**Coach Houses**

*Guiding Principles and Draft Recommendations Paper*

Comments from the Civic Hospital Neighbourhood Association (CHNA)

The Civic Hospital Neighbourhood Association (CHNA) is pleased to have the opportunity to comment on the guiding principles and recommendations related to Coach Houses as this initiative has the potential to have a significant impact on our neighbourhood.

**General Comments:**

***Infill 2 Guidelines***

CHNA understands that Coach Houses would not have to follow Infill 2 Guidelines. If this is the case, the rationale around this proposed approach should be better explained to residents.

In CHNA’s opinion, there needs to be a linkage between Infill 2 and Coach Houses as the implications for residents and communities around both sets of regulations should be considered together.

***Committee of Adjustment***

As it appears that the Committee of Adjustment (CoA) has the power to vary a zoning rule (as per the permission afforded the CoA by the province). It is imperative that the principles and recommendations be clear and specific so the Committee of Adjustment has appropriate guidance as to zoning variances that can and should be permitted.

To this end, the City must not only specify what the Coach House initiative is designed to achieve but also specify variances that should be closely examined or circumstances when Coach Houses are not appropriate to ensure that the Committee of Adjustment is better positioned to assess any request for against these criteria.

***Privacy, Shadowing and Sunlight Penetration***

The eastern boundary of the Civic Hospital neighbourhood has been and will be subject to significant impact from development at the Preston-Carling district. We also anticipate development along Carling Avenue at the southern boundary of our neighbourhood. Therefore, our neighbourhood is cognisant of the potentially negative impacts of inappropriate Coach Houses that are overly tall, too close to adjoining properties or require destruction of a canopy tree to be built.

***Danger of Overcrowding***

Downtown neighbourhoods require special consideration.

For example, one of our CHNA residents lives in a house that abuts the backyards of 7 neighbours. Under the proposed recommendations, six of these 7 residences could accommodate Coach Houses. Has the city looked at these kinds of situations, in particular in downtown districts such as the Civic Hospital neighbourhood?

**Proximity to the Primary Residence**

CHNA can envision situations where the Coach Houses are placed closer to a neighbour’s home than the primary residence with which the Coach House is supposed to be associated.

For example, a Coach House could be situated at the rear of a back yard, closer to the main house of an adjoining property. Perhaps there should be specific regulations around Coach House placement so that they are always in closer proximity to the primary residence than the primary residences of adjoining properties.

**Tenant or Homeowner?**

CHNA would like some clarity as to the legal arrangements envisioned between the resident of the Coach House and the primary residence. Is the Coach House resident a tenant? Will there be any circumstances where Coach Houses can be sold? Has the city legal advisor provided guidance with respect to this question?

**Principles:**

In general, CHNA agrees with the Principles. However, we caution the city that terminology such as “sufficient”, “no undue adverse impact”, “will integrate”, “compatibility”, “fabric of the community” and “not negatively impact the streetscape character” are very subjective terms and can be defined very differently depending on the viewpoint of the beholder. For example, what a Coach House builder considers a negative impact on the streetscape character might be very different from the perspective of his or her neighbours. Therefore, it is important that the city clearly defines or describes the intention of this terminology.

**Principle 1**

CHNA questions whether a resident who might be surrounded by numerous Coach Houses will consider this type of intensification as “gentle”. Indeed, this type of intensification could, in some circumstances, be very intrusive. Therefore, the city should define what it means by gentle from the point of view of the residents of the city.

**Draft Recommendations**

**Detached Garages**

Within the Civic Hospital neighbourhood, there are very large garages with a footprint almost as large as or perhaps larger than the primary 2-storey residences. Do the recommendations allow for these garages to be converted to Coach Houses?

**Parking, Yards and Driveways**

CHNA would like more specifics as to how the city will police some of the proposed regulations. For example, how will the city ensure that landscaped areas will not be paved over to create parking for a Coach House? How will the city ensure that a homeowner does not pave part of his or her property in advance of getting permission to build a Coach House?

**Urban Canopy**

CHNA would like more specifics on how the city is intending to protect the urban canopy from damage as a result of the construction of Coach Houses. Many Civic Hospital homeowners have large trees at the margins of their properties and the health of these trees could be compromised by construction of Coach Houses adjacent to their properties. Has the city considered regulations to protect the urban canopy from unintended damage?

CHNA looks forward to responses to our concerns and questions.

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