



October 19, 2025

## **Kensington Orphan Lanes**

Dear Toronto and East York Community Council members:

### **SUMMARY:**

Kensington Market is an important tourist attraction as well as the centre of a thriving multi-ethnic community and one of the most affordable parts of Ward 11. Recent planning changes are accelerating intensification of this area.

Kensington Market is crossed by a network of small lanes. Some neighbourhood lanes are owned and maintained by the City of Toronto. Unfortunately, a high concentration of lanes that provide essential access to homes and businesses are registered in the name of individuals who died in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This includes Cyril Lane, the emergency fire exit for Kensington Community School, and Ellen Lane, the only vehicular access to a Toronto Community Seniors Housing building.

These orphan lanes are broken, unlit and filthy. They are infested with rats and trash. Their visible neglect attracts illegal activities that are profoundly disruptive for the neighbourhood. Although they are used by heavy vehicles, the lanes' structural integrity is unknown. Municipal Licensing and Standards can do nothing in the absence of a current owner.

There are multiple indicators that these lanes were always intended to be part of the city's road network. The lanes have never been assessed for taxes, and so cannot be removed from limbo by a tax sale. Some bear names marked by official city street signs. Some contain public infrastructure, such as catch basins. Community members are pleading for the city to take responsibility for these orphan lanes, or to ensure that someone else does.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Toronto East York Community Council request the General Manager, Transportation Services, to investigate and to report back to this committee in Q2 2026 with an appropriate action plan, starting with how to provide street lighting and trash removal to the orphan lanes in Kensington Market that serve public facilities.

*D. Saxe*