



November 20, 2021

Ana Bailao, Chair
Planning and Housing Committee
City of Toronto

Dear Chair Bailao:

Subject: PHC Meeting 29, November 25, 2021
Agenda Item: PHC 29.2 Changing Lanes

I am writing on behalf of the Upper Avenue Community Association. We represent approximately 2700 homes in the Bedford Park–Nortown City of Toronto neighbourhood and do have laneways in our catchment area.

I participated in the public consultation review with City Planning and representatives from Gladki Consulting presenting the results of the laneway monitoring report. As a resident and homeowner, it was very disappointing to hear the extent to which discussion took place with Developers versus a complete lack of discussion with neighbours adjacent to existing laneway projects. During the meeting it was mentioned that C of A letters of objection were reviewed versus speaking directly with people. The City followed up in October with a mailing to neighbours requesting feedback. Mail in response was, not surprisingly, low. A distinctly different process afforded to adjacent neighbours versus Developers. The initial presentation on Laneway Suites to City Council identified key concerns– one being “possible privacy, overlook and shadowing issues.” With implementation underway, that no longer seems to be a City concern.

info@uaca.ca

1500 Avenue Road P.O. Box 1373 Toronto, ON M5M 0A1

We submit the following objections to the proposed amendments to the zoning bylaws.

HEIGHT – one of the biggest impacts on adjacent residents/neighbours is height – specifically the 6M height allowance currently in the zoning bylaws. At 6M, a laneway suite looks directly into adjacent backyards resulting in 100% loss of privacy. The proposal to increase this limit to 6.3M is unacceptable. The additional extension of rooftop equipment from 1.0M to 1.5M will further exacerbate the height issue for adjacent neighbours. We have evidence that laneway suites are currently being built within the 6M height allowance indicating that a further increase in height is not required. Also, height has been a variance noted in many C of A applications. Increasing the height will not change this. Developers will now just go higher– that is, higher than the proposed amendment of 6.3M. The impact on adjacent neighbours is being grossly underestimated and will have a significant impact on adjacent properties as you move north from the City core where overall heights are much lower.

SOFTSCAPING – The Gladki report recommended a reduction in softscaping from 85% to 60%. It would appear the primary objective in the proposed reduction was to alleviate C of A variances. This recommendation seems to be based on the **approval** rate of C of A applications for this zoning element. The thinking being – if it got approved, we should be able to amend the zoning bylaw. To quote the Gladki report –

“We find that variances to this provision are common and are frequently approved and the issue has been highlighted as a challenge to industry experts. Variances typically seek a reduction to 60% soft landscaping in this area.”

This statement in the report would confirm to me that the intent of the report was to examine C of A variances and amend the zoning so that they would be eliminated. It would strike me that what is needed is further training of the C of A Hearing panel members so they understand the impact of their decisions. Softscaping should not be reduced and in doing so does not align to the Climate Change objectives of the City.

The City approach to the Gladki recommendation was to not propose a reduction in softscaping directly, but to do so disingenuously by proposing a “sidewalk” between the main house and the laneway suite that would be excluded from the softscaping calculation. What this suggests is that it is a backhanded way of reducing softscaping

requirements while appearing to not alter the current 85% requirement. In addition, further reductions are being made on the laneway setback requirements.

There does not seem to be consideration for the impact on drainage or overall green space on properties. Bedford Park–Nortown is in a flood–prone area of the City as the Burke Brook runs through our entire area. Adequate softscaping is critical to ensure flooding does not worsen.

City Planning has failed to estimate the impact of any softscaping reduction on the stormwater requirement. The current Clean our Waterways project approved in 2019, using \$2.5 B of Toronto taxpayer monies with an additional \$1.05 B of provincial and federal taxpayer monies, is just catching up with existing stormwater problems and the milder climate change impact that were envisioned at the time. Now that climate change model predictions are more severe, and the amendments are indirectly proposing a 10 to 15% reduction in softscaping, this could literally flood the currently planned project. For some quick math, a 10% reduction in softscaping is roughly equivalent to an additional 63,000 m³/yr. of stormwater and, by comparison, the current \$3.5B project has 3000 m³ storage and treatment capacity. This added cost to taxpayers is unacceptable. A link to the WATERFRONT Toronto website is attached for reference (Ref #1).

HOUSING COST IMPACT: The laneway suite objective now seems to be “bigger is better.” A recent article in The Globe and Mail featured a 20’ wide lot, semi–detached home, at 86 Woburn Avenue. The list price of the home was \$1,295,000 and it sold for \$1,750,000. The real estate agent sold the property on the potential of a laneway suite. As the article stated – “**a tree blocking the way was removed**” and the property was marketed for laneway potential. Reduction in tree canopy and increase in housing costs – is that really what we are trying to do?

The proposed zoning amendments are very disappointing. The City objectives seem to be to change the zoning bylaws to eliminate the need for C of A variances and please Developers. Meanwhile the price of housing continues to rise as evidenced at 86 Woburn Avenue. Other jurisdictions are managing their programs in a balanced approach – increasing housing supply but having respect for adjacent neighbours. An excellent example is the City of Barrie. They have recently reigned in their zoning bylaws due to the public outcry of residents as adjacent neighbours digest the impact on their property.

Developers, not homeowners offering intergenerational living, were to blame and their development projects were the catalyst to the amendments. A similar approach by the City of Toronto would be respectful to the existing neighbourhoods and be an excellent example to follow.

The proposed amendments are irresponsible, out of step with the current climate reality, will have a significant impact on adjacent neighbours, and are unnecessary. We would ask that you consider the following:

1. **Maintain the height at a maximum of 6M.**
2. **Maintain the current calculation for 85% softscaping with no exclusions.**
3. **Softscaping should not be a negotiable variance at C of A.**

Regards,



France Rochette
Chair, Upper Avenue Community Association

cc: Councillor Mike Colle
UACA Members
John Tory, Mayor City of Toronto
MPP Robin Martin, Eglinton Lawrence
MP Marco Mendicino, Minister of Public Safety
Hon. Steven Guilbeault, Minister of the Environment, Canada
G. Kettel, C. MacDonald FONTRA

Reference 1 –

<https://waterfrontoronto.ca/nbe/portal/waterfront/Home/waterfronthome/our-vision/environment%20and%20sustainability/green+infrastructure>