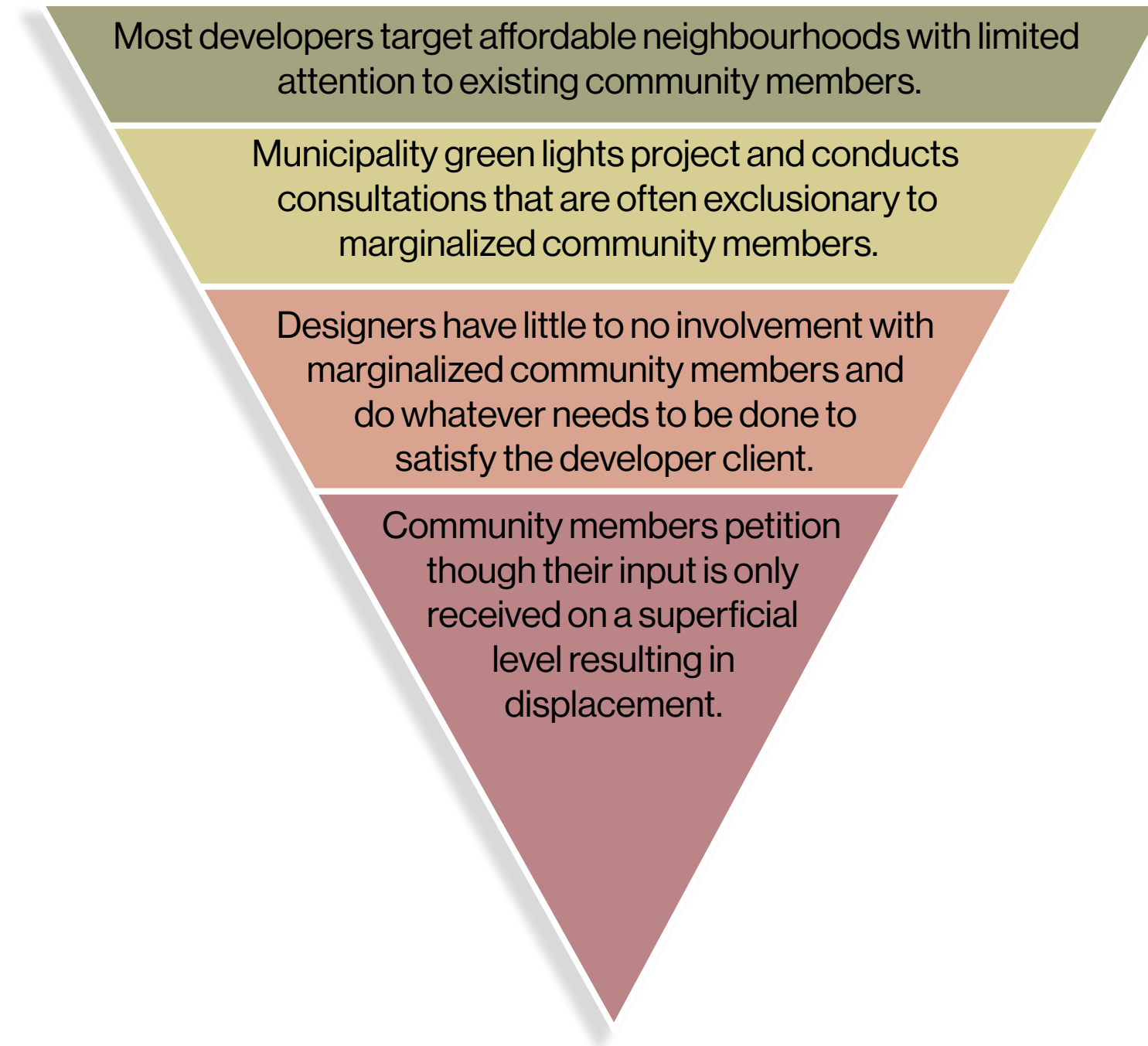
Yuppies attract cafes and amenities to gentrifying neighborhoods. They also spark rising rents — and even violence.  
Washington Post, September 2019

## **Public Spaces Aren't Really Available for Everyone**

Arch Daily, July 2020

# **THE CURRENT PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS**

## **A TOP DOWN APPROACH**



# **OBSERVATIONS**

Gentrification is quickly reshaping Toronto (and many other cities across North America), resulting in the displacement of marginalized residents and erasing the cultural character of communities.

Many participants are involved in the gentrifying urban development in Toronto, including landscape architects. In its current form, this process expedites the homogenization of neighbourhoods and erasure of existing communities.

As critical members of the allied professions responsible for urban development and the creation and/or revitalization of public space, landscape architects have an active role to play in determining the extent to which systemic racism, discrimination, and bias remain embedded within the city building process. We influence who feels safe and welcome through the spaces that we help design – whether we realize it or not.

# **OBSERVATIONS**

The established framework for community engagement on urban development and public realm projects does not adequately represent and involve community stakeholders. As a result, many residents feel that the community identities of their neighborhoods are being undermined and eroded, rather than acknowledged and integrated into the design process.

Community consultations are the primary mechanism through which community feedback is solicited for private development. The current format of these consultation meetings is ineffective and exclusionary for a number of reasons. A baseline prerequisite for technological literacy, computer access, scheduling, locations, and a rigid, non-community specific meeting format are all impediments currently limiting the meaningful impact of community consultations on the design process.

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# ***PROJECT INTENTION***

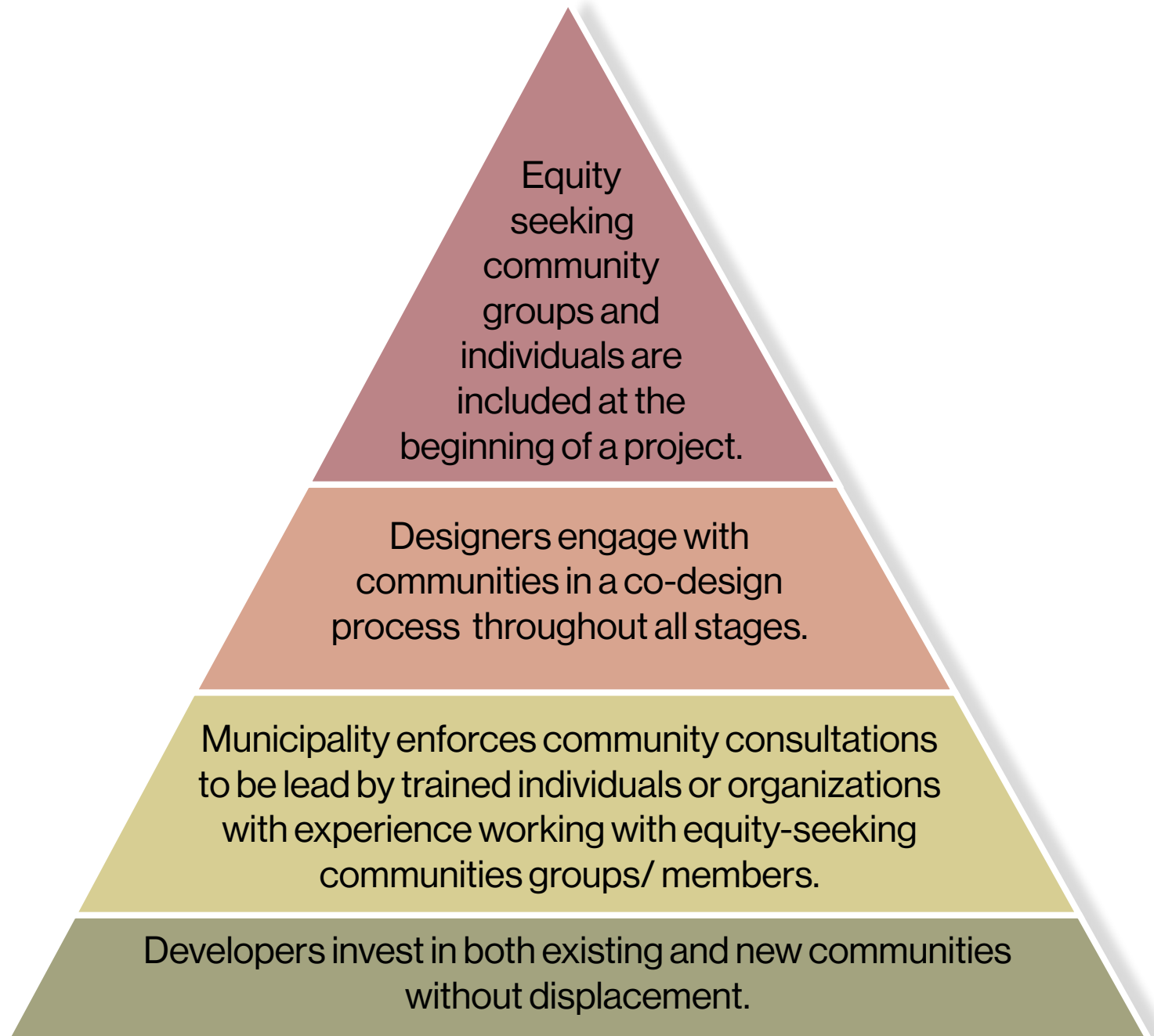
To develop and evaluate strategies for impactful community-centric design processes through collaboration with grassroots community organizations.

To listen, learn, and envision a fresh co-design framework for landscape design processes that reflects and amplifies existing community voices and needs.

To examine how a co-design strategy with equity-seeking community organizations and members could be manifested in a landscape architecture project.

# **ADJUST THE PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS TO PRIORITIZE...**

## **PARTICIPATORY RELATIONSHIP BUILDING**



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## **WHAT'S GOING IN PARKDALE, TORONTO**

**'My Parkdale is gone': how gentrification reached the one place that seemed immune**

The Guardian, January 2020

**'We're being squeezed out': Locals try to save Parkdale restaurant amid gentrification worry**

CBC News, October 2017

**Parkdale community holds rally calling for end to anti-Black racism in schools**

CP24, November 2021

**Medicine or rent? In Parkdale—High Park, affordable housing is at the forefront ahead of federal election**

The Star, September 2021

**Parkdale tenants seek community solutions to booming gentrification**

Community Housing Transformation Centre, February 2021

# PARKDALE IN DOWNTOWN TORONTO CONTEXT



Parkdale is one of a few remaining downtown neighbourhoods in Toronto that is affordable and accessible to diverse community members.

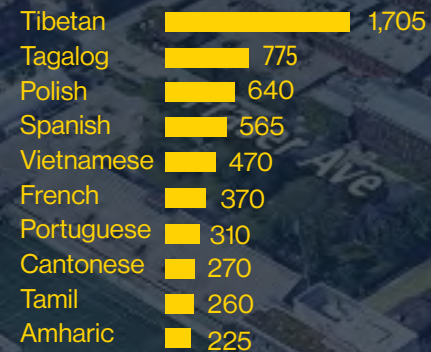
An increasing gap between North and South Parkdale has grown over the past thirty years. North Parkdale has seen a growth of higher-income residents. In contrast, in South Parkdale, around 90% of residents are renters, and close to 35 % live in poverty. South Parkdale is profiled as one of thirty-five of Toronto's Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAS).

# SOUTH PARKDALE UP CLOSE

The pace and scale of gentrification and displacement have intensified within the last decade. Contributing to this is the rapid influx of proposed market-rate condominium housing, businesses that cater to high-end clientele, the rise of corporate landlords that have pressured the affordability of high-rise rental apartments, and the ongoing loss of rooming houses.

BOUNDARY OF SOUTH PARKDALE (AS PER CENSUS DATA 2016)

## Top 10 Non-English Mother Tongue Languages



Population

**21,849** +2.8%

Population change  
2011 - 2016

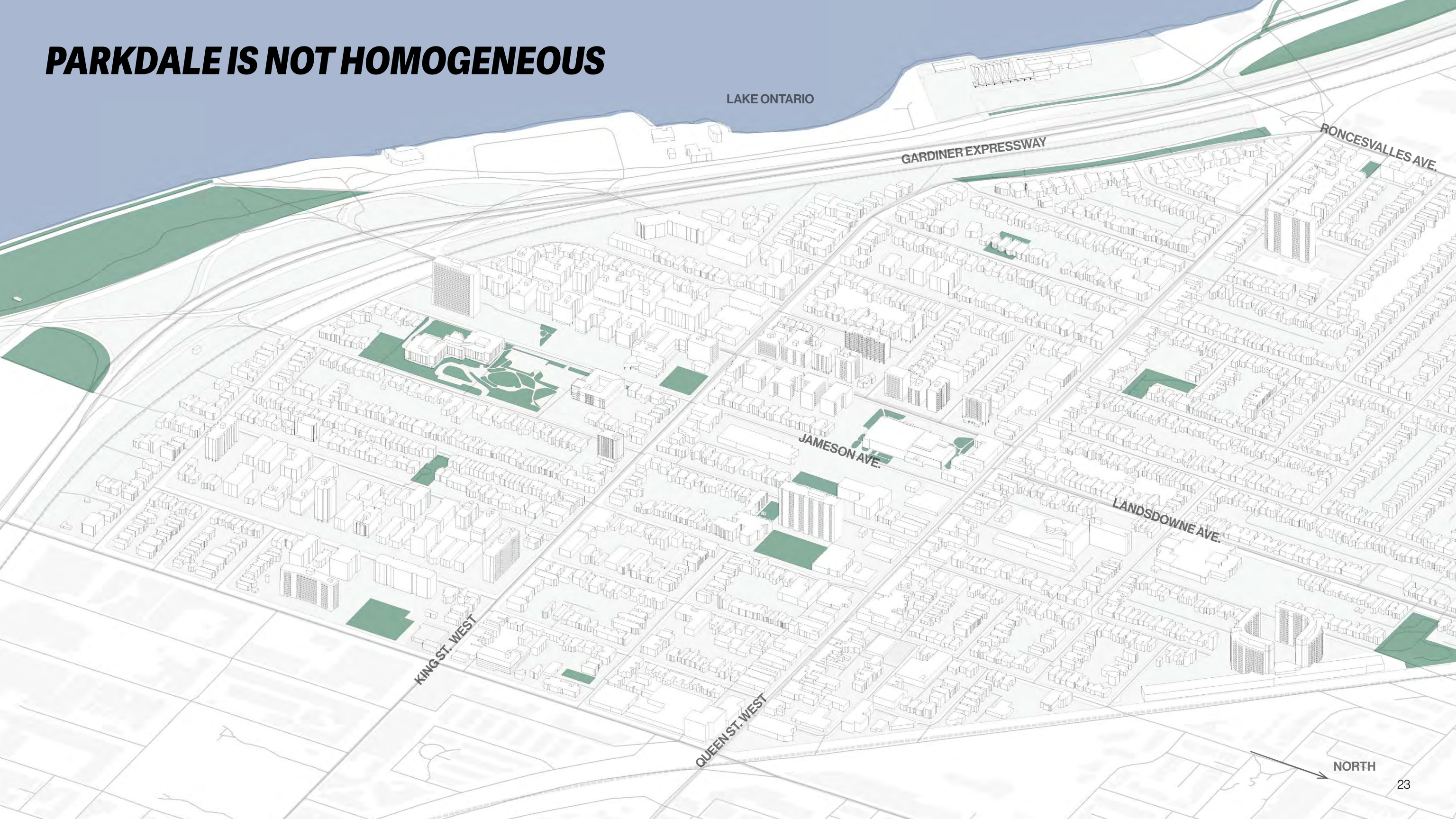
Density

**9,583**

People per square km

Canadian Census Data 2016

# PARKDALE IS NOT HOMOGENEOUS



LAKE ONTARIO

GARDINER EXPRESSWAY

RONCESVALLES AVE.

JAMESON AVE.

LANDSDOWNE AVE.

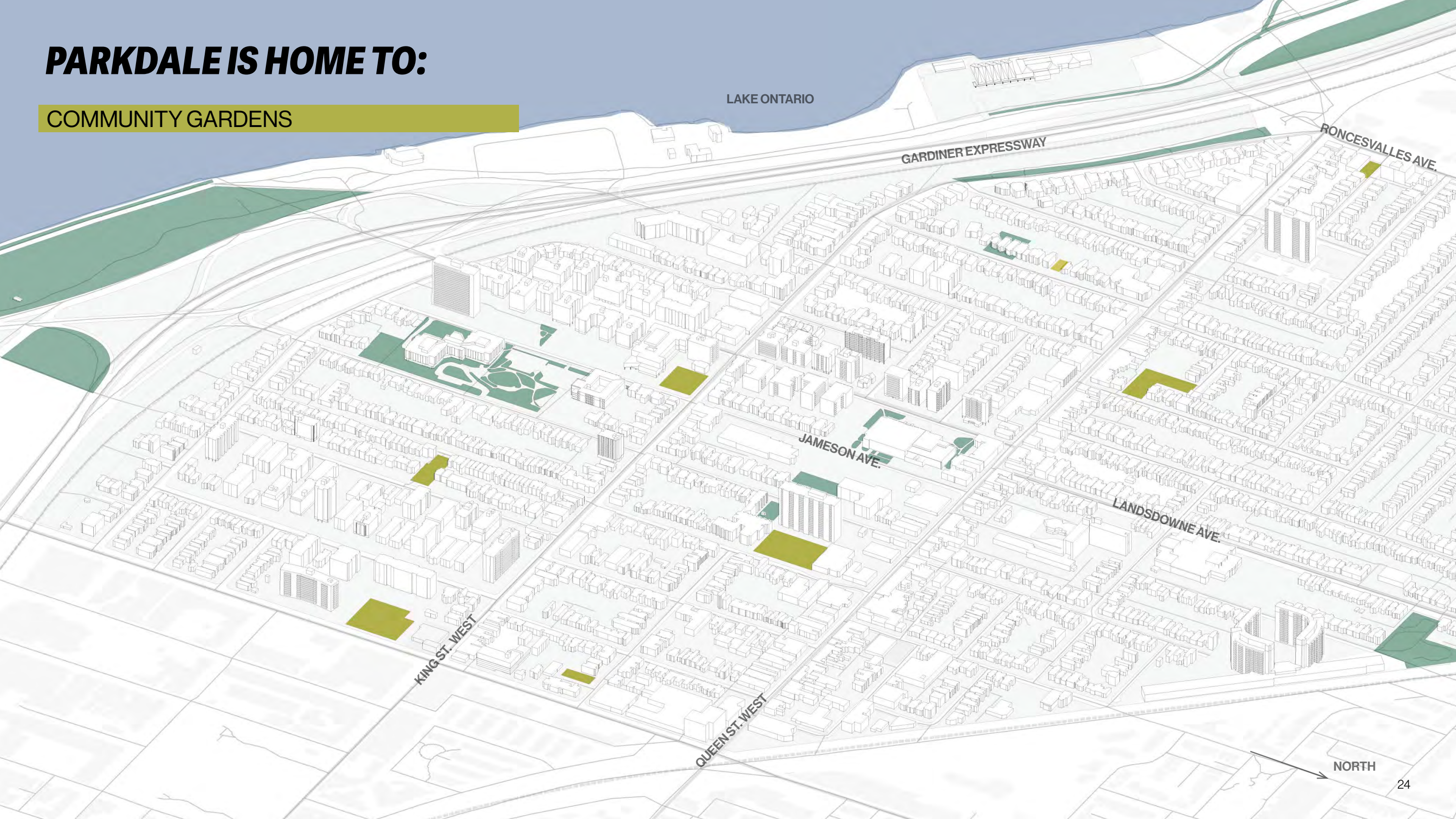
KING ST. WEST

QUEEN ST. WEST

NORTH

# PARKDALE IS HOME TO:

## COMMUNITY GARDENS



LAKE ONTARIO

GARDINER EXPRESSWAY

RONCESVALLES AVE.

JAMESON AVE.

LANDSDOWNE AVE.

KING ST. WEST

QUEEN ST. WEST

NORTH



# PARKDALE IS HOME TO:

COMMUNITY GARDENS  
SOCIAL SERVICES



# PARKDALE IS HOME TO:

- COMMUNITY GARDENS
- SOCIAL SERVICES
- ELDERLY CARE



LAKE ONTARIO

GARDINER EXPRESSWAY

RONCESVALLES AVE.

JAMESON AVE.

LANDSDOWNE AVE.

KING ST. WEST

QUEEN ST. WEST

NORTH

# PARKDALE IS HOME TO:

COMMUNITY GARDENS

SOCIAL SERVICES

ELDERLY CARE

PLACES OF WORSHIP



LAKE ONTARIO

GARDINER EXPRESSWAY

RONCESVALLES AVE.

JAMESON AVE.

LANDSDOWNE AVE.

KING ST. WEST

QUEEN ST. WEST

NORTH

# PARKDALE IS HOME TO:

COMMUNITY GARDENS

SOCIAL SERVICES

ELDERLY CARE

PLACES OF WORSHIP

COMMUNITY OWNED NON-PROFIT HOUSING



LAKE ONTARIO

GARDINER EXPRESSWAY

RONCESVALLES AVE.

JAMESON AVE.

LANDSDOWNE AVE.

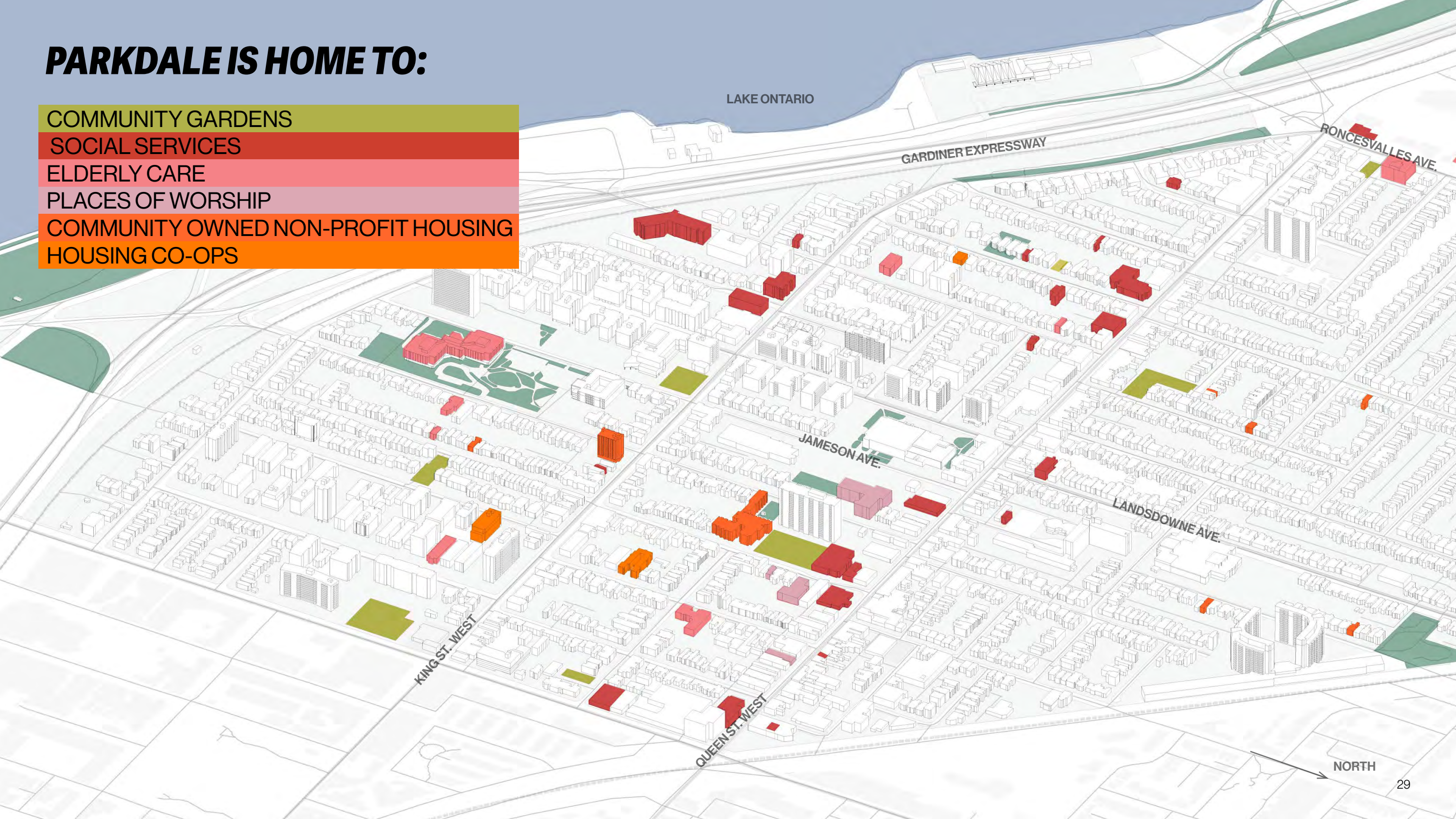
KING ST. WEST

QUEEN ST. WEST

NORTH

# PARKDALE IS HOME TO:

- COMMUNITY GARDENS
- SOCIAL SERVICES
- ELDERLY CARE
- PLACES OF WORSHIP
- COMMUNITY OWNED NON-PROFIT HOUSING
- HOUSING CO-OPS



LAKE ONTARIO

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LANDSDOWNE AVE.

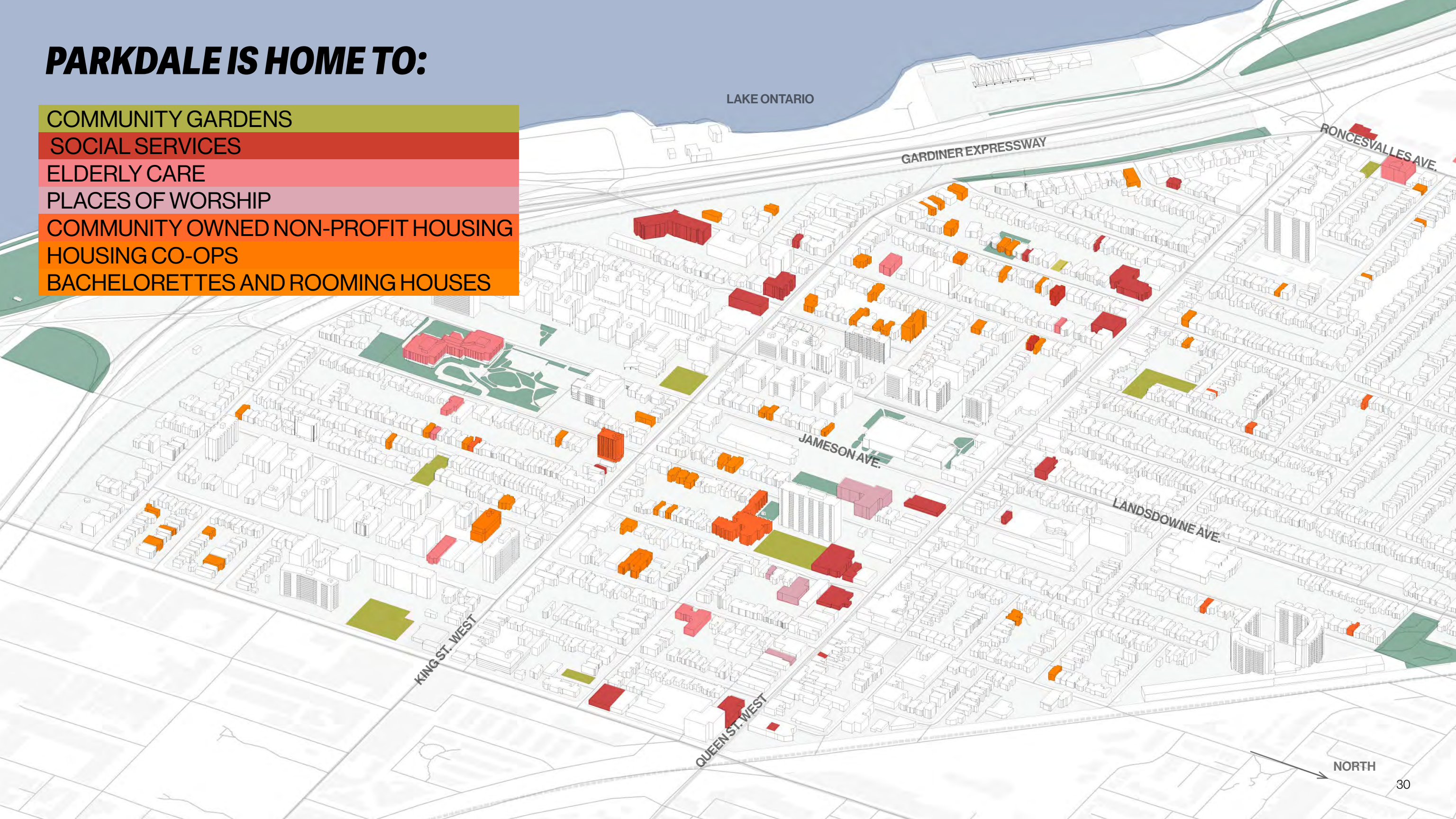
KING ST. WEST

QUEEN ST. WEST

NORTH

# PARKDALE IS HOME TO:

- COMMUNITY GARDENS
- SOCIAL SERVICES
- ELDERLY CARE
- PLACES OF WORSHIP
- COMMUNITY OWNED NON-PROFIT HOUSING
- HOUSING CO-OPS
- BACHELORETTES AND ROOMING HOUSES



LAKE ONTARIO

GARDINER EXPRESSWAY

RONCESVALLES AVE.

JAMESON AVE.

LANDSDOWNE AVE.

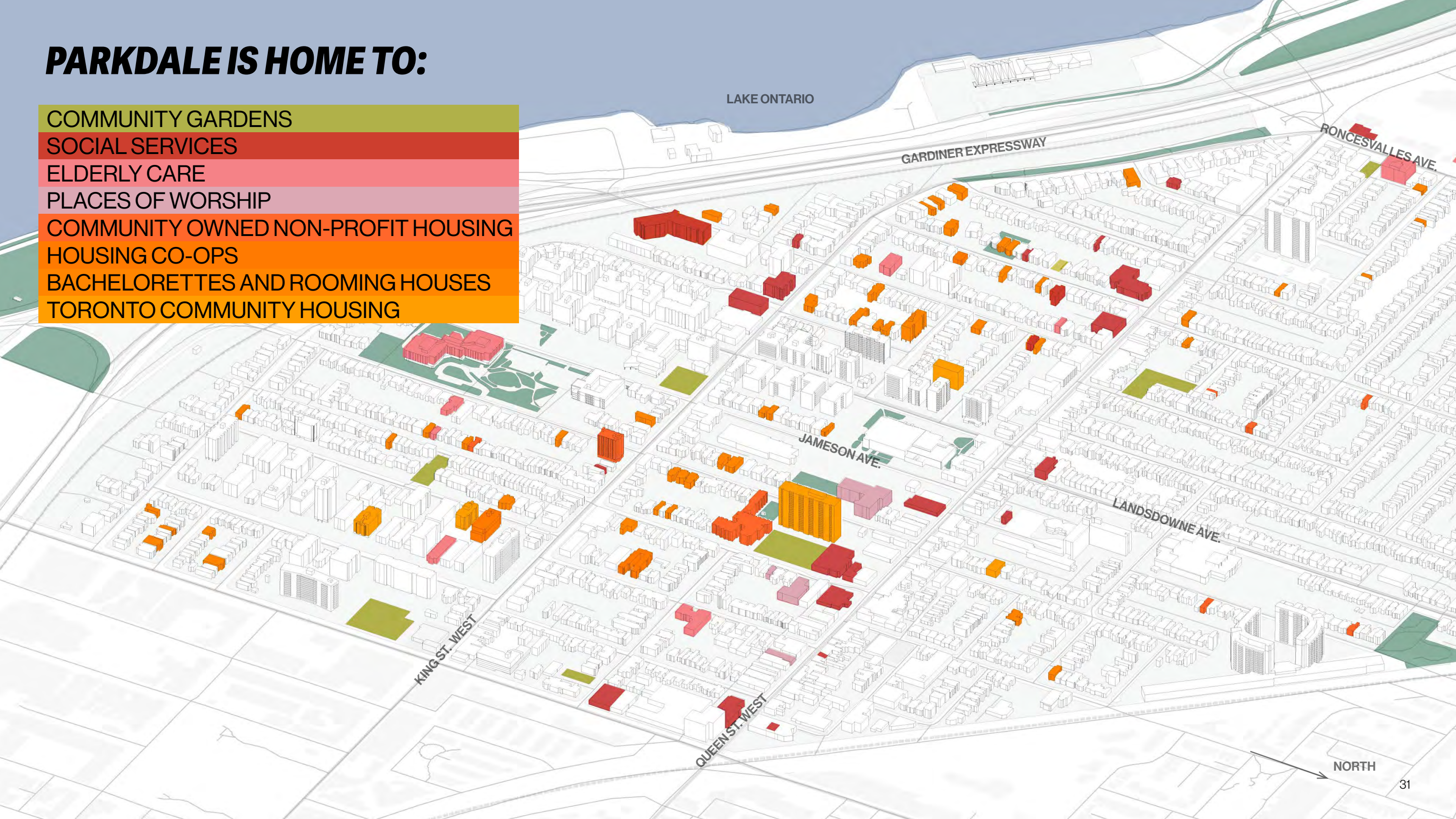
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# PARKDALE IS HOME TO:

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- SOCIAL SERVICES
- ELDERLY CARE
- PLACES OF WORSHIP
- COMMUNITY OWNED NON-PROFIT HOUSING
- HOUSING CO-OPS
- BACHELORETTES AND ROOMING HOUSES
- TORONTO COMMUNITY HOUSING



LAKE ONTARIO

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RONCESVALLES AVE.

JAMESON AVE.

LANDSDOWNE AVE.

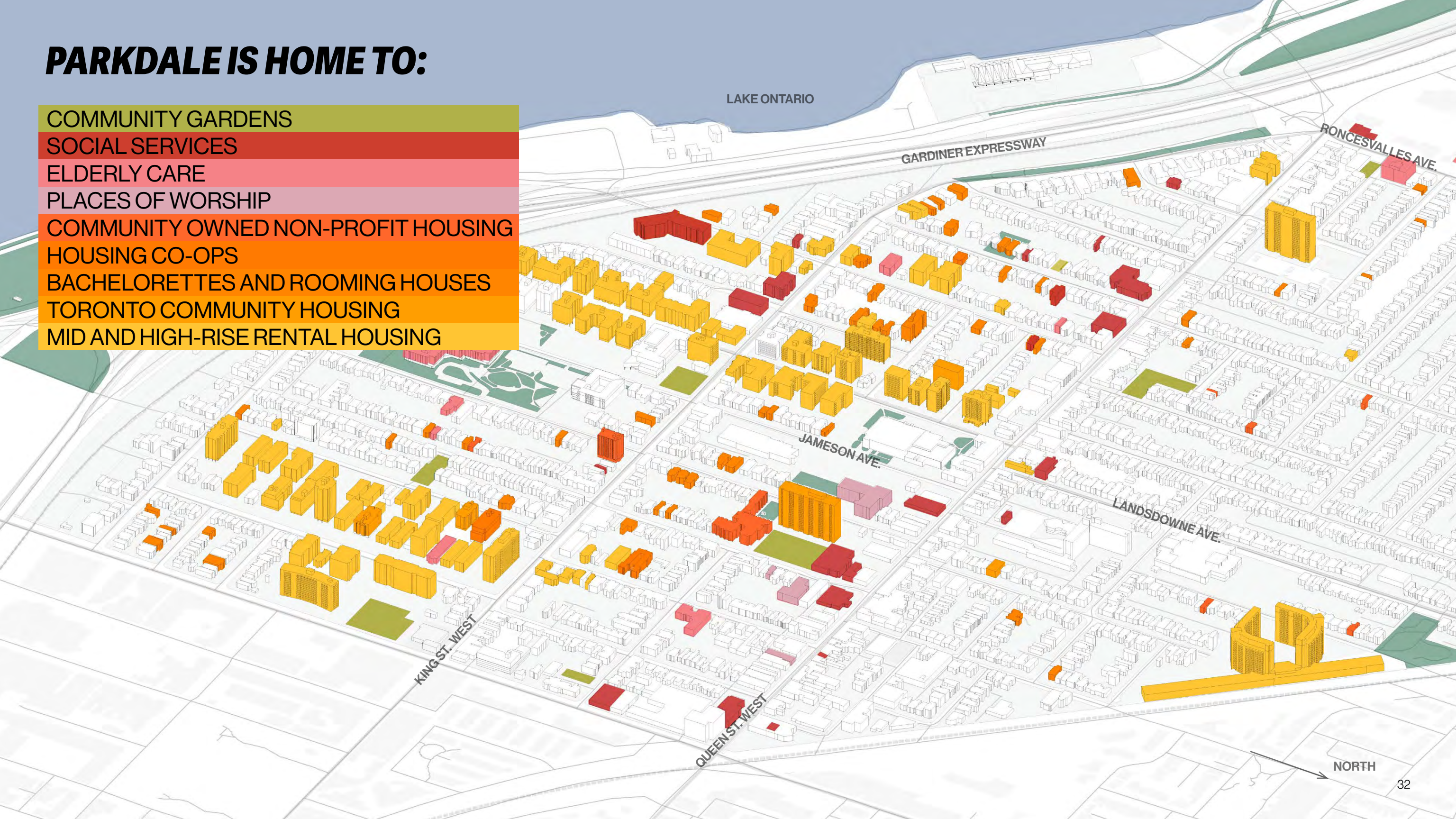
KING ST. WEST

QUEEN ST. WEST

NORTH

# PARKDALE IS HOME TO:

- COMMUNITY GARDENS
- SOCIAL SERVICES
- ELDERLY CARE
- PLACES OF WORSHIP
- COMMUNITY OWNED NON-PROFIT HOUSING
- HOUSING CO-OPS
- BACHELORETTES AND ROOMING HOUSES
- TORONTO COMMUNITY HOUSING
- MID AND HIGH-RISE RENTAL HOUSING



LAKE ONTARIO

GARDINER EXPRESSWAY

RONCESVALLES AVE.

JAMESON AVE.

LANDSDOWNE AVE.

KING ST. WEST

QUEEN ST. WEST

NORTH



# PARKDALE IS BEING THREATENED BY:

ENCROACHING MARKET-RATE CONDO DEVELOPMENTS WITH NO AFFORDABLE HOUSING



Example: XO Condos by Lifetime Developments proposed at King and Dufferin

703-unit luxury condo | 10 corporate retail units | **no affordable housing**



## NOT IN OUR LIFETIME

THURSDAY  
NOVEMBER 9, 2017  
7 - 9 PM

NEIGHBOURHOOD  
ASSEMBLY

201 COWAN AVE  
(BASEMENT)

LIFETIME DEVELOPMENTS HAS PROPOSED A 703-UNIT LUXURY CONDO DEVELOPMENT AT THE INTERSECTION OF KING AND DUFFERIN. **NOT ONE UNIT WILL BE AFFORDABLE.**

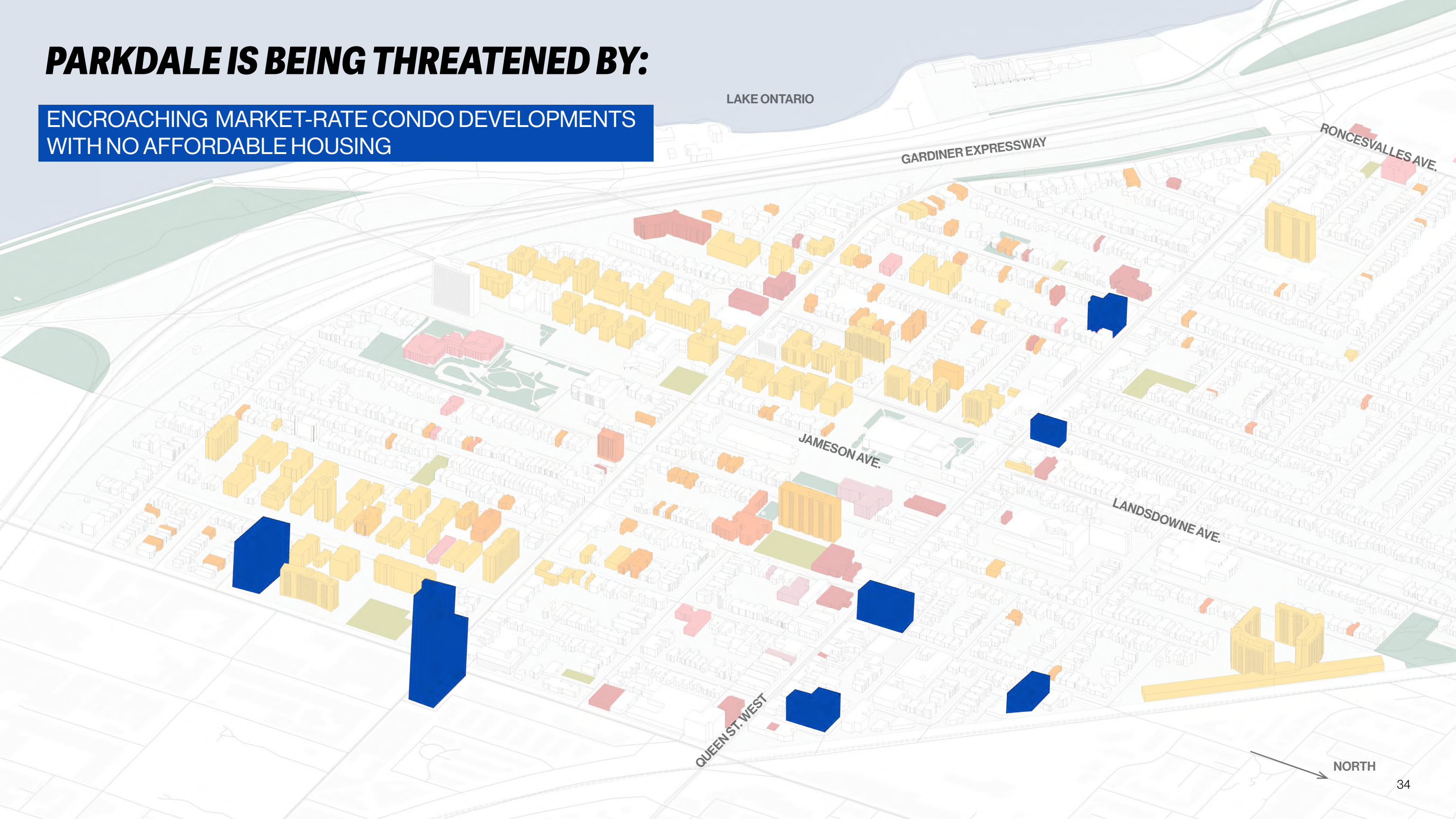
Join us for a neighbourhood assembly **this Thursday**, November 9, 2017 from 7-9PM, to say NO to the 14-storey and 17-storey King Street luxury condos. We will review the proposal, prepare a collective platform, sign up for public deputations, and start a letter-writing campaign for the upcoming Toronto East York Community Council on November 14th, 2017, where City Planning will be presenting their report to approve the development. This is our chance to fight back as a community.

**This is not Liberty Village. This is Parkdale. Let's unite to say "Not in our Lifetime."**

Community flyer in response to Lifetime Developments proposal

# PARKDALE IS BEING THREATENED BY:

ENCROACHING MARKET-RATE CONDO DEVELOPMENTS  
WITH NO AFFORDABLE HOUSING



LAKE ONTARIO

GARDINER EXPRESSWAY

RONCESVALLES AVE.

JAMESON AVE.

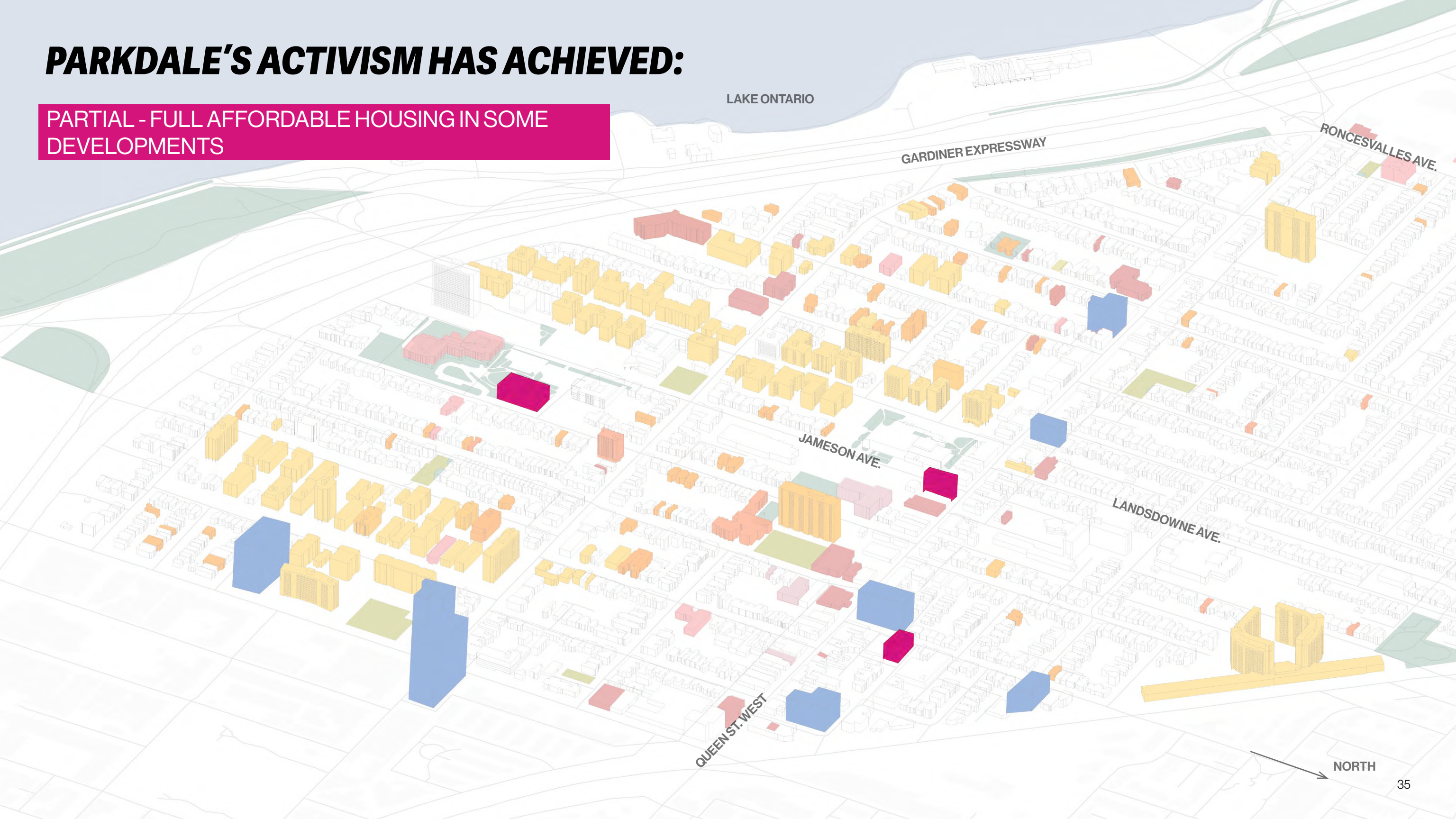
LANDSDOWNE AVE.

QUEEN ST. WEST

NORTH

# PARKDALE'S ACTIVISM HAS ACHIEVED:

PARTIAL - FULL AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN SOME DEVELOPMENTS



# PARKDALE CULTURE



PARKDALE COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

TINY CAFE

PARC 14

OPEN

PARKDALE COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE  
CENTRE DE SANTE DE COMMUNAUTE DE PARCDALE

COMMUNITY CONTROL

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

99 YEARS OF AFFORDABILITY

COMMUNITY CONTROL

HERE TO STAY

PRESERVE & PROTECT

COMMUNITY OWNED LAND

PARKDALE

TIBET MEMORY GARDEN

TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY  
Parkdale  
1193 Queen Street West

1879 Village of Parkdale  
Cowan Av.  
220

1879 Village of Parkdale  
Queen St. W.  
1313

Parkdale

# CO-DESIGN PARKDALE: COLLABORATION

To initiate our exploration of participatory planning processes, we partnered with Parkdale People's Economy (PPE) – a group of over 30 community-based organizations and hundreds of community members collaborating to build decent work, shared wealth, and equitable development in Parkdale.

Over the course of a year, we joined the PPE's Planning Committee with 17 other diverse community members, meeting once a month to collaborate and participate in a 12-month community planning process. A pivotal stage in our co-design process focused on community-mapping. Together with the PPE, we held four online community mapping workshops with the use of Social Pinpoint – an online interactive mapping tool. These workshops involved community member capacity building with the Social Pinpoint software while creating a space for productive engagement, the sharing of experiences, and feedback.

These workshops focused on **housing**, the **impacts of market-driven development**, and **community well-being** and **safety**. The intention of the workshops was to understand the lived experiences and stories of individual community members to cultivate a vision and set of values for community health and wealth.

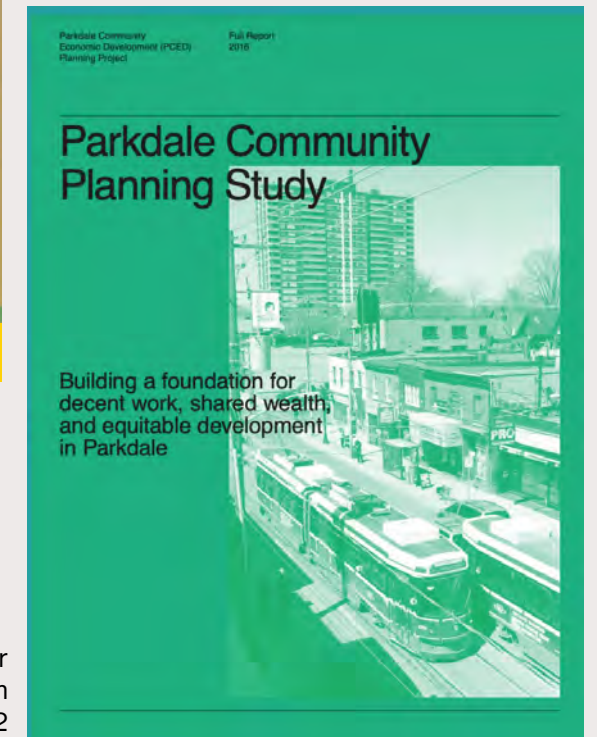
The information from these workshops will be used by PPE to inform the Parkdale Community Planning Study - a comprehensive resource rooted in qualitative research to document community assets and needs for future development initiatives.



PPE Participatory Planning Workshop in 2015.



Parkdale Community Planning Study for 2016, to be updated with results from Community Planning Process 2021-2022



# CO-DESIGN PARKDALE: PROCESS

## BACKGROUND INFO

- researched platforms for community engagement
- researched similar mapping projects
- met with nonprofits and organizations across TO to gauge interest and hone our research methodology and focus

JAN-MAR  
2021

MAR-JUN

## INITIAL OUTREACH

- Purchased Social Pinpoint
  - Built out a demo sites
- connected with Parkdale People's Economy for collaboration/partnership
- applied and joined Parkdale People Economy's Planning Committee

## CO-DESIGN PARKDALE PLANNING COMMITTEE FOCUS: WELLBEING INDICATORS

- committee conducted a series of workshops with larger Parkdale community to identify what they need to live well and have a decent quality of life for now and the future
- What indicators or signs show that this is being achieved?

JUL-SEPT

OCT-DEC

## CO-DESIGN PARKDALE PLANNING COMMITTEE FOCUS: COMMUNITY MAPPING

- Building off of the Wellbeing Indicators established by folks in the previous workshops, we brainstormed what questions and how to facilitate the community mapping workshops
- We held four workshops using Social Pinpoint

## PLANNING COMMITTEE FOCUS: VISION FOR ACTION

- Review findings from workshops
- Finalize design for action planning workshops
- Determine outreach strategy for final stage

WINTER 2022

# CO-DESIGN PARKDALE: COMMUNITY MAPPING WORKSHOPS

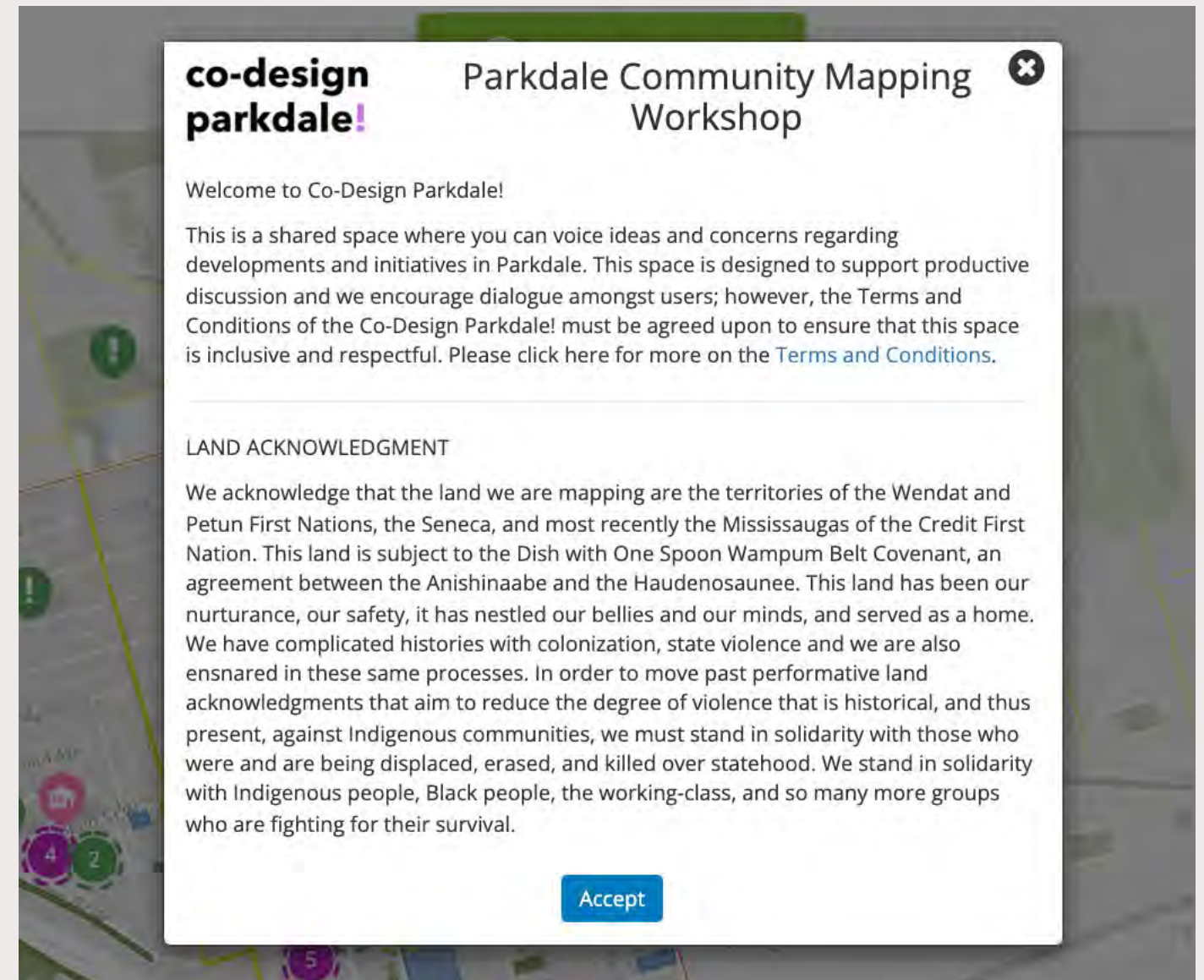
Municipal community consultation strategies often disregard marginalized community members. Consequently, community needs and assets are not captured in the conversation. This is antithetical to the intended purpose of community consultations, which is to inform the community about the proposed project and solicit feedback for subsequent design iterations.

Our community mapping workshops aimed to address this issue by building a power analysis of cultural and community needs and assets to cultivate visions and values for community health and wealth.

We prioritized understanding people's experiences of belonging and well-being in the neighbourhood through a mapping and storytelling process. The impacts of development and displacement were also critical themes.

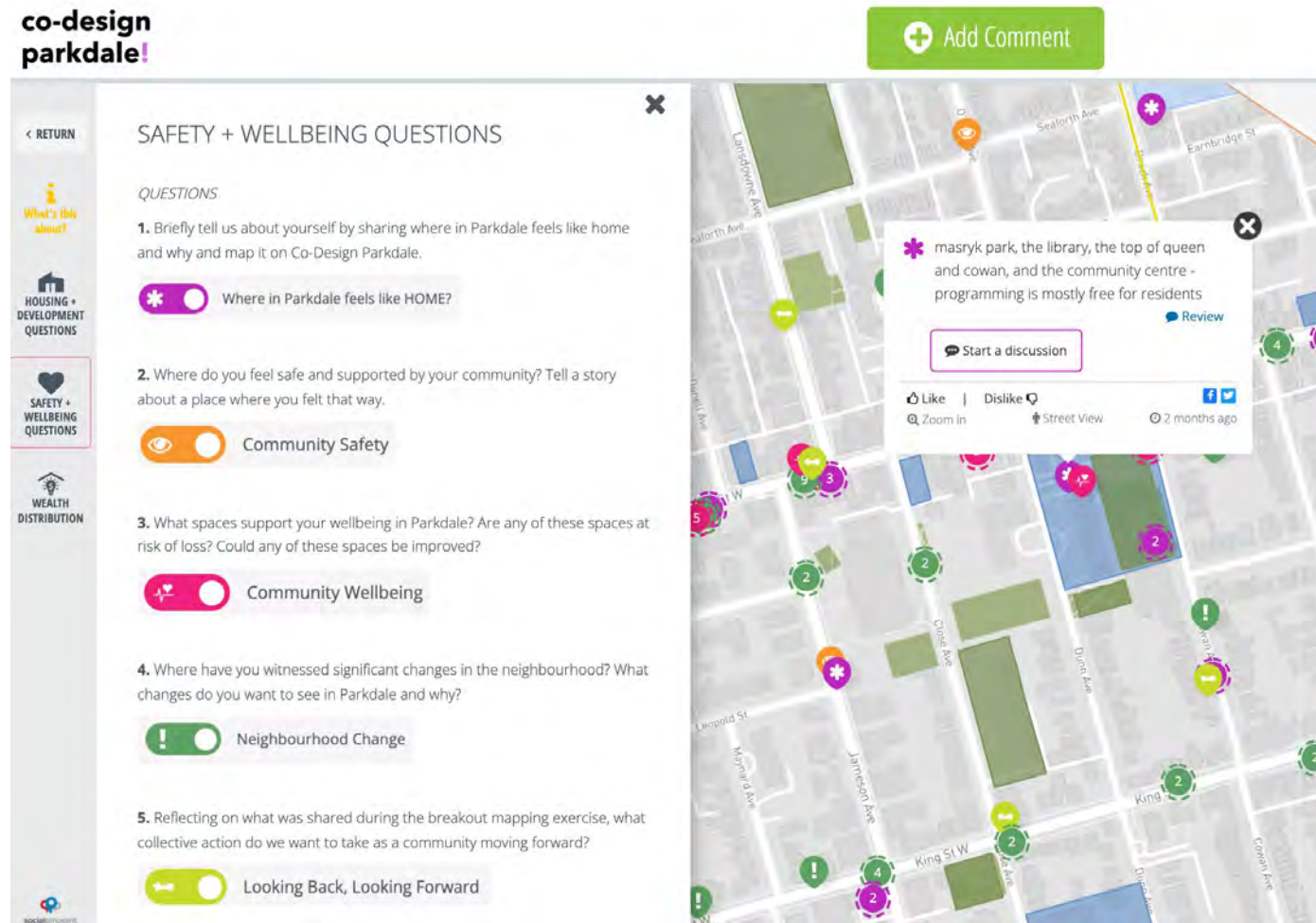
We explored the community significance of how spaces have changed over time. This allowed us to develop a more robust community analysis focused on differentiating the positive and negative causes and impacts of change throughout the neighbourhood.

We held a total of four 2-hour online workshops with a total of 61 participants using Social Pinpoint.

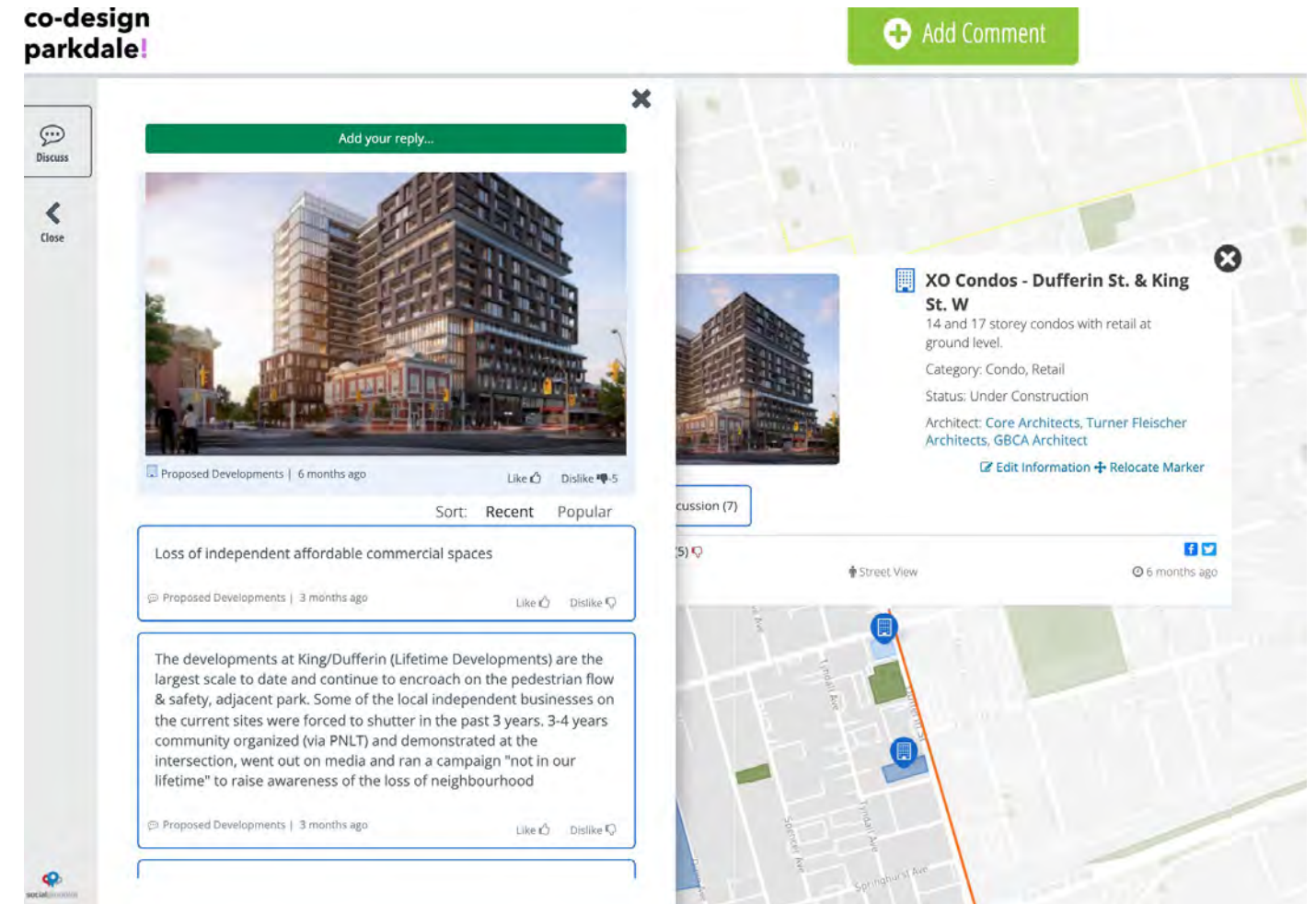


Arrival page of Co-Design Parkdale Community Mapping Workshops via Social Pinpoint

# CO-DESIGN PARKDALE: COMMUNITY MAPPING WORKSHOPS



Screenshot from Social Pinpoint illustrating people's comments on the maps. Questions on the left facilitated during the 'Safety and Wellbeing' workshops.



Screenshot from Social Pinpoint illustrating people's comment on the impact of proposed developments in the neighbourhood.



# ***CITY-LED COMMUNITY CONSULTATION (PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT)***

***GOAL: INFORM THE COMMUNITY ABOUT THE PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT***

## **'LIST OF MATTERS TO BE ADDRESSED'**

**Uses of the building** - ie;  
residential, retail, community hub, etc.

**Architecture, design + built form** -  
height, massing and setbacks, building materials,  
heritage considerations

**Broader Site** -  
parking + traffic, transit, circulation, pedestrian  
environment, public realm

# CO-DESIGN COMMUNITY MAPPING

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PRIORITY: LISTEN TO COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES AND INTEGRATE FEEDBACK INTO DESIGN PROCESS

## STORYTELLING AND MAPPING

Share stories of **housing justice** in Parkdale

What **impact** will these developments have in the neighbourhood?

What are your visions and strategies for how to **engage** with these developments?

Where do you feel **safe and supported** by your community? Tell a story about a place where you felt that way.

# CO-DESIGN COMMUNITY MAPPING DISCUSSIONS CONT'D

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## STORYTELLING AND MAPPING

What spaces support your **wellbeing** in Parkdale?  
Are any of these spaces at risk of loss? Could any of these spaces be improved?

Where have you witnessed **significant changes** in the neighbourhood?

What **changes** do you want to see in Parkdale and why?

What **collective action** do we want to take as a community moving forward?

# WHAT WAS SHARED

## WHERE IN PARKDALE FEELS LIKE HOME, AND WHY?

I grew up in Parkdale and I was raised here. This place is more diversified than any area in Toronto. It's accessible.

I have a lot of friends on this street. People always enjoy sharing a meal.

There is a sense of support and belonging here. We could turn to each other to get help and support. The day I got news that my mom passed away, there was a lady at my sister's home, and the lady was massaging my shoulders and had empathy for me. I'll never forget that moment.

The library. Pete's Grill, the Queen Fresh Building, and St. Francis' Table are spaces where you can convene and get together.

\*These are few out of several comments shared. All comments can be viewed online. Link shared in *References*.

# WHAT WAS SHARED

## WHAT SIGNIFICANT CHANGES DO YOU SEE IN PARKDALE?

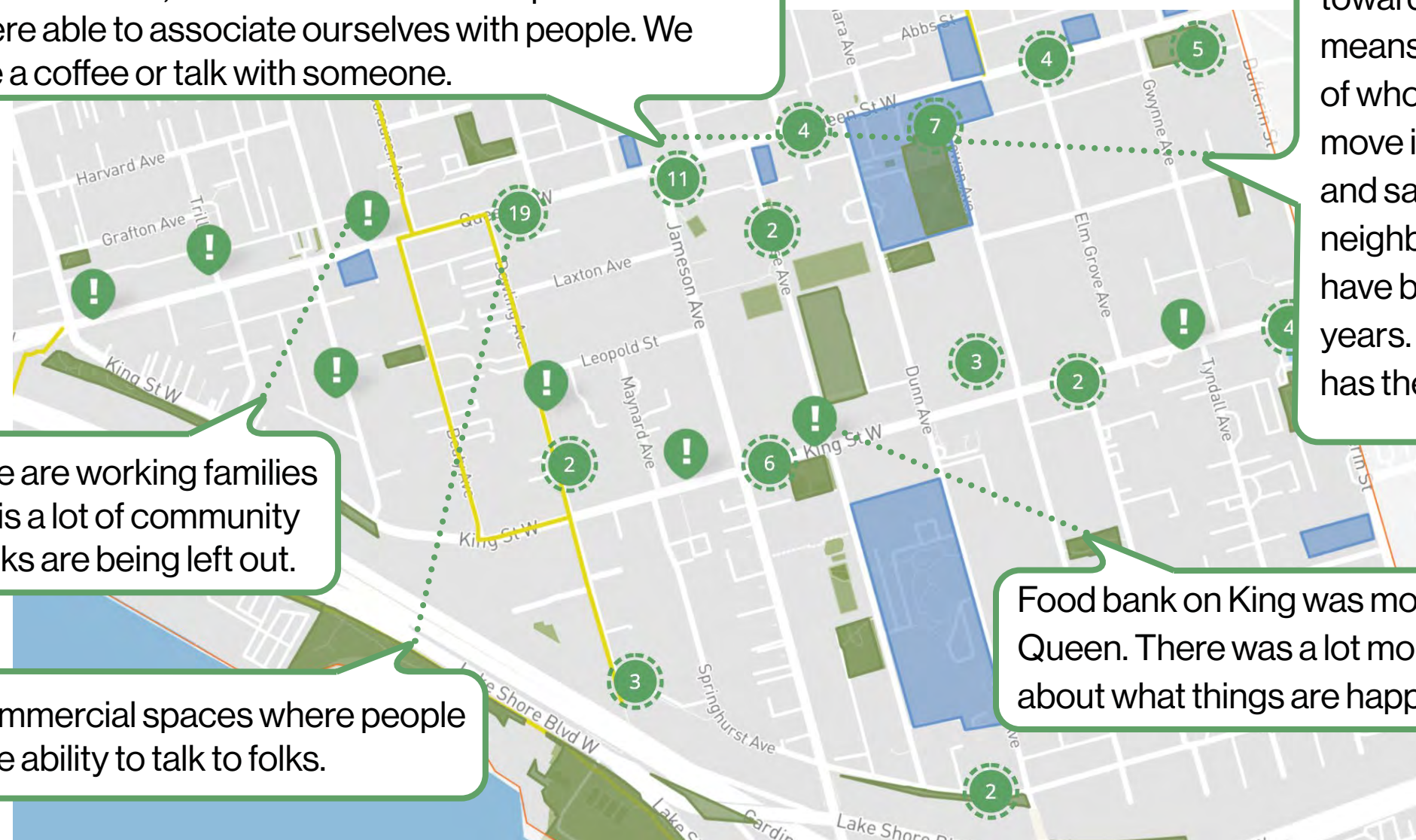
I feel alone due to the high rise buildings, and the loss of old memories that we had of going to different places. Everything has become so strange, you feel the loneliness, and there is no friendship that we used to have when we were able to associate ourselves with people. We used to go and have a coffee or talk with someone.

There is an increased voice of privilege in Parkdale. South Parkdale was a landing pad for newcomers, etc. The push towards mixed development means that there will be a shift of who lives here. I hear people move into this neighbourhood and say “what’s with my neighbours?” When these folks have been living here for 40-50 years. There is a change in who has the right to live in this area.

Most people in Parkdale are working families and even though there is a lot of community engagement - some folks are being left out.

There are commercial spaces where people don’t have the ability to talk to folks.

Food bank on King was more private versus on Queen. There was a lot more information shared about what things are happening at the old location.



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# WHAT WAS SHARED

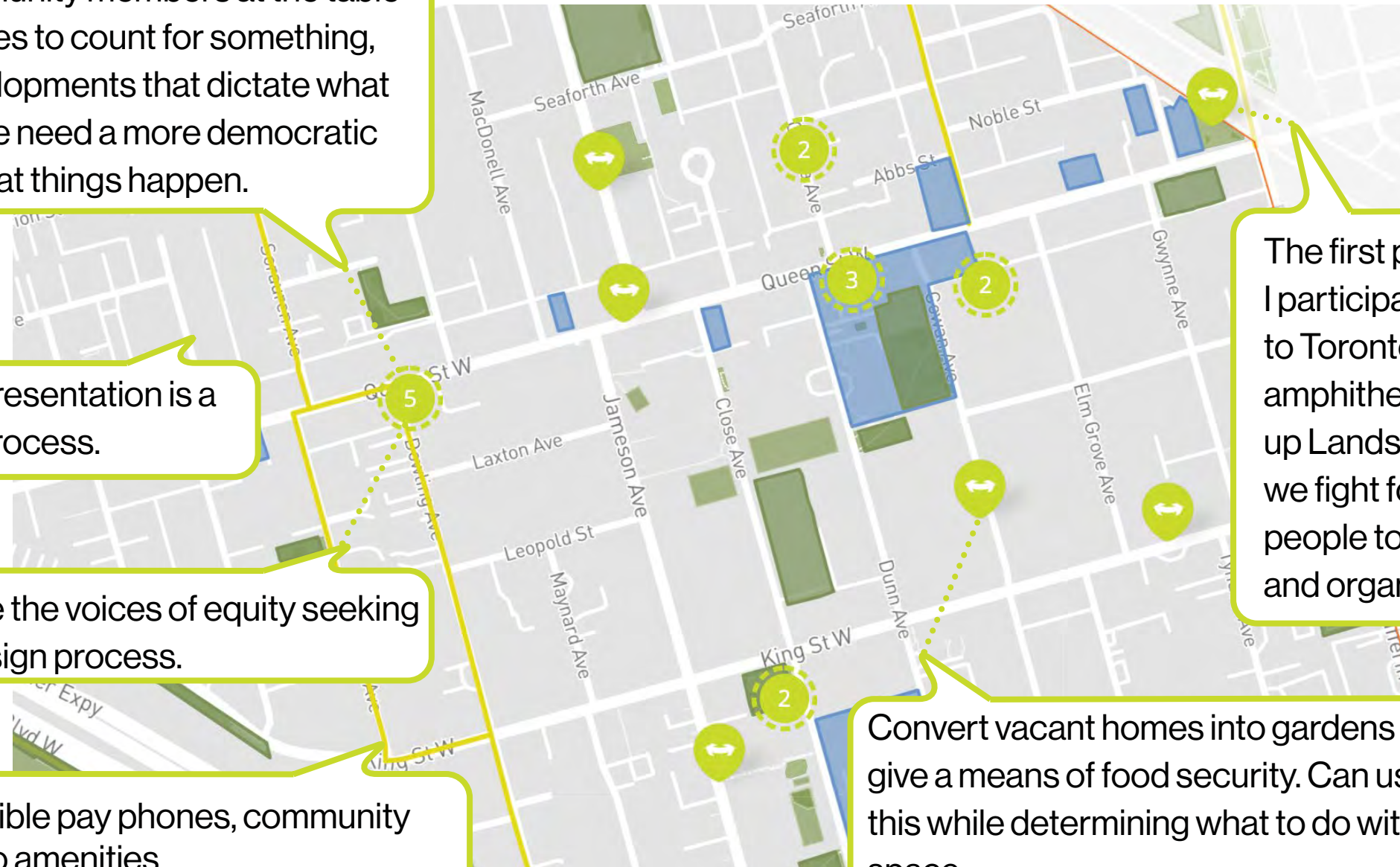
## LOOKING AHEAD - WHAT COLLECTIVE ACTION DO WE WANT TO TAKE AS A COMMUNITY?

We need to have community members at the table and we need their voices to count for something, versus corporate developments that dictate what happens in this City. We need a more democratic process in terms of what things happen.

Make sure that the representation is a part of the approvals process.

Make sure to centralize the voices of equity seeking communities in the design process.

At-grade retail, accessible pay phones, community gardens, shared condo amenities.



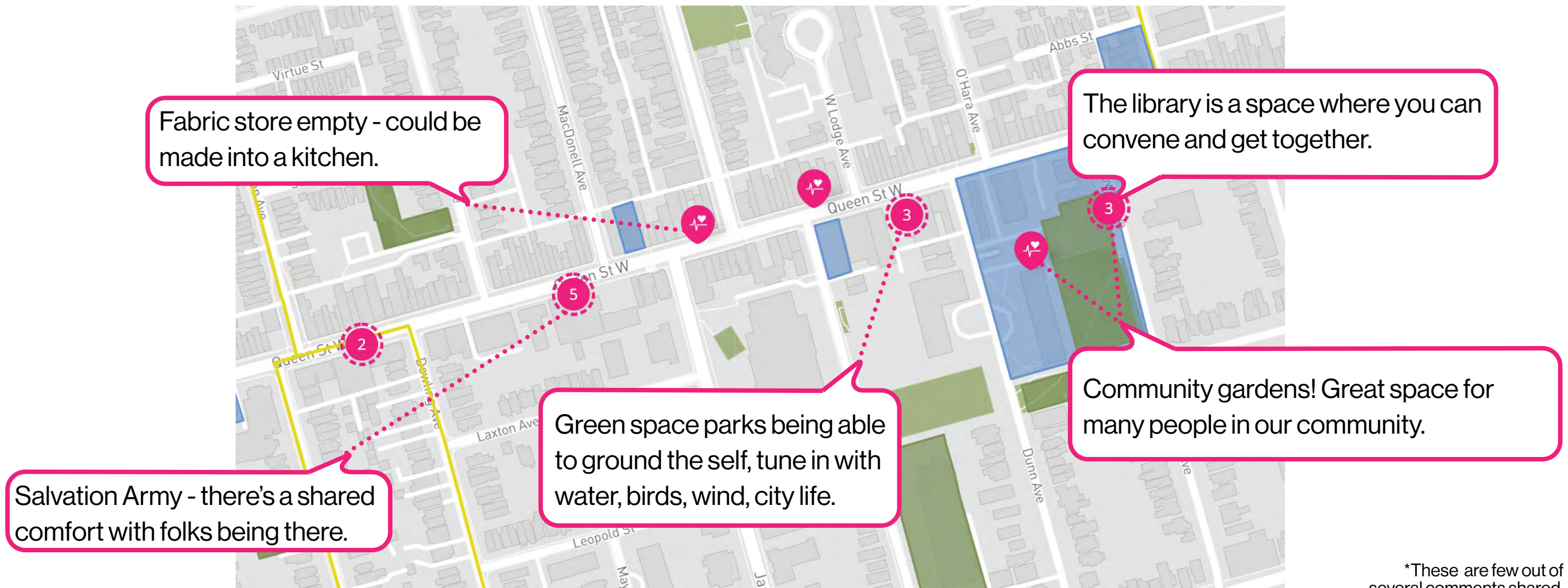
The first political demonstration I participated in after migrating to Toronto was held in the amphitheater and then moved up Landsdowne. It's important we fight for spaces like this for people to get together, live freely and organize.

Convert vacant homes into gardens and give a means of food security. Can use this while determining what to do with the space.

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# WHAT WAS SHARED

## WHAT SPACES SUPPORT YOUR WELLBEING IN PARKDALE?



\*These are few out of several comments shared. All comments can be viewed online. Link shared in *References*.

## **WHAT WAS SHARED COMMON SENTIMENTS**

Parkdale is a place of community, friends, and warmth.

This neighbourhood is closely tied to peoples memories and feelings.

The residents are grappling with change.

There is a fear of loneliness that comes with that change.

There is a big question mark over the neighbourhood right now: *Who is future Parkdale for?*



# LESSONS FOR THE PROFESSION

## Acknowledge and Checking our Inherent Bias

This project exposed our own inherent biases on several fronts. As designers trained in Euro-centric design principles at accredited academic institutions, we were forced to step back and assess the impact of our professional lens on community engagement. Our initial assumptions that a simple online directory of community resources would be sufficient to address existing community engagement issues proved misguided. Limited access to computers and internet, diverse linguistic backgrounds, and varying technological literacy all pointed to the fact that the first iteration of our project was not aligned with the requirements for a genuine inclusive conversation on the community's terms. This realization underscored the importance of collaborating with an activist group that served the community, as they were able to share valuable best-practices for community engagement developed and improved throughout years of outreach.

## Trauma is Site Specific

When engaging with communities who have suffered trauma, housing displacement, and other losses, facilitation led by established local organizations (like Parkdale People's Economy) is vital. In our workshops, we asked questions that could bring up past traumatic experiences for attendees, related to public space, accessibility, and housing. To account for the potential impact of our questions on individual community members, we included an 'active listener' in all workshop conversations. We found that it was critical for the active listener to be experienced working with people who had faced or were currently facing housing-insecurity, in the event that a workshop participant was triggered by past or on-going trauma and needed a private space to speak out.

## Relationships Before Deliverables

Early on in this project, our priorities were focused on developing project deliverables and hitting deadlines. This echoes how we as landscape architects operate in a professional context. In pursuing our project goals, however, we realized that we needed to refocus our priorities on the cultivation of trust and meaningful relationships with our community partners. Without that trust, we could not have created a forum for open community dialogue, which included community elders, representatives of cultural groups, and community activists and leaders. It takes time build trust, but through finding a willing community partner in Parkdale People's Economy, we were able to learn through their experience to better position ourselves for meaningful and productive community engagement.

## Expand the Scope of Analysis and Inventory

Through the workshops, we heard from people from all walks of life who shared stories of joy, family, friends, home, sadness, and fear that were all tied to physical spaces. In the established site inventory and analysis framework, landscape architects document the physical aspects of a site – sun exposures, existing buildings, trees, circulation and additional infrastructure – limiting us from capturing diverse cultural lived experience. Memories, stories, and people's human experiences are equally as important in understanding physical space.

WHO WE ARE



INTRODUCTION



OBSERVATIONS  
PROJECT INTENTION



CASE STUDY

Site: Parkdale, Toronto

Co-Design Parkdale Collaboration

What Was Shared + Lessons Learned



**SUGGESTED ACTIONS**

# ***SUGGESTED ACTIONS***

## ***LEARN FROM OTHERS: PARTICIPATORY LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE RESOURCES***

### **Community-Led Co-Design Kit**

A wide range of resources to help landscape architects and allied professions run co-design activities, and how to incorporate them into a project or fee proposal, on a range of project sizes. These resources can be applied to private projects that might not have funding for extensive public consultation.

### **Co-Designing Inclusive Cities Toolkit**

A toolkit of detailed documents, activity guides, and templates from the Inclusive Design Research Centre to help landscape architects include co-design elements in their project scope, and run effective co-design workshops with community members.

### **Co-Design Now! Map**

Co-design Now! is a map-based, spatialized resource - that highlights community groups, local initiatives, and grassroots organizations, all in one place.

### **Community.Design.Initiative at the East Scarborough Storefront (ERA Architects, Sustainable.TO, Architext), 2010**

The Community.Design.Initiative (CDI) is a collaborative project to redesign the East Scarborough Storefront (4040 Lawrence Avenue East) located in one of Canada's most at-risk and diverse neighbourhoods. The project facilitates a conversation about architecture's responsibility to engage across not only physical, but economic, social, cultural, and environmental contexts. Over the last four years, local youth have worked closely with architects, landscape architects, planners, and designers to co-design the building and surrounding landscape's concept design, design development, fundraising, approvals, and construction processes, including a 7-phase Master Plan.

### **Dequindre Cut, Detroit (SmithGroup)**

A project that built on existing community efforts and activism meant that this revitalization project had local support and buy-in from the very beginning.

"We recognized its potential – not just to be repurposed for connections and activity, but to celebrate the past and the future of industry and street art as a voice for the community." (SmithGroup)

### **Parkdale Planning Study, 2016**

As part of the Parkdale Community Economic Development (PCED) Planning Project, Parkdale People's Economy developed a report that summarized a series of community workshops that sought to answer the question: How can we protect diversity, affordability, and inclusivity in changing Parkdale while promoting equitable development for shared wealth-building and decent work for all? The report shows that communities and activist groups are already performing the much-needed research, groundwork, and reporting necessary for landscape architects to engage in a co-design process for future projects.

### **SOM Foundation Research Prize: Reclaiming Black Settlements: A Design Playbook for Historic Communities in the Shadow of Sprawl, 2020**

This research project aims to develop a design playbook particular to the needs of historic Black settlements in Dallas-Fort Worth that are exposed to risks of top-down development in the wake of explosive urban development and sprawl. This playbook reflects what is possible when landscape architects, as professionals, recognize that the projects we work on influence the way existing communities thrive in the long term.

# SUGGESTED ACTIONS

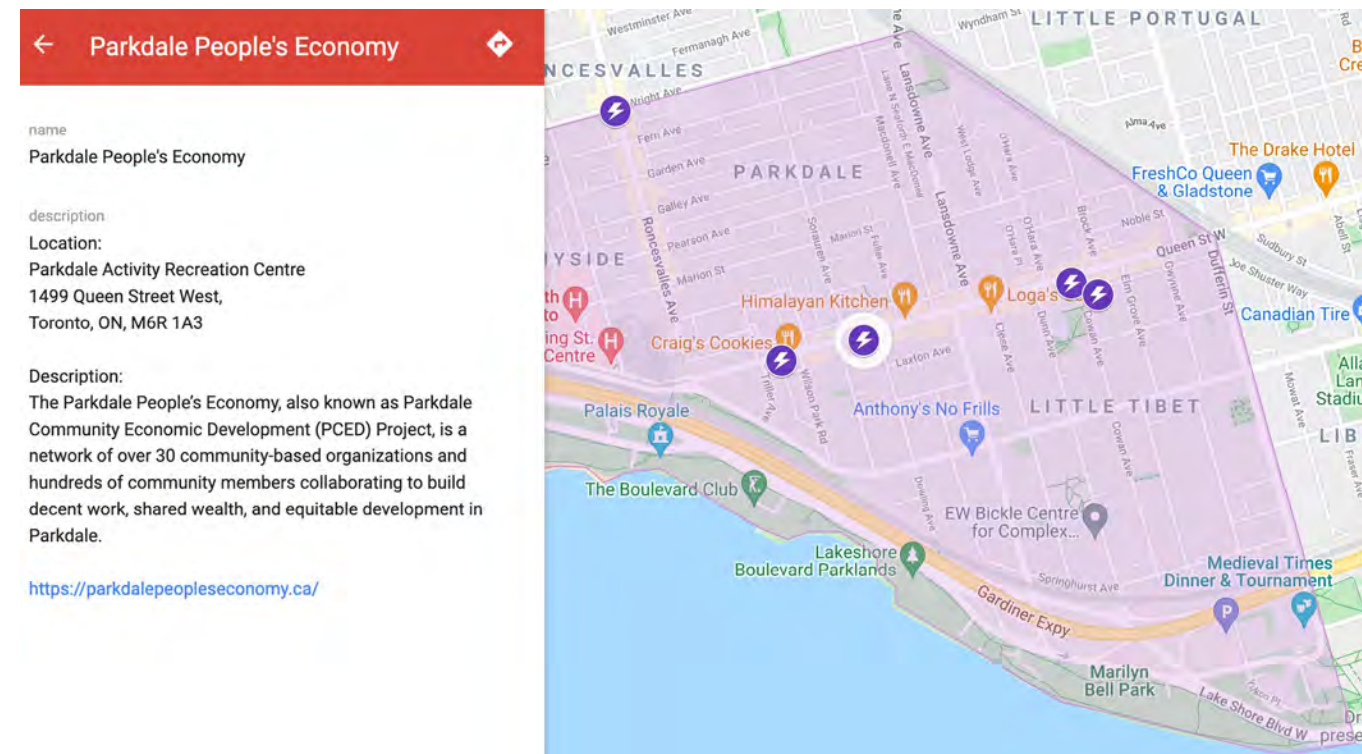
## BUILD CAPACITY WITH COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

### VIA THE CO-DESIGN NOW! MAP

We've cataloged community organizations in Toronto's Neighbourhood improvement Areas.

Find your neighbourhood and click the thunderbolt icon to get to know the local agencies in the area. ⚡

Click to access the [Co-Design Now! Map](#)



**Parkdale People's Economy**

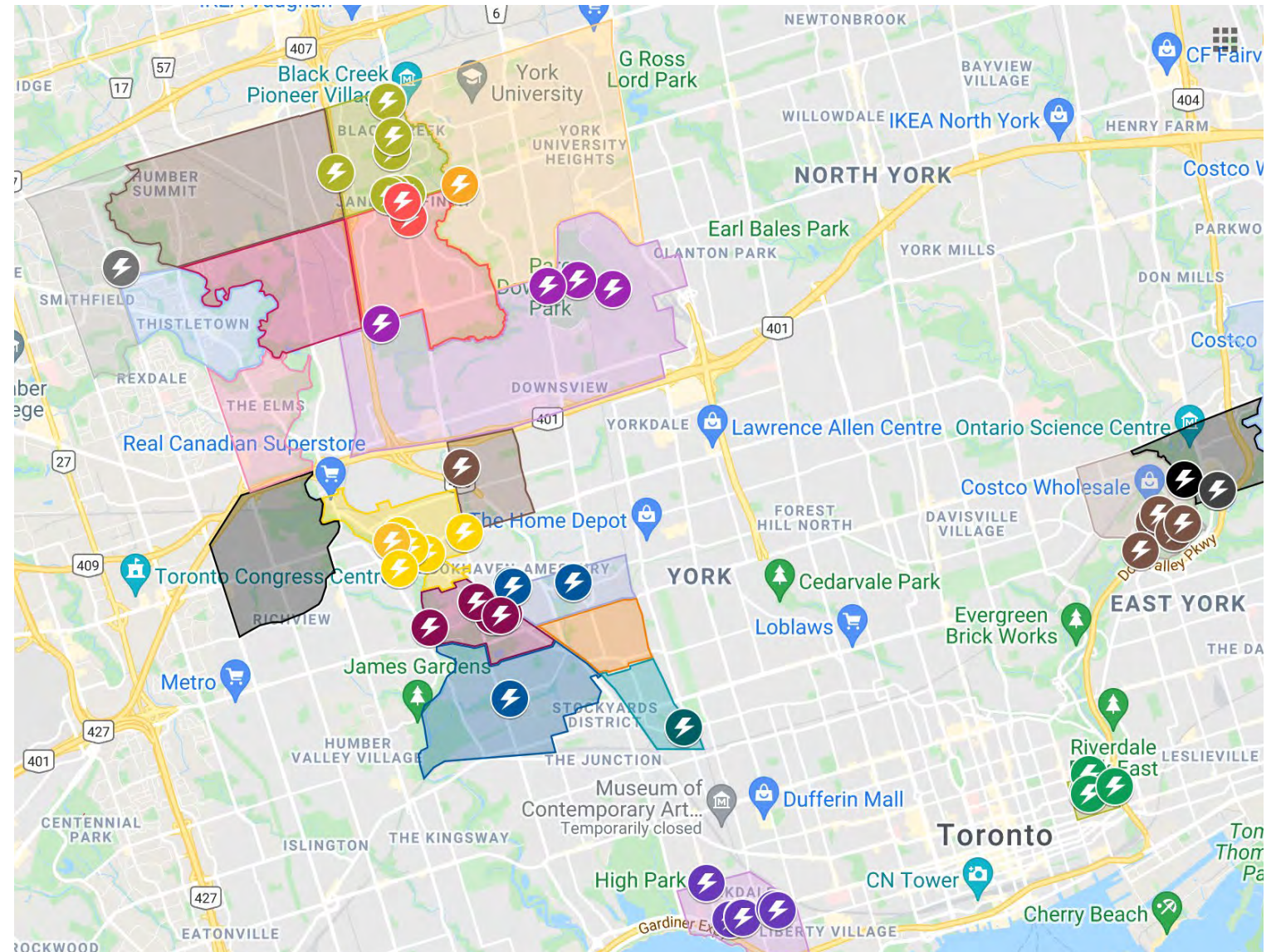
name  
Parkdale People's Economy

description  
**Location:**  
Parkdale Activity Recreation Centre  
1499 Queen Street West,  
Toronto, ON, M6R 1A3

Description:  
The Parkdale People's Economy, also known as Parkdale Community Economic Development (PCED) Project, is a network of over 30 community-based organizations and hundreds of community members collaborating to build decent work, shared wealth, and equitable development in Parkdale.

<https://parkdalepeopleseconomy.ca/>

The screenshot shows a detailed map of the Parkdale neighbourhood in Toronto. The map is overlaid with a purple semi-transparent rectangle representing the Parkdale People's Economy project area. Various community organizations are marked with colorful icons (thunderbolts, trees, etc.) across the map. A sidebar on the left provides specific information about the Parkdale People's Economy, including its name, location at the Parkdale Activity Recreation Centre, and a description of its mission as a network of over 30 community-based organizations.



# **LOOKING AHEAD**

Several barriers to the profession of landscape architecture prevent marginalized or racialized people from bringing their unique perspectives to the table. Co-designing with community activists and leaders challenges these barriers by including their voices.

As designers, we recognize our limits - activism is not taught or prioritized at the average design firm or design school. As such, connecting landscape architects, activists, and community leaders will only make our profession more relevant, our designs more socially resilient, and our work stronger.

As designers, we do not merely create physical objects or spaces. Our work reflects the political and social zeitgeist of our time within the contexts of culture, local references, and narratives. By incorporating community-driven design into our work, we have an opportunity to more accurately understand and address the world as it is. This, in turn, can inform how we define our design priorities for the better.

# **LOOKING AHEAD**

Expanding the proposed scope of work in fee proposals and RFPs on future Canadian projects should include consulting community leaders, activists, and designers to unearth layers of history, culture, and values throughout the design process.

Through a co-design process, landscape architects can have the opportunity to set a precedent for future generations of designers and raise the bar for accountable and inclusive Canadian landscape design.

**CO-DESIGN NOW!**

# REFERENCES

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“How to Conduct a Community Needs Assessment.” Galaxy Digital Volunteer Management Software, March 22, 2021. <https://www.galaxydigital.com/blog/community-needs-assessment/>.

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“Participatory Planning.” Co-Designing the Active City. Accessed February 14, 2022. <https://participatoryplanning.ca/participatory-planning>.

Pitter, Jay. “A Call to Courage - Canurb.org.” Canadian Urban Institute, June 2022. <https://canurb.org/wp-content/uploads/OpenLetter-ACallToCourage-Final-June2020.pdf>.

“Section 1: Asset Mapping.” UCLA Centre for Health Policy Research. Accessed February 14, 2022. [https://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/programs/health-data/trainings/Documents/tw\\_cba20.pdf](https://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/programs/health-data/trainings/Documents/tw_cba20.pdf).

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# IMAGE SOURCES

## Page 8

Community Owned Land - Milky Way Garden

<http://www.pnlt.ca/milkywaygarden/>

## Page 9

'Wanted to Be Understood'

Saved from an no longer existing Instagram account called ParkdaleLife

## Page 12

How 'landscape urbanism' is making gentrification look fun

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2019/11/19/how-landscape-urbanism-is-making-gentrification-look-like-fun/>

Inequality is being built into cities: segregated playgrounds are just the start

<https://theconversation.com/inequality-is-being-built-into-cities-segregated-playgrounds-are-just-the-start-115676>

Inequality in the Provision of Access to Urban Space

<https://www.smartcitiesdive.com/ex/sustainablecitiescollective/inequality-provision-access-urban-open-space/216266/>

How gentrification caused America's cities to burn

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2019/09/13/how-gentrification-caused-americas-cities-burn/>

Public Spaces Aren't Really Available for Everyone

<https://www.archdaily.com/915377/public-spaces-arent-really-available-for-everyone>

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'My Parkdale is gone': how gentrification reached the one place that seemed immune

<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2020/jan/14/my-parkdale-is-gone-how-gentrification-reached-the-one-place-that-seemed-immune>

'We're being squeezed out': Locals try to save Parkdale restaurants amid gentrification worry

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/we-re-being-squeezed-out-locals-try-to-save-parkdale-restaurant-amid-gentrification-worry-1.4359744>

Medicine or rent? In Parkdale - High Park, affordable housing is a the forefront ahead of federal election

<https://www.thestar.com/politics/federal-election/2021/09/17/medicine-or-rent-in-parkdalehigh-park-affordable-housing-is-at-the-forefront-ahead-of-federal-election.html>

Parkdale tenants seek community solutions to booming gentrification

<https://centre.support/parkdale-tenants-seek-community-solutions-to-booming-gentrification/>

Parkdale community holds rally calling for end to anti-Black racism in schools

<https://www.cp24.com/news/parkdale-community-holds-rally-calling-for-end-to-anti-black-racism-in-schools-1.5665114?cacle=%3FclipId%3D89530%3FclipId%3D104070>

## Page 33

Lifetime Developments Render

<https://www.blogto.com/city/2017/11/parkdale-going-get-condo-it-doesnt-want/>

Not in Our Lifetime Flyer

<https://parkdalecommunityeconomies.wordpress.com/2017/11/07/not-in-our-lifetime-neighbourhood-assembly-to-oppose-the-king-street-luxury-condo-proposal/>

## Page 36

St. Francis Table

<https://www.thedale.org/visit-us/>

# IMAGE SOURCES

## PARC

<https://parc.on.ca/>

## Parkdale Arts and Cultural Centre

<https://www.artscape.ca/portfolio-item/parkdale-arts-and-cultural-centre/>

## Parkdale Community Health

<https://www.toronto.com/community-story/7077502-parkdale-and-queen-west-health-centres-approve-merger/>

## Tiny Cafe

<https://dailyhive.com/toronto/tiny-tibetan-cafe-parkdale-toronto-january-2019>

## Community Owned Land

<https://centre.support/parkdale-tenants-seek-community-solutions-to-booming-gentrification/>

## Masayrk Cowan Community Centre

<https://www.toronto.com/community-story/7127487-masayrk-cowan-cc-renames-popular-youth-space-the-myz/>

## Woman Mural

<https://www.liisawanders.com/blog/the-hidden-street-art-of-parkdale-toronto/>

## Tibetan Garden

<https://greenestcity.ca/hope>

## Parkdale Globe Sculpture

[https://torontopubliclibrary.typepad.com/arts\\_culture/2019/11/in-parkdale-musings-from-the-musician-in-residence.html](https://torontopubliclibrary.typepad.com/arts_culture/2019/11/in-parkdale-musings-from-the-musician-in-residence.html)

## Parkdale Mural

<https://www.narcity.com/toronto/ten-things-you-know-to-be-true-when-living-in-parkdale/9-the-hipsters-are-cooler>

## Queen and Cowan

<https://createto.ca/engagement-highlights/parkdale-community-hub-feasibility-study/>

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## Participatory Planning Workshop

<https://parkdalecommunityeconomies.wordpress.com/category/community-planning/>

## Parkdale Community Planning Study

<http://www.pnlt.ca/parkdaleplanningstudy/>