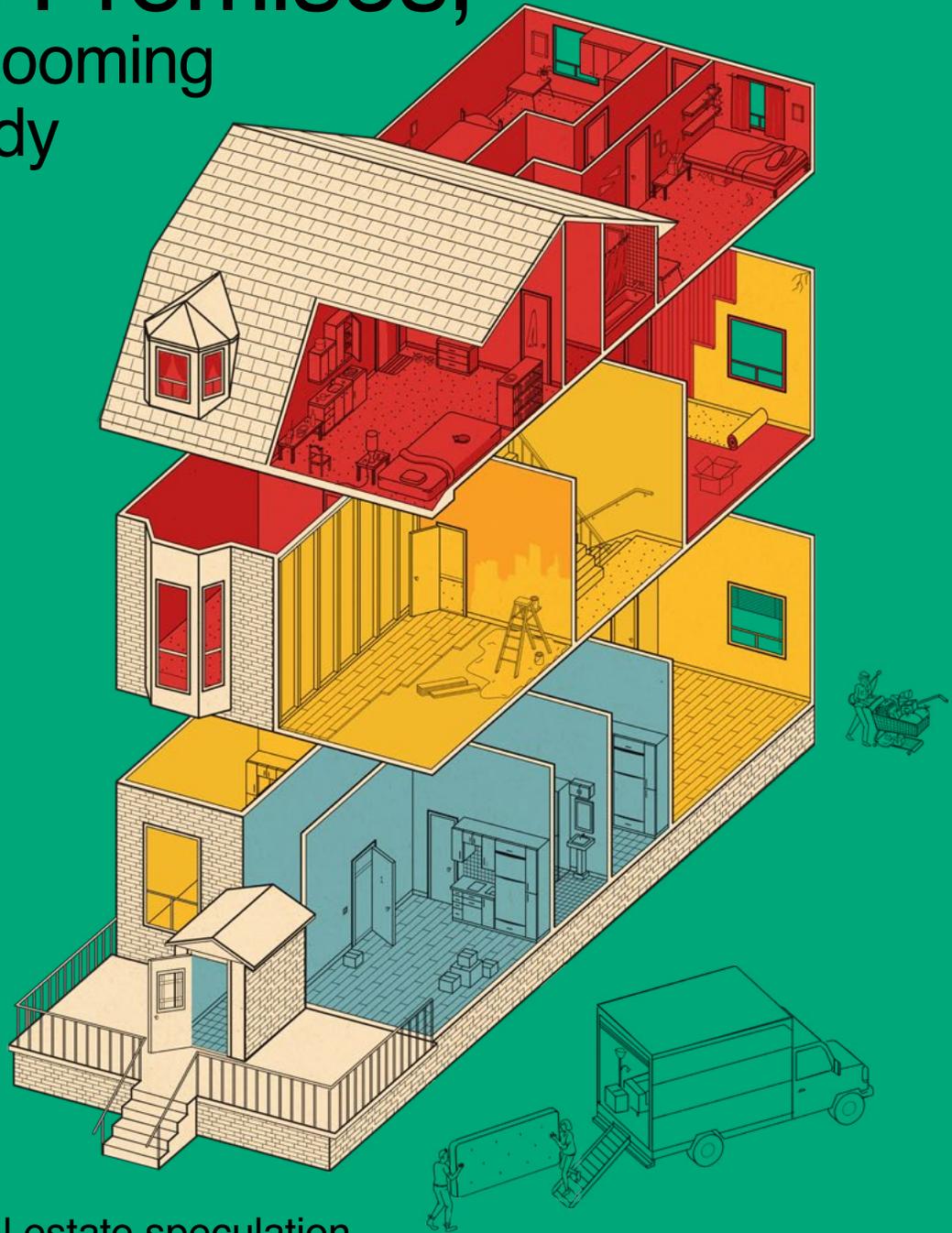


# No Room For Unkept Promises, Parkdale Rooming House Study



The impact of real estate speculation,  
upscaling, and conversion on rooming  
house loss in Parkdale

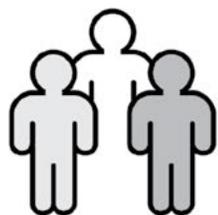
# Executive Summary



**198**  
ROOMING  
HOUSES

**59**  
AT RISK  
OF LOSS

**28**  
ALREADY  
LOST



HOUSING  
**2,715**  
PEOPLE

HOUSING  
**818**  
PEOPLE

DE-HOUSING  
**347**  
PEOPLE

## THE PARKDALE ROOMING HOUSE STUDY

The rooming house has been a critical source of accessible and affordable housing in Parkdale since the 1930s but has been stigmatized by and under pressure from government and community groups for just as long. As the economic tides of Parkdale continue to shift with increasing gentrification, resulting in higher property values, Parkdale's rooming houses face new challenges to their existence. Formerly affordable private rooming houses are being lost at an alarming rate, either through speculative upscaling to higher-income rental housing—a new and concerning trend we call “upscale gentrification”—or through conversion to single-family homes.

The Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust (PNLT) was commissioned to determine the number and condition of rooming houses in Parkdale and to assess the impact of gentrification and real estate speculation on rooming house loss. The scale of what we have found—both in terms of the size and importance of this affordable housing stock as well as the rate at which it is disappearing—has alarmed the research team, non-profits, and government alike.

Our research found 198 rooming houses in Parkdale with an estimated 2,715 dwelling rooms — more than double the 1300 units owned by Toronto Community Housing within the study boundaries. We have also documented an

escalating crisis of rooming house loss. The research confirmed that in the past 10 years, 28 rooming houses have been lost to conversion and upscaling gentrification, displacing an estimated 347 people. We believe 59 more, housing 818 people, are at imminent risk of being lost.

This report does more, however, than quantify for the first time in Toronto the number of rooming house buildings, units, and residents within a community. It also identifies the human cost of this concerning scale of potential displacement. Continued loss of rooming houses in Parkdale will be catastrophic to the lives of hundreds of mostly low-income, vulnerable residents who depend on Parkdale's social and community supports and are at risk of eviction, displacement, and homelessness. We are on the edge of an escalating homelessness crisis: in 2016 Toronto's social housing waiting lists surpassed 177,000 people, while the City's 4674 shelter beds reached 96% occupancy.

We call on the non-profit and public sectors to respond urgently to this crisis. We propose a 10-year, coordinated, multi-partner Parkdale Rooming House Preservation Strategy to preserve, maintain, and develop this disappearing stock of affordable housing. As the Federal government is poised for a reinvestment in a 10-year national housing strategy, there is no room for unkept promises.

## 10 KEY FINDINGS

1. Parkdale has a substantial rooming house stock of 198 buildings, with 2,715 dwelling rooms—more than double the 1300 units owned by TCH in the area.
2. Neighbourhood change and real estate speculation, while not the only contributing factors, are the leading causes of rooming house loss through upscaling and/or conversion.
3. 28 private rooming houses or 12% of Parkdale's rooming houses have been lost in the last 10 years.
4. 86% of rooming houses are privately owned. These properties are heavily subsidized by public money that does not protect their long-term affordability.
5. 59 private rooming houses are at risk of upscaling and/or conversion, jeopardizing the housing stability of over 818 people.
6. Bachelorette buildings in particular are at imminent risk.
7. Currently no effective policy frameworks are in place to preserve rooming houses or their affordability.
8. Rooming house upscaling and conversion is causing an eviction crisis. Both legal and illegal evictions are common.
9. While most rooming house tenants are protected under the Residential Tenancies Act, many are unaware of their rights or do not have the desire or capacity to contest their eviction to the full extent of the law.
10. Many evicted tenants are displaced from Parkdale, losing access to its community and social services. Some become homeless. Some evictions lead to tragedies.



**WE CALL ON THE NON-PROFIT AND PUBLIC SECTORS TO RESPOND URGENTLY TO THIS CRISIS. WE PROPOSE A 10-YEAR, COORDINATED, MULTI-PARTNER PARKDALE ROOMING HOUSE PRESERVATION STRATEGY.**

Study Team Member Lynne Sky



# Rooming House Loss, Upscaling & Conversion

## Key findings include:

1. Neighbourhood change and real estate speculation, while not the only contributing factors, are the leading causes of rooming house loss through upscaling and/or conversion.
2. 28 private rooming houses have been lost in the last 10 years.
3. 59 more private rooming houses are at risk, jeopardizing the housing stability and health of over 800 people.
4. Bachelorette buildings in particular are at imminent risk.
5. Currently no effective policy frameworks are in place to preserve rooming houses or their affordability.

Summary of All Rooming Houses in Parkdale		
Type of Building	Number of Buildings	Total Population in Rooming Houses*
Rooming House	87	1,253
Bachelorette Rooming House	75	955
Community Non-Profit Building	28	452
Possible Rooming House	8	55
<b>Total</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>2,715</b>

Converted / Lost Rooming Houses		
Converted to	Number of Buildings	Total Former Population of Converted Rooming Houses*
Single Family Homes	5	70
Upscaling Conversion	15	177
Vacant	4	56
Under Construction	2	19
Sold by Community Non-Profit	1	8
Converted to Seniors Housing	1	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>347</b>

At-Risk Properties		
Reason for Risk	Number of Buildings	Total Estimated Number of Residents at Risk of Housing Loss*
Bachelorette w/ 10 or more units	36	540
Sale Imminent / Lease Ending	15	194
Conversion Related Evictions	3	47
Licensing Compliance Issues	5	38
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>818</b>

## ROOMING HOUSE LOSS

Our study confirmed that 28 former rooming houses had been upscaled or converted over the past decade to other uses including single-family homes, Airbnb rentals, and higher-priced rental apartments. The loss of these 28 rooming houses displaced an estimated 347 residents. This is a conservative estimate, and the true number of people displaced by rooming house loss is higher.

## PROPERTIES AT RISK OF UPSCALING & CONVERSION

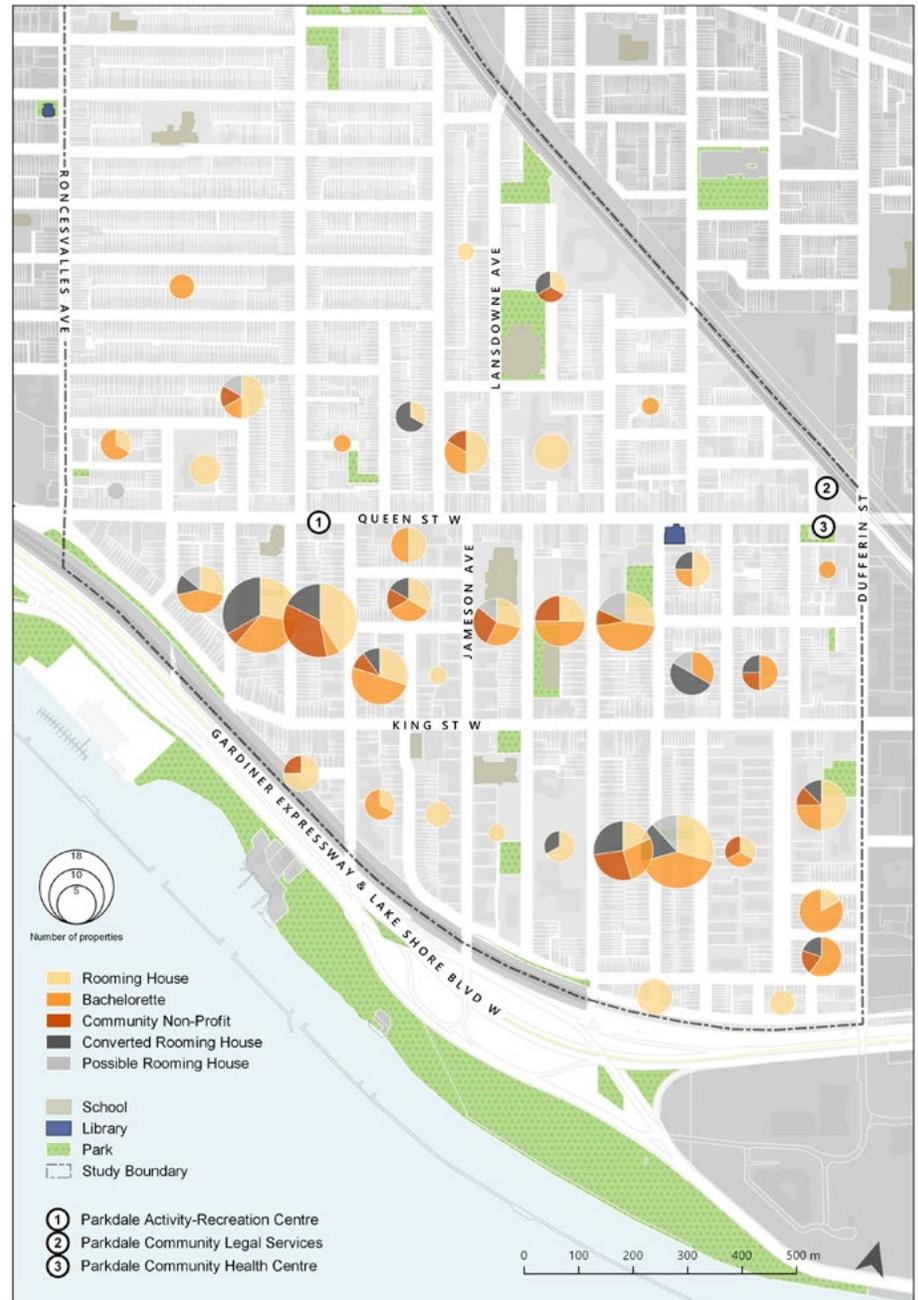
The study identified multiple factors that put rooming houses at risk of loss through upscaling and conversion. We identified 59 rooming houses—28% of all rooming houses in Parkdale—as currently at risk of conversion due to one or more factors listed in the chart on page 4. This represents a tremendous and unpredictable threat to the housing stability and wellbeing of 818 vulnerable residents.

## INCREASING ROOMING HOUSES EVICTIONS

The study has found that the upscaling and conversion of rooming houses almost always triggers the eviction and displacement of rooming house tenants. While the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) outlines a formal eviction process that should protect most tenants, in practice both legal and illegal rooming house evictions occur. Our research suggests that in the course of legal eviction proceedings, many tenants are often unaware of their rights under the Residential Tenancies Act or do not have the desire or capacity to contest their eviction to the full extent that the law permits. This finding suggests that there is a need for increased tenants' rights education and support for rooming house tenants.

## ROOMING HOUSES IN PARKDALE

March 2017



**PARKDALE HAS 59 ROOMING HOUSES AT RISK TO UPSCALING AND CONVERSION, PUTTING 818 RESIDENTS AT RISK OF DISPLACEMENT.**

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# 06

# Recommendations for a 10-Year Affordable Housing Preservation Strategy



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To address the escalating crisis of rooming house loss and tenant displacement there is urgent need for a multi-partner, coordinated response. As the Federal government is poised for a reinvestment in a 10-year national housing strategy, we recommend the implementation of a complementary 10-year Affordable Housing Preservation Strategy in Parkdale. There is a historic opportunity to implement an innovative approach to equitable development and smart growth at a neighbourhood scale, while preserving hundreds of affordable housing units in perpetuity. Four key directions for action include:

1. Proactive eviction prevention & response
  2. Affordable housing preservation through acquisition & rehabilitation of at-risk private rooming houses by a non-profit Community Land Trust (CLT)
  3. Development of new affordable & supportive housing
  4. Policy & planning tools that support development without displacement
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## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A 10-YEAR AFFORDABLE HOUSING PRESERVATION STRATEGY IN PARKDALE.

1. Proactive eviction prevention & response		
Recommendations	Who is responsible	Target
1 Develop information-sharing protocols among local agencies and the City to monitor the stability of at-risk rooming houses.	PNLT, PCLS, WoodGreen, OEM, City Planning	NA
2 Increase legal education for tenants and owners through the <i>Rooming House Stabilization &amp; Eviction Prevention Pilot Project</i> . This legal education project will focus on those who live in or run rooming houses (both licensed and unlicensed), ensuring they understand their rights as tenants or obligations as landlords. It would include the development & delivery of focused legal education for rooming house tenants.	City of Toronto, WoodGreen, PCLS, PARC, PNLT	Stabilize up to 59 rooming houses, 800 tenants provided legal education
3 Support the creation of tenants associations in rooming houses for those seeking to form a tenants association and further supports. To further this objective, the City of Toronto should immediately increase funding for the <i>Tenant Defence Fund</i> , and develop a new grant to assist rooming house tenants.	Federation of Metro Tenants' Associations, PCLS	TBD
4 Local community organizations should take a more active role in the Rooming House Licensing administration by attending hearings and meetings of the board or seeking membership.	PNLT, PARC, PCLS, Regeneration, Cota, PCED Steering Committee	NA

2. Affordable housing preservation through acquisition & rehabilitation of at-risk private rooming houses by non-profit CLT		
Recommendations	Who is responsible	Target
1 Undertake a demonstration project to establish the feasibility of rooming house preservation through non-profit acquisition, rehabilitation and stewardship by the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust and partners.	City of Toronto, PNLT, PARC	Preserve 1 at-risk Rooming House by 2018
2 Initiate 10-year development pipe-line to preserve affordable housing through the non-profit acquisition & rehabilitation of at-risk rooming houses in Parkdale.	City of Toronto, PNLT, PARC, Habitat Services, Cota, Regeneration, St Clair Multifairth Housing, Ecuhome WoodGreen, and more.	Preserve up to 800 units by 2027
3 Develop social finance instrument to raise capital for affordable housing acquisition, preservation and development.	PCED Community Finance Working Group, PNLT, Purpose Capital, CSI,	\$16,000,000 in social finance in 10 years.
4 Develop property maintenance & property management social enterprise or workers' coop that focuses on local hiring & supportive work placements.	Silver Brush, Working For Change, PNLT, PARC, Dufferin Grove Coop.	TBD

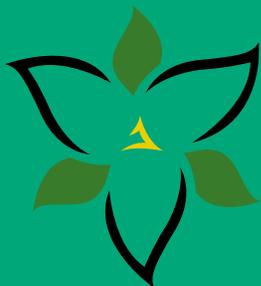
  

3. Development of new affordable & supportive housing		
Recommendations	Who is responsible	Target
1 Prioritize the development of affordable & supportive housing on City-Owned properties (11 Brock, Cowan & Queen Community Hub Development).	Local Councillor, City of Toronto	80 new units
2 Develop purpose-built affordable condominium ownership opportunities for non-profit and supportive housing organizations.	ivN/D and other private sector developers	200 new units
3 Develop mixed-income affordable condominium ownership opportunities for low-, middle-income people, including individuals on fixed income (ODSP, OW, OAS).	ivN/D and other private sector developers	100 new units

4. Policy & planning tools that support development without displacement		
Recommendations	Who is responsible	Target
1 The City of Toronto should expand the City's rental housing protection policies for rooming house properties with 6 or more dwelling rooms, in order to ensure no-net-loss of rooming house rooms for Parkdale and protect and maintain the current level of affordable housing.	City of Toronto	Maintain the current stock of rooming houses at 2700 dwelling rooms as of 2016
2 The City of Toronto should encourage the ongoing affordability of bachelorette units that were legalized through the Parkdale Pilot Project.	City of Toronto	protect the affordability of up to 900 units.
3 The City of Toronto and Province of Ontario should increase the supply of rent supplements that are specifically linked to affordable housing units owned by non-profit organizations.	City of Toronto (SSHA, Affordable Housing Office), Province of Ontario	TBD
4 The City of Toronto should establish a Small Site Affordable Housing Acquisition Fund, that would provide capital to non-profit organizations to acquire and preserve at-risk affordable multi-residential rental properties.	City of Toronto	NA
5 Ministry of Health should increase Habitat Services boarding home subsidies to keep pace with the rising cost of operations. Additionally, new funding should be provided to Habitat to expand the number of boarding home beds it subsidizes in Parkdale.	Province of Ontario, City of Toronto	10% increase in subsidy, 150 new units
6 The PNLT, PARC and the Parkdale Community Economic Development (PCED) Steering Committee should develop a Built Form and Land Use Plan that enshrines rooming houses in its vision, and use this plan as the starting point for discussions with City staff and developers as new development applications and community initiatives occur. Consideration should be made as to how the following planning tools can support this vision: Inclusionary zoning, Secondary Plans and Expropriation.	PNLT, PARC, PCED Steering Committee	NA

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