

Regina Missing Laneway Housing Opportunity

Adding a new small housing unit detached from the main home is actually a viable means of increasing density while minimizing disruption to established communities. This is a form of [Gentle Density](#) which defines the sweet spot between low-and high-density development.

While some cities are considering allowing three or four homes to be built on existing lots or encouraging more multi-unit development to achieve higher density, it has often been met with significant local citizen pushback, sometimes referred to as NIMBYism. Laneway homes provide a unique opportunity to bring gentle density into the existing neighborhood, with less of the perceived negative consequences. This form of gentle density brings the benefits of smarter growth, including easy access to amenities, safer streets and a variety of housing types, to established communities.

A **Lane Way Home** is a form of a detached secondary suite that has gained popularity in cities across North America. Typically, lane way homes are built on pre-existing lots, usually in the backyard and opens onto the back lane. Sometimes they are built where the garage would normally appear or over top of the garage. Most laneway homes are small.

Laneway homes is almost non-existent in Regina, but could provide many benefits to the homeowners like:

1. **Provide Housing for Extended Family** - Most homeowners build a laneway home to provide affordable yet separate housing for their young adult children starting out in life or starting their own families. They are also ideal for elderly parents who want to live independently and defer the high cost of nursing homes as long as possible yet be close enough to family for help.
2. **Create Extra Income** - Some homeowners use their laneway home to generate income from renters to help with their mortgage or to create retirement income.
3. **Allow Aging-In-Place** - Laneway homes let kids who grew up in a neighbourhood, stay there. And when empty nesters are ready to downsize but want to stay in the neighbourhood they love – they can just move into the laneway and rent the main house (or let their kids move into it), and even trade rent reductions for services (e.g yardwork, vacation-watch, chauffeuring).
4. **Boost Property Value** - A property's resale value can increase well above the cost of building the lane way home.



There are significant community benefits as well:

1. **Add Affordable Rental Housing** - Laneway homes provide reasonably priced rentals in single-family neighbourhoods closer to amenities, jobs, and an urban lifestyle.
2. **Makes Laneways Safer** - With more 'eyes' on the lane, laneway homes help to make alleyways safer places.
3. **Retain Neighbourhood Character**- Built in the backyard and designed to look like a small version of the main house, laneway homes don't affect the curb appeal and character of older single-family neighbourhoods with their lovely tree-lined streets and turn-of-the-century homes.
4. **More Energy Efficient** - Small homes, by virtue of their size, use less resources and are nearly as energy efficient as condos. Add in green-build features, energy efficient appliances and heating systems, and even solar panels, and they are ultra-green.
5. **Add Density to Accommodate Regional Growth** – More people will move to Regina over the next 30 years. Laneway homes are a human-friendly way the city is gently increasing the density of single-family neighbourhoods to provide housing.

Most municipalities have taken a slow and cautious approach to lane way housing; however the City of Toronto recently took a courageous step forward by making laneway homes a right in all residential zones. Adding a [Development Charge Deferral Program](#) to laneway suites and creating an [Affordable Laneway Suites](#) program.



The City of Regina does have a [Laneway and Garden Suite Pilot Project Overlay Zone](#) and [Laneway Housing Pilot Direct Control District](#) as part of a pilot project, but the locations are so specific and awareness so sparse that it does really miss the mark on the opportunity for the community's and neighborhoods. Maybe this is a good time to take Toronto's lead and make laneway homes a right in all residential zones.
