



Palmerston Area Residents' Association
Serving Palmerston & Little Italy

City of Toronto,
Planning and Housing Committee
(phc@toronto.ca)

Re: PH 29.2 Changing Lanes – Laneway Suites – Nov 25, 2021

November 24, 2021

To the Planning and Housing Committee:

The Palmerston Area Residents' Association, PARA, represents the residents residing between Bathurst and Grace Streets, and College and Bloor Streets. Our neighbourhood is directly impacted by the Laneway Suites By-law as there are numerous laneways in our area and laneway suites, with many more in the planning stages.

We support laneway suites as one means of providing more housing within our neighbourhood.

However, **we are writing to record our opposition** to several proposed changes in the by-law that would reduce the required amount of softscaping on the property and increase the allowed height of the suites.

PARA's Green Plan 2020 emphasizes that softscaping is a critical component in the mitigation of the effects of climate change. Softscaping is critical in storm water management as water from heavy rains (which are increasing in severity and frequency), needs to go somewhere – better to be absorbed by the soil than to go into our basements, including the many basement apartments in our

neighbourhood. Stormwater should nourish our gardens, not run off into our lakes creating higher levels of pollution in our source of drinking water.

Many of our backyards are already small. Reducing the softscaping component limits the areas for planting trees, essential for helping to absorb rainwater runoff and, just as important, for cooling the urban environment during our increasingly hot and lengthy summers.

We are strongly opposed to the increase in permitted hardscaping. Any increase in hardscaping contributes to the Urban Heat Island Effect, making heat waves more extreme. Heat waves have profound negative impacts on people's health, as the heat dome in British Columbia where hundreds of people died this last summer illustrates. Given the increase in intensity and duration of summer heat waves, softscaping helps to decrease the negative impacts of our rising temperatures.

We are also opposed to any increase in height for the laneway suites. Extra height increases shadows, often on neighbouring properties. In small backyards, this impacts available sunshine which is so important for maintaining green space.

PARA's Green Plan was approved by City Council, the same council that unanimously declared Toronto to be in a state of climate emergency in 2019. Part of the Climate Emergency declaration is a: "...commitment to protecting... our ecosystems and our community from climate change." (Taken from the City of Toronto website)

The City has also developed a **Resilience Strategy**. One of its goals states: "Toronto is more resilient to climate change, including the hazards of flooding and heat." It includes: "Take action to mitigate the effects of extreme heat. Communicate, synthesize and scale up ongoing City efforts to advance a system of green and blue infrastructure." Now, with the proposed laneway suites by-law amendments, the Council is being asked to relieve developers of some of their responsibility for that same green infrastructure that the City deems central to building climate resilience.

The Planning Department has stated that the purpose of increasing the hardscaping allowance is to reduce Committee of Adjustment applications. However, developers have often used a by-law as a basis to ask for more. Council needs to draw a line on softscaping requirements for laneway

housing.

Yes, climate change is on our doorstep. It is imperative that the City look at all its actions through a climate change mitigation lens. Given the importance of softscaping, we find it nonsensical that any City by-law would allow for the wholesale reduction of softscaping. Rather than change the by-law, it's time to educate people about the importance of softscaping. Housing is important, but if we don't have a livable environment, all of us will suffer.

Yours truly,

Frumie Diamond

Chair

PARA Green Committee

Cc:

Councillor Mike Layton, councillor_layton@toronto.ca

Emily Wong, Advisor, Constituency and Planning, Office of Councillor Mike Layton, Emily.Wong@toronto.ca