



School of Cities
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

January 11, 2022

Councillor Ana Bailão
Chair, Planning and Housing Committee
10th floor, West Tower, City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Re: City of Toronto Planning and Housing Committee Agenda Item PH 30.2

Dear Councillor Bailão and committee members:

On behalf of the University of Toronto's School of Cities, I am writing to express our strong and enthusiastic support for your recent report, *Expanding Housing Options in Neighbourhoods – Garden Suites*. The thoughtful analysis and consultation process have resulted in a robust Official Plan Amendment (554) and Zoning By-law Amendment that the City should adopt.

There is now a significant amount of evidence about the economics and impacts of accessory dwelling units for households and communities – due in part to the construction in California of 23,000 such units in the past three years (of which the majority are garden suites). (Please see the set of studies I have conducted over the last decade at www.aducalifornia.org/research.) Research has established the following:

Accessory dwelling units tend to be “affordable by design”: Shared infrastructure and land mean that they cost less to build, and data reveals that homeowners tend to rent them for below market rates. The extension of the City's Affordable Laneway Suites Program to garden suites will help provide additional affordability.

Motivating homeowners to build is the desire for more flexible housing: Surveys show that most homeowners build garden suites to provide flexible options to fit life circumstances,

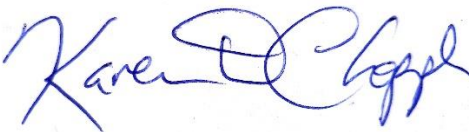
whether they need to house a family member or a caregiver, generate a rental income stream, or arrange office space for remote work. Very few dedicate their unit solely to short-term rentals.

Reducing regulatory barriers such as minimum lot size, height, setback, and parking regulations is key to spurring more construction: Cities that eliminate the most barriers tend to see the most new units built, and removing minimum lot sizes is particularly important to spur building by low-income homeowners. Since garden suite dwellers are less likely to own a car, few communities have experienced parking shortages.

The construction of accessory dwelling units generates multiple economic benefits for communities: In cities that have eliminated regulatory barriers, new startups have proliferated, often innovating low-cost alternatives such as modular construction. Small-scale housing construction favours small local businesses. If materials and labour are purchased locally, each new unit has a multiplier effect of 1.8: for each \$100,000 spent on construction, the local economy sees additional expenditures of \$80,000.

Unfortunately I am not able to attend your January 12 meeting to make a deputation in person. But please know that at the School of Cities, we stand ready to assist in the implementation of *Expanding Housing Options in Neighbourhoods*, including monitoring and evaluation of the program as you roll it out.

Sincerely,



Karen Chapple
Director, School of Cities and Professor, Geography & Planning