

HARBORD VILLAGE  
RESIDENTS'  
ASSOCIATION

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



To Toronto And East York Community Council

Re: TE32.11

Changing Lanes Report and OPA 403

Dear Council Members:

April 29, 2018.

Harbord Village Residents' Association serves an area that is bounded by College, Bathurst, Bloor and Spadina. We are a dense Victorian community, protected by two HCDs. Our permitted GFA is 1.0 and many Committee of Adjustment Hearings are returning variance permissions in the 1.1 and 1.2 range.

On July 4, 2017, we shared with you our lengthy analysis of the 25 lanes and 1213 properties in our catchment. This study was undertaken to do a practical, ground level analysis of our neighbourhood conditions, and to generate a suite of conditions we felt should be met in any policy change. We supported and continue to support affordable housing.

Today, after several months of public consultation and meetings with City Planning, some of our concerns have been met, while a significant number remain. These include:

1. Affordable housing: since the Planning report advocates a pilot study for Affordable housing, it is clear Laneway suites are not expected to be affordable. Nor, with the low uptake, could it be argued that supply of laneway suites will be sufficient to depress rents. We continue to support affordable units in main street developments as the most effective way to ease the deficit.
2. Density: there is no allowance for existing density on a lot. In Harbord Village, we already have many additional housing types in our existing houses, including duplexes, basement units, rooming houses. In many cases, a laneway suite would be a tertiary or even a quaternary residence.

Our densities remain among the highest in the City for neighbourhoods. The addition of a suite would increase our existing average GFA by .3. A property already at 1.2 or 1.3 would be taken to 1.5 or 1.6. We believe GFA should remain a standard as it reflects facilities carrying capacity and infrastructure demand, including schools, hospitals, parks, parking among others.

Recommendation: Properties with suites should have a maximum GFA.

3. Green space: We believe there is insufficient yard and garden depth to preserve landscaped space. The standard 5 m. yard depth for one-storey and 7.5 m. for two-storey

is inadequate to preserve mature trees, especially when trenching for water and sewer lines from the suite to the main house is virtually sure to damage tree roots.

Recommendation: Enact minimum 7.5 metre garden space with a minimum lot area soft surfacing to ensure run-off capture and healthy trees.

The 1.5 m. suite setback from the lane which is said to be for greening is as quickly taken up by bike parking, garbage bin enclosures as well as possible balconies and architectural features.

Recommendation: create a consistent laneway street wall with a 3 m. setback from the rear property line.

Expansion of the suite footprint to 8 x 10 metre in the final report gives us concern, as once again, it limits greenspace.

Recommendation: Return to the previous footprint of 8 x 8 metres.

4. Lane capacity: Lanes vary in width and length. Suites should not be considered on narrow dead end lanes where servicing is impossible.

Recommendation: stipulate minimum lane width as a criterion.

5. Appeals: Appeals to committee of adjustment can be anticipated both from 'qualifying suites' that need a tweak, or adjacent property owners that feel hard done by the rules. Equally, consents to sever should be constrained on applications for suites. The HVRA experience is that consents are applied for in connection with highly-priced units. This is contrary to the mandate of Changing Lanes.
6. Monitoring: the 3-year evaluation could lead to loosening the regulations further in an effort to get very little in the way of more rental properties.

Recommendation: Formation of a Laneways Task Group, led by Councillors, including Residents' Association stakeholders, to include City staff, receiving minimum quarterly reporting on all variance and re-zoning applications, Committee of Adjustment hearings and decisions, TLAB and LPAT appeals and other City reports as requested. Also by 2020, there should be a report of MPAC impacts.

This has been an ambitious exercise. We do not stand in the way of affordable units, or laneway suites where appropriate. We remain concerned that the final report should be carefully and closely considered because neighbourhood stability hangs in the balance.

Best regards

Sue Dexter for HVRA