



Toronto and East York Community Council
2nd Floor, West Tower, City Hall
100 Queen St. W. Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

5 June 2018

TE33.3A: CHANGING LANES: THE CITY OF TORONTO'S REVIEW OF LANEWAY SUITES – CITY-INITIATED OFFICIAL PLAN AMENDMENT AND ZONING AMENDMENT – SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT

Dear Toronto and East York Community Council Members,

It is with great enthusiasm that we write this letter in support of the Changing Lanes policy, and encourage you to approve it without change, immediately.

Lanescape is a group of individuals who have designed, built, and lived in laneway houses in Toronto. We are as familiar with the technical and contextual sensitivities of laneway housing as anyone else in our city because we have been finding solutions for them for years, both as professionals and as residents who rely on our laneways as our doorsteps.

We are also a group who spearheaded a public consultation process, in partnership with Evergreen, that collected input on social and design sensitivities related to laneway suites from 2,700 Torontonians via an online survey, over 400 Torontonians at public meetings, and dozens more through meetings with residents' associations, community groups, and individual families.

The Changing Lanes policy has learned from other Canadian municipalities on how to properly execute laneway housing, and it has gone a step farther by engendering the social and built fabric sensitivities of our city into the solution.

This process has established Toronto as civic leaders in collaborative, new low-rise housing policy. No other municipality in the world has taken such care in creating a laneway housing policy. We have collaborated with more citizens than any other municipality. We have consulted with more experts than any other municipality. We have spent more time and completed more revisions than any other municipality.

We should be proud of the hard work that our collective group of thousands has poured into this report, because the result is sensitive in built-form, measured in its execution, flexible for the future, and accessible enough for any homeowner to benefit from, regardless of means.

We would like to thank the TEYCC for their care and consideration for the Changing Lanes report, and for the extra effort they executed to protect our greenspace and tree canopy, enhance affordability, and protect neighbours from privacy and aesthetic concerns.

This policy is exceptionally good, and we urge the TEYCC to approve it without change, immediately.

Enclosed is our response to the benefits and concerns related to the policy. Thank you.

Sincerely,
The Lanescape Team



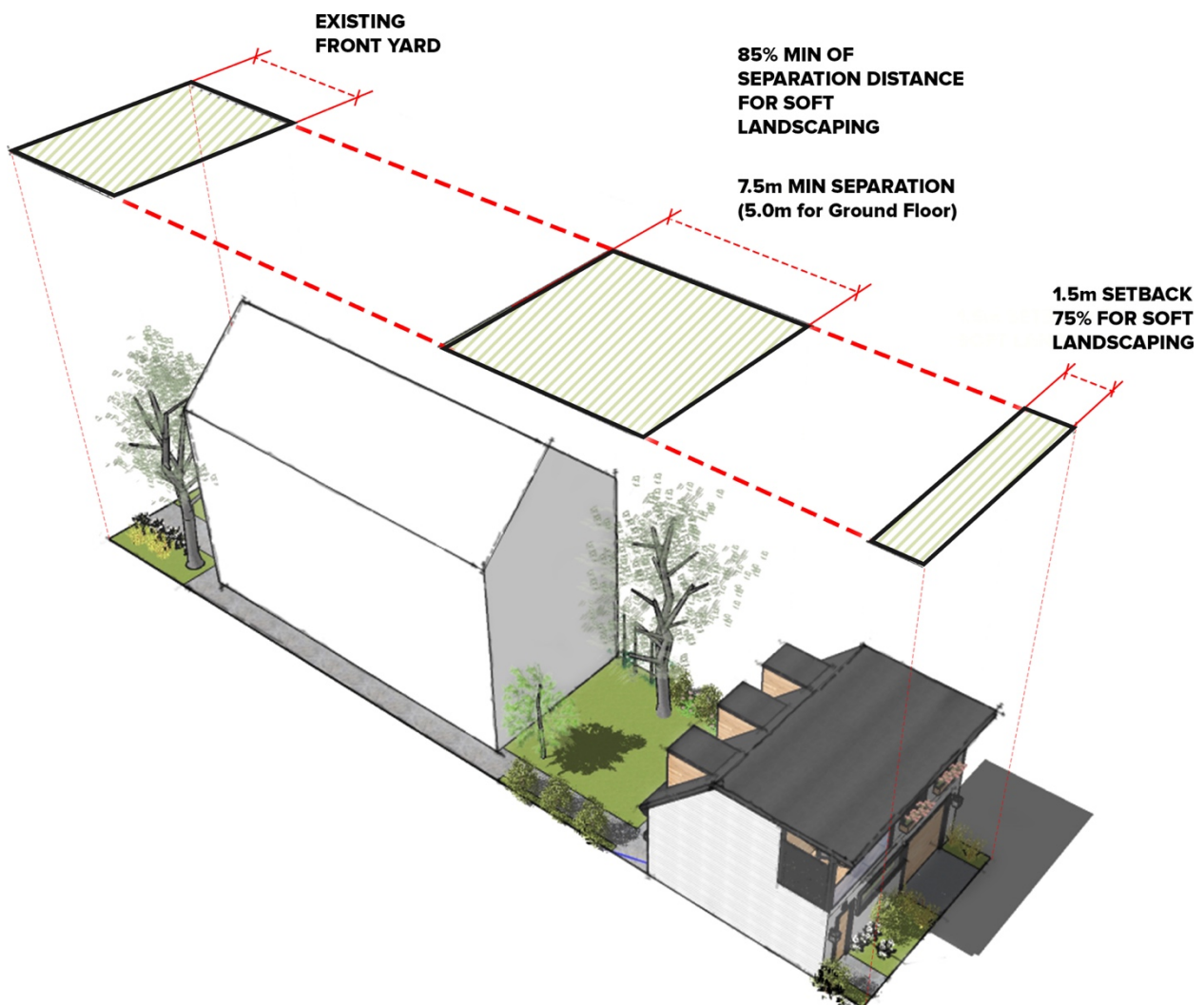
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SITE REQUIREMENTS

The lot requirements for a laneway suite follow the current requirements for a house with an as-of-right garage, except a laneway suite will require additional soft landscaping, and enhanced protection for trees.

A lot with a laneway suite will provide MORE greenery and landscaping than a house with a garage, which means that the more laneway suites built, the more greenery is created.

We are fully supportive of all policies related to site and landscaped open space, as they create a more spacious and ecologically sensitive design than current as-of-right garages in any and all respects.



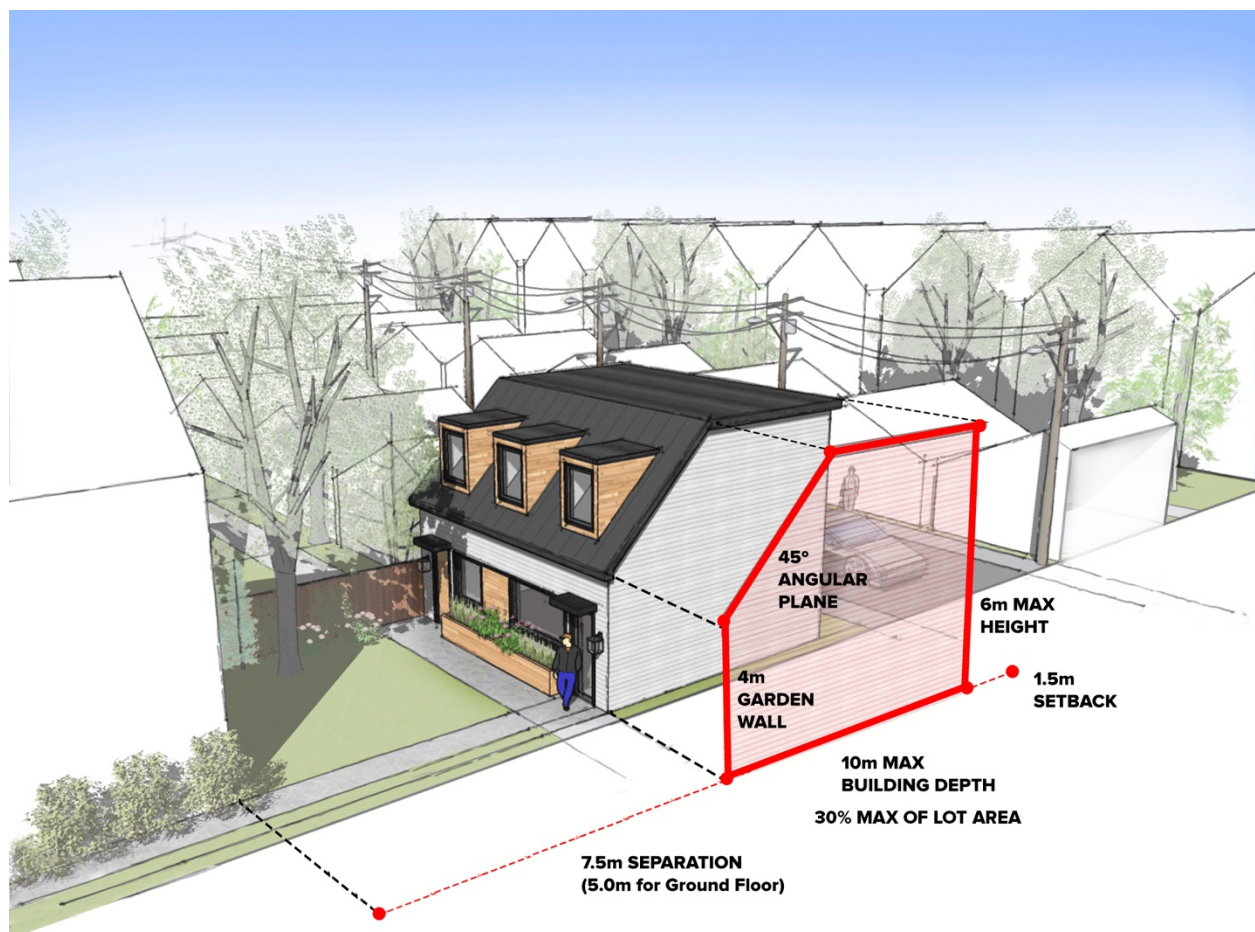
BUILT FORM REQUIREMENTS

Minimum yard dimensions guarantee that laneways will only become wider and greener, and only lots of sufficient depth will be able to accommodate a laneway suite.

Privacy and overlook are very tightly controlled by limitations of second-floor dormers, and an angular plane. Shadow impact is equal to an as-of-right garage, meaning there will be very little impact on residents' enjoyment of their rear yards.

There is concern that many of these specific requirements will be cheated by homeowners seeking minor variances at the Committee of Adjustment, and we are strongly opposed to any variances being granted, except where genuinely unusual site conditions warrant thoughtful variances that are truly minor in nature.

We are fully supportive of all policies related to built form, as they create a structure that is sensitive to neighbours' privacy and sunlight, and generally reinforce good urban design.



BALCONIES AND MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT

Allowing second floor balconies on the laneway side only is a smart gesture to allow much-needed outdoor living space when homeowners wish to keep the rear yard dedicated to the main house. Requiring them to face the public realm ensures there is no overlook to neighbouring yards, only the public realm of the laneway. This will help activate the laneway by putting “eyes on the street”, improving safety and reinforcing Toronto’s laneway society.

Mechanical equipment on the roof must be set back from the perimeter and limited in footprint and height so it will be invisible from the laneway and neighbouring rear yards.

We are fully supportive of all policies related to balconies and mechanical equipment, as they are thoroughly considerate of adjacent properties and the public realm.

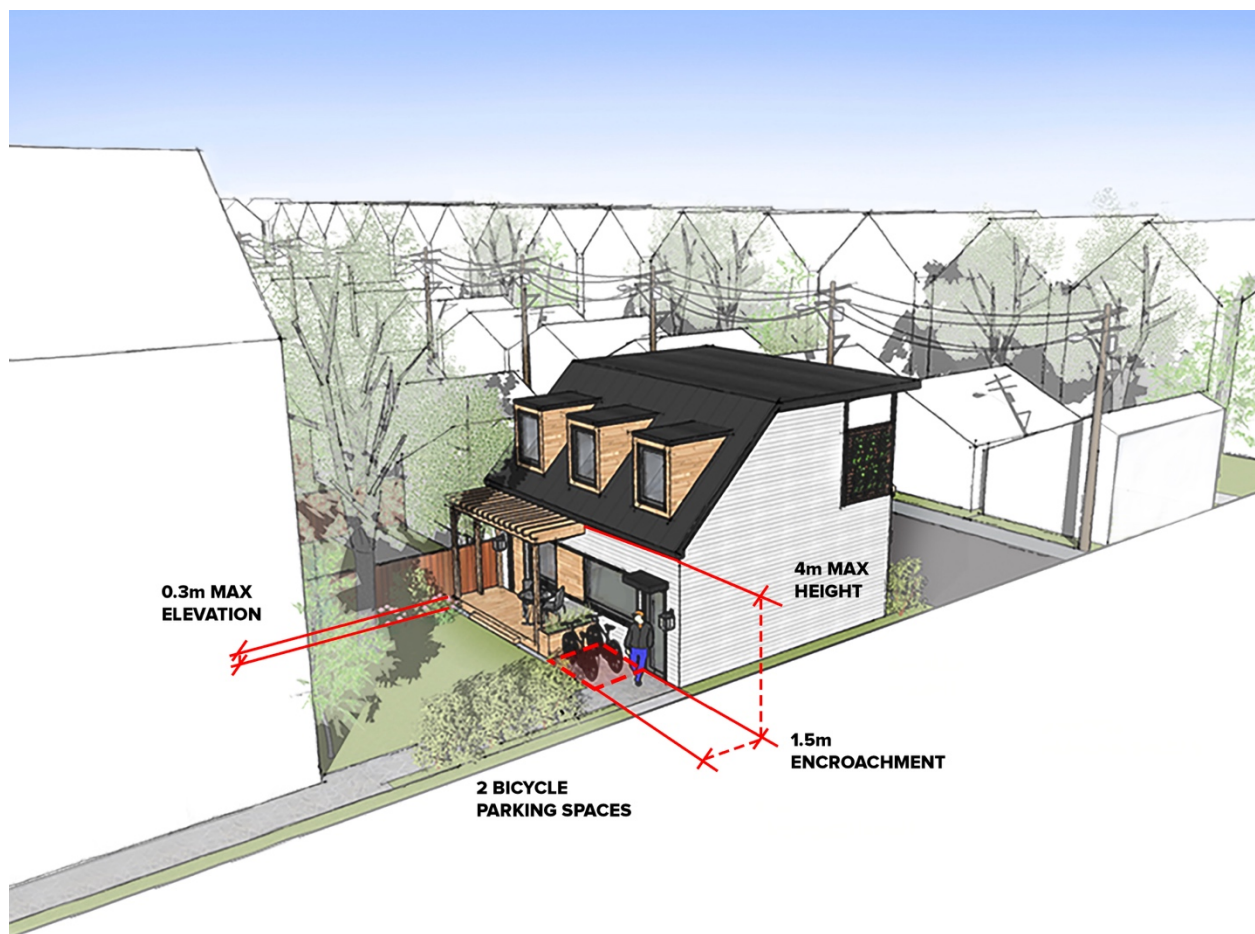


PARKING AND DECKS

Decks and canopies are limited to a max. depth of 1.5m. Decks are also limited in height to 0.3m above the ground floor. These requirements protect greenspace and prevent overlook into adjacent yards.

Also, 2 dedicated bicycle parking spaces are required on the site.

We are fully supportive of all policies related to parking and decks, as they are thoroughly considerate of neighbours and ensure adequate transportation options for homeowners are accommodate on-site.



We are accepting of all items in the Changing Lanes policy. We are excited to see them put into action, and to remain engaged while the policy is executed, and lessons learned from the execution of the first series of laneway suites improve this policy going forward.

Below is a response to the TEYCC's deferral notes:

Item	Lanescape Comments
<p>1. Develop a strengthened affordability strategy, including city stand-alone incentives, options for maintaining affordability in the long-term enforcing affordability, and any proposals to support affordability that would require provincial legislative or regulatory changes.</p>	<p>The fact that \$1,000,000 has been earmarked for subsidizing affordability in laneway suites is exceptionally great! We encourage Council to continue to expand this policy to all types of secondary units.</p> <p>We are thankful for Council's ability to secure this funding to promote affordability, and we are very supportive of Planning's approach to making it accessible to laneway suite owners as an opt-in policy. It ensures homeowners can support subsidized housing, without restricting homeowners' ability to access these entitlements.</p>
<p>2. Review and re-consider the following components of the Laneway Suites Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law Amendment:</p> <p>a) Requiring the 1.5m lot setback to be soft landscaping as part of the as-of-right requirements;</p> <p>b) Additional measures to increase soft landscaping, tree protection and greening;</p>	<p>The enhanced soft landscaping requirements imposed by Planning in response to this are excellent. Our laneways will be significantly greener than an equal property with an as-of-right garage.</p> <p>Similarly, the proposed tree protection requirements mean that homeowners will have to be more considerate of damaging or removing trees, by proving they have considered every option for designing around them. And if they do not convince them, they will not be permitted to proceed. This may lead to more homeowners illegally poisoning or removing trees, but we support it on principle, and remain hopeful that Urban Forestry will continue to prevent surreptitious practices from occurring.</p> <p>The Changing Lanes policy will not be ADDING greenspace to our city with each new laneway suite constructed – an unprecedented benefit in the world of zoning requirements.</p>



<p>c) Any requests to change the as-of-right zoning permissions be considered through a Zoning By-law Amendment, and not through a Minor Variance application;</p>	<p>We are strongly opposed to limiting homeowners' legal right to minor variances.</p> <p>However, we understand that this is a major concern, and we would like to see minor variance applications minimized as much as possible, as the need for them adds considerable cost, time, and uncertainty to the approvals process - corrupting this policy's attempt to provide an easily-accessible standard for secondary suites to homeowners of all means.</p> <p>This policy is written with requirements that are flexible and considerate of modern building requirements. Its quality and thoughtfulness will make it possible for every laneway suite to be constructed as-of-right, with very few exceptions.</p> <p>We would like to see a public document clearly prohibiting the issuance of minor variances, except in very clearly defined cases where there is a genuine need based on unusual circumstances, and we strongly encourage tight and minimal approvals of minor variances.</p>
<p>d) Considerations for placement of mechanical equipment associated with laneway suites,</p>	<p>The improved restrictions on mechanical equipment mean that any rooftop units (which are unlikely to be common in the first place) will be effectively invisible from neighbouring yards and from the laneway.</p> <p>This is an excellent improvement that bolsters the thoughtful urban design of this policy.</p>
<p>3. Consider the following in the report back to the Toronto and East York Community Council:</p> <p>a) include the density of the laneway suite in the calculation of density/GFA of the property;</p>	<p>The context, parametric-based requirements of the Changing Lanes policy enforced the contextually sensitive approach to urbanism and zoning regulations that is fundamental to the good quality of this policy. Layering GFA requirements tied to the existing house would do nothing to improve the urban design of laneway suites but would cause a significant number of homeowners to require minor variances at the Committee of Adjustment, adding considerable cost, time, and uncertainty to the approvals process - corrupting this policy's attempt to provide an easily-accessible standard for secondary suites to homeowners of all means.</p> <p>We support Planning's added requirement for lot coverage, but strongly opposed to any additional restrictions, as they will not improve the urbanism of our neighbourhoods and laneways, and will cost homeowners significant resources – the exact opposite of what this policy is intended to do.</p>
<p>b) give consideration to the new Ward and Community Council boundaries into the plan;</p>	<p>No comments.</p>



c) ancillary issues brought forward either in communications or deputations at Community Council;	<p>We are extremely disappointed to see no changes resulting from the letters and deputations from architects and residents (including Lanescape) suggesting the Changing Lanes policy is, in some ways, too restrictive.</p> <p>Instead, one letter was given higher standing than the 188 others that were submitted. Going forward, we expect equal consideration, as the content of our concerns are equal in substance and validity.</p>
d) a strategy and timeline for Phase Two accessory housing for properties that do not have a laneway; and	<p>We look forward to participating in the growth and refinement of this policy. We are supportive of its approval immediately, with the expectation that it will continue to be improved and expanded over the coming years.</p>
e) include the lot coverage of the laneway suite in the total lot coverage permitted on a property	<p>We do not agree that the laneway suite should be tied to the house. The variations this will create will cause the unwarranted need for minor variances when the footprint and setback requirements already ensure laneway suites will only occur where adequate lot area is available. Planning's imposition of a 30% lot coverage requirement for the laneway suite only is a good alternative, and we support it.</p>
4. Provide an update on the "Second Units - Draft Official Plan Amendment" Public Consultation Meeting to be held on May 7, 8 9 and 10, 2018.	<p>No comments.</p>
<p>5. Consider options to secure tenancies in laneway housing, and other rental housing types, including requesting the Province of Ontario to amend legislation to protect tenants in residential dwellings with fewer than six units by deleting:</p> <p>a) Subsection 111(3) and 52(b) of the City of Toronto Act, and</p>	<p>We support planning's response to this point. As experienced tenants and landlords of secondary suites, we believe the current policies protecting tenants are equally considerate of tenants and landlords.</p>



<p>6. Consider the Letter from ABC Residents Association (Communication TE.Supp.TE32.11.106);</p>	<p>See 3.c)</p> <p>We are opposed to the ABC neighbourhood being removed from the Changing Lanes policy area, as their secondary plan would supersede any requirements of the Changing Lanes policy, ensuring their neighbourhood character would be maintained and protected.</p> <p>We also oppose any other neighbourhoods within the TEYCC neighbourhood being removed. It sets a dangerous precedent that small outspoken groups can stand in the way of progress supported by a significantly larger majority of Torontonians, including residents of their own neighbourhood.</p>
<p>7. Consider whether laneway suites may be constructed on lots with row houses; and,</p>	<p>The requirements of the Changing Lanes policy give proper consideration to row houses already. We support Planning's response to this item, and Fire and Building's support of their inclusion.</p>
<p>8. Review any potential conflicts between any existing Site and Area Specific Policies and/or Secondary Plan Policies and the proposed Official Plan Amendment 403.</p>	<p>Allowing secondary plans to supersede the Changing Lanes policy is the correct approach and ensures all neighbourhoods will maintain any specific character already controlled by other policies.</p>

