



February 23, 2016

Councillor David Shiner, Chair &  
Members of the Planning and Growth Management Committee  
City of Toronto  
100 Queen St. West  
Toronto, Ontario M5H 2N2

RE: ***February 24, 2016 – PGMC Meeting, Agenda Item #1  
Strategy for Minimizing the Negative Impacts of Residential Infill Construction Activity***

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The Building Industry and Land Development is in receipt of the staff report 'Strategy for Minimizing the Negative Impacts of Residential Infill Construction Activity' being presented for consideration to the February 24<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Planning and Growth Management Committee, and offers the comments below, on behalf of its' infill builder members, and renovator members who may also engage in infill building projects .

BILD would like to thank staff for their consultation to date on this file, and our members look forward to additional discussions as we collectively move forward to address this strategy. Our members at BILD are the professional infill builder, renovator and contractors who obtain the necessary licenses and insurance coverage, present written contracts and offer warranties to their clients, and *work* with the inspectors of our City.

Upon review of the proposed 'Strategy for Minimizing the Negative Impacts of Residential Infill Construction Activity', we put forward the following three **recommendations for your consideration** which are elaborated further in this set of correspondence:

1. **Related to the objective of 'Improving Communication with Residents', we strongly suggest that members of the Planning and Growth Management Committee adopt a motion which recommends that Council issue a directive to have Toronto Building staff have their inspectors immediately commence to issue inspection reports for the homeowner, at the time of each inspection, within a timely manner, and to have these accurately documented on the existing City of Toronto website that contains project status information.**
2. **As this proposed strategy involves ongoing dialogue with our membership and the various City departments, we recommend the establishment of a formal 'Toronto – BILD Renovator LIAISON Committee'.**
3. **As associated to the objective of this strategy to minimize the negative impacts of residential infill construction activity on the surrounding neighbours, and to improve the caliber of companies involved in these projects, BILD recommends that the Planning and Growth Management Committee direct staff of the Municipal Licensing Department, and the Transportation Services to report back to its next meeting on the feasibility of connecting the issuance of renovator parking permissions to the municipal license that the industry obtains.**

BILD members quite often, and proactively, outreach to neighbours prior to the start of an infill project to inform them of what type of activity will be associated to it. We are, therefore, of the mind that the “problematic residential construction sites in existing neighbourhoods” are most likely not the result of the professional and diligent actions of the majority of the members of our association.

It is for this reason that we support staff’s effort to level the playing field across the industry, with the aim to having the same rules apply across the board, and we are happy to work with City staff on this initiative moving forward. It is in our collective best interest to work collaboratively for our mutual consumer – the resident and neighbours of our City.

In addition, we offer the following comments related to these specific objectives of the proposed Strategy found in Appendix 1 (pg. 11) of the staff report, and elaborate on the recommendations provided above:

### **Objective #1: Encouraging Good Construction Practices**

We are pleased to see proposed action items that relate to additional training on various elements for building inspectors. We also acknowledge the reference on page 7 of the staff report to the additional resources related to inspections: *“This proposed strategy will add up to seven new staff, including building inspectors and program support, to conduct inspections...”* Additional resources, and continued learning as our industry evolves is significant, and should only result in increased levels of efficiency in a City that is becoming increasingly dynamic.

### **Objective #2: Improve Communication with Residents**

#### ***(a) Dedicated Residential Infill Website***

We also applaud staff’s proposed action item to *“establish a dedicated City website with key information about construction, including orders and **construction stages passed**.”* We note that the project completion is scheduled for the fourth quarter of 2016, and although this is a most excellent step in the right direction, there will be a significant construction period between now and the end of this year to warrant the consideration of an interim solution to address the lack of record of inspections at the various stages.

It is the experience of our renovator members, that too often, the homeowner or renovator is not provided a record of inspection, at the various stages, during a home renovation project. It is also their experience that the individual inspections that have been passed are not accurately documented on the City’s website. These are both problematic. The proposed dedicated residential infill website will eventually be a solution, as it will record the construction stages passed. However, at this point in time, neither the homeowner, or renovator, are provided with a record of inspection at the various stages.

#### ***Recommendation:***

**Related to the objective of ‘Improving Communication with Residents’, we strongly suggest that members of the Planning and Growth Management Committee adopt a motion which**

**recommends that Council issue a directive to have Toronto Building staff have their inspectors immediately commence to issue inspection reports for the homeowner, at the time of each inspection, within a timely manner, and to have these accurately documented on the existing City of Toronto website that contains project status information.**

***(b) Best Practices Guide***

City staff are also recommending, as an action item for the proposed strategy, to “facilitate the development of a good neighbor guide for builders with BILD and residential ratepayers associations.”

BILD would be pleased to participate in discussions related to the development of this guide. Recently, our colleagues at the Calgary Home Builders’ Association worked closely with the City of Calgary to develop a similar product, and the results were that the relative stakeholders and their municipal partners worked in cooperation to develop a guide that was generally mutually agreeable, and in the best interest of the City’s residents. Again, we are happy that staff are looking at a collaborative process, and we would be pleased to engage in future discussions on this.

***(c) Construction Site Sign***

Page 9 of the staff report indicates that the *“Planning and Growth Management Committee previously identified that a sign posted on the infill construction site, containing key information, would be a useful public information tool”*. It is already a common practice for information signs to be posted on renovation and infill project sites. In fact, they are also mandated by the provincial Ministry of Labour, through a ‘notice of project form.’

During BILD’s consultation sessions with staff on this proposed strategy, members noted that the information provided on any additional sign, if in fact required, does not need to be exhaustive. Recognizing that renovator and infill builders quite often already post a sign that provides certain company information, and that many conduct their own door to door outreach to neighbours adjacent to their project sites, this additional sign could be used as a tool to guide the neighbours to the city/ city website in order to obtain additional project information.

We trust that staff will continue to engage the industry on this matter as the proposed strategy develops.

**Objective #3: Improve City’s Complaint Management Strategy**

We note that as part of this objective, and throughout the staff report, there are continual references to engaging many other city departments, and that this strategy will involve the coordination of interdivisional actions. Acting on a recognition that various staff departments will be required to work together in order to achieve success for this strategy is very positive.

Since October, through the organizing efforts of Toronto Building staff, the BILD Renovators Group have been a part of two ‘roundtable’ type meetings where we have been able to address industry

matters in the presence of representatives from the Building, Planning, Urban Forestry, Legal and Transportation Services departments. Dialogue in this setting has resulted in some significant positive outcomes, and in recent meetings with City Councillors, BILD Renovators have been advocating for the formalization of these types of meetings, as a commitment to continued dialogue.

***Recommendation:***

**As this proposed strategy involves ongoing dialogue with our membership and the various City departments, we recommend the establishment of a formal ‘Toronto – BILD Renovator LIAISON Committee’.**

The Toronto-BILD Renovator LIAISON Committee would involve a small group of representatives from the BILD Renovator Council, and all departments that BILD renovator members interact with (ie. those referenced above). This group would meet on a regular basis (ie. quarterly or as issues warrant), with agenda items pre-determined by both parties.

BILD has found much success with other municipalities that have instituted formal LIAISON Committees with our membership. They serve to facilitate regular and direct communication with all city departments, and act as a forum to discuss proposed policies, and implementation of those that are existing. BILD would be happy to share existing Terms of Reference for the LIAISON Committees that we participate on with other GTA municipalities, and would be happy to see the City’s commitment to ongoing dialogue in this setting. The additional consultation with the industry, as referenced in the staff report for this proposed strategy, could take place at this LIAISON Committee .

**Parking Allowances Tied to Municipal Licenses**

There is an additional item which we present to you for consideration that also serves the objective of this strategy to minimize the negative impacts of residential infill construction activity.

***Recommendation:***

**As associated to the objective of this strategy to minimize the negative impacts of residential infill construction activity on the surrounding neighbours, and to improve the caliber of companies involved in these projects, BILD recommends that the Planning and Growth Management Committee direct staff of the Municipal Licensing Department, and the Transportation Services to report back to its next meeting on the feasibility of connecting the issuance of renovator parking permissions to the municipal license that the industry obtains.**

Currently, the Toronto Police Services, working in cooperation with the City’s Transportation Services department, grants parking permissions, under certain conditions, to renovator members when they are involved in a project in a residential neighbourhood.

Temporarily dedicating the right of way to allow for a limited amount of service vehicles to have access to the renovation project could briefly impact the community. Having these parking allowances for licensed contractors in public right of ways associated to the municipal licenses

obtained would add value to licensing requirements and improve operations across the sector. Parking allowances, tied to municipal licenses would also improve safety and workplace conditions. This ultimately does better serve all the street residents, as there is a certainty that the professional renovator or contractor working in their neighbourhood carries a legitimate license and aims to uphold their conduct to a high standard.

We recognize that not all neighbourhoods across the city would require the contractors to obtain parking allowances, as there may be more room for parking of service vehicles in some of the outlying suburban type areas. We are requesting that the City examine connecting the issuance of parking permissions to municipal licenses as a universal principle, understanding that its implementation may be situational, or site-specific.

BILD Renovator members have been recently engaged by MPP Laura Albanese, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Finance, who is looking at an initiative to address the Underground Economy in our province. We are always looking at opportunities to strengthen our sector, and work on the professional good conduct of our membership. This would be an opportunity to do the same.

We look forward to a continued working relationship with our partners at City Hall and the opportunity to discuss how we can work together with staff on elements of this proposed strategy, in order to build an even more successful renovation and infill building industry and to better serve our mutual customer, which are the residents of this great City.

Thank you for taking our comments and recommendations in to consideration.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paula J. Tenuta', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Paula J. Tenuta, MCIP, RPP  
Vice President, Policy & Government Relations