



January 11, 2022

The Planning and Housing Committee  
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Toronto, ON. M5H 2N2

Attn. Nancy Martins  
Email: [phc@toronto.ca](mailto:phc@toronto.ca)

Dear Deputy Mayor Ana Bailao, Chair and Members of the Planning and Housing Committee

**RE: Item PH30.2 Garden Suites**

Thank you for the opportunity to offer some suggestions about the Garden Suites proposed program:

**Be Clear about Lots Suitable for Garden Suites and Those that are not.**

The backgrounder staff report indicates that there is a good deal of enthusiasm about the possibility of being able to build garden suites on residential lots. No doubt architects and builders see this as a new line of work. Expectations are very high. The backgrounder provides some drawings showing garden suites on various sized lots and various types of lots. The backgrounder also indicates that not all lots are suitable for a garden suite based on the lot analysis done by staff. Going forward staff needs to indicate the types of lots that are not suitable and give examples. This could be included in publications about garden suites and well as information that is provided as well as briefings to staff, Committee of Adjustment staff where garden suites are not suitable. This may help keep enthusiasm for the concept on a more realistic level.

**Show Drawings with Rear Yard Parking – Older Neighbourhood Style**

With respect to the drawings shown in the backgrounder, most are on conventional lots with principal residence in the front and the garden suite in back. All show garages for cars as part of the house. In the older parts of the city parking was not normally part of the house. It is typically in the rear, adjacent to a laneway, or beside the house, or more recently in the front yard. The West Bend High Park area has many pie-shaped and other unusually shaped lots, normally with parking in the rear. It would be useful to include one or two of these in a set of drawings.

**Develop a Garden Suite Booklet**

A booklet dealing with garden suites should be developed. The web site is incomplete on detail and the by law if very technical. The guide would be in plain language with illustrations. It would help modulate expectations and if we are all on the same page, it may help mitigate conflict further down the road and may even avoid acrimonious hearings before the Committee of Adjustment or the LPAT or its equivalent.



### **Planning Staff Needs to Monitor the Program Start Up**

To get the program off with a minimal amount of emotional and financial damage to all involved, planning staff, who created this program, should monitor the first fifteen or so of the applications for garden suite building permits to see if they conform to what the planners working on the project have in mind. This may save developers, residents groups and yes, Councillors, endless hours of wrangling.

### **Establish a Mechanism for an Independent Tree Assessment**

Where a mature tree is involved, an independent arborist should be retained by the city, at the applicant's expense, as arborists hired by development proponents, for some reason, seem to see a lot of dead trees on prospective development sites. More attention should be paid to smaller trees that are on the site that wish to be big trees some day. Often smaller trees are ignored in the review process and are destroyed, cutting off a source of future mature urban tree canopy.

### **Develop a Garden and Laneway Suite Website**

A great deal more confidence in the garden and laneway suite program could be created among the public, if there was a database of what is being approved. That would help reduce speculation about what is going on and provide a basis for an in-program correction if problems are identified early by the city. Early adopters of any program usually suffer, no plan can be perfect, and there should be a structured way to identify problems and fix them quickly.

### **Develop a Process for a Two-Sided Dialogue on the Development of New Programs**

Over the course of the public consultation for this program, numerous queries about garden suites have been made, and suggestions offered by members of the public, in meetings and in writing. Yet, in reading the final report, it is not obvious that many of the queries or suggestions have been considered. It would be very helpful if the planning side of the dialogue could actually provide some of their thinking on the issue raised and provide a response as to why they did or did not accommodate the request. If planners are not comfortable in this role, then a public consultation professional should be retained to guide the process, so that there is complete information exchange.

### **Share the Research that went into the Program Development**

The final report indicates that data was collected about Garden Suite programs in numerous other Canadian and US municipalities. This information should be shared during the study and placed on a website. This information was gathered with our tax dollars. Also, numerous public comments and surveys are mentioned in the final report. These also should be published on a website and at meetings illustrating content and frequency. A survey research professional may coordinate this to preserve objectivity and avoidance of bias.

Sincerely,

Ken Sharratt, Treasurer