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ARCHITECTS

Toronto and East York Community Council  
100 Queen Street West  
Toronto, Ontario, M5H 2N2

June 4, 2018

**RE: TE33.3 Changing Lanes: The City of Toronto's Review of Laneway Suites – City-Initiated Official Plan Amendment and Zoning Amendment – Final Report**

Dear members of the Toronto and East York Community Council,

Established in 1887, the Toronto Society of Architects (TSA) has a long tradition of advocating for design in the city, ensuring that architecture and urban design are key considerations in public discussions and in processes that have an impact on our built environment. It is with this mandate in mind that we are writing to you regarding *TE33.3 Changing Lanes: The City of Toronto's Review of Laneway Suites – City-Initiated Official Plan Amendment and Zoning Amendment*.

We wish to begin by acknowledging the role of advocates and city staff in advancing the important issue of laneway housing in Toronto. It is their persistent work throughout the last two decades that have brought us to the point where laneway housing might become a long overdue reality in our city.

**The TSA fully supports allowing laneway housing as-of-right within the proposed area.** We believe in the potential of laneway housing to provide opportunities for design excellence in our city, while contributing to housing diversity, affordability, and density.

Laneway housing introduces a new housing typology into Toronto, increasing density and providing much needed housing stock while preserving the character of Toronto's neighbourhoods as dictated in the Official Plan. Equally as important, this new housing typology provides an unprecedented opportunity for architectural innovation and design excellence in our city as architects and designers explore the mostly untapped potential of Toronto's laneways.



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While our support for laneway housing is unequivocal, we must also strongly advise against overly prescriptive guidelines and regulations that limit architectural expression and hinder the full potential of laneway housing. If too narrowly defined, these guidelines will also result in an increase number of proposals requiring minor variances through Committee of Adjustment, incumbering our already overburdened approvals systems and decreasing the effectiveness of any as-of-right zoning.

Instead, our recommendation is to establish clear performance criteria that provide flexibility to architects and designers when addressing site specific conditions, while ensuring key aspects such as privacy and minimizing impact on neighbouring properties are addressed.

It has taken many years of discussions and failed initiatives to get to the point where the approval of laneway housing in Toronto seems to be within reach, and it is important that we create conditions from the very beginning that fully unlock the potential of this new housing typology in the city.

Equally as important, Toronto's city councillors must show they are able to lead on this issue and move forward with the necessary amendments to the Official Plan and Zoning By-laws required to make laneway housing a reality. We can no longer afford to continue underutilizing the limited land in our city – including our laneways - and City Hall must show its willingness to embrace a new generation of housing in Toronto.

We trust our feedback will be considered as the guidelines are finalized, and we make ourselves available to work with the City to ensure policies and guidelines on laneway housing allow this new housing type to live up to its fullest potential.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Maria Denegri', written over a horizontal line.

Maria Denegri  
Chair | Toronto Society of Architects