



Re: **TE34.13** 520 Richmond Street West Zoning Amendment Application | **TEYCC 4 July 2018**

To the Chair and Members of the Toronto and East York Community Council:

The Garment District Neighbourhood Association (GDNA) is a federal not-for-profit corporation with a mandate to build and promote an attractive, inclusive, safe and healthy community for those residents who live in the area bounded by Spadina and Bathurst, Queen and King. Within this catchment we proudly claim and vigorously defend two cherished gems: Saint Andrew's Playground and Rush Lane (including its intersecting laneways).

Rush Lane (also referred to as Graffiti Alley) is a top Toronto tourist attraction, winning Tourism Toronto's 2017 Presidents' Award that recognizes organizations and individuals outside the tourism sector contributing to the tourist and meeting industry. At any time of the year and in any weather, visitors (and, at this time of year especially, school groups) flood the laneways, admiring and photographing the creations of Toronto's artistic community.

The GDNA is therefore encouraged that both the City and the developers of 520 Richmond West are sensitive to this "gem" of ours, specifically with respect to:

- Widening of both Rush Lane and the north-south (as yet un-named) lane to the west of the development site
- Additional setback above the podium along this same north-south lane
- A proposal that this north-south lane be pedestrianized and animated
- Approval for access to service vehicles off Augusta Avenue rather than either of the lanes
- The intention of the developer to create graffiti-friendly walls on the north and west sides of the building

All these plans and proposals bode well for Rush Lane and its intersecting laneways ... in 2021 or 2022 or whenever construction is complete. But what is their fate until then?

The GDNA would suggest that as much attention should be paid to the "during construction" phase as has been paid to the "post construction" vision. Such consideration might well be part of the Site Planning Approval process but residents' associations have traditionally been locked out of such discussions***. So the GDNA is submitting some suggestions here and now in the expectation that they will be implemented or at least considered at the appropriate time:

- There should be absolutely no construction activity in either the “no name” north-south or the Rush Lane east-west laneway adjacent to the site. The bike lane on Richmond inhibits construction access from that direction but Augusta Avenue, if parking were no longer permitted along its western curbside, would be ideal for such activity.
- Graffiti-friendly hoarding needs to be placed along the north and west property lines of the development site. Artists should be invited to do their magic to restore what artwork has been destroyed during demolition of the existing building.
- Measures to protect pedestrians walking along the laneways from debris and dust must be implemented and in such a way as to not impede their enjoyment of the alley experience.
- Any damage to laneway surfaces consequent to construction activity needs repair immediately to ensure the safety of pedestrians using those laneways.
- Measures to protect artwork on other buildings must also be implemented.

The sole consideration in these suggestions is the maintenance of the attraction we all know as Graffiti Alley. It is a valuable asset to our neighbourhood and to the City at large. It has taken years of artistic endeavour and Rick Mercer rants to raise its profile to the stature it enjoys today. No one can predict what damage two or three years of intrusive construction activity might wreak on our “gem”.

Valerie Eggertson

Valerie Eggertson, Secretary
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*** In the opinion of the GDNA, neighbourhood input into a development Site Plan would be of enormous value. Participation in the Construction Management phase is important but often too late for protection of neighbourhood assets.

c.c.
Spencer Sutherland, Queen Street West BIA
Michelle Senayah, Laneway Project
Johanne Belanger, Tourism Toronto
Uber5000, graffiti artist
Stu Pearce, graffiti artist
Joe Cressy, City Councillor Ward 20