



2018 April 30

SUPPORT FOR TE32.11

CHANGING LANES: THE CITY OF TORONTO'S REVIEW OF LANEWAY SUITES CITY-INITIATED OFFICIAL PLAN AMENDMENT AND ZONING AMENDMENT - FINAL REPORT

Dear Toronto and East York Community Council Members,

It is with great enthusiasm that we write this letter in support of the proposed Official Plan and Zoning By-Law amendments regarding laneway suites.

As originators of this effort to create an as-of-right framework for laneway suites in Toronto, we have been privileged to work with Torontonians, City Staff, and yourselves for the past 3 years on creating this vision for laneway housing.

We approached this challenge with two presuppositions:

1. Laneway suites must be non-severable. This resolves all servicing issues related to water, sewer, solid-waste collection, postal delivery, and other infrastructure by coupling the laneway suite with the main house. These solutions of sharing services between two units are already prevalent across the city for internal secondary units and are proven to be reliable.
2. We will not make any other presuppositions.

Our work, in conjunction with Evergreen's exceptional public-outreach efforts, sought to gather communal input from a diverse array of Torontonians. We gathered their sensitivities and synthesized them into a report that ensured the resulting vision for laneway suites would be sensitive, equitable, and broadly suitable for all of Toronto's unique neighbourhoods and laneways.

Throughout our engagement process, we consulted with:

- 2,600 online survey respondents (91% of whom supported laneway suites in their neighbourhoods)
- 400 design charette attendants from all wards
- 400 letters of support to Lanescape and local Councillors (and growing)
- 33 articles and stories in major Toronto newspapers and news networks

Our reach has been broad, and we are proud to say that the performance standards outlined in our report were authored by the collective voice of thousands of engaged Torontonians.

We are equally proud to say that the additional public consultation work completed by City of Toronto Planning Staff has gone above and beyond our expectations to refine the Final Report with input from hundreds more citizens and resident associations.

The resulting Final Report does an exceptional job of responding to the sensitivities voiced by Torontonians, and the amount of public engagement underpinning this policy work is unprecedented for its scale.

By supporting this policy, you are empowering individual citizens to address their growing needs for housing and financial flexibility – something our families desperately need to keep our low-rise neighbourhoods equitable.

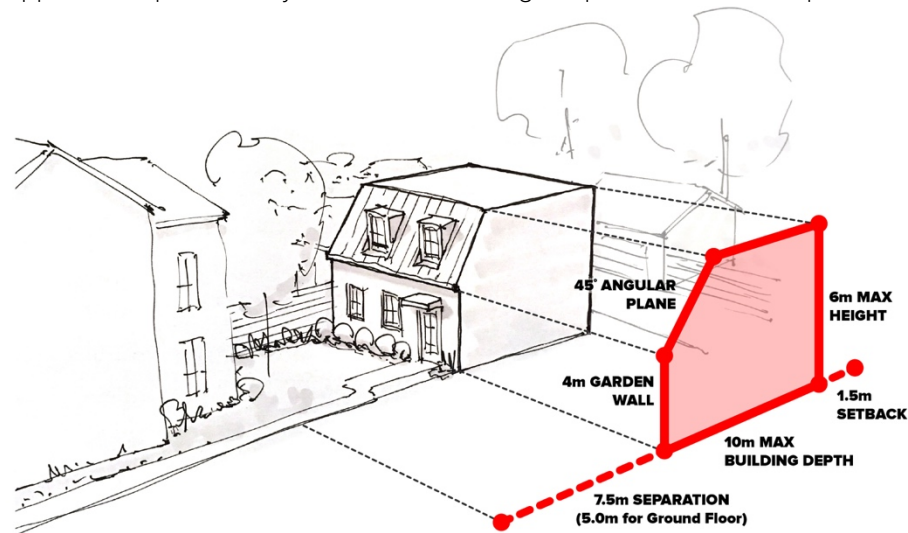
This policy was written by homeowners, for home owners. It will set a historic precedent in how housing policy is created and how our great city adapts to meet the needs of its homeowners. Your constituents will thank you for your support of this inspirational work of civic advancement.

Sincerely,

The Lanescape Team

WHAT IS IN THE REPORT?

The City of Toronto has faithfully followed Lanescape's Report, which crowd-sourced suitable laneway house design standards. The final performance standards maintain the character of good urbanism and accessible and affordable approvals expounded by Torontonians during the public consultation process.



Design requirements allow for rear-yard suites ranging in size from bachelor to 2-bedroom units, as one might find in Vancouver or Ottawa. However, they follow contextually sensitive setbacks and height restrictions that ensure these new structures will be respectful of neighbour's sunlight and privacy in Toronto's built-form context. They also include provisions to improve the safety and beauty of laneways – one of our city's most abundant public spaces.

PLANNING POLICY

The proposed Laneway Suite policy responds to a provincial mandate for all Ontario municipalities to provide planning framework for detached secondary suites. It does so by remaining sensitive to the demands of the Official Plan by ensuring the resulting changes experienced in our neighbourhoods are sensitive and minimal. It also has the ability to coexist with secondary plans and heritage districts, ensuring areas of unique character are positively respected. The policy mandates review and revision, ensuring it will adapt to the inevitable learning experiences of early adopters and continue to evolve, much like our changing city.

AFFORDABILITY

Laneway suites will be subjected to the same affordability requirements and opportunities of all secondary housing units in Toronto. It is important that laneway suites are treated equally when compared to basement apartments and other forms of secondary suites that are currently permitted throughout the city. All forms of secondary suites provide financial flexibility for homeowners and should be supported and affected equally, no matter what form they take.

EQUITY

Multi-generational housing will take on a new dimension when laneway suites are permitted. Rather than relying on a basement apartment or other integral secondary suite for caretakers or transitioning empty nesters and their children, detached suites provide acoustic and environmental separation in above-grade space that will make supported loved ones feel proud of their accommodations.

DESIGN STANDARDS

ACCESS

The requirement for a 1m wide access to the laneway suite is an unfortunate necessity. This requirement sterilizes a significant number of properties. It is important to note that there will be permitted alternatives if the homeowner can demonstrate suitable life-safety considerations that are acceptable by the Chief Building Official and Fire Services. We strongly recommend the City publish a list of prescriptive alternatives, as the majority of lots on laneways will need to explore alternative compliance.

ACCESSIBILITY

Laneway suites will be subjected to the same accessibility standards as all buildings in Ontario via the requirements of the Ontario Building Code. The built form of laneway suites makes them suitable for complete barrier-free design when needed, and when adequate property dimensions are present.

DEVELOPMENT CHARGES AND LEVIES

Ensuring laneway suites receive the same exemption from development charges and levies as other secondary suites is of critical importance to homeowner equity and uptake for this form of housing. There is no difference in terms of impact on municipal infrastructure between a laneway suite and an integral secondary suite. Basement apartments and other integral secondary suites are exempt from charges and levies as a way of creating housing equity for our citizens, and this must apply to laneway suites as well.

SHORT TERM RENTALS

The requirements for short term rentals must be applied to laneway suites as they would for any secondary suite. This will ensure laneway suites are treated equally and protected from the detrimental impact of short term renters on our neighbourhoods.

SOLID WASTE COLLECTION, SERVICING, AND SEVERANCES

The Committee of Adjustment must not permit severances, as this will create technical issues related to waste collection and deliveries, and require new services to be installed in the laneway. So long as the laneway suite remains un-severed, all servicing requirements can be supported by the main house using solutions that are already in place for many Toronto homes with multiple units. However, strata-titling or condominiumizing of laneway suites should be allowed as a means of creating flexibility for accessible market-rate housing.

SUSTAINABILITY

The Ontario Building Code is engendering energy efficiency across our province, and laneway suites will be subjected to the same energy requirements imposed on all new homes. The design flexibility in these criteria allow for suitable energy upgrades so that homeowners will not be restricted if they seek high sustainability standards.

TREE PROTECTION

The requirements of Urban Forestry should apply to laneway suites equally, as they would for garages and houses. Protecting our tree life is of critical importance to our neighbourhoods, which are “the lungs of our city”. Permits to injure or remove trees must be required for laneway suites as they currently do for other structures.

DESIGN CRITERIA

Criteria	Requirement	Comments
Location on a Lane	Min. 3.0m Lot Line Abutting Laneway	This is a suitable minimum. Any narrower, and liveability becomes a concern.
Density	LWS is Excluded from Main House Area	This is acceptable. The built-form requirements applied to the laneway suite ensure they will be suitably scaled and should not be dependent or penalized by the main house or vice versa.
Basements	Permitted for Storage and Equipment	Given the small size of some laneway suites, using subterranean space will be important.
Separation from Main House	5.0m, 1-Storey LWS 7.5m, 2-Storey LWS	We believe 5.0m should be the case for all LWSs. The angular plane incorporated into the design requirements ensures massing is always sensitive to neighbours and rear yards, and 7.5m will require many lots to seek minor variances from the Committee of Adjustment.
Landscaped Open Space	Min. 50% Rear Yard to be Soft Landscaping (40% when Frontage < 6.0m)	This is a suitable minimum. Currently, garages create equal impact on soft landscaping.
Building Height	Max. 6.0m	This is suitable for a modestly-sized 2-storey LWS and ensures subordinate height to main house zoning requirements in all neighbourhoods.
Wall Height	Max. 4.0m on Garden-Side w/ 45° Angular Plane	This is excellent urban design. Garages are currently permitted to be 4.0m, so this creates no worse condition. The angular plane ensures neighbours' sunlight and views are very minimally impacted.
LWS Length and Width	Max. 10.0m Depth Max. 8.0m Width	This provides sufficient flexibility for up to a 2-car garage, or a family-friendly laneway suite, while limiting maximum size to a subordinate scale. Most lots in the TEYCC are far too small to reach the maximums.
Rear Yard Setback	Min. 1.5m	We believe this should be 1.0m, as is currently required for garages, in order to maintain a consistent laneway streetscape and provide more flexibility. It will also reduce the number of lots requiring minor variances from the Committee of Adjustment.
Side Yard Setbacks	0.0m	This is suitable, as existing requirements for garages create a party-wall-like condition for laneway structures. It ensures a consistent laneway streetscape and minimizes the need for minor variances.
Fenestration Percentage	TBD in Guidelines	We suggest following the guidelines of our report... Ground Floor : Unlimited Second Floor, Laneway : 20% - 60% Second Floor, Rear Yard : 10% - 40%
Dormers and Projections	TBD in Guidelines	We suggest permitting dormers and bay windows that project beyond the 45° angular plane to provide character elements that improve the visual quality of laneway suites, but do not extend beyond the required setbacks or overall height. This will improve the availability of second floor useable space without sacrificing the good urbanism of the proposed built form.

Parking	No Car Parking Required Min. 2 Bicycle Parking	This is excellent. The allowable built form will permit homeowners to incorporate garages if they so choose, or allows for additional living space, greater suitability for small lots, and a reduced number of lots requiring minor variances from the Committee of Adjustment.
Second Floor Amenity Space	Second Floor Balconies Permitted on Laneway-Side Only	The laneway is public space where overlook is not a concern. Balconies are rightfully not permitted facing neighbours rear yards.
Horizontal and Vertical Projections	Awnings, Exterior Staircases, Air-Conditioners, Decorative Architectural Features, etc. are Permitted to Exceed Max. Height	We do not believe air conditioners should be included in this list. All others are suitable, provided limitations are clearly stated for how far they can exceed the height requirement.

CONCLUSION

In general, we are very pleased with these design standards. They do an excellent job of addressing the concerns that were presented to Lanescape during our public consultation. They provide adequate flexibility for designers and occupants, while suitably addressing privacy, overlook, shadowing, and built-form-massing concerns.

We believe the laneway suites that will result from these guidelines will be fitting for Toronto neighbourhoods, and will create high-quality design and housing opportunities.

Provided they are accessible through an as-of-right, affordable approvals framework, we are excited to see the positive results this innovative policy framework can produce.