



June 4, 2018

To: Toronto And East York Community Council
From: Roncesvalles-Macdonell Residents' Association (RMRA)
Sent by email: teycc@toronto.ca

Re: TE32.11 Changing Lanes Report – The City of Toronto's Review of Laneway Suites: City-Initiated Official Plan Amendment and Zoning Amendment - Final and Supplementary Reports, and Official Plan Amendment 403

Dear Council Members:

The RMRA is one of Toronto's oldest, continuously operating residents' associations. Since 1973, we have contributed to the creation of a new city park and new playground on formerly derelict industrial land; a new community center now being developed; the redesign and greening of Roncesvalles Avenue; and, the creation of new community gardens - among other initiatives.

Our executive has had a member attending many of the laneway suite meetings across the city over the past year. Last week, on May 29, 2018, we held an open public meeting on laneway suites, with 71 local residents attending. That is much higher than the historical average attendance of our public meetings – which indicates the high degree of public interest in the subject.

Residents were given an in-depth presentation by Mr. Andrew Sorbara of Lanescape, with further information on the current state of this proposed amendment provided by our councillor, Mr. Gordon Perks.

Every person attending had time to ask questions. We then held a vote asking residents to indicate Yea or Nay. The vote was 70-1 in favor of laneway suites.

We urge this council to recognize this kind of overwhelming public support and to forward this amendment to full council. Your vote today can do much for families that want to evolve together and to grow neighborhoods like ours that are losing population because of the present dynamics of housing and zoning.

We urge the full council to support this most organic form of housing densification. We have heard from residents who would welcome the removal of bylaw restrictions that are currently preventing them from investing in their own property to add a ground-level accessible space for aging parents, or for any person with accessible needs, or for a young adult in their family who otherwise has very limited access to housing in the city where they've been raised.



We have also heard from residents who, at the empty nest phase of life, would invest in creating a suite in back for themselves and renting out the big house in the front – thus, there is an opportunity for this council to create a greater availability of family-sized rental housing, of which there is a dire need. Who would deny this kind of shelter to families that are striving to rent decent space in this city?

We ask this council to be encouraging organic, sustainable densification of which laneway suites are a step in the right direction – a first step and not the last, we hope. We strongly urge council to allow ways to expand secondary suites wherever possible in the city. Start with lots on laneways, then look at creative approaches to other lot forms where urban land is being underutilized for its primary purpose – to create structures that are efficient, sustainable machines for living.

The laneway suites guidelines recommended by city planning staff are a good first step – but in some ways they are one step forward and two steps back. For example, the report states: “While many lots adjacent to laneways have adequate depth and size to accommodate a laneway suite in accordance with the proposed zoning standards, the ability to provide **adequate emergency access** was found to be a significant limiting factor in laneway suite construction.”

Among others, our area residents have questions about the “significant limiting factors” of one-meter, one-story side yard access between houses. In Parkdale there are many homes on lanes, but there are extremely few lots with one-meter width between houses. Of the few houses that do have the generous width of one meter, many have side bay windows that would be excluded by the one-story rule. We ask council to ask emergency services to provide a justification for the definition of what is “adequate.” An ambulance stretcher at 24 inches wide can adequately pass through the most common side widths of 30 inches to 34 inches. We also note in Toronto the doors to most houses are not one meter wide and one story high, yet that is not preventing emergency services from doing their jobs. We respectfully request a justification and/or clear alternative solutions where a 1M side yard is unavailable.

In sum, the RMRA would like to thank council and staff for the hard work that has gone into Changing Lanes. We salute the leadership shown. Your vote today can do much for families that are investing in making this a vibrant city of stable yet growing neighbourhoods. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Norman Kolasky		Mark Campbell		George Emerson
Co-chair & Treasurer		Planning & Development		Planning & Development