

July 7, 2021

To the Mayor and City Council of the City of Hamilton -

I am writing with respect to the report that was referred to City Council by the Public Works Committee (PW21034) on July 7, 2021 that recommends the sale of part of the Sunset Cultural Garden at the corner of Bay Street North and Strachan Street West.

While I continue to be in favour of plans for more affordable housing in Ward 2, and across the city, I believe that those plans can be realized either elsewhere in this development or on land nearby without having to disrupt, destroy, or otherwise remove the Sunset Cultural Garden.

Development at the corner of Bay Street North and Cannon Street East and on the adjacent Jamesville property have not yet begun. There is an opportunity to incorporate this housing at either site, in my opinion.

Simply put, North End residents should not have to choose between vital open parkland and new affordable housing.

I'm not the only one who feels this way. As the City's report states, "Landscape Architectural Services has advised that they are opposed to the application as the Subject Lands are currently functioning as Open Space and the closure and sale will reduce Open Space in the North End West Neighbourhood which is deficient in parkland."

I believe that the sale of this land to the developer is more than just a formality or a matter of "housekeeping". This park means more to the neighbourhood than the notarization of some official documents or the formalization of a plan. If this land is sold, it will almost certainly mean that the Sunset Cultural Garden will neither remain in its current location nor exist in its current form.

I appreciate that many, including myself, are anxious to see more affordable housing in the neighbourhood and want to see these projects move ahead. To that point, wide engagement around the final stages could and should have been planned in advance to avoid any potential delays.

As the City's report states, only 17 "properties" were consulted with respect to the sale. Considering the magnitude of this issue, and the park's importance to the community, much wider engagement should have been undertaken in advance of this report coming forward.

As the Public Works Committee heard on July 7, 2021, from delegates living in the North End, almost no one in the neighbourhood thinks that this park should be removed or that this land should become residential housing.

Community park space is a vital part of the fabric of every neighbourhood and the addition of public space at Pier 8, or elsewhere, cannot replace it.

Members of the North End, Central, and Beasley neighbourhoods in Ward 2 advocated for this parkland, a quiet space for reflection and contemplation, and then set to work, personally, to build this park, plant its beautiful flowers, and ensure its continued maintenance. This is truly a park built by and for the community.

I ask you to read the [handout provided by Sandra Hudson](#), one of the tireless volunteers who got this park up and running, as part of her delegation to the Public Works Committee today, where she spoke passionately about keeping the Sunset Cultural Garden intact. It contains important information about the history behind this project and why it's so valuable to the community.

During a time of unprecedented isolation, our greenspaces and neighbourhood parks have been an important site for relief and relaxation. This park, in particular, as a site for contemplation and reflection, will continue to be needed as our communities recover from the impacts of the pandemic.

I urge you to vote against this recommendation by staff and instead work to ensure that there is a balanced solution in place that respects both the ongoing need for affordable housing and the preservation of our public parks.

*Cameron Kroetsch*