

HARBORD VILLAGE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Box 68522, 360A Bloor St. W.
Toronto, ON M5S 1X1



Harbord Village Backyard Housing Response:

June 7, 2017.

Potential rule changes are now under consideration which could increase the affordable housing stock in the City by allowing secondary residential and backyard lane suites

After meetings with the private sector advocates of backyard housing and an official from City Planning, we understand the parameters of these proposed supplementary suites to be:

- Expansion of affordable units throughout the laneway network of Toronto,
- No severances,
- Service from the main house,
- Garbage to be taken to the main street,
- No backyard housing where there is row housing,
- Unit size c. 400 sq. ft.

To assess the viability of such developments in our downtown Victorian neighbourhood, and possible standards that might be applied before recommending such policies, we examined the 1213 properties in Harbord Village and the 28 lanes that flank them. 47 properties that have no lane between Robert and Major north of Harbord have been included.

Our finding is that backyard suites would not be viable in Harbord Village because:

1. House type is predominantly row,
2. Half of the properties on interior Neighbourhood streets average 18 feet or less in width. Three quarters are less than 20 feet. Wider lots are scattered exceptions. To achieve additional GFA, backyard infill would have to be two storeys, causing loss of privacy, overlook and shadowing on rear gardens; or the footprint of the additional suite would be extended into the rear yard with an unacceptable loss of landscaped space,
3. Rear yards vary in depth from 27-120'; extensions and additions have already occurred driving recent Committee of Adjustment approvals of GFA variances close to 1.1 (we are zoned 1.0), City Property Data Statistics 2016 report the average GFA, including boundary streets, is .97.
4. Access to the main street is limited, even between semi-detached houses,
5. Lanes themselves are all unploughed, none have fire hydrants; several are dead end; some feeder lanes off north-south streets are too narrow for access for fire and garbage collection; where lanes are wide enough, other conditions may not be met,
6. Increased parking demand for residents, guests and workers may not easily be accommodated.

Interactive map — Harbord Village laneway names

Version AUGUST 27, 2014



Harbord Village Residents Association

This interactive map courtesy of HVRA volunteer webmaster Wendy Smith, creator of the [Toronto Park Lot Project](#).

Webmaster's note: the map may take a minute to download. Please be patient.

Move your mouse over the lines to see their naming information.

Please visit the HVRA website for information on our naming process.

The numbered **GREEN** laneway names were proposed by the Harbord Village Resident's Association in 2011.

1. Loretta Lane
2. David French Lane
3. Alan Powell Lane
4. James Hales Lane
5. Albert Jackson Lane
6. Lewis Family Lane
7. Galvao Lane
8. Antonio Hernandez Lane
9. Cyril Lane
10. Chapel Hospice Lane
11. Dairy Lane
12. Douglas Campbell Lane
13. Sappers Lane
14. Greenberg Lane
15. Barker Family Lane
16. Boys of Major Lane
17. Lemingluck Lane
18. Barbara Godard Lane
19. Katherine Hocken Lane
20. William James Lane
21. Leah Cohen Lane
22. Barbara Bennett Lane
23. Butcher Lane

The three lettered **RED** laneways were officially named by the city at the request of the families in 2010 and 2011.

- A. Brook Lake Lane
- B. Koszow Lane
- C. Pomeroy Lane

The map of Harbord Village shows the laneways between all streets, except for a section of Major and Brunswick, between Sussex and Harbord Streets, which has no lanes.

Neighbourhood profile

Harbord Village is a dense late 19th century Victorian community between Bathurst, Bloor, Spadina and College. Lot sizes and house form are on a 7x7 block grid subdivided by 25 lanes. It has two Heritage Conservation Districts between College and Bloor, Spadina and Robert, and the remaining area has been approved for a district study. House facades have been fixed either by district designation or neighbourhood custom. Form is mostly two or 2.5 storey row, with fewer semi-detached and fewer still detached houses. There are three tall residential buildings along Spadina and a fourth has been approved.

Toronto Real Estate Board numbers are quoted as saying property within the neighbourhood is half owner-occupied, half rental. Because of the proximity of the University of Toronto, there is an abundance of student accommodation, including student co-ops, shared apartments, and rooming houses dispersed through the village. Student rental is particularly prominent in apartments on Spadina and the semi-detached houses that line Bathurst St. as well as in supplementary housing in houses within the Village. Many are used, but not formally regulated, as rooming houses.

Demographics are balanced. Schools have a satisfactory enrollment.

With 4,000 trees in our 0.6 square km area, Harbord Village is a community set in a forest. We are involved with collaborations with the City and University of Toronto on stormwater abatement, greening lanes and streets, tree canopy health and expansion and heat island reduction. A recent study of our neighbourhood has linked tree mortality closely to house construction. Even so, backyard trees remain plentiful.

Built form characteristics

Considerable infill has occurred within the neighbourhood from Borden east and more is in prospect with the condo developments on College, at 484 Spadina and prospective 128 rental infill suites at 666 Spadina and the approved Mirvish Village 806-unit rental development on the southwest corner of Bathurst and Bloor.

By direct count, the neighbourhood built form is predominantly Victorian row housing: 47.5% row, 39.3% in semi-detached and 13.2% detached, with general distribution.

From the table below, the east side of Lippincott (odd numbers) flanking Croft Street has the narrowest lots in the Village, with two thirds being 16.7 feet or less. Two thirds of the houses on the west side of Borden (even numbers flanking Croft Street) are 17.7 feet or less. The east side of Brunswick (odd numbers) has the most generous lots, with 50 percent with 19.3 foot frontages or less, and two thirds of its properties having widths of 21 feet or less.

Property Widths internal streets: City Property Data Sheets 2016

	At least 50%	At least 66%
Lippincott even (west) Odd (east)	Widths 5.18 m. (17') Widths 4.6 m. (15')	Widths 5.79 m. (19') Widths 5.1 m. (16.7')
Borden even (west) Odd (east)	Widths 5.1 m. (16.7') Widths 5.7 m. (18.7')	Widths 5.4 m. (17.7') Widths 6.1 m. (20')
Brunswick even (west) Odd (east)	Widths 5.7 m. (18.7') Widths 5.9 m. (19.3')	Widths 6.4 m. (21') Widths 6.4 m. (21')
Major even (west) Odd (east)	Widths 5.79 m. (19') Widths 5.18 m. (17')	Widths 6.1 m. (20') Widths 5.49 m. (18')
Robert even (west) Odd (east)	Widths 5.18 m. (17') Widths 5.79 m. (19')	Widths 5.5 m (18') Widths 6.1 m. (20')

While individual major north-south streets vary in property width, half of properties are captured by widths which range between 15-19.3 feet. When expanded from 17.7 to 21 feet, two thirds of the properties are represented.

Rear Yards:

Depths of rear yards average 56 feet. They vary with the position of house and size of the property and range from 12 to 120 feet.

Lanes:

N-W lanes vary in width from 9.3 to 18 feet. East-West lanes feeding main lanes average 9.8 feet.

Lane widths (actual): Bloor-Harbord, Harbord to College

Loretto n.	Croft	French	James	TSP Hockin	Sussex	E-W (all)
15'	16'	18'	14'	9'	16'	9.8' (Av.)
AV 13.9'						
HARBORD						
Hale s.	Croft	Jackson	Boys	Laki	Sussex	
11.5	17.5	14.5	10.1	9.4'	18'	
AV 13.4'						

Harbord Village has about a dozen existing Victorian structures on laneways outside Croft St. but only two properties, both on Croft, have facing rear yard or laneway housing on the opposite side of the lane. Maps of the entire Village are appended.

HVRA concerns when considering backyard housing

In addition to privacy and overlook, we have identified the following:

Density/GFA: with average existing GFA in HV at .97 (permitted is 1.0), backyard permissions become a form of upzoning in an already dense neighbourhood.

Laneway widths: with narrow lanes, a two or three-storey backyard house impedes sky view; turns a lane into a canyon and the rear yard garden faces a wall.

Rear yard depths: expansion into rear yards could seriously impact trees and create storm water runoff issues, heat island and reduction of canopy will lead to summer energy demand, and increased air pollution.

Property widths: narrow lots would mandate multi-storey suites, or unacceptable incursion into rear yards.

Fire and emergency access: a number of existing laneways are too narrow to accommodate fire trucks, others are dead end. None have fire hydrants.

Accessibility: walkways to the main street must be accessible.

Parking issues must be addressed, even though we support different modes of movement.

Fine-tuning

A number of variables should align before backyard housing is approved. Lanes might be thought wide enough to handle backyard housing, but property depth and house type might not be amenable. Likewise, where house type is detached or semi-detached, laneway width might be deficient. Where laneway and property widths might be acceptable, backyards might be too shallow to accommodate backyard units without severely diminishing rear yard green space.

Some lanes would be immediately disqualified. Lanes between Robert and Major and Borden and Lippincott illustrate the difficulties.

- **Katherine Hockin Lane north of Sussex:** it is 9' wide and dead ends at Trinity St. Paul's. Yards are 36' deep, but 44 of 66 houses are row. (map 2)
- **Barbara Goddard Lane south of Sussex:** 16 of 49 houses are row. (map 2)
- **Kosower/Louie Laki/Grimsby Dairy complex south of Harbord:** On the west side of Robert, 49 of 89 houses are row, property depths are 24, 30 and 35', widths of 15' and access lanes are 9'6", 9'4", 7'6" and 8'. On the east side of Major, 50 of 93 houses are row, width is 15 feet. (map 3)
- **Croft Street between Harbord and Vankoughtnet:** The east side of Lippincott has 50 row houses, 12 semi-detached and 6 detached. The west side of Borden has 32 row houses, 20 semi-detached and 8 detached. (map 6).

Frequently, where there are deep lots, there is row housing. At the ends of rows, or where there is semi-detached housing, there is often an unusably narrow walkway between houses. Backyard units would not be accessible to persons in wheelchairs. Nor could trash be moved in bins from a granny suite to the front street. Trash would have to be hand carried to the front of

the house or exit from the lane. With no laneway garbage collection and no ploughing in winter, residents would be forced to wheel garbage to the nearest street.

Random patterns created

The abundance of row housing would preclude many properties from consideration, but other properties in the same block might be eligible. If permissions were granted, any resulting neighbourhood pattern of rear yard suites would be random, with backyard suites approved for one property, and denied the next. Consistency of built form has been a significant characteristic of modern zoning regulations—take, for example, the street wall and house depth provisions—this is important to stable neighbourhood patterns.

Croft Street case in point:

Croft Street between Borden and Lippincott has been considered by some a potential candidate for laneway housing. It has garbage collection, but is not ploughed and does not have fire hydrants. Our analysis shows it falls short in other respects.

Croft Street: 18'5" wide between Harbord and Ulster,
16'5" wide from Ulster to College.

House form: Lippincott: 61 row, 18 semi-detached, 13 detached;
Borden Street: 47 row, 26 semi-detached, and 10 detached houses.
Combined house form on Lippincott and Borden: row 62%, semi-detached 24%,
detached, 14%.

Rear yard: 54-90' deep

Lot widths: flanking properties on Croft average 17.7', College to Harbord

Within an existing 10' garage footprint, the average lot width of 18' would dictate three storeys to achieve 400 sq. ft. Otherwise a new development would extend into the rear yard, encroaching on landscaped space, and creating issues around ecology, stormwater runoff, privacy and overlook.

Because of tight lots and sideyard setback requirements as well as future re-development should backyard units be approved, windows are placed on the front and rear of a suite—looking into the lane, or into the rear yards and windows of houses on the main street.

Where walkways between houses are not wide enough for passage, the backyard suite would of necessity become a laneway suite.

History of laneway development

Virtually all of the 17 addresses on Croft are either existing historic, or replacement of Victorian or Edwardian buildings.

The south end, from 22 Croft south to College, has been the focus of development, where a cluster of buildings used in the late 19th or early 20th century for light manufacturing, a munitions factory and a stable has been converted to housing, including a three-storey laneway townhouse development. This new development is high end multi-storey housing: one 2200 sq. ft. unit sold recently for \$1.62 million. In this section of the street, there has been only one recent severance allowing a new townhouse and a second divided an historic building.

North of Vankoughnet is a different story. Of five dwellings fronting on the lane, three are Victorian structures, and the two replacement buildings sit on double-width historic footprints.

Applications for new laneway housing have been turned down. An OMB decision in 2000 denied use of the upper story of a garage behind 148 Borden for habitation.

But here too, the appetite for large-scale development, not affordable units, is in play. A present application for a severance and a two-storey 1786.8 sq. ft house at the rear of 157 Lippincott is scheduled for the OMB July 25, 2017. Its Committee of Adjustment file shows the impacts of potential future applications on our existing zoning. With a severance, the list of variances extends from minimum lot size on both lots—the newly created lane lot would have an area of 100.9 sq. m. (180 required), FSI 1.64 (zoned 1.0), and landscaped open space 14% (30% required)—as well as a variety of setbacks. If no severance occurred, the main and new unit would still create a combined GFA of 1.09. If the existing rental space in the basement of the main house were added, the *effective density* of both dwellings is 1.35.

Existing intensification

The provincially mandated goal for intensification in the Downtown has been met. With recent and expected approvals on Spadina, Harbord Village will have more than contributed its share. But we have also had silent intensification in the form of additions within the building footprints, extensions beyond the footprint, and internal divisions of houses into apartments, including basements. The 2016 Property Data sheets show an average of 2.1 units per property.

Unlike adjacent neighbourhoods west of Bathurst, our permitted neighbourhood GFA is 1.0 times coverage. City Property Data statistics show the average existing GFA in Harbord Village is already 0.97. Recent Committee of Adjustment records show a pattern of approvals for 1.1 to 1.2 times coverage.

It is important to note GFA calculations exclude existing basement units.

Ten years ago, an HVRA-commissioned property data study identified 400 basement units in our catchment. Others have been constructed. We believe basement units should be counted part of GFA, because it reflects the *effective density* on a property and begins to capture population intensity within a neighbourhood. If basement suites were included, the built form and population densities in Harbord Village would average considerably higher than .97. One recent rental conversion on Spadina was for 1.1 times GFA, without the basement, and 1.25

times GFA including the basement. Some jurisdictions have created rules to prohibit backyard units where basement units are in place.

Green space

For the last fifteen years, Harbord Village has had an active stewardship of its urban forest. We have partnered with the University of Toronto Forestry Department on various initiatives, including neighbourhood tree inventories, research on the relative contribution of invasive and native species to ecosystem diversity, and development of an emerald ash borer neighbourhood level treatment plan. We have provided the baseline for studies of city trees in a dense downtown urban setting.

We are in an active partnership with the City to green laneways in an effort to reduce heat island impacts and retain storm water, which has become a significant issue with climate change. In the first phase of our Green Master Plan, the City will install several inground tree pits on streets to replace concrete planter boxes, and will turn its attention greening City-owned boulevards that are presently paved over, as well as lanes. There is no question that our contribution to the canopy is a significant resource for the City and measures already underway and those contemplated in future should lead to its enhancement, not its reduction.

City considerations

We support the building of affordable units, where appropriate, but each district has distinct characteristics which could exclude them from eligibility. In addition, there is no certainty of uptake. The creation of new units, and their eventual affordability, would entirely be in the hands of the private property owners, who may not be able to afford the investment, or desire the additional housing. For reliable and efficient expansion of rental stock, the City will most likely continue to have to rely on infill along main streets.

Before approving the adoption of backyard housing, we believe the City take into account conditions on a neighbourhood by neighbourhood basis:

- 1) personal, fire, emergency service accessibility to the main street
- 2) available density, taking into account existing basement units,
- 3) row housing prohibition on supplementary suites,
- 4) sufficient property width to yield GFA without multi-storey development,
- 5) sufficient yard depth to preserve adequate landscaped space and the potential for laneway greening,
- 6) privacy, shadowing and overlook considerations where rear yards are short,
- 7) sufficient lane widths for emergency, fire access or if laneway housing, garbage collection,
- 8) Would suites negatively impact the stability of Neighbourhoods?

Taking into account these criterion, we do not believe Harbord Village is a suitable neighbourhood for such housing.

We look forward to your comments,

Sue Dexter, Carolee Orme, Rory Gus Sinclair
Harbord Village Planning and Development Committee

Maps 1-8.

Note: Semi-detached are recorded on the maps as single units, but in our statistical analysis are counted as two separate dwellings.

Blocks are not to scale, so numbers of properties cannot be inferred from the size of blocks.
Laneway widths in feet, accurately measured.

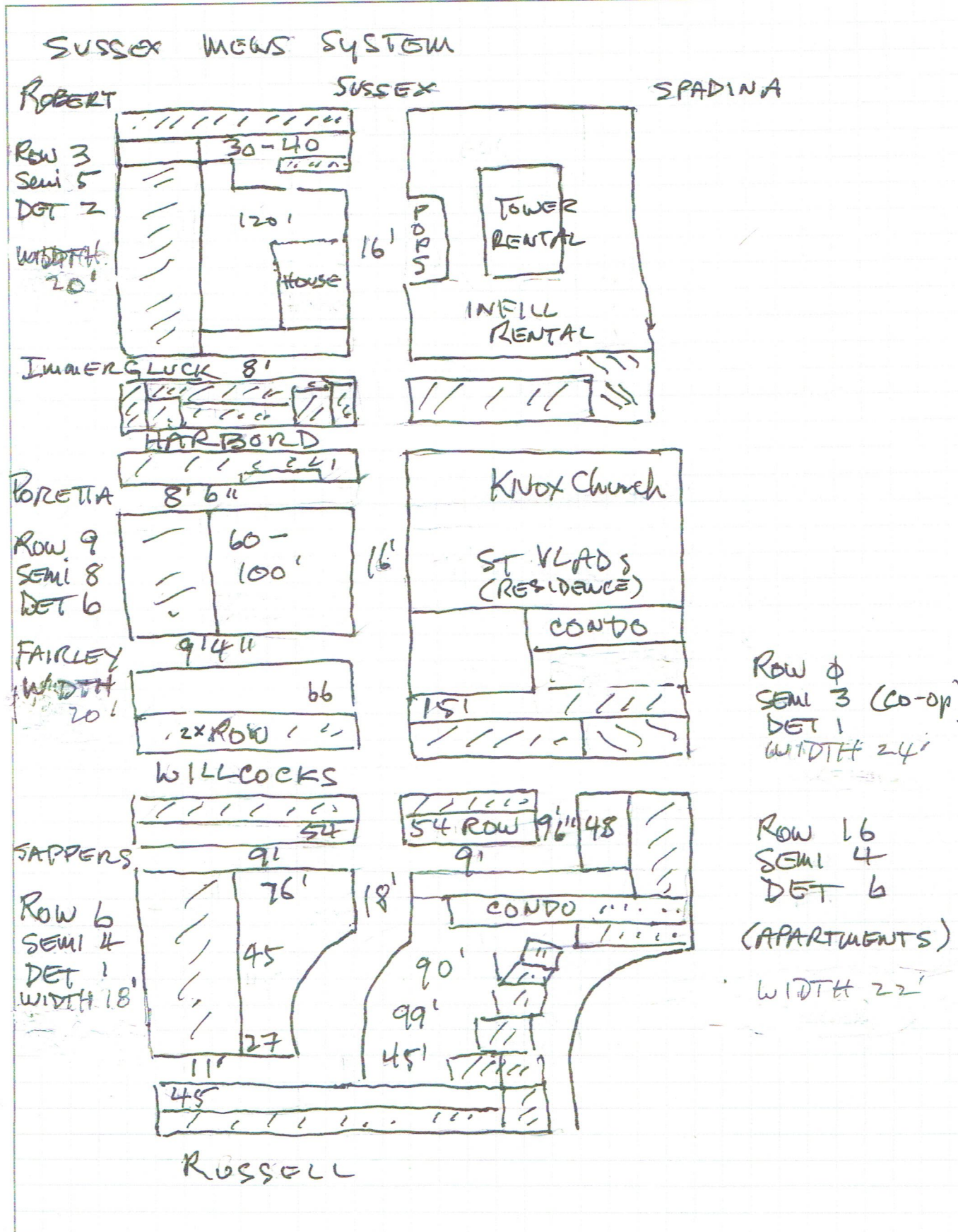
Rear yard depths do not claim to represent any individual property, but are intended to give a general sense of the built form in the neighbourhood. They are taken from the back wall of the house to the lane, estimated in feet, stepped out as best as can be seen from flanking streets.

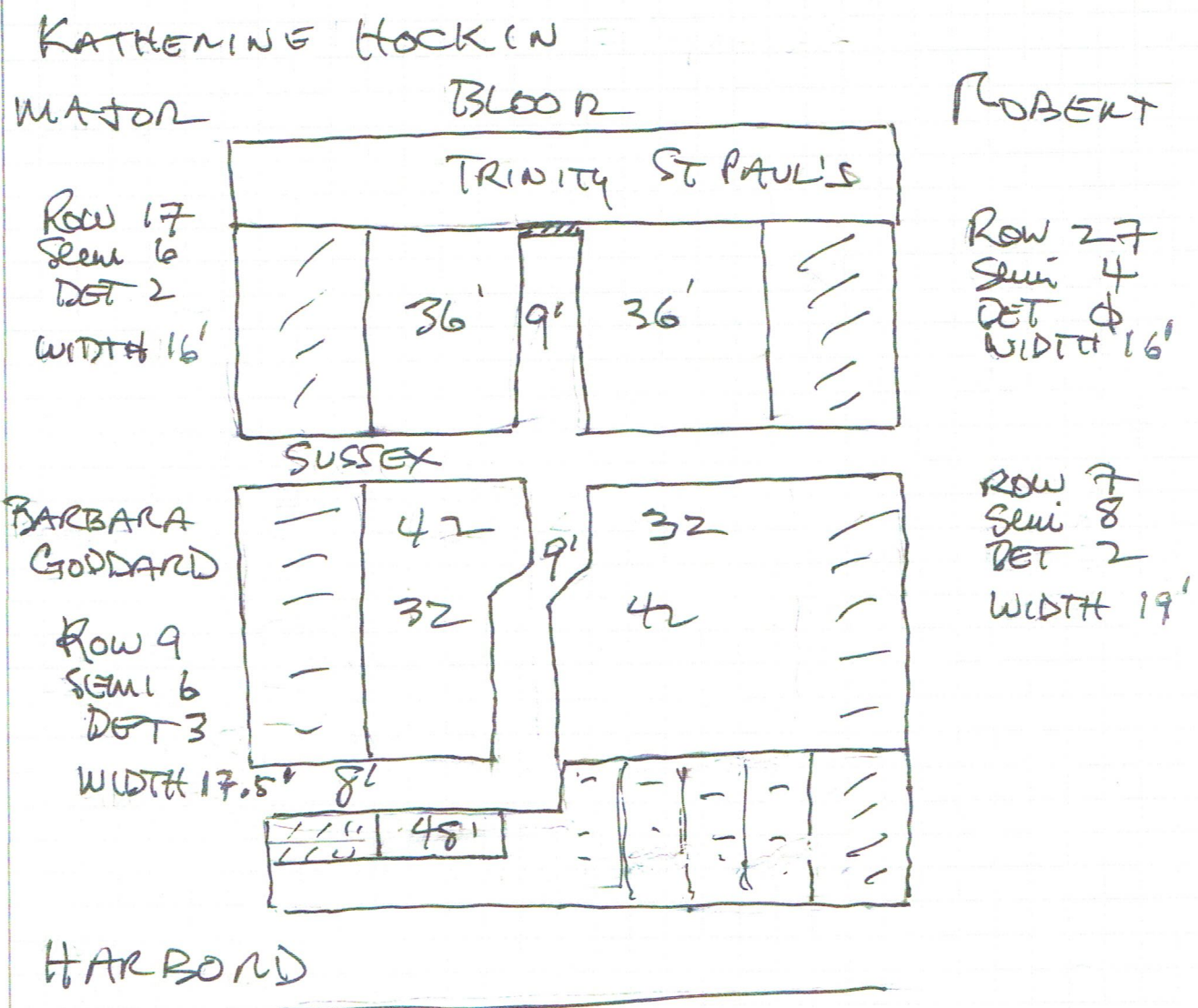
Variable yard depth can be explained by front yard setback, length of house, and possible house additions over time.

Property width is taken from City of Toronto Property Data Sheets 2016.

Name	Project
Course - Section	
Instructor	Date
	Page

MAP 1





MAP 3

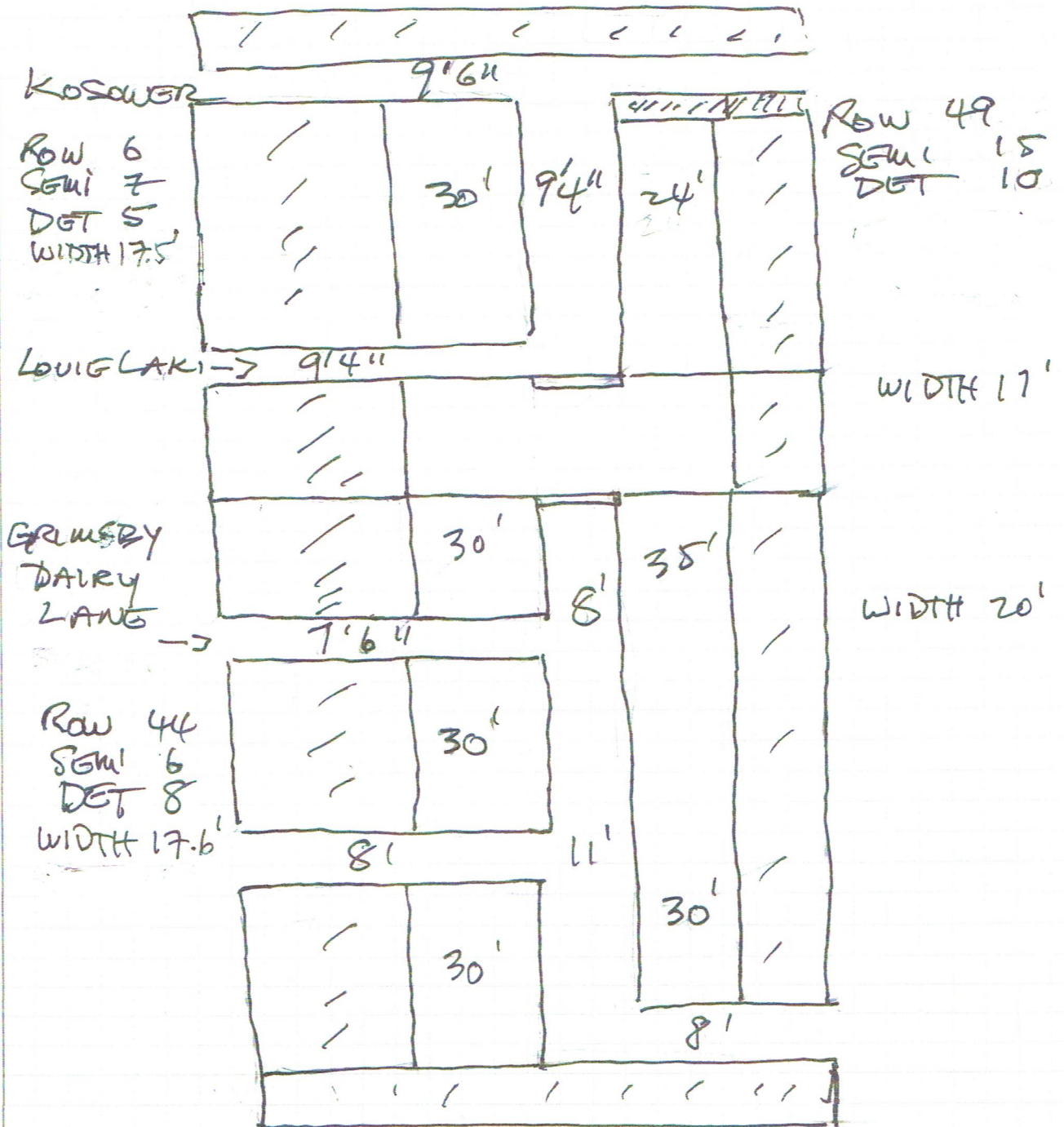
Name	Project	
Course - Section		
Instructor	Date	Page

KOSOWER - LOUIE LAKI

MASON

HARBOR

ROBERT



COLLEGE

WILLIAM JAMES / BOYS OF MAJOR SYSTEM

BRUNSWICK

BLOOD ST

MAJOR

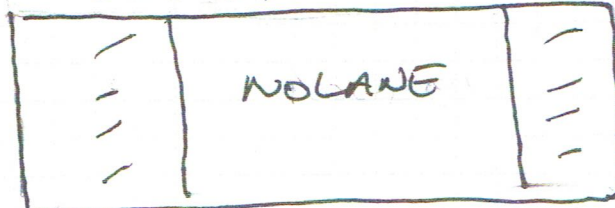
Row 12
SEMI 6
DET 4
WIDTH 18'



Row 8
SEMI 8
DET 5
WIDTH 19'

SUSSEX

Row 9
SEMI 1
DET 11
WIDTH 23'

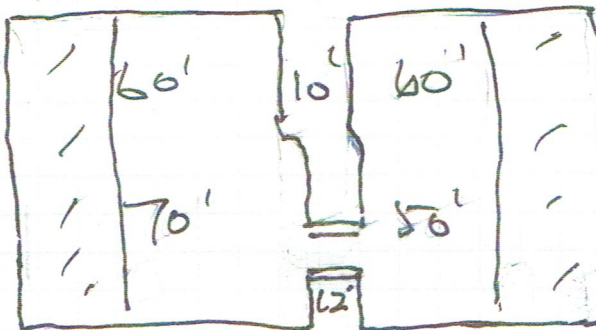


Row 6
SEMI 7
DET 8

HARBOR

BOYS OF MAJOR

Row 14
SEMI 6
DET 3
WIDTH 19'



Row 23
SEMI 3
DET 2
WIDTH 16'

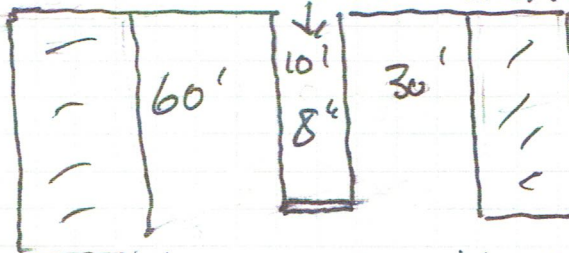
GREENBERG →



ULSTER

CHAPEL HOSPICE

Row 14
SEMI 6
DET 3
WIDTH 21'

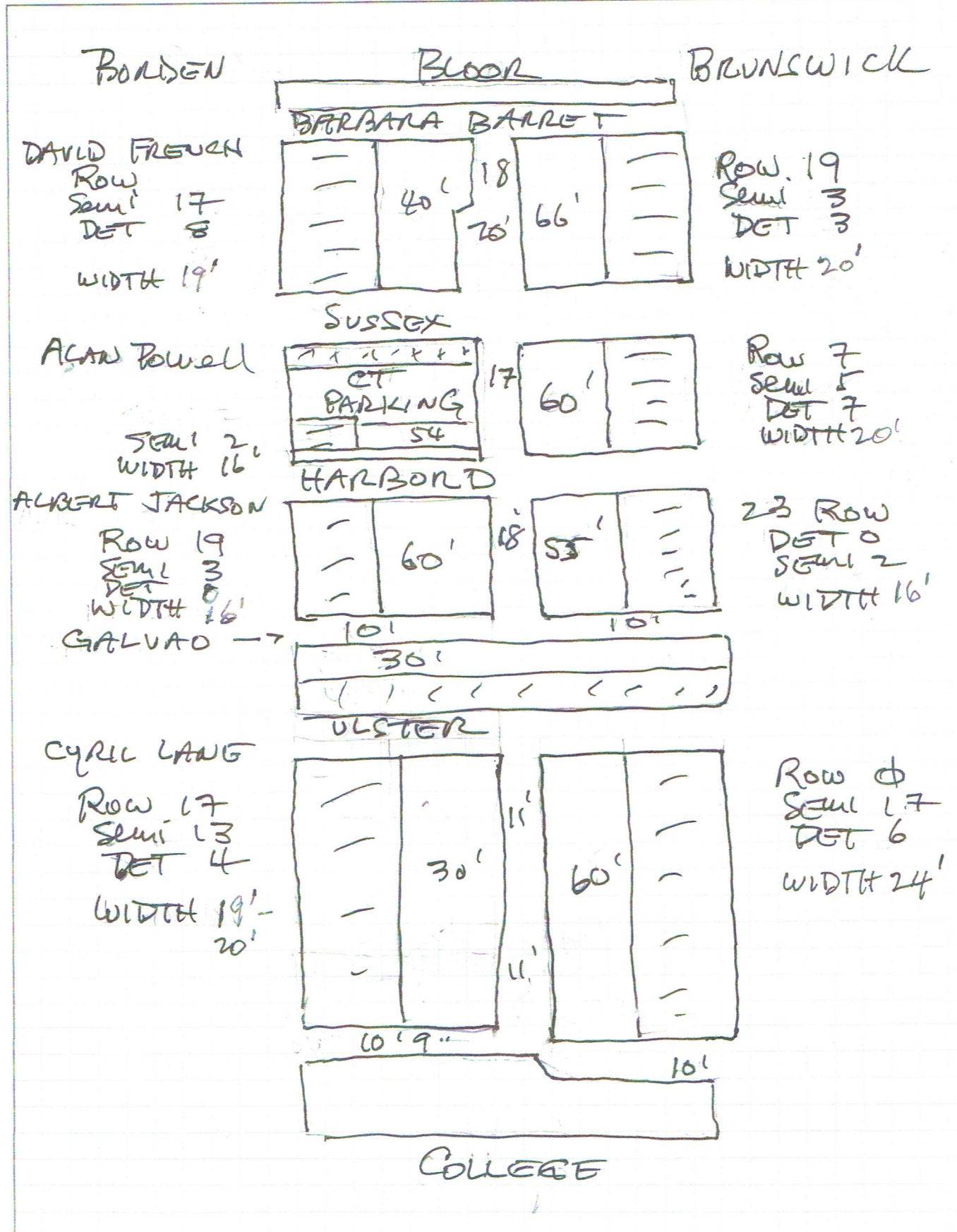


Row 9
SEMI 9
DET 6
WIDTH 17'

Kensington Health Centre

MAP 5-

Name	Project	
Course - Section		
Instructor	Date	Page



MAP 6

Name	Project	
Course - Section		
Instructor	Date	Page

CROFTSLANEWAY Complex

Lippincott

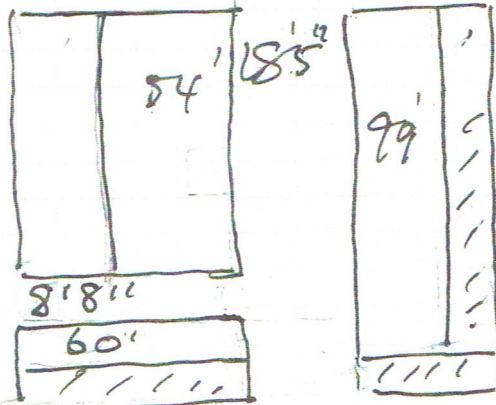
HALBORD

BONDEN

Row 24
Semi 4
DET 4

WIDTH 18'

LEWIS FAMILY

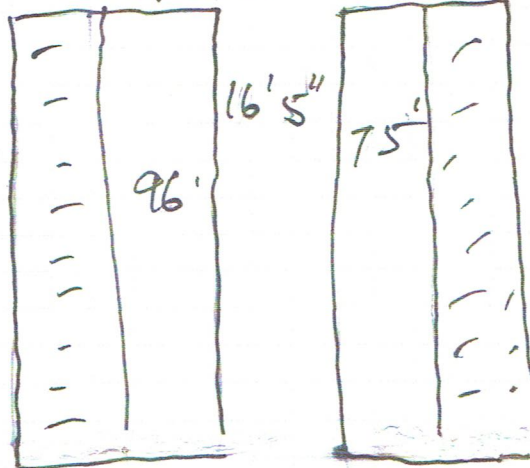


Row 13
Semi 5
DET 4

WIDTH 18'

ULSTER

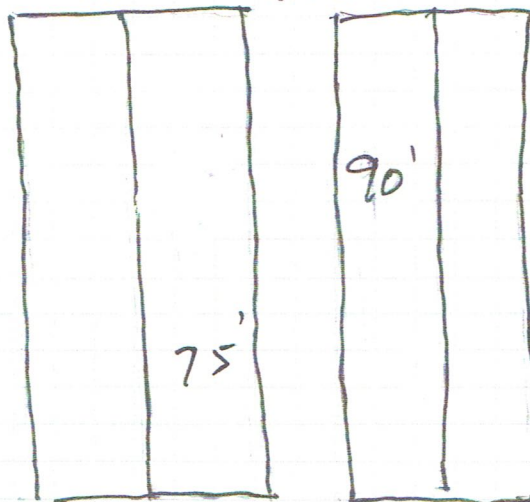
Row 26
Semi 2
DET 2
WIDTH 17'



Row 19
Semi 5
DET 4
WIDTH 16'

VANCOUVER

Row 11
Semi 3
DET 7
WIDTH 19'



Row 15
Semi 3
DET 2
WIDTH 18'

College

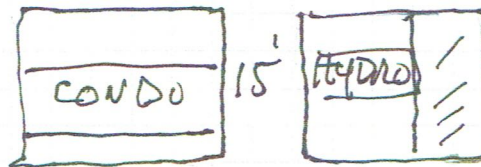
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MAP 7

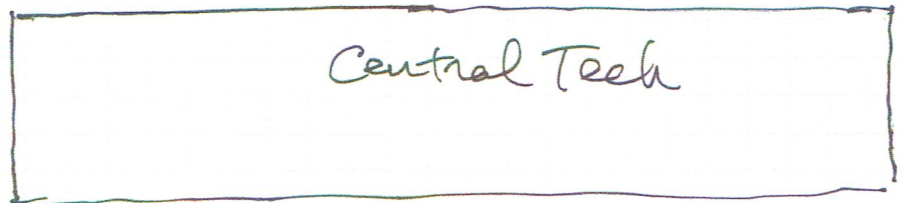
LORETTO LANE

BATHURST

LORETTO LANE



LENNOX



HARBOR

JAMES HALL

Row 3
Semi 11
DET 2
OTHER 3
WIDTH 20'

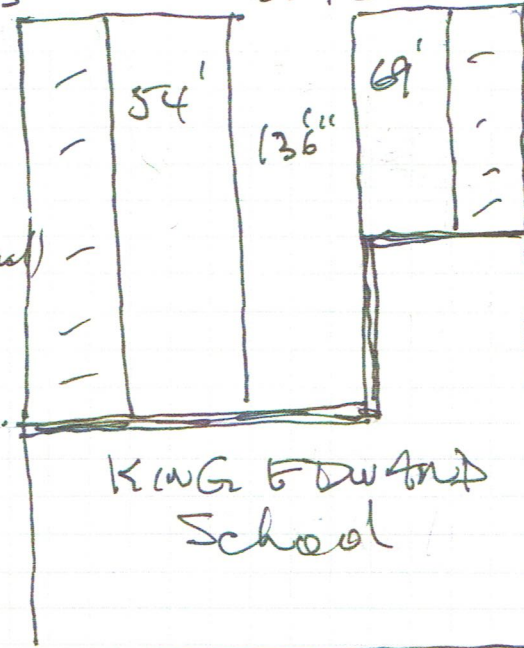


Row 26
Semi 2
DET 4
APT 1
WIDTH 17'

ANTONIO FERNANDES

Row 6
Semi 8
DET 1

WIDTH 21'
(CHURCH INSTITUTION)



Row 11
Semi 3
DET 7
WIDTH 20'

KING EDWARD
School

College

ULSTER

ULSTER WATSON TO
BATHURST

Row 50
Semi 9
DET 1

MAP 2

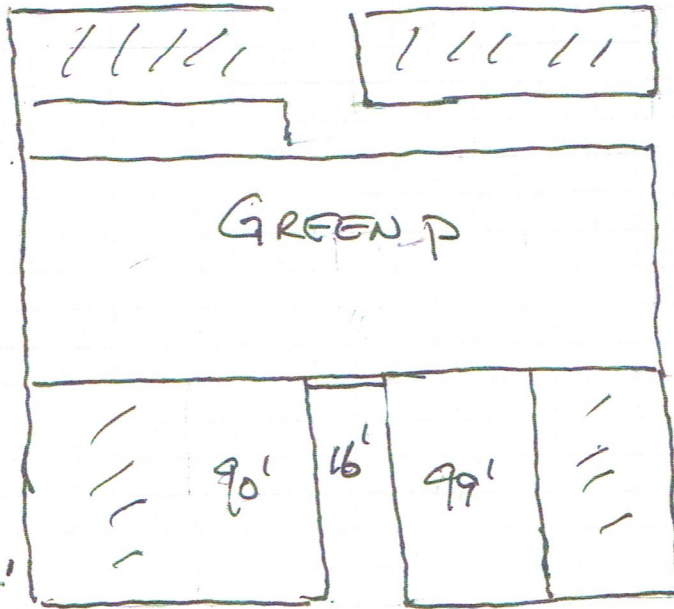
Name	Project	
Course - Section		
Instructor	Date	Page

UPPER Croft - BAGPIPE LANE

LIPPINCOTT

TLOOR

BORDEN



BAGPIPES

ROW 7
SEMI Φ
DET 3

WIDTH 17'

ROW 8
SEMI Φ
DET Φ

WIDTH 17'

LENNOX

HARBORD VILLAGE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Box 68522, 360A Bloor St. W.
Toronto, ON M5S 1X1



To: Toronto and East York Community Council

June 10, 2017.

Re: TE25.108

Bringing Laneway Suites to the Toronto and East York District

Dear Councillors:

While Harbord Village Residents' Association agrees with need to create affordable housing, we do not support the adoption of this motion.

Rear yard or laneway housing is presently not permitted in the City. It represents a major change in acceptable development. It should only be proceeded with after highly detailed and sensitive studies of the various neighbourhoods in the City.

Our catchment is Bloor/College/Spadina and Bathurst Streets. We are a densely-packed two and a half storey Victorian community, built on narrow lots. We are home to 25 lanes and a Green Master Plan project for greening and climate change remediation, including stormwater abatement, planting green corridors and recovering City boulevard flanks to soft landscaping.

We were well aware of the laneway initiative, through press coverage and having watched our neighbor, Huron Sussex, agree to three pilot sites and through development proposals in our neighbourhood.

After meeting with the proponents, we decided to conduct our own study of the practicality of laneway housing in Harbord Village. This is attached.

Rather than a destination, we see this motion as a start. The housing element of a broadly based laneway study has begun. What else might we do to make best use of property? We urge the Councillors to mandate a Laneway Master Plan study, under the aegis of the Planning Department, Urban Design and other pertinent departments, similar to the work of TOCore. It should address a different question: what unlocked promise is in our lanes beyond housing, how can we create a planning regime to better prepare our Neighbourhoods for Climate Change and green challenges, for social meeting places, for places of rest and sanctuary, places for children to learn to ride a bike.

With thanks,

Sue Dexter for Carolee Orme and Rory Gus Sinclair
Harbord Village Planning and Development Committee.



