



June 8, 2017

Toronto and East York Community Council
2nd floor, West Tower, City Hall
100 Queen St. W.
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2
Sent by email: teycc@toronto.ca

Dear Toronto and East York Community Council Members

Subject: TE25.108 - Bringing Laneway Suites to the Toronto and East York District

The ABC Residents Association 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.

We are writing to express our concern about agenda item TE25.108 regarding Laneway Suites in the following broad areas:

1. The Role of City Planning

We are concerned that the recommendations of Councillor Ana Bailão and Councillor Mary-Margaret McMahon before TEY Community Council will limit City Planning to a reactive, responsive position restricted to recommending changes required for implementation of the Lanescape, Evergreen report. While the report is thought provoking, it is not sufficient. City Planning should conduct its own study and report on whether the concept of laneway housing makes sense as an option for Toronto, identify where in the city it would make sense as an appropriate form of intensification and where it would not, and what the requirements and specifications should be.

Toronto is Canada's largest, most developed and complex city. It has major high-rise areas, low rise residential areas, and a variety of mixes of these combined with commercial, retail, and public facilities. Other cities in the report are not truly comparable to the size and density that exists in Toronto. Before setting Planning Policy that affects large, diverse areas of the City, Planning staff experts should consider and recommend policy direction. Laneway housing may have



positive potential under certain circumstances, but it also has the potential to not deliver on hoped for benefits.

We request: City Planning be free to conduct its own investigation and report on laneway housing, both in general and in specifics.

2. **Toronto and East York or City-wide.** The report references city-wide application, but the recommendations are restricted to Toronto and East York. Many areas in Toronto are already intensively developed and have small lots and narrow laneways unsuitable for development while other areas outside the Toronto and East York areas may have less intensive development and larger lots. Different areas may also provide different opportunity for affordability.

We request: Laneway housing development should be considered in the context of its impact and application across the City of Toronto as a whole.

3. **Recognition of diverse, unique neighbourhoods.** ABCRA takes planning and the livability of our community seriously. *The Bloor-Yorkville/North Midtown: Planning Framework & Implementation Strategy*, a joint initiative of the Yorkville BIA, ABCRA, the Yonge Bloor Business Association and the Greater Yorkville Residents Association was developed to ensure the needs of our community were professionally documented in a specific framework to guide future growth. We hope Area-specific policies contained within the framework will help ensure inevitable growth does not fundamentally alter the unique characteristics of our neighbourhood that make it a special place to live, work, visit, shop, and play.

We request: All diverse unique neighbourhoods throughout Toronto be considered when initiating new planning policy that will impact them.

4. **Report specifics:** We are not commenting on the many details in the report at this time. Some comments and suggestions seem helpful. Some minimize or mask the likely impact for our area. To go further at this time would be presumptive of the outcome related to issues identified above. But some examples of concern are:

- a. Parking is a major concern. Many residents, having no other alternative, rely on street parking. Elimination of existing parking on properties themselves, as contemplated in the report, will exacerbate an already very difficult situation.

- b. Vancouver, which does not have the density of Toronto but is the closest of those listed, has a minimum lot width of 33 feet requirements for laneway houses. Only one story is permitted in Vancouver “as of right”. Taller structures are discretionary. These reasonable requirements would likely eliminate many lots in the core of Toronto from eligibility for laneway housing.
- c. The proposed permitted height of two stories would present a proportion and scale issue and raise overlook concerns for adjacent narrow lots and across the laneway on most narrow laneways.

We request: Broad consultations, led by city planning staff, occur in communities across Toronto with a balanced look at the issue of laneway housing as a form of intensification in terms of its merits relative to the specific community and relationship. Plus staff review of learning from Vancouver (or any other city they identify that has a) a complex, very large, urban environment similar to Toronto and b) sufficient length of experience to be of value) with respect to their experience with laneway housing.

We also request that this report address to what extent laneway housing could contribute to the issue of increasing affordable housing in Toronto.

ABCRA understands growth is inevitable and can contribute to the vitality of both our community and Toronto. We also are concerned about the lack of affordable housing in the City. We write with a concern this growth occurs from a balanced perspective, in a manner that recognizes and sustains Toronto’s diverse and unique communities, and promotes a quality of life for all residents.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.

John Caliendo & Ian Carmichael
Co-Presidents, ABC Residents Association

Cc: Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam
Chief Planner & Executive Director Jennifer Keesmaat

