Laneway Housing: Proposed Expansion and Amendments to the Program

Council Presentation
Public Hearing

June 11, 2013
Purpose

- Expand program to equalize opportunity across all RS Districts

- Amend laneway housing (LWH) regulations to create livable units that are a good fit in single family neighbourhoods
Key Objectives

- Increase the supply of rental housing across the city
- Provide more housing options in low density residential neighbourhoods
- Provide additional housing while maintaining streetscape and neighbourhood character and add vibrancy to lane
- Promote green site and building
Background

2009
• Council adopts LWH regulations & guidelines

2010
• Council receives monitoring report and directs review of options to improve impacts on neighbours, livability and length of the permitting process

2011
• 3 Year Action Plan of Housing and Homelessness Strategy calls for expanding LWH to other zones

2012
• Bold Ideas Toward an Affordable City calls for expanding program to other single family zones
Some LWH Facts

• Average unit size is 590 sf; approximately 60% have 1 bedroom

• Average rents compare favourably with rents for market rental housing

• Most occupants are singles and couples between the ages of 20 and 49

• Occupants are 2/3 tenants and 1/3 property owner or family member

• Like living in new, detached dwelling with access to outdoor space, privacy, location; would like more space for storage, parking space
Key Concerns Addressed By Regulatory Amendments

- Impact of height and massing on neighbouring properties
- Provision of parking and use of enclosed parking space
- Livability
- Permitting process
Consultation

- Two workshops with LWH builders and designers held November 2012 and January 2013:
  - Support proposed amendments and expansion

- Two information open houses held March 2013:
  - Over 350 attended
  - Most support proposed amendments and expansion
Height and Massing Concerns

- 94% of LWH are 1.5 storey

- Rate of neighbourhood complaints decreasing yet continue to focus on impacts of the upper storey:
  - Perceived height and massing
  - Loss of privacy and increased overlook
  - Shadowing
Proposed Changes to Siting

• Encourage one storey LWH by changes to siting:
  ▪ Allow extension into rear yard of up to 6 feet for 1 storey (same height as garage)
  ▪ No extension for 1.5 storey

• Maintain required minimum separation of 16 feet from main house

• Site permeability requirements unchanged
Parking Concerns

- Main areas of concern:
  - One space is inadequate for a property with 3 dwelling units
  - Could contribute to on-street parking congestion
  - Enclosed garage being used as living space
Proposed Changes to Parking

- Require 1 external parking space for all LWH, permeable materials
- Enclosed parking permitted, but no ‘additional’ floor area for parking
Livability Concerns

- Predominance of 1.5 storey LWH results in less accessibility for those with mobility challenges
- Average size of LWH constant but number of 2 bedrooms increasing; adequacy of common areas
- Not enough living and storage space
Proposed Changes to Size

- Allow some of the floor area previously used for enclosed parking to be used for living space:
  - On a 33 x 122 lot allow 644 sf of living space
  - On larger lots allow maximum 900 sf

- Allow an additional 40 sf for storage space
Permit Review Process Concerns

- Length of process - has improved since fall 2012
- Varying interpretation of regulations and guidelines
Proposed Changes to Review Process

• 1 storey LWH permitted through an outright review process

• 1.5 storey continues with current review process
Thank you