



**To:** City of Toronto Planning and Housing Committee  
**From:** ABC Residents Association

February 27, 2023

**Re: PH2.3 - Zoning By-law Amendment to Permit Laneway Suites in Yorkville - Final Report**

The ABC Residents Association (“ABCRA”) is a volunteer organization committed to enhancing the quality of life in our neighbourhood through active participation in municipal issues. Originally established in 1957, we serve the residents, including condo and apartment residents, living in Toronto’s Yorkville / North Midtown community between Yonge Street west to Avenue Road and Bloor Street north to the CPR tracks.

ABCRA has a specific focus to ensure planning decisions in our community follow approved City Planning Policy and Guidelines, specifically as it relates to the completion of a Secondary Plan for Bloor-Yorkville / North Midtown. We are concerned with any planning steps that are taken in the absence of a Secondary Plan – a tool to ensure that thoughtful and prudent decisions can be made in the interests of Toronto residents.

**We oppose the recommendation of planning staff that City Council reverse its decision that laneway policies should be examined during the Secondary Plan / SASP.**

This very principle is at issue and we are counting on the Planning and Housing Committee to exercise its judgment and expertise to halt the reactive nature and lack of engagement that continues to persist in City Planning. City Council has been thoughtful and clear on the matter. Conversely, City Planning has consistently for the last 6+ years, failed to fulfil its responsibilities and respond to the directives of City Council.

A summary timeline is outlined here:

- **October 13, 2016:** Toronto and East York Community Council adopted a motion directing the Director, Community Planning, Toronto and East York District to report to Toronto and East York Community Council in the first quarter of 2017 on the work plan and schedule for the preparation of the Secondary Plan for Bloor-Yorkville / North Midtown. This plan has apparently been “under development” **since 2017** with continuous delays by the City and there is no progress, let alone completion, of the Secondary Plan that was directed to be completed by City Council

- **July 2019:** when Laneway Suites were expanded City-wide, City Council adopted the following two relevant items:
  - i. City Council amended the draft Zoning By-law to exempt Laneway Suites in the Asquith-Collier, Ramsden Park and Yorkville neighbourhood.
  - ii. City Council also requested the City Planner and Executive Director, City Planning to consider permitting laneway suites within the Asquith- Collier, Ramsden Park, and Yorkville neighbourhoods ***as part of the ongoing review of Site and Area Specific Policy 211.***

**City Council agreed that laneway policies should be examined during the Secondary Plan/SASP 211 review for our area, but city staff is now recommending that City Council reverse that decision.**

ABCRA has not been opposed to Laneway Suites in principle but has advocated for Laneway Suites by-law standards and that any rezoning be done in conjunction with the review of “Site and Area Specific Policy 211”, aka The Secondary Plan review. **City Council agreed.**

The issues we have raised pose real concerns:

- ✘ **Laneway suites** as they have so far been implemented in Toronto have often **not addressed the need for affordable, accessible housing.**
- ✘ City approach is to change zoning with **“one size fit’s all” standards** applied to all neighbourhood lots across the City. **Neighbourhood character and context have not been considered** and the standards approved **will cause loss of privacy and green space in neighbourhoods with small lots.**
- ✘ There is **lack of conformity with the existing Secondary Area/Specific Plan 211**, particularly with respect to neighbourhood character.
- ✘ There is no outright prohibition of **laneway suites behind row houses where emergency access is a concern.**
- ✘ **Gross floor area of the Laneway Suite is not included in the calculation of the maximum density** permitted on a lot.
- ✘ ‘As-of-right’ provisions mean **suites that meet the minimum by-law standards can be built with no neighbour consultation affected by the construction and no right of appeal** with respect to impacts such as loss of privacy, access to sky view and shadows.
- ✘ As a result of removing all parking requirements for lots with an ancillary suite, there will be **increased pressure to provide front yard parking pads in our area.**
- ✘ There are concerns that the **reduced requirements for soft landscaping and the weak tree protection** policies will further reduce the already declining tree canopy.

- ✘ There are **implications of variances to the by-law** that would result in suites larger than the by-law permits. We note that about 60-70% of laneway suite applications request variances to the by-law, with 65% being approved.<sup>1</sup>

Our concerns are straightforward. We see the value of planning policy and execution, so does City Council. Shockingly, the City Planning department has sidestepped its responsibility to follow through on its a Secondary Plan for Bloor-Yorkville / North Midtown. There is no good reason for this, and it is a failure in accountability.

Therefore, we ask that the Housing and Planning Committee reject City Planning' recommendation that City Council reverse its decision that laneway housing should be examined during the Secondary Plan / SASP. Further, we urge that steps be taken to require City Planning to complete the Secondary Plan for Bloor-Yorkville / North Midtown originally directed to be completed in October 2016.

Sincerely,

The ABCRA Board of Directors

[abc@abcra.ca](mailto:abc@abcra.ca)

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<sup>1</sup>[9739-CityPlanningLanewaySuitesOct2021.pdf \(toronto.ca\)](#)