

July 2, 2019

Ms. Nancy Watkins
Committee Secretariat
City Hall
100 Queen St. W., 10th floor, West Tower
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Re: PH 7.1 - Changing Lanes: The City of Toronto's Review of Laneway Suites - City-wide Expansion of City-Initiated Official Plan Amendment and Zoning Amendment – Final Report

Dear Ms. Watkins:

The Toronto Region Board of Trade (“the Board”) is a strong advocate for increasing the supply of housing in the City of Toronto, particularly affordable and accessible housing. Without a strong supply of affordable housing, we will not be able to attract and retain the talent needed to maintain our edge as a globally competitive city-region.

Put simply, Toronto needs a stronger “Yes in my backyard” attitude. This staff report on allowing laneway suites across the city tackles the issue directly, by granting permission for homeowners to create an additional unit in their *literal backyard*. These recommendations expand permissions for laneway suites to over 47,000 lots, from the current 27,500. Laneway homes will provide more affordable rental options in neighbourhoods across the city, many of which have seen their population decrease since the 1960s. The Board strongly supports the staff report in full, and urges Council to approve it without adding exceptions or delaying any further.

In particular, the Board is supportive of allowing laneway suites on a single lot regardless of the number of dwelling units in the primary building. The addition of a single laneway unit is reasonable, and the report provides a persuasive rebuttal to concerns that may be raised about additional traffic, parking requirements, or privacy. These amendments are an appropriate way to remove lengthy and expensive processes for homeowners to rezone their property.

But this is more than a conversation about a type of housing; rather, it is about the diverse individuals who make up Toronto, and who are increasingly finding it difficult to live here. The Toronto Star’s recent feature on housing options for five middle-income careers, based on the Board’s research, makes clear the range of people who are struggling to find appropriate homes in the city. Approving laneway suites is one way that councillors can help create more affordable housing options for Torontonians.

Sincerely,

Brian Kelcey
Vice President, Public Affairs and Advocacy
Toronto Region Board of Trade