



District of Maple Ridge

TO: His Worship Mayor Ernie Daykin
and Members of Council
FROM: Chief Administrative Officer
SUBJECT: Secondary Suites and Temporary Residential Uses - Process Report

MEETING DATE: July 16, 2012
FILE NO:
MEETING: Workshop

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Council has recently discussed the secondary suite and temporary residential use provisions in the Zoning Bylaw. They have directed staff to undertake a review of the District's current policies and regulations to identify a comprehensive list of issues and associated potential solutions pertaining to each.

In 1999 Council amended the Zoning Bylaw to allow secondary suites in a limited number of single family residential zones with minimum lot areas of 557m² or greater. This was done as a means to help provide affordable, rental housing within the District with the recognition that at that time, there were many unauthorized suites within Maple Ridge. Secondary suites are not permitted in the smaller residential zones including CD-1-93, R-3, R-1 or R-2.

Since then, Council has approved additional policies and regulations that allow temporary residential accommodation (TRU's) for family members and detached Garden Suites.

In spite of these attempts to regulate secondary suites and temporary residential uses, illegal suites continue to be an issue in the District, creating neighbourhood concerns related to parking maintenance, emergency response and Building Code compliance. At the same time the District is under increasing pressure from developers and builders to allow secondary suites in smaller housing forms.

With these issues in mind, the Review will include the establishment of an inter-departmental working committee, focus group workshops with local developers, builders and community associations and a public open house. Each of these components is intended to provide a wide range of opportunities for input into the discussion and to establish the comprehensive list of issues and potential solutions Council is seeking.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Secondary Suites Review process outlined in the staff report titled "Secondary Suites and Temporary Residential Uses – Process Report" dated July 16, 2012, be endorsed.

DISCUSSION:

a) Background Context:

Since 1999, The District has allowed secondary suites as an accessory use in some single family residential zones, one of the first municipalities to do so in the Lower Mainland. The intent was to

provide affordable and rental housing options, as a 'mortgage helper' and in recognition of the increasing number of illegal suites in the District.

Council has recently passed two Resolutions related to secondary suites, the first on April 16, 2012:

"That staff be directed to prepare a report identifying a comprehensive list of issues and options pertaining to Secondary Suites and Temporary Residential Uses."

and the second on May 22, 2012 related to suites in the compact single family residential zones:

"That staff be directed to explore the possibility of a restrictive covenant to deal with illegal suites in the R-1, CD-1-93, R-2 and R-3 zones."

Council also directed that the practice of reviewing building permits to prohibit direct access to basements and the use of tumbler lock and key systems discontinue pending review of this issue as a component of the Review.

The Review is intended to provide a broad summary of the issues associated with secondary suites and temporary residential units, to investigate options and ideas to solve the issues and to recommend a set of policy and/or bylaw amendments for Council's review and consideration. The Review does not envision the complete prohibition of secondary suites in the community rather it is intended to fine-tune the current Zoning Bylaw regulations.

b) Process:

The proposed process for the Secondary Suite Review is as follows:

- Establishment of a Staff Working Group comprised of representatives from Planning, Licences, Permits & Bylaws, Fire and others as required;
- Preparation of an online questionnaire on general issues related to secondary suites and temporary residential uses;
- Research into the policies, regulations and practices of other Lower Mainland municipalities and 2011 Census information;
- Focus Group Workshops - with local community groups and organizations, developers and builders
- Community-wide open house event
- Preparation of an Issues Summary including key issues and options for Council consideration
- Council update and further direction on policy, regulations or other mechanisms available to the District.

Preliminary Issues List

As part of the Review, Council has directed staff to prepare a comprehensive list of issues relating to secondary suites and temporary residential uses. As part of the recent discussions with Council at Workshop on April 16 and May 14 and at the May 22 Council meeting, the following issues have been identified:

- Existing Zoning Bylaw provisions - zones that permit secondary suites and temporary residential uses;
- Building design;

- Owner occupancy requirements; and
- Challenges with enforcement of illegal suites;
- The use of restrictive covenants;
- BC Building Code requirements and potential equivalencies;
- Lot sizes, subdivision design and parking impacts & implications; and
- Regional approaches that may be applicable in Maple Ridge.

It is anticipated that the discussions with key stakeholders may identify additional issues or help clarify specific aspects that will also be included in the Issues Summary for Council's information.

Anticipated Timeline

The process for the Review is anticipated to be completed by end of 2012 based on the following schedule of events:

Summer 2012

- Inter-departmental Working Group – Preliminary issue identification
- Online Questionnaire
- Regional comparisons & background information

Fall 2012

- Questionnaire Summary
- Focus Group Workshops
- Open House
- Issues Summary

The work completed during the fall will align with the process and timeline of the Housing Action Plan for the preparation of background studies and reports.

Late fall / winter 2012

- Preparation of policy and/or regulation amendments

Council will be provided with updates at various stages throughout the Review process.

c) Citizen/Customer Implications:

Several opportunities for input into the Review will be provided for residents, developers and buildings and local groups as identified in the Process section above.

d) Interdepartmental Implications:

As identified, an inter-departmental Working Group will be established in order to help identify key issues and develop options to address each for Council's consideration.

The Planning Department will also work closely with the Licenses, Permits and Bylaws Department to ensure any long-standing enforcement issues are incorporated into the Review.

The Secondary Suites Review will also inform the Housing Action Plan and form part of the background information for that work.

e) Business Plan/Financial Implications:

This Review is work directed by Council that is in addition to the projects identified in the 2012 Business Plan for the Planning Department and other departments. This may have an effect on the schedule of other work items, but efforts will be taken to minimize any potential impacts.

f) Policy Implications:

Included in the Issues Summary will be an assessment of any existing policies and/or regulations that staff recommend be amended in order to address the key issues. Council will be provided with a detailed assessment and rationale for each recommended policy or bylaw amendment related to secondary suites and temporary residential units.

CONCLUSIONS:

The District has allowed secondary suites and temporary residential units as accessory residential uses for more than a decade. Throughout that period, there have been changes to the BC Building Code, single family housing forms, Zoning Bylaw additions, significant changes to the housing market and a need for more affordable and rental housing accommodations in the community.

The process outlined in this report is intended to identify a wide range of issues associated with secondary suites and temporary residential uses and provide a range of potential solutions for Council's review.

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