

December 3, 2020

Planning and Housing Committee
City of Toronto

Re: ***Expanding Housing Options in Neighbourhoods - Garden Suites Review
Item No. 19.4 – December 8, 2020***

I am an urban planning consultant who specializes in small scale, “Missing Middle” type projects. I am a vocal advocate for expanding the range of housing forms across the low-rise residential areas of the city. By expanding housing options in Neighbourhoods, to borrow a phrase from the City’s ongoing initiative, we can creatively unlock the potential of these areas, and allow the many benefits that come with it.

Since the permissions for laneway suites were introduced in Toronto, I have had the pleasure of working on many of them, assisting homeowners seeking minor variances for their projects. Many more times, however, I get calls from people and they are able to develop a laneway suite without any variances at all (and they don’t need me). I think this is excellent, and shows that the by-law permissions are working, and slowly but surely, laneway suites are rolling out across the city (well, where there are lanes).

Garden suite permissions hold even more potential than does the laneway suites program, simply because there are an order of magnitude more lots without lanes than there are with lanes. Where laneway suites were primarily limited to the former City of Toronto, with a few lanes outside of the old city limits, garden suites will find potential homes clear across the city. If we let them. And they will do so in ways that do not fundamentally alter the character of their neighbourhoods. The evolution will be gradual, and generational, and beneficial in ways that we can’t yet predict (and many that we can).

These small-scale residential homes are already permitted in a number of cities across Canada and the USA. Garden suites can help with affordability, create multi-generational housing opportunities, assist seniors to age-in-place in their neighbourhoods, and help stabilize populations in parts of the city that are shrinking (to name but a very few benefits). With other cities having paved the way on garden suites, there is a lot that the City can learn from their experiences, and use that knowledge to inform permissions in Toronto.

I whole heartedly support the staff recommendations to allow the Planning Department to begin consultation on garden suites, and to request the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning to prepare a report with necessary recommendations to permit Garden Suites in the second quarter of 2021.

Kindest regards,
GALBRAITH & ASSOCIATES, INC.



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