

HARBORD VILLAGE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

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To: Planning and Housing Committee
Re: PH 29.2 Changing Lanes Report
Date: Nov. 22, 2021.

Harbord Village is a Victorian subdivision constructed, for the most part, in 1885. Our community is threaded with laneways, except for a single residential block. We are a majority row housing of modest houses sitting on small lots.

We urge this committee to amend this report by removing the change in zoning to permit a reduction in soft landscaping.

This last week, our Board unanimously adopted a resolution calling for HVRA, in our advocacy and the actions we take, to consider climate impacts first. While we welcome the inclusion of a section on Climate Impacts in this Planning report, we are little comforted by what seems contradictory: the report recommends reducing soft landscaping, while City Planning will “specifically work to mitigate impacts on the City’s soft landscaping, water permeable areas and tree canopy”. You cannot deduct and mitigate at the same time.

By our calculations, confirmed by Planning, the addition of a hard walkway could reduce soft landscaping in the shared rear yard of a property 6 m. in width, from 85% to 58%. This does not promote the retention, let alone growth of the single most effective source of carbon capture: trees. This goes well beyond an amenity for residents of both dwellings. Trees are a significant contributor to reducing the City’s emissions as a whole and yield a lifetime benefit in GHG reduction.

In the last ten years, Harbord Village has lost 30% of our trees, 1,371 in total, mostly to construction and aging—to the point where Council has requested Forestry bring forward a report on our neighbourhood, along with a handful of others, for emergency remediation. Our most recent tree inventory shows our canopy cover at 21.9%, well short of the City’s 40% target. This has heat island, stormwater management, and climate impacts we can ill afford.

Second, this Planning report argues the zoning bylaw be relaxed because in the 26% of applications where a variance has been sought, this soft landscaping request has been

frequently approved. This effectively makes C of A the arbiter of City zoning rules because its decisions do not support the rules the City has passed. Further, it is not clear in the report that the lack of a hard surfaced walkway in addition to the patio space discourages laneway suites. It is surely a minor add-on when other variances are sought.

Finally, given our focus on the Climate Emergency and our concerns about tree loss, we would appreciate seeing the detailed review from City Forestry extended to impacts of laneway housing on the canopy, including loss of leaf area, reduction in hard surfaces, failure to replace trees injured or lost. This review should consider all trees, not just by-law protected trees.

We urge you to refuse this change.

With thanks,

Sue Dexter,
Board,
Harbord Village Residents' Association.