



Thompson Orchard Community Association

Planning and Housing Committee (phc@toronto.ca)

Re: PH 29.2 Changing Lanes – Laneway Suites – Nov 25, 2021

The Thompson Orchard Community Association Inc. (“TOCA”) represents just over 400 households in the area between Mimico Creek on the west, Bloor Street on the north and Royal York Road to the east. A portion of the area TOCA represents lies within the flood zone of Mimico Creek. Our residents have experienced catastrophic flooding.

We have considered the 13 proposed changes to the rules implemented two years ago regarding laneway suites. The first point we wish to make is that the Notice of Meeting was not accompanied by the proposed zoning changes so the Notice is deficient. Official Plan section 5.5.1 emphasizes the importance of a fair, open and accessible public process for amending by-laws and section 5.5.1 c) iv stipulates that such amendments should be available for review at least 10 days prior to the statutory public meeting. This has not been done. As a result, residents’ groups are not being given sufficient time to respond to the proposed changes. This is not appropriate and it is unnecessary. The matter should be adjourned for at least one month to allow proper notice. Preferably the matter should be adjourned for longer than that to allow for consultation with residents’ groups, as it appears their views have been largely ignored in the drafting of the proposed changes (please see the comments under Gladki Report below).

If you choose not to adjourn this matter to allow the required notice period, for the reasons set out below, TOCA believes the proposed amendments should not be approved in their present form. The proposed amendments we are most concerned with, and the only ones we can deal with in the limited time we have had to review the proposed changes, are:

- (i) the proposed amendment increasing the maximum permitted height of a laneway suite from 6.0 metres to 6.3 metres; and
- (ii) the proposed amendments that reduce the amount of softscaping required.

Gladki Report

Prior to discussing TOCA’s specific objections, TOCA wishes to make two general comments about the Gladki Report. First, many of the recommendations made are not explained. It appears that all the authors of the report have done is (i) look at what the most common request for variances were, and (ii) talk to six industry professionals. The authors did not speak to residents’ groups and did very little – if anything – to determine the effect of their changes on neighbouring properties or the character of the neighbourhoods in which laneway suites will be built.

From reading the report it is clear that much of the reasoning behind the recommendations is simply based on the fact that a very, very small percentage of laneway suite applications sought a specific change. For instance, the report recommends that the height of laneway suites be increased from 6.0 metres to 6.75 metres based on 1 (one!) application for a variance. When you look at the statistics cited in the Gladki report regarding building permit applications for laneway suites and the number of applications for variances, a strong case can be made that no zoning amendments are necessary. The vast majority of laneway suites did not require a variance so why is it necessary to change the zoning?

The second comment TOCA wishes to make comes from the preceding paragraph. The only people that appear to want these zoning changes are industry professionals. While their views are important, their



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views alone should not determine zoning changes, particularly when there is very little evidence that the zoning changes are required.

Height

On page 29 of the Gladki Report it says:

"A total of 10 applications sought variances to the height provisions of the zoning By-law. A total of 7 of the 10 applications were approved. Six of the 7 variances sought relief from the 4.0m height requirement and all proposed building heights less than 6m. The single variance to the 6.0m height requirement identified in our data sought a total laneway suite height of 6.96 m."

Thus, in the 2 years since laneway suites have been permitted, there has been only 1 (one) request for a height increase. Accordingly, there appears to be absolutely no reason to amend the bylaw to increase the height permitted to 6.3 metres, particularly when the Gladki report does not contain any discussion on the effect of such an increase on neighbouring properties or shadowing in the adjacent laneway. Hundreds of laneway suites have been successfully built without any need for a height increase.

TOCA believes that the proposed amendment increasing the maximum permitted height of a suite from 6.0 metres to 6.3 metres should be deleted/removed. It is clear from the Gladki report that there is no justification for it.

Soft Landscaping

Section 5 of the proposed amendments propose several changes to soft landscaping requirements for laneway suites, all of which have the effect of reducing the soft landscaping. Other residents' organizations have written to object to some of the inexplicable aspects of these proposed changes and TOCA supports their analysis. More particularly, it is not clear why a pedestrian walkway has to be as large as 1.5 metres or why the walkway is not part of the 15% hardscaping allocation for the rear yard. However, the main objection that TOCA has to these changes is that there has been no analysis at all on the effect of the proposed changes on stormwater management, tree canopy, heat islands, climate change or the appearance of the laneway itself. Perhaps some of the proposed changes can be justified once an analysis of their effect has been done but the changes should not be implemented before such an analysis is done. On this issue, the Gladki Report and the proposed changes both seem to ignore the portions of the Official Plan and the Provincial Policy framework that stress the importance of sustainable development.

Sincerely,

Ingrid van Weert

Director
Thompson Orchard Community Association Inc.

cc. Councillor Grimes
Mary Campbell, Policy Advisor to Councillor Grimes
Matt Grey, Chair of TOCA



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Andrew Watson, Chair of Development C'ee, TOCA
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