

# *A DISCUSSION PAPER FOR MAPLE RIDGE*

## DETACHED GARDEN SUITES: ISSUES AND OPTIONS

November 30, 2007



# Executive Summary

Maple Ridge's Official Community Plan identifies Garden Suites as a possible option for modest density infill in Urban, Suburban and Rural residential neighbourhoods pending further study. This report attempts to further explore this option by identifying the issues, challenges and considerations for implementation.

Information has been gathered from a variety of Canadian and American municipalities that are pursuing similar endeavours, as well as from reports and other sources of technical information regarding particulars about Maple Ridge. Information gathered includes Bylaw and Policy content, Discussion papers, Interviews with planning staff and reports from other municipalities and interviews with staff from the District of Maple Ridge.

This report also offers a comprehensive summary of the Garden Suite review and its benefits along with relevant practices undertaken in various municipalities across North America. It reviews the regulatory and technical considerations involved should Maple Ridge implement this policy.

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# Introduction

The Official Community Plan identifies “**Garden Suites**” as a possible option for modest density infill. This discussion paper explores Garden Suites as an additional and affordable housing option in the District of Maple Ridge, and is intended to serve as background research to aid the District with a Garden Suite Policy and Bylaw(s) amendment.

## Project Background

### **Regional Context**

The District of Maple Ridge situated on the eastern edge of Metro Vancouver in southern British Columbia falls under the Liveable Region Strategic Plan (LRSP), the regional growth strategy for the region. The LRSP has outlined policies on four fundamental objectives, a) Building Complete Communities, b) Achieving a Compact Metropolitan Region, c) Increasing Transportation Choice, and d) Protecting the Green Zone.

The Livable Region Strategic Plan identifies Maple Ridge as one of the eight designated Town Centres, intended to serve as a complete community by offering a mix of services, shops, employment, and housing in close proximity to one another. Maple Ridge also has a considerable amount of land in the Agricultural Land Reserve and the Green Zone and protecting these lands reinforces the importance of maximizing density within the Urban Area Boundary.

### **Demographic Trends in Maple Ridge**

As in most municipalities in North America, a large bulge of Maple Ridge’s population is the “baby-boom” generation, which now has reached the age bracket of 39 to 58. As such, Maple Ridge is facing the reality of an aging population, with a projected tripling of the seniors’ population by 2031. A growing number of single-person households, preferred decrease in family size and younger couples waiting longer to have children are all demographic changes that have led to a growing need and demand for smaller housing.

Meanwhile, the percentage of the population in the 20-34 year bracket is markedly lower than the provincial average, and is expected to decline further. Despite such decline, however, the absolute number of residents in this age bracket is expected to increase over the next 25 years, as the general population grows in number.

### **Housing Trends in Maple Ridge**

Currently, Maple Ridge is a municipality mainly comprised of single-detached homes. According to the 2001 Census of Canada, 65% of Maple Ridge’s housing is single-detached, 10% higher than the provincial average. Other housing forms have been slowly increasing over the last 25 years, and Maple Ridge housing projections state that the demand for apartment and smaller ground-oriented units will continue to increase over the next 25 years (Sheltair Group, 2004).

## Maple Ridge's Response to Changing Trends

In Chapter 3 (Neighbourhoods and Housing) of the 2006 Official Community Plan, the District outlines its goals and strategies for housing Maple Ridge residents in the future. The first two goals speak to this directly:

- To encourage a variety of housing types and densities to meet the diverse residential needs of the District.
- To accommodate future population growth and change through the appropriate land use designations and strategies that are consistent with community and regional goals and objectives.

Maple Ridge already has secondary suites as a permitted use in all single family residential zones (except R-1 which is the Residential District zone, R-3 which is the Special Amenity Residential District zone and CD-1-93 which is the Comprehensive Development zone), yet the average-sized lot is also quite large and the possibility exists that homeowners who would not be able or willing to create an internal secondary suite would perhaps instead build another dwelling unit in the rear yard. This housing form, as an option of housing form will meet the demands of changing demographics and the need for smaller, ground-oriented housing units.

When discussing plans for future urban residential growth, the Official Community Plan states that “infill development must respect and reinforce the character and physical patterns of established neighbourhoods.” As such, strategies for Neighbourhood and Major Corridor Infill are mentioned as Policies 3-18 (a) and 3-19 (b), which read as follows:

- 1) **Neighbourhood Residential:** A maximum of one principal dwelling unit per lot and an additional dwelling unit such as a secondary suite or Garden Suite (pending further studies to be conducted by the District).
- 2) **Major Corridor Residential:** is characterized by the following: includes ground oriented housing forms such as Single Detached dwellings, Garden Suites (pending further study), Duplex, Triplexes, Fourplexes, Townhouses, Apartments or Small lot Intensive Residential, subject to compliance with Major Corridor Infill policies.

The District has been encouraging all forms of housing with varying densities as part of densification initiatives within the Urban Area Boundary.

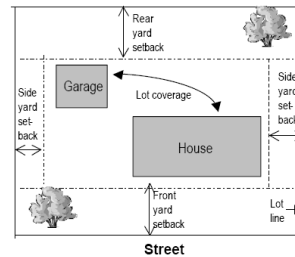
## Report Content

This report is divided into five major sections and includes the following:

- a summary of general considerations, based on a literature review of the Garden Suite concept
- a summary of definitions and benefits of Garden Suites.
- Logistical considerations, including common practices for Development Standards and Infrastructure
- Some graphic illustrations of Garden Suites.
- a comparison of Regulatory approaches for implementing Garden Suites
- a summary of issues for further discussion
- Conclusions for the District should it seriously consider this housing option
- References.

## Data Sources

The statistical data in this report is based on demographic studies undertaken for Maple Ridge and profiles produced by BC Statistics. Content analysis is based on a review of Bylaw and Policy documents from other municipalities. A summary of basic conceptual information draws on project reports from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Commission, as well as Accessory Dwelling Unit (Santa Cruz, California) discussion papers produced for municipalities in Ontario, Washington state, and California state. A variety of Canadian and American municipalities that have been pursuing similar endeavours have been interviewed and researched for lessons learned. Lastly, the report includes information compiled from interviews with Municipal Staff, as well as staff from the Metro Vancouver Regional District and the Agricultural Land Commission.



## GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Before launching into discussions about the feasibility of Garden Suites, it is important to review the reasons why other municipalities have introduced them into their neighbourhoods and for the District to have a clear definition of what it considers a Garden Suite.

Once these general points are established, there is a brief discussion about what Maple Ridge objectives for a Garden Suite Policy and how these objectives influence implementation options in the process.

# Definitions

All the terms listed below identify a unit that serves as a self-contained dwelling with its own kitchen and bathroom facilities, as well as its own entrance. However, definitions vary from this point onward, and interpretations may differ even among a common name. Below is a summary of each term, identifying both similarities and discrepancies among the terminology.

## Garden Suite

Garden Suite is a terminology commonly used in Ontario and the Maritimes. Commonly defined as a **self-contained residential structure including kitchen and bathroom facilities**, a Garden Suite is **subordinate to a single-detached dwelling**. Typically, Garden Suites are detached structures, but attached structures are sometimes deemed Garden Suites as well. Most definitions of the term restrict the possible occupant to a relative of the homeowner. In every instance where the term Garden Suite is used, the structure is intended to be temporary.

## Granny Flat

A Granny Flat is the Australian equivalent to Canada's Garden Suite, and both share the same physical characteristics. Intended to be temporary, a Granny Flat is a **self-contained dwelling unit on the same parcel of land as, and subordinate to, a single-detached dwelling**. This term is considered dated, as most municipalities allowing Granny Flats no longer have restrictions on who may occupy the unit. However, most do require the property owner to live in one of the two units.

## Coach House

The term Coach House is commonly used throughout the Lower Mainland and typically describes a **second dwelling unit separate and accessory to a single detached dwelling, built above or attached to a rear garage**. Municipalities often designate specific Coach House zones (e.g. City of Surrey and Kelowna)

## Accessory Dwelling Units

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) is a fairly general term with wide-ranging interpretations. In Canada, an ADU is typically an additional dwelling unit attached to or within the primary dwelling unit, and not meant to be rented out to the general public. However, in the United States, ADUs are **subordinate and permanent dwelling units that can be either attached or detached from the main house**. There are **no stipulations on who may occupy the unit**, but many do require the property owner to live in one of the two units.

## Second Dwelling Units/Secondary Suites

Second Dwelling Units is a term used interchangeably with 'secondary suites', defining suites as residences that may be built into, onto, or beside a single detached dwelling. With this definition, **detached structures are regulated, implemented and monitored in the same fashion as an attached secondary suite**.

## Garden Suite Housing/Cluster Housing

In the United States, some municipalities allow Garden Suites to be occupied year-round. Others build Garden Suites as infill housing, as "Garden Suite Housing" (see definition below).

The concept of Garden Suite Housing is gaining popularity in Washington State. **Permanent, year-round Garden Suites are clustered together on vacant property** into "pocket neighbourhoods" of infill housing.



# A Definition for Maple Ridge

Overall, the American interpretation of the Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) best represents Maple Ridge's intentions for this policy – a permanent, detached structure available for rent by the homeowner (living in the primary dwelling or vice versa). The size of such a unit in other jurisdictions has been a concern when it does not remain subordinate to the main dwelling.

However, Maple Ridge already has “Accessory residences”, “Accessory employee residential units”, “Temporary Residential Units” (TRU), “Guest houses” and ‘Accessory buildings’ in its Zoning bylaw, so a more distinct term would be desired.

All definitions seem to be fluid and differ significantly between municipalities; therefore, the only key requirement is that the use and physical attributes (and potentially, occupancy) be made clear in the definition itself, whichever definition is chosen.

*It is suggested that the term for this housing option be referred to as a **Detached Garden Suite**, defined as:*

**Detached Garden Suite**: “A self-contained second dwelling unit that is separate, subordinate in size and accessory to the principal dwelling unit. The unit may be a free-standing structure, or may be located beside or above a detached garage or other accessory structure.”

Note: This definition may be refined at the time of Bylaw (s) amendment.



# Why have Detached Garden Suites?

There are differing reasons why a municipality undertakes a Garden Suite program and such intentions often affect how it is regulated. The following section overviews the various motivations behind permitting Garden Suites and the Regulatory and Logistical considerations.

## Seniors, Disability, & Family Housing

The main impetus behind such Garden Suite schemes in Australia, Britain and Canada is to offer another housing option for seniors. Garden Suites offer seniors a viable option by which to remain in one's neighbourhood, a housing option more affordable than a retirement home, and the opportunity for independent living while remaining close to one's family for any necessary assistance. This intention affects the approval process as well as the physical characteristics of Garden Suites. In fact, many municipalities go further and stipulate that occupants must be relatives of those living in the primary dwelling unit as they are not meant to be part of the rental housing market stock for the general public. In these instances, Garden Suites are intended for fairly temporary situations; therefore, licences are temporary and the units themselves must be temporary and removable.

A similar scenario that permits Garden Suites occurs with farms located in rural areas of Canada (e.g. Chilliwack). Owners are permitted to build a second dwelling unit on a lot for farm lands or relatives (stipulations about who may occupy the dwelling are a key element of the policy).

## Growth Management

Garden Suites are a viable option for municipalities supporting infill housing that will increase density and reduce sprawl. Optimal for municipalities that are predominantly single-detached residential, Garden Suites offer the opportunity to increase density while maintaining a neighbourhood's character and avoiding a multi-family rezoning.

In 1990, the State of Washington passed a Growth Management Act (GMA) that looked to reduce sprawl, concentrate urban growth, and increase affordable housing. It was followed by a Housing Policy Act (HPA) that encouraged Accessory Dwelling Units as a method of compliance. Since then, most cities in Washington have adopted ADU ordinances to comply with the HPA.

One of the key elements of success in many cities has been a streamlining of the permitting process and lower permit fees to encourage homeowners, as well as public education and information which are comprehensive and user-friendly. Garden Suites have also been used as a tool not only to reduce sprawl, but to direct infill. One example is that of Cary, North Carolina; to slow down rampant sprawl in the city and draw more people to the downtown core, the town decided to allow "utility dwelling units" through as-of-right permits, although only in the downtown area.

## Affordable Housing

Over the past twenty years, the decrease in affordable housing has become a growing concern to many cities and Vancouver has been no exception. Garden Suites can help increase the supply of affordable housing within a municipality.

Over the last decade, in many parts of California affordable housing had reached a perceived state of crisis. As a response, in 2002 the state legislated that municipal agencies are required to permit “Second Dwelling Units”. These units are “as-of-right” permits, though it is within the authority of each municipality to specify the developments standards for such a unit. As a result, there is a wide spectrum of what is allowed in the way of unit sizes, coverage, and heights (often dependent upon a municipality’s needs, as well as its political attitudes towards such units.)

Garden Suites intended to address affordable housing do not place restrictions on the age or relationship of the occupant; however, some municipalities do offer incentives or impose restrictions to ensure that units are serving low-income occupants.

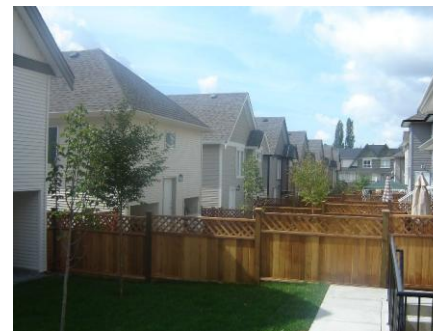
### Examples

Bay Area, California, Santa Cruz, California, Boston, Massachusetts, Seattle, Washington, Chicago, Illinois

## New Urbanist Principle

Mixed use and demographic diversity are two main tenets of New Urbanism. New Urbanists encourage Garden Suites as they encourage a mix of demographics and income levels in a neighbourhood. They also note that dwellings placed close to lanes offer more “eyes on the street”, and the use of existing infrastructure as well as sharing existing amenities promotes environmental sustainability.

These motivations are primarily theoretical ones but often serve as additional reasons to encourage support for Garden Suites. The City of Surrey’s new East Clayton development draws much of its direction from New Urbanist principles, and is encouraging the establishment of “Coach Houses” on properties, particularly corner lots.



Row of Coach Houses in East Clayton, Surrey

### Examples

East Clayton,  
Surrey BC

# Benefits of Garden Suites in Maple Ridge

The benefits that Maple Ridge can garner from implementing detached Garden Suites are four-fold: benefits to the property owner, to the tenant, to the municipality and to the community in general.

## Benefits to the Community and Municipality

- Growth Management

One major goal in Maple Ridge's Official Community Plan (as well as the Metro Vancouver's Livable Region Strategic Plan) is to manage growth and encourage compact communities. This infill policy would allow a larger population into Maple Ridge while avoiding expansion of the Urban Area Boundary.

- Increased Housing Options

Housing affordability and choice of housing form are objectives set out in Maple Ridge's Official Community Plan and introducing Garden Suites in suitable single family zones in the District would offer more ground-oriented alternatives to the District's housing stock.

- Use of Existing Infrastructure

Due to demographic changes and preference for smaller families over the years, household size is slowly decreasing in many areas; housing, infrastructure, and services built for 4 person households are now servicing only two or less per household (Stats Canada, 2001). Adding Garden Suites to back lots would return neighbourhood infrastructure to the level of use for which it was intended, making use of existing infrastructure rather than building new infrastructure (as would be required for new developments).



## Benefits to the Owner

- Aging in Place

Another goal in the Official Community Plan is to accommodate "aging in place". Many residents who love the neighbourhood they live in but are "over-housed" with unused bedrooms and large lots would have the option to live in this smaller Garden Suite on their own property and still be able to get help with financing and maintaining a large house and property or be close to family.

- Supplementary Income

Single income households (widows, single parents, etc.) often find renting second units such as a Garden Suite necessary in order to remain in their chosen neighbourhood. Some new homeowners may also use them as a mortgage-helper (a better option than the secondary suite which is part of their house), allowing them to afford a house in the area they wish to continue living.

## Benefits to the Tenant

- Affordable Housing

Detached Garden Suites would increase the supply of affordable rental housing for singles, seniors and couples in the District.

- Ground-Oriented Housing

As most have at-grade entrances, Garden Suites offer a housing type particularly well-suited to those requiring such access.

- Proximity to community services

Single family residential neighbourhoods are typically complimented with transit, parks, shopping, and schools. Garden Suite residents would share existing public amenities and benefit from it.

## How do these objectives affect possible regulations?

How Garden Suites are implemented and regulated depends on the objectives that are important for a municipality when introducing this form of housing. The following points should be paid particular attention, to ensure that all policies work together to promote the District's objectives.

**As Complete Communities are a prime objective for Maple Ridge, issue to consider is:**

- Whether to restrict Garden Suites to those areas that are close to transit and services (i.e. Urban versus Suburban and Rural)

**As Growth Management is a prime objective for Maple Ridge, issues to consider are:**

- Whether to specify which areas of Maple Ridge would be permitted to have Garden Suites in effort to direct infill
- Whether further permit approval streamlining is necessary in order to encourage homeowners to build Garden Suites on their properties

**As Increased Housing Options are a prime objective for Maple Ridge, issue to consider is:**

- Whether to look into specific incentives that will encourage homeowners to build Garden Suites

**As Aging in Place is a prime objective for Maple Ridge, issues to consider are:**

- Whether to require or promote Garden Suite designs that focus on accessibility (ground oriented units only, special width and ramp for wheelchair/scooter users, etc.)

**As promoting Sustainable building practices is another objective for Maple Ridge, issue to consider is:**

- Whether to require Garden Suite designs to be “green” through a checklist and covenant.



# Who will live in Garden Suites?

Researched municipalities state that while they do not make specific note of who lives in Garden Suites, generally units are occupied by single people (young or elderly) who are related to the family living in the main home. Some are built for visiting relatives (like the 'Guest house' or the "Temporary Residential Use" permitted in Maple Ridge) and in affluent areas Garden Suites often house service personnel. The rental demographic is typically that of singles or young couples.

Kelowna notes that there is a significant concentration of Garden Suites near the hospital, renting out to young hospital staff, thus helping reduce greenhouse gases due to proximity to workplace.

Studies conducted on the popularity of the Garden Suite strategy are old and no recent studies have been done on the popularity of such strategies in the BC context.

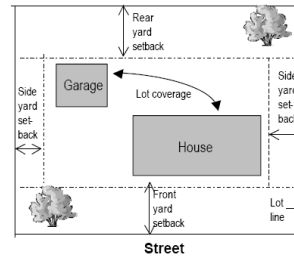
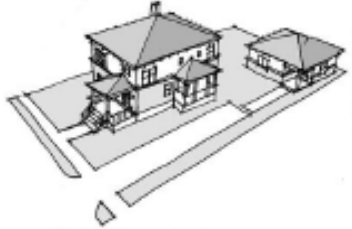
Gathering information from researched municipalities gives the following numbers:

- The City of Santa Cruz, California (pop. 54,000) approves approximately 100 Garden Suites each year.
- The City of Mercer Island, Washington State (pop. 22,000) approves approximately 12-15 Garden Suites each year.
- The Village of Anmore, BC (pop. 1,500) has approved approximately 20 since implementing Garden Suites in 2004.

The demand for Garden Suites is quite varied, and therefore difficult to base solely upon a general ratio or average. The difficulty to make general projections is exacerbated by the dual uses for Garden Suites (family use vs. rental) and the very different residential areas in Maple Ridge (Urban versus Rural).



**Garden Suite in Anmore**



## Logistical Considerations

The impact of Garden Suites on the surrounding neighbourhood and local infrastructure can be assessed against the following:

- The physical aspects of Garden Suites (size, height, setbacks, etc)
- Fire and Health code regulations that must be met for safety and liveability reasons.
- Design aspects (compatibility) which deal with building material, building foot print, colors, height, form, character, massing, etc.

The Review of Development Standards summarizes basic physical and technical aspects of Garden Suites in other municipalities, noting any patterns found in physical requirements and highlighting lessons learned from certain municipalities.

Infrastructure Considerations are then reviewed, focusing on the potential limitations to implementing Garden Suites. These infrastructure concerns include both hard and soft infrastructure.

# Review of Development Standards

The size and design of a Garden Suite are perhaps factors with the most direct impact on surroundings. Proper development standards ensure that a Garden Suite is subordinate in size and scale, visually compatible with the rest of the neighbourhood and that the structure does not intrude upon neighbouring properties.

## Minimum Lot Area

Most of the municipalities reviewed require a minimum lot size to accommodate a Garden Suite. However, the numbers range from 270 m<sup>2</sup> in Hamilton, Ontario to 8000 m<sup>2</sup> in Parkland, Alberta. The more urbanized areas have lot sizes that are understandably much smaller than those in rural districts. Yet even among municipalities with demographics and lot sizes similar to those of Maple Ridge, minimum lot sizes vary from 306 m<sup>2</sup> to 929 m<sup>2</sup>. Judging from this range, minimum lot size seems to be an important factor but does not seem to be the primary control for allowing Garden Suites. Rather, a minimum lot size is typically paired up with other requirements in order to achieve the type of Garden Suite a municipality is looking for. For example, smaller lots like in some areas of downtown Vancouver are usually those that also offer back lane access and allow units above garages. Some municipalities stipulate a certain minimum lot width as a more specific criterion. Municipalities with lot sizes similar to those in Maple Ridge typically place the width minimum at 18 metres. This is already the minimum lot width for all Maple Ridge zones being considered, except the RS-1b zone which is set at 15 metres. R-3 and R-1 are not considered here because of small lot area requirement. Location of the existing house with its setbacks is very crucial.

## Minimum Unit Size

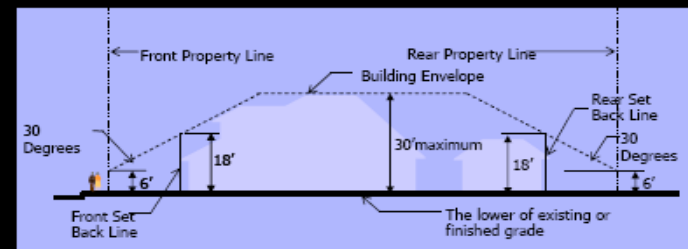
A handful of municipalities stipulate minimum unit sizes for Garden Suites; most others refer to their building codes for a minimum dwelling unit size. Some Garden Suites are allowed to be as small as 20 m<sup>2</sup>, though most are set between 35-45 m<sup>2</sup>, with an average size of 38 m<sup>2</sup>. The BC Building Code sets a minimum size of 37 m<sup>2</sup> for Secondary Suites in the province

which may not be relevant here because Garden Suites are detached. For a detached unit, there is no absolute minimum size set but there are code requirements (area) for the living spaces within a unit like kitchen, living area, bedroom, bathroom, etc.

## Maximum Unit Size

Other than a few municipalities with very small maximum sizes, maximum unit sizes are fairly similar, ranging from 60 m<sup>2</sup> to 100m<sup>2</sup>. While maximum sizes vary, the allowable scale of a Garden Suite relative to the principal dwelling is quite constant. Most of the municipalities allow for a building between 33 – 50% of the Primary Dwelling Unit's size. One notable exception is Kelowna, which allows the lesser of either 90 m<sup>2</sup> or up to 75% of the principal dwelling unit; however, they advise others against such a large size allowance due to units not looking subordinate to the main house and therefore do not fit into the neighbourhood fabric. Rather than establishing a proportion of the principal dwelling, it would seem easier to specify area (minimum and maximum range) for the Detached Garden Suite, irrespective of the size of the lot itself.

## Preserve the Neighborhood



- Maintain **neighborhood scale**
- Architecture to relate to primary residence



## Setbacks

In all the reviewed municipalities the requirements for Garden Suite setbacks simply require compliance with the general setback requirements outlined in the Zoning Bylaw.

Certain municipalities require a greater rear lot setback for Garden Suites, but for the most part the general rear setback is found to be sufficient. Rear setbacks range from 1.5 m to 6.0 m, with an average of around 3.0 m. Some municipalities increase the rear setbacks for 2-storey buildings in order to mitigate the privacy issues with encountered with elevated views. A good example of this is in Santa Cruz's guidelines: while the rear setback for 1-storey buildings is set at 1.5 metres, 2-storey buildings require 6 metres. If the design guidelines allow only ground oriented units, the maximum height could be limited to 4.5 m, hence a standard setback of 3.0 m for rear and side could work well.

## Distance between Buildings

When considering a minimum distance between dwelling units, consideration must be given to existing issues and requirements. The BC Building Code requires significant open space distances between a structure's windowed walls facing another structure; the required distance is based on the amount of glazed surface proposed on the external wall and on whether the structure is sprinklered. As most single family homes in Maple Ridge may have a large kitchen window, two bedroom windows, and often a sliding door on the rear facade, the distance required between the principal dwelling's windowed back wall and the detached Garden Suite will need to be compliant with Zoning Bylaw requirements for the zone under consideration.

## Maximum Height

Once a property reaches its maximum lot coverage allowance, the only option to increase the size is to build above the main floor when height becomes an important factor to control. Researched municipalities were evenly split on their maximum height requirements (half capped height at 4.5 to 5.0 m-1½ storey, while the remainder set the limit at 7.5 to 8.0 m-2½ storey).

Kelowna experienced difficulty when it set its Garden Suite maximum height at two storeys and found later that some of the coach houses were higher than the principal dwelling. On the other hand, in Maple Ridge, because the single family zones do not have a density component to them (no Floor Space Ratio) some of the existing single family housing stock is over-sized hence an important point to note is to consider the typical height of houses on potential lots. The visual impact of rooflines is important. California's City of Santa Cruz, for example, has developed comprehensive guidelines for rooflines with a focus on minimal neighbourhood impact (refer to the sketch on previous page).

## Access and Entrance

All Garden Suites are required to have a separate entrance. Beyond this requirement, however, there seems to be a variety of opinions on optimal entrance requirements. Certain municipalities expressly require the accessory entrances to be placed at a 90-degree angle to the main house entrance, some forbid entrances to face out into neighbouring properties, and others simply ask that the entrance be considerate of its impact on neighbours and the single family character of the neighbourhood. The Fire Department of Maple Ridge prefers front entrance to the lot (rather than from a back lane) as it is better for safety, visibility/monitoring and locating at times of fire or

emergency. However, it is still possible to have successful Garden Suites on lots without alleys, Santa Cruz being a good example.



**This coach house in Surrey has access from the back lane as well as a path from the front yard and main house.**



**Insufficient parking requirements have led a North Vancouver coach house resident to rely on lane parking (with three 'no parking' signs along their front wall).**

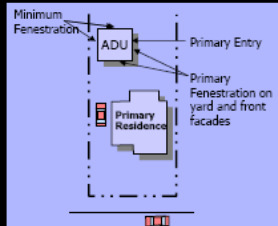
Some municipalities simply require a path to the Garden Suite from the front parking stalls (where the required off-street parking stall is offered), while other municipalities will have a driveway run to the back, with a parking pad beside the Garden Suite. This seems to be more an issue of configuration or design preference. Lastly, requiring an access path between the two dwelling units is recommended in order to prevent a make-shift subdivision of the lot by way of a fence across the yard.

## Parking Requirements

Opponents of Garden Suites often cite the impact of on-street parking as a concern for the character and function of the neighbourhood. Proponents of the program typically counter this argument with the rationale that there is nothing to prevent lots with one family living in the principal dwelling unit from having more cars than another lot with a detached Garden Suite.

Two municipalities stipulate a second additional space for Garden Suites over a certain size and one other bases the requirement upon the number of bedrooms in the Garden Suite (one for a 1-bedroom, two for a 2-bedroom). Most all of the municipalities require the parking space to be off-street parking, though there is some disparity over whether or not a tandem space is allowed. The vast majority of municipalities require one additional off-street parking space for a proposed Garden Suite.

## Protect Adjacent Neighbor



- Entries/stairs away from neighbors; Windows minimized
- Alley Orientation encouraged
- Homeowner lives on the property



## Screening and Landscaping

Natural screening and landscaping requirements can serve as an important tool to protect required visual privacy from neighboring properties, yet are not expanded upon in the municipalities researched. All municipalities simply require Garden Suite lots to comply with the general landscaping requirements for Single Family Zones. One reason for this could perhaps be the difficulty to enforce expanded landscaping requirements – a good example is the approval of a Coach house in North Vancouver contingent upon a willow tree screening. This requirement was later removed upon the unit's construction.

## Private Space

Some development standards and design prototypes include designated and properly delineated private yards outside both the main house and the Garden Suite. Requiring such a specifically configured area prevents Garden Suites from emerging in lots that are poorly sited to comfortably accommodate this suite. It helps to maintain a sense of privacy for both households and it ensures a sense of backyard which is an important component of single family neighborhoods.

## Floor Plans

Certain municipalities place restrictions on the design of the Garden Suite's floor plan, in an attempt to keep it at a desired scale. Some limit the number of rooms or bedrooms; others attach specific requirements based on how many rooms are in the Garden Suite, a good example being the parking requirements (one space for one bedroom, two for two bedrooms).

## Some graphic illustrations of Detached Garden Suites:

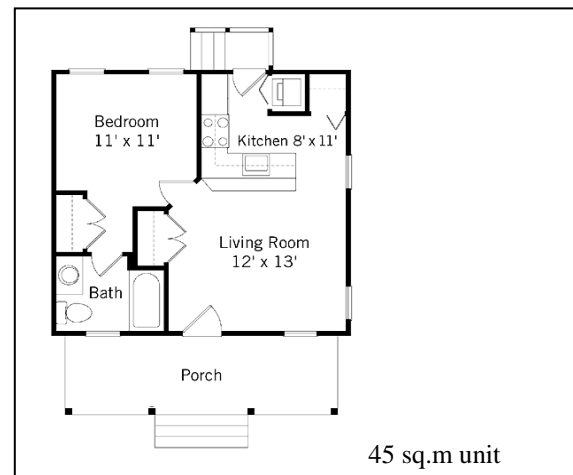
A Garden Suite behind a home in Anmore



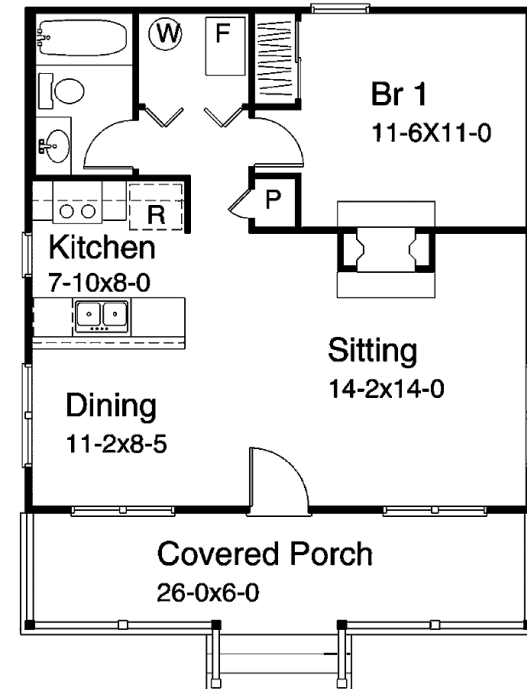
Each unit has its own private yard, delineated by hedges

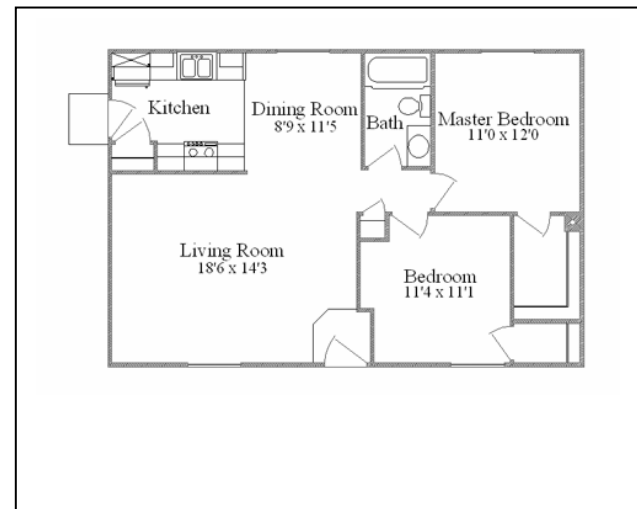
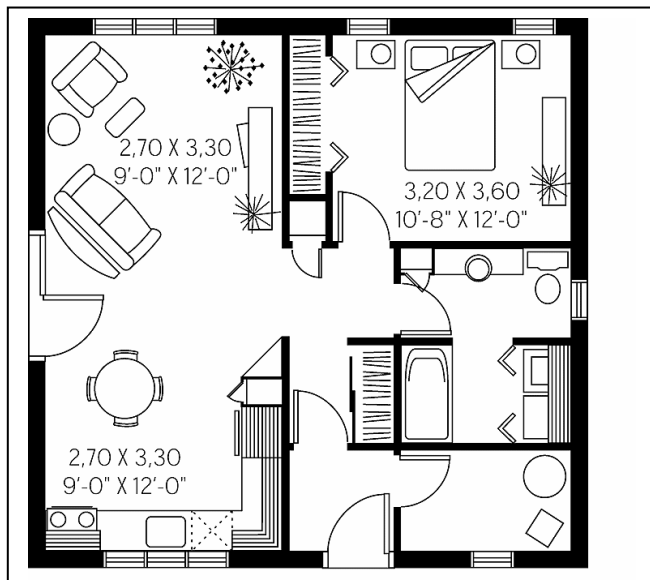


View of the entire rear yard









## Fire Considerations

Maple Ridge Bylaw No. 6184 requires all new dwelling units to have fire sprinklers placed throughout, therefore mitigating the fire department's need to require fire truck access to a Garden Suite on the back of the lot. The sprinkler requirement can be met by the installation of a self contained system that utilizes a 400 gallon water tank equipped with an electric pump, to supply pressure to the system. Among the portable units available, "CSA A277 labeled modular homes" can be equipped with a sprinkler system in the field (and CSA Z240 cannot be) which could be an option. For permanent units the only major restriction would be how far back a dwelling unit can sit on a property (distance from the front access). The Maple Ridge Fire Department has indicated that such a maximum distance will likely be 100 meters from the closest placement of the fire truck. In cases where the fire department does not have vehicular access to the Garden Suite, the design of the walking path should include a hard surface, and be of sufficient width (at least 1.8 m) to ensure easy movement of emergency equipment like stretchers.

## Neighbourhood Compatibility

A key element for all municipalities researched is architectural compatibility with the principal dwelling and the neighbourhood. Many municipalities simply require that the architectural style of the Garden Suite be similar to the main house, a judgment to be made by staff at the time of building permit process. Others outline more specific requirements prescribing building materials, rooflines, colours, and other details relating to the main house. A very old principal dwelling could be an exception to this rule. The legal mechanism for this would have to be explored further. One other exception from such requirements would be when elements of "Green Design" are incorporated into the design.

Other considerations in design guidelines involve landscaping and fencing, adhering to any existing siting patterns, maintaining the general level of trees/vegetation in the rear yard, and matching the nature of existing parking areas within the neighbourhood.

## Lessons Learned

- ✓ Lot size requirements tend to be less of a mitigating factor than lot configuration and siting requirements. Proper setbacks, size, proper access, and adequate parking are typically what limit application approvals.
- ✓ Beyond footprint size, height is an important factor to ensure the subordinate nature of a detached Garden Suite in any neighbourhood.
- ✓ Parking can serve as a useful limiting factor.
- ✓ Either requiring access between the main house and the Garden Suite or setting landscaping requirements will help to prevent fences that span the entire width of a lot in the back.
- ✓ Patios at grade level should be the only acceptable extension/private outdoor area of a Garden Suite.
- ✓ A certain amount of private open space around the detached Garden Suite helps to maintain the open backyard feel of a single family house.
- ✓ Although rear lanes and alleys are popular aspects of Garden Suites, they are not necessary and the strategy can be just as successful without them (as found in Santa Cruz, CA).
- ✓ It is much easier to ease strict requirements over time than it is to claw back regulations that are too lax.
- ✓ Even if they are not followed explicitly, clear and comprehensive guidelines or design prototypes do a lot to influence the look of Garden Suites.
- ✓ The City of Santa Cruz's ADU Manual is an excellent resource for information.  
[http://www.ci.santa-cruz.ca.us/pl/hcd/ADU/ADU\\_Manual.pdf](http://www.ci.santa-cruz.ca.us/pl/hcd/ADU/ADU_Manual.pdf)

# Infrastructure Considerations

## Water Service Considerations

On a broad level, Garden Suites have a lesser impact on water services than new developments as they consume on average only between 30 to 40% (or less, depending on occupancy) of the amount of water consumed in a single family dwelling. Yet looking at water service implications on a smaller scale, there is a noted impact on neighbourhood consumption level. Most municipalities however, did not find increased water demand a concern for any of their neighbourhoods. A few municipalities had stipulated a limit on the number of units allowed in a neighbourhood, though this was done as much to minimize noise and nuisance as it was to minimize impacts on water service. Water service considerations were only a concern in municipalities with a markedly limited water supply, such as municipalities on small islands. The Engineering Department mentioned that potential limiting factor for water service in Maple Ridge is the fire flow requirement. The fire flow requirement ensures there is enough water and water pressure to suppress a fire in the neighbourhood. In Maple Ridge's single family residential areas, the minimum fire flow required is 60 litres/ second, a requirement easily met in all neighbourhoods being considered for Garden Suites within the urban area. Fire code also requires that dwelling units must be within 90 metres of a fire hydrant; almost all eligible areas fulfill this requirement as well. As per the Subdivision Bylaw No.4800-1993, parcels of 2.0 Hectares or more in area located in the RS-3 (One Family Rural Residential) zone may be exempted from the requirements to provide a water distribution system. These lots in the rural area, depending on wells for their water supply require a hydrogeological impact assessment done to assess the quality and quantity of water for the whole subdivision.

## Sewer Service Considerations

Concerns about adequate sewer service are similar to those regarding water service capability. Sewers in certain older areas are reaching the end of their life cycle and are running at a higher capacity than sewers in other areas. Maple Ridge's Engineering department is in the process of having these sewers replaced; however, this is part of a large capital project that will span over the next decade. The maximized areas are located mainly within the Regional Town Center which has many features otherwise attractive for Garden Suites. This area is also currently zoned to allow Secondary Suites, which have the same potential increase in water usage. Considering that the Zoning Bylaw would likely only allow for either a detached Garden Suite or a Secondary Suite per property, allowing Garden Suites in these neighbourhoods would not likely affect the potential sewage increase above what currently exists. For all areas, water-conserving measures would help to mitigate the potential for added pressure on the sewage system. The important consideration to remember is that limiting the occupancy and hence the size of the Garden Suite could reduce most infrastructure impacts within the existing neighbourhood.



## Parking and Traffic Considerations

Maple Ridge being an auto-dominated region has several residents owning more than one car. Adding more people to a neighbourhood will inevitably increase the number of cars in an existing neighbourhood. These additional cars will increase traffic on collector roads and cars must be parked without adversely affecting the availability of on-street parking. Too many additional driveways could become a concern on certain collector roads. Whether parking and traffic will become a problem depends to a large extent on the neighbourhood's current situation. While additional traffic on Maple Ridge's residential and collector roads could likely be accommodated, the Engineering Department notes that on-street parking is already inadequate in several single family neighbourhoods as many families own more than one car. On-street parking is a major concern in certain areas of Maple Ridge and could be further impacted should Garden Suite residents own a vehicle(s). In addition to the concerns about on-street parking, many potential sites may require an extended driveway to accommodate a Garden Suite which would need to consider safe sightline requirements and they would certainly impact traffic on busier roads. However, it is noted that access to the Garden Suite could be via the existing driveway as opposed to another independent driveway.

## Environmental Considerations

Certain geographic aspects of Maple Ridge require specific attention. Any development within these areas has huge environmental implications. The environmentally sensitive areas include floodplain areas, areas around Watercourses and Wetlands, areas with slopes greater than 15 %, the Fraser River Escarpment Area, areas in the Agricultural Land Reserve, etc. In certain instances a Watercourse Development Permit and Natural Features Development Permit are required to protect and preserve these lands and could minimize impacts on such

environmentally sensitive lands. Geotechnical considerations must also be taken into account when issuing building permits. If the approval and processing times of Garden Suites need to be short and encouraging for the single family owner only a Building Permit is required but there could be exceptions in the environmentally sensitive areas or one could restrict permitting detached Garden Suites in such areas.

## Garbage Removal Considerations

The District of Maple Ridge has private garbage removal and is therefore not in a position to place requirements on the manner in which garbage is removed from Garden Suites. However, it must be noted that Bylaw enforcement has encountered numerous situations dealing with inadequate garbage removal, particularly on properties with Secondary Suites

## Drainage Considerations

Proper drainage in all existing single family neighbourhoods is crucial. Certain older neighbourhoods in Maple Ridge lack proper storm sewers, hence drainage is unavailable (e.g. Hammond area). The other urban areas bounded by 207<sup>th</sup> Street, 124<sup>th</sup> Avenue, 224<sup>th</sup> Street and the Crest of the Fraser River Escarpment are subject to the Surficial and Groundwater Discharge policy (Fraser River Escarpment Policy No 6.23 and Policy 6.24) which, among other actions, prohibits groundwater discharge and ensures stability of the lands within 300 m of the crest of Fraser River Escarpment, with any new construction. Approval of a Garden Suite within these areas should consider these two policies.



## Septic Considerations

Many eligible RS-2 (One Family Suburban Residential) and RS-3 (One Family Rural Residential) properties are privately serviced with a septic system. Additional development on lots with septic fields and water wells are usually only denied in municipalities with a limited water supply such as island communities provided the required septic field size can be met. On-site sewage systems can be vulnerable to malfunctioning from overloading. Findings from a CMHC research study note that implementing water conservation measures in Garden Suites and/or the host houses can prevent possible hydraulic or pollutant overloads (which are a result of water use rather than the system itself). Other measures such as system upgrades, arranging for more frequent pumping, and installing effluent filters were successful solutions in addressing on-site sewage system malfunctions.

The ACT program's *"Laying the Groundwork: Garden Suites and On-Site Septic Systems"* and CMHC's *"Complete Guide to Garden Suites"* serve as good resources for Garden Suite site plans on properties with septic fields. This case study shows how a number of communities in New Brunswick worked together to overcome Municipal planning and Bylaw hurdles for faster approval of Garden Suites located on the main property of a relative's single-family home.

## Soft Service Considerations

Adding residents into a neighbourhood also impacts the use of soft services such as Schools, Parks, Trails, Recreation centres, etc. Although Detached Garden Suites are not intended for large family use, single parents with children may find them an optimal housing option, or empty nesters would rent out the main dwelling to a large family while living in the Garden Suite on the same lot. In either instance, implementation of Garden Suites would need to be communicated to the School District so that it might anticipate possible additional enrolment numbers.

School District 42 (Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows) regularly reviews its enrolment numbers and may open or close schools to adjust to shifting populations. In discussion with the School District's Maintenance Division, there currently is excess capacity in certain Maple Ridge's elementary schools. Adding Detached Garden Suites in some of these neighbourhoods could prove to be a beneficial density infill tool to meet the school capacity and funding.

Emergency responders need to be able to quickly identify and access these units in an emergency. While the fire department has the ability to note secondary dwellings through their computer aided dispatch system, other emergency responders do not currently have this capability. Consideration must be given to ensure that addressing of the properties reflect the fact that there is a Garden Suite on the property. This could be accomplished by amending Bylaw No. 4773-1992 regarding building numbering.



# Other Logistical Considerations

## Transit Considerations

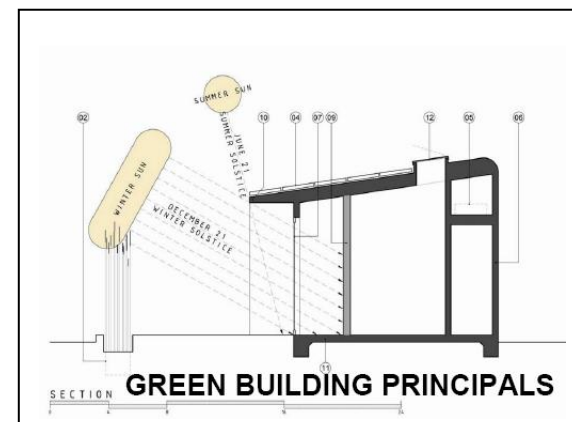
Beyond simply considering where Garden Suites are feasible, careful thought must also be given to where the District wishes to promote Garden Suites. Garden Suites could be immensely beneficial to encourage densification in areas close to services and transit routes. Promoting transit use is a goal in both the Smart Growth on Ground Concept Plan and the Liveable Region Strategic Plan. Therefore areas around existing transit routes in Maple Ridge and the potential to foster increased transit use in these neighbourhoods should be considered. Some areas designated single family within the Regional Town Centre area may have the potential to house a Garden Suite although the District supports maximizing residential densities in the downtown area.

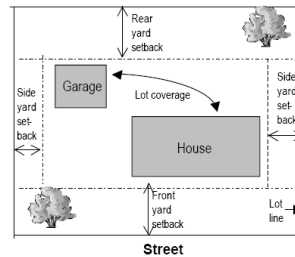
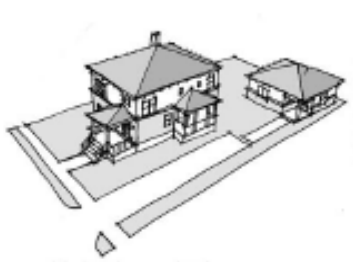
Currently, transit is best served in the western half of Maple Ridge, up to the Haney Place Transit Exchange at Edge Street and Dewdney Trunk Road. Beyond this, there is limited service offered by community shuttles in the east. Larger lots in the western areas of Maple Ridge look to be optimal areas in which to promote the Detached Garden Suite strategy, as they are well serviced by transit and close to shops and services such as the hospital. Walking is also an excellent alternative mode of transportation but within a certain radius. Improving walkability is an objective in the Official Community Plan. Neighbourhoods in areas close to shops and services would be optimal areas in which to promote Detached Garden Suites, also because of the fact that renters would likely prefer to live close to public transport.

## Green Building Considerations

The District's Smart Growth on the Ground concept plan promotes the use of "Green" building materials and energy-conserving measures. So does the Official Community Plan.

Solar panels, Geo-thermal heat pumps, Permeable surfaces, Swales, On-site sedimentation ponds, Green roofs, Greenways are good examples of sustainable residential infrastructure. One consideration is the impact green building materials and methods may have on the visual character of Garden Suites and how they will blend in with the rest of the neighborhood. It is important to respect the neighborhood's visual character at the same time encourage energy and water saving designs and in fact District could offer some incentives to home-owners to promote them throughout keeping in mind the "Net Community Gain" (e.g. Application fees may be waived, or construction costs may be subsidized). The City of Santa Cruz offers suggested prototypes for Accessory Dwelling Units using alternative design and construction methods and promotes their construction. These have been designed by seven local architects and approved by the City, available to the prospective home-owners for a nominal fee (they save processing time because they are pre-reviewed by the City officials and reduce the home-owner costs by 60 % )





## Implementation Considerations

Ultimately, Detached Garden Suites can only work as well as the implementation procedures that accompany them. Decisions on where to allow them, their occupancy, and how they will be approved are important points for discussion.

- ✓ Regulatory Considerations detail what authority the District has to implement Garden Suites.
- ✓ The issue of owner-occupancy is discussed in the Occupancy Considerations section.
- ✓ Urban vs. Rural Placement reviews any special considerations for Garden Suites should they be on an Urban, Suburban or Rural lot
- ✓ Zoning Considerations summarizes four major options on how the District may choose to zone for Detached Garden Suites.
- ✓ The Review of Approval Processes explores the possible methods for approving applications and the specific effects of each choice.
- ✓ Lastly, Other Considerations such as fees, process and financial assistance are outlined.

# Regulatory Considerations

## Enabling Legislation

Planning and Land use regulation in British Columbia occurs within a Federal constitutional framework in which certain aspects of planning and regulation are conducted by Federal, Provincial and Local governments. All of the authority possessed by Local governments is delegated to them by the Provincial government. The principal tool used to implement Local government Land Use Plans is the Zoning Bylaw. As per Section 903 of the Local Government Act, the municipalities have broad powers to enforce regulations through the Zoning Bylaw amendments. In this case the suitable single family zones need to be reviewed to allow (or disallow) Detached Garden Suites.

## Conformity with Regional Strategies

As part of Metropolitan Vancouver, the District of Maple Ridge is expected to conform to the goals and objectives of the region's Liveable Region Strategic Plan. The four main objectives of the plan are to protect the Green Zone, Build Complete Communities, achieve a Compact Metropolitan Area and increase transportation choice. The Metropolitan Vancouver Regional District Planning and Policy Department finds Garden Suites to be complimentary to the goals set out in the Liveable Region Strategic Plan, even in Suburban and Rural residential zones. A good portion of Maple Ridge falls in the Agricultural Land Reserve and land use on ALR lots must conform to the regulations set down by the Agricultural Land Commission. All land within the Agricultural Land Reserve is prohibited from adding any new structures onto its properties, without Commission approval therefore Garden Suites would only be allowed above a pre-existing garage and a detached form would require a Non-Farm Use approval.

## Conformity with Official Community Plan

The 2006 Official Community Plan explicitly promotes the study of Garden Suites as a strategy for modest density infill. If allowed, detached Garden Suites will need to also conform to the criteria for residential compatibility which requires all infill development to "respect and reinforce the physical pattern and characteristics of established neighbourhoods". Specific criteria are set relating to maintaining light, view, and privacy for neighbours, minimizing adverse parking impacts, and conforming to existing development patterns in the neighbourhood.

## Zoning Bylaw Amendments

Maple Ridge's Zoning Bylaw would need to be amended to include Detached Garden Suites as a permitted use in suitable single family zones.

The District's approach to Secondary Suites may serve as a useful reference although the intended size, design guidelines and occupancy regulations are different for Detached Garden Suites. The zones should be selected based on an analysis of lot size, configuration, setbacks, height restrictions and the ability of the lot to satisfy parking and safety requirements.

# Occupancy Considerations

Lack of property maintenance is often a common concern with absentee landlord properties. Whenever such problems do emerge they are most often tied to a situation involving an absentee landlord that does not take an active interest in the activities happening in the unit and is not prompt at dealing with complaints. Discussion with the Fire and Bylaws department of Maple Ridge indicated that, owner occupancy was considered a necessity should such a strategy be implemented.

In fact, several municipalities interviewed cited their owner-occupancy clauses as a key factor in their successful Garden Suite strategies. Such clauses require the owner to reside in one of the two units. Certain clauses stipulate how long the owner must have resided there before building a Garden Suite, or require the owner to live in the principal dwelling. However, most of them simply require the owner to occupy either of the two units. Certain cities are able to place owner-occupancy restrictions directly into their Bylaw and make it a major criterion for approval. Other municipalities must require property owners to enter into an agreement with the municipality noted in a contract that follows the property deed. Some other municipalities recommend owner occupancy in their policies, although it is not a binding requirement.

Should owner occupation be deemed a necessary requirement, it will be necessary to discuss this matter with the District solicitor to determine whether as such this requirement is legally binding or identify other tools that may be utilized.



# Urban vs. Rural Placement

Garden Suites are implemented in both urban and rural residential neighbourhoods, each with their own specific benefits and challenges.

## Placement in Urban Neighbourhoods

Garden Suites are typically instated in urban areas in order to increase the housing stock in the urban core and to provide affordable housing that is in close proximity to amenities.

Benefits: Placing Garden Suites in rear lots of urban residential neighbourhoods complies with the District's infill policy. Lots in the urban area are also more likely to be close to parks, schools, shopping services and transit routes in turn promoting alternative transportation options, walking and reduction in green house gases. The urban area lots are serviced by municipal services.

Considerations: Lots in the urban area are typically smaller (and more specifically narrower) than lots in the rural area and as such will be more prone to problems concerning sufficient access, sufficient on-site parking, traffic capacity, sufficient privacy between neighbours and access on and off of major corridors.

Drawbacks: Urban lots typically have houses sited fairly close to one another; in such areas detached Garden Suites may infringe upon the privacy of neighbours in adjacent lots.

On-street parking is already over capacity in certain neighbourhoods of the urban area and Garden Suites may only exacerbate the problem. Also, depending on the number of Garden Suites built, increased traffic may become an issue.



Dense development on smaller lots

## Placement in Rural Neighbourhoods

A fair number of municipalities allow Garden Suites on rural properties typically to serve as housing for seniors, extended family, or farm help. Development standards are similar to those for urban Garden Suites, although units are typically allowed to be larger, a reflection of the large size of rural lots. If size of the unit is limited (irrespective of lot size), several problems may be overcome.

Benefits: Rural residential lots being quite large are at times underused, easily able to accommodate the required setbacks, parking and open space for Garden Suites. Adding Garden Suites in rural zones would offer housing options without significantly affecting the density.

Considerations: Infrastructure requirements however are more stringent with rural properties using on-site sewage systems, prevalent on much of rural properties without municipal sewer and water. These must meet the Health Codes. A significant proportion of Maple Ridge's Rural Residential zoned lots which are part of the Agricultural Land Reserve, fall under the authority of the Agricultural Land Commission. At present, no additional structures are permitted on these lots; therefore, only lots with pre-existing garages or a legal "guest house" use would be able to upgrade it to a Garden Suite if they meet all other criteria. Code approvals will be required. The problem is further augmented by monitoring challenges.

Drawbacks: Promoting Garden Suites only in rural neighbourhoods may not enhance the District's long-range goal of transit-oriented and compact communities. However, allowing detached Garden Suites in both, Urban and Rural neighbourhoods may further other community objectives relating to housing affordability and increasing density.

# Zoning Considerations

There are four major possibilities for Garden Suite Zoning; each stems from a different intention, each with its own advantages and disadvantages.

**a) allow as a permitted use in all single-detached residential neighbourhoods**

This option would see Garden Suites allowed in all single family zones on the condition that all stated requirements were met. Both Washington State and California State have legislated that municipalities allow Garden Suites in all their single-detached zones promoting them as a low-impact tool to increase the housing stock. The advantage of this approach is that it treats all zones equally, and is equally accessible to all single family homeowners. Negatively, Single family zones vary so considerably in Maple Ridge that certain zones or areas would be quite unsuitable to host Detached Garden Suites (e.g. R-3, Special Amenity Residential District zone with 213 sq.m minimum lot area compared to RS-1b, One Family Urban Residential zone with 668 sq.m lot area).

**b) allow as a use in select land use zonings**

This option would see Garden Suites allowed only in certain single family zones subject to satisfying prescribed criteria. Maple Ridge currently employs such an approach with Secondary Suites. The advantage of this approach is that it would likely avoid the potential problems that would result in the smaller single family zones like R-3 (Special Amenity Residential District) and R-1 (Residential District) and could aid in focusing Garden Suites into preferred areas.

**c) allow as a use in specific areas only**

This option allows Garden Suites, but only in specific areas, even within a specific zone. This approach has been

employed by the Town of Cary in North Carolina, where they only allow Garden Suites in their downtown core as a tool to curb sprawl and instead promote downtown infill. The advantage to this option is that it can dovetail nicely with any policies that target growth in certain areas, or direct Garden Suites away from unsuitable areas without restricting an entire zone. The disadvantages are that such an approach will require research and rationale for each choice, separate mapping which details where Garden Suites are allowed and may complicate implementation and monitoring processes. This approach also does not provide for this form of housing on large lots outside of a specified area and would be a missed opportunity for densification.

**d) allow as a use in its own separate zone**

This option would permit Garden Suites as a unique residential zone. Any property owner may apply for this zoning change, but each is required to go through a rezoning process. Cities of Surrey and Nelson have each created specific zones for their Coach houses. Requiring a rezoning process is viewed as a barrier for properties in built-out neighbourhoods due to the cost and time for the owner and may bring in personal grudges between neighbours during the public hearing. The advantage to this approach is that municipality can focus on Detached Garden Suites in new development as it is much easier for a developer to apply for a zoning change for an entire development than it is for existing properties to individually apply for a zoning change.



# Other Considerations

## Application and Fee Processes

Application and permitting fees may serve as another constraint on Garden Suites or they can serve to encourage the concept. The amount of time required to assess an application has a direct effect on the costs to the property owner. Therefore many cities hoping to promote Garden Suites typically focus first on streamlining the application process which is shortest when Rezoning and Development Permits are avoided. A Building Permit processing time ranges from 6 to 10 weeks, among the municipalities reviewed. Application and Permit fees are required in most municipalities in order to recuperate the costs of plan checking and inspection. In their model ordinance, Cobb and Dvorak (2000) recommend that total fees for Garden Suites should not exceed 30% of those charged for houses in single family neighbourhoods. This is an older study done and one may argue that discounted fees may be offered to encourage only first time builders. Other consideration would be whether we need to double the utility fees (water, sewer, etc.) for single family houses hosting a Detached Garden Suite on their property. In Maple Ridge, roughly 1000 houses hosting a Secondary Suite do pay higher utility fees.

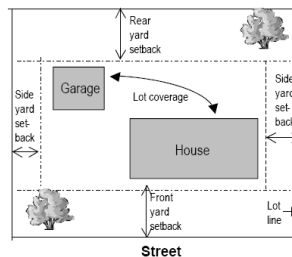
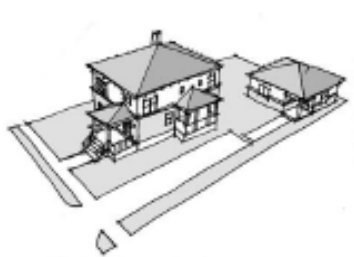
## Outside Financial Assistance

Certain programs exist that will financially assist homeowners that wish to pursue Garden Suites. One good example is the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP) by Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation which offers

financial assistance to low-income seniors and disabled adults to create a second dwelling unit to rent on their property. If the loan exceeds \$ 25,000, a mortgage will be registered against the property and if it is less than that, only a Promissory Note is adequate as loan security.

Assistance is in the form of a fully forgivable loan which does not have to be repaid provided the owner adheres to the conditions of the program. The maximum loan available varies in accordance to the geographic zone in which the property is located: Zone 1: Southern areas of Canada \$24,000/unit ; Zone 2: Northern areas of Canada \$28,000/unit and Zone 3: Far northern areas \$36,000/unit  
A 25% supplement in assistance is available in remote areas.

Processing time for this loan is about 6 to 8 weeks and the eligible costs include all reasonable costs related to the creation of a new self-contained suite (e.g. labor, materials, legal fees, building permits, certificates, drawings, specifications, taxes, etc.)



## Issues for further discussion

In municipalities that have implemented Garden Suites most problems encountered stemmed from a lack of discussion regarding certain crucial issues. The following section briefs the most common issues facing municipalities so that the District may properly address these in advance of the Detached Garden Suite Policy and Bylaw creation.

# POINTS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

Researched literature and municipalities have identified important points to address before implementing a Garden Suite strategy.

## Resident Response

Often, residents express concern about Garden Suites - how such units in their neighbourhood will affect their property values, about the additional activity and noise of additional people, or worry about the transient nature of renters who will “destabilize the neighbourhood”.

Response: Some municipalities restrict the number of units which may be added into a neighbourhood so to keep a tight hold on how quickly a neighbourhood may change. Many, though, do not place such restrictions, as research suggests that only 1 in every 1000 single-detached homes elects to add a Garden Suite (Hare, 1991). Regardless, community acceptance is integral to ensure long-term viability for Garden Suites, a point noted by many municipalities. In some cases, this is done through a rezoning process public hearing; in other communities, they have community notices or kitchen meetings. Municipalities in Ontario require what they term “neighbourhood tea parties” wherein there is the opportunity for neighbours to gain further information, ask questions, and express concerns with applicants and planning staff present, yet in a less formal manner than a confrontational public meeting. Other municipalities, such as Nova Scotia’s Tantramar District and Washington’s Mercer Island, require a notice be sent out to all neighbours within a certain proximity (approximately a 100 feet radius) detailing the proposed dimensions and site plan; neighbours are then given the opportunity to formally comment on the proposal. The City of Mercer Island passes any pertinent concerns on to decision-makers, though the City notes that the instance is extremely rare when a comment is not a case of misinformation or disapproval of the concept in general. Mercer Island replies to all comments and, in certain cases, provides correct information to respondents. While a conscientious approach, it does add to the workload of municipal staff significantly.

Another effective way to mitigate negative response from neighbourhoods is community consultation and involvement before the policy/bylaw is adopted. Involving residents in open house sessions about strategic policies and/or a design charade about guidelines for neighbourhood compatibility may serve to ease anxieties about how Garden Suites are going to fit into the neighbourhood.

## Additional Parking

Those opposed to Garden Suites are often concerned about more cars parking on the neighbourhood streets, affecting the function of the neighbourhood. If adequate parking space is not properly addressed when implementing Garden Suites, the noticeable difficulties may outweigh the benefits of Garden Suites.

Response: Most municipalities with Garden Suites require one additional off-street parking space for the additional unit.

A larger problem with ensuring adequate parking is that no regulation currently exists to limit the number of vehicles that a resident may own; therefore, streets may perhaps already be overloaded with vehicles from only the main dwelling units. In addition, even though a property may provide the required number of off-street parking spaces, it is entirely possible that the spaces would be used for storage and the cars parked on the street regardless.

## Privacy

Though it is unlikely that privacy would become an issue in the large lot suburban and rural residential zones, Garden Suites have the potential to negatively affect the sense of privacy in the smaller urban single family neighbourhoods. Privacy in ones yard is an essential characteristic of a single family neighbourhood. In North Vancouver, a lack of explicit guidelines about appropriate size, lot siting, and screening has incited a backlash towards such a housing type in single family neighbourhoods. In Kelowna, lack of consideration about privacy led to the approval of second-storey balconies, which had direct sightlines into neighbouring backyards.

Response: Factoring in open private space is now required by a few municipalities (including Kelowna) after recognizing that both the main dwelling unit and the Garden Suite need to be assured of yard space that is private and usable. Limiting the height of the unit and allowing only ground-oriented units with proper side, rear and front setbacks could solve most problems.

Stipulating explicit screening requirements could serve as an important tool in protecting neighbour privacy. Advanced work with a landscape architect could aid in anticipating what green space configurations would work on a property to maintain a sense of privacy that corresponds with the characteristics of a single family residential neighbourhood.

## Neighbourhood Aesthetics

Beyond the potential demographic change, neighbourhood residents often express concern about detached Garden Suites fitting in visually with the neighbourhood surroundings. Units that are too large in scale, or architecturally incongruent with surrounding dwellings, could adversely affect the look of the neighbourhood, as could additional parking spaces eating up front yard green space. The physical look of a Garden Suite is often the deal-breaker with residents – if this unit does not fit well into its surroundings, residents are not forgiving and will likely resist the entire concept (as witnessed in North Vancouver).

Response: Concerns about maintaining a neighbourhood aesthetic can be addressed through very simple and clear development standards and design guidelines. Most municipalities require units to be similar in style and proportionate to the property's main dwelling unit; requiring these units to have similar building materials, rooflines, and colours as the main house will go far to maintain a sense of continuity with the neighbourhood aesthetic. However challenges could be with older housing stock which does not have much of a character or appearance that is pleasing to the eye. Design Proto-types could help in such situations in acquiring quality and consistency.

In areas with a strong visual neighbourhood character, such as heritage neighbourhoods, detached Garden Suites must be given careful consideration and detailed design guidelines could be established to avoid Garden Suite designs that would adversely affect the integrity of the area's heritage.

## Owner Occupancy

It is often the case that when landlords do not occupy the house, they may feel no responsibility in maintaining the neighbourhood's character. As a result, renters can be hastily chosen and any complaints from neighbours poorly handled. Neighbouring residents also express concerns about the potential lack of property maintenance on such properties.

Response: Absentee Landlords are a concern not only with second units – there is nothing in the Zoning by-law that precludes a homeowner from renting the main dwelling unit, which fosters situations similar to the ones expressed by Garden Suite opponents.

Regardless, including an “owner occupancy” requirement may help to alleviate the number of problems with Garden Suites. Certain municipalities, such as Mercer Island, have stated that owner occupancy is the pivotal factor in the success of their Garden Suite strategy, and the Maple Ridge Fire and Bylaw Departments have emphasized the need for such a clause should this housing option be implemented. However, enforcement of any such regulation is often the determining factor. As mentioned earlier in this report, mechanisms for requiring owner occupancy would need to be discussed with the District solicitor.

## Approval Process

Should approval processes be complicated, drawn-out, or quite expensive, homeowners interested in building Garden Suites may decide against implementing them. Nelson's drawn-out rezoning process resulted in two Garden Suites approved during the twelve-year existence of the Bylaw. This does not mean, however, that Garden Suites will not be built, but rather a problem may develop where these units are built illegally. Unknown residences create problems for fire departments and school boards, who are then unable to properly plan and implement their services.

Response: Mitigating factor is approving Garden Suites as a permitted use rather than through a rezoning or development process and simple and clear design guidelines could be considered.

## Monitoring and Enforcement

Once a strategy such as Garden Suites is implemented, enforcement is the remaining challenge. The Bylaws department has expressed concern with the ramifications of having two separate dwelling units on one property, and whether this will affect certain restrictions that currently only apply to one household (e.g. current maximums of three dogs, two uninsured vehicles, etc.).

Response: For all intents and purposes, Bylaws which address maximums will apply to the entire lot. Periodic monitoring of detached Garden Suites would be optimal, as a monitoring program could address issues of maintenance and other problems before they are brought to the By-laws department as complaints and also serve as future reference to improve enforcement strategies.



# Conclusions

## General Conclusions

- Metro Vancouver approves of allowing Garden Suites in the Rural Residential RS-2 (One Family Suburban Residential) and RS-3 (One Family Rural Residential) zones.
- The Agricultural Land Commission does not approve of allowing Garden Suites to be built on land within the Agricultural Land Reserve, unless they are built above existing garages. A detached form would require a Non-Farm Use approval. Code approvals will also be required.
- In general, the physical characteristics of most single family zones in the Zoning Bylaw appear to be conducive to accommodating detached Garden Suites provided siting is achieved.
- In some areas, infrastructure will be a limiting factor, particularly those that are on private services and/or areas with aged sewage systems. Planning the site to have easy access to utilities can save money by avoiding the necessity of digging long trenches. This can be easily done in newer single family developments by looking at the development of both the units simultaneously.
- The Maple Ridge Fire Department supports introduction of detached Garden Suites, as it feels confident that occupant safety and fire access issues can be properly addressed.
- Owner-occupancy is considered a key factor to the success of detached Garden Suites.

## Best Practices

- Early and consistent consultation with stakeholders helps to mitigate the potential contentious nature of Garden Suites in single-detached residential neighborhoods. This could be done through Open House sessions before and after Bylaw preparation.
- Clear and simple design guidelines and requirements will offer proper information to Maple Ridge residents interested in building a detached Garden Suite.
- Consistency throughout the jurisdiction is preferred when approving detached Garden Suites (Building Permit approvals).
- Visual examples and site plan prototypes do much to guide Garden Suite designs. In case of the City of Santa Cruz, California they have proved to be important tools to achieve success.
- Considering resource consumption (cost of energy, water, maintenance) as an important factor in calculating life-costs of construction would help choose more sustainable building materials. Making some initial investment in energy-efficient design and materials which contribute to the “Net Community Gain” would result in lower life-cycle costs.
- Encourage the use of alternative “green” building materials and the possibility of offering incentives that promote alternative energy sourcing, green design, and environmentally progressive building materials.
- There is not one specific municipality that stands out as a ‘best practice’ for Maple Ridge; however, the Santa Cruz ADU program is a particularly successful one and their manual is an excellent resource.



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Town of Cary, North Carolina. Land Development Ordinance, Chapter 5.3.4(A) Accessory Dwelling Units.

Catawba County, North Carolina. Zoning Ordinance, Section 515.195 Accessory Dwelling Unit/Guest House.

City of Chilliwack, British Columbia. Zoning By-Law, Section 6.02 ss7, Accessory Dwelling Unit: Section 14.10, CD-10 Comprehensive Development-10 Zone.

City of Enumclaw, Washington. Municipal Code, Section 18.06.050 Detached Accessory Buildings.

Town of Falmouth, Maine. Zoning and Site Plan Review Ordinance, Section 5.22.1 Accessory Dwelling Units.

City of Issaquah, Washington. Municipal Code, Section 18.07.450 Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs).

City of Kent, Washington. Kent Zoning Code Section 15.08.350 Accessory Dwelling Unit Regulations

City of La Grande, Oregon. Land Development Code, Article 5.9 Accessory Buildings.

City of Lake Forest Park, Washington. Municipal Code, Chapter 18.50.050 Accessory Dwelling Units.

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City of Talent, Oregon. Zoning Ordinance, Article 28 Accessory Dwelling Units.

## Municipalities Researched

The following municipalities were researched in order to provide context and comparison. Since very few municipalities have implemented Garden Suite strategies identical to Maple Ridge's proposed strategy, municipalities were chosen for their relevance in one of three factors

- similar legislation (all municipalities in BC with similar strategies)
- implementation of zoning bylaw/ordinance requirements for similar structures
- relevant situations with useful lessons learned

All municipalities' zoning bylaws were researched as well as any information sheets or building checklists detailing Garden Suite requirements.

Municipalities marked with an asterisk (\*) are those that participated in dialogue about their experiences with Garden Suites.

### British Columbia

City of Surrey  
City of Vancouver  
City of North Vancouver\*  
District of Anmore\*  
City of Chilliwack\*  
Municipality of Whistler  
City of Kelowna\*  
City of Nelson\*

### Washington and California

Mercer Island, WA\*  
Enumclaw, WA  
Issaquah, WA  
Kent, WA  
King County, WA  
Lake Forest Park, WA  
Shoreline, WA

Snoqualmie, WA  
Clark County, WA  
Santa Cruz, CA\*  
San Carlos, CA

### Elsewhere in Canada

Calgary, AB\*  
Hamilton, ONT

Guelph, ONT  
Burlington, ONT\*  
Oakville, ONT  
Parkland, AB

Moncton, NB

Elsewhere in United States  
Talent, OR

Catawba, NC  
Falmouth, ME  
Bedford, NY  
Santa Fe, NM

## **CANADA**

The vast majority of Garden Suites in Canada are small portable dwellings intended for use by a relative. These Garden Suites are typically pre-fabricated homes that are rented by families for temporary use. Garden Suites installed in Canadian demonstration projects range in size from 49 to 60m<sup>2</sup>. Exceptions to this type of accessory dwelling are detached secondary suites and coach houses (found predominantly in British Columbia). Both these types of units are intended to be rented out to a single person or a couple.

### **Ontario**

In 1993, the Province of Ontario passed Bill 90 which granted all municipalities in Ontario “the power to authorize the temporary use of a Garden Suite” (Ontario Government Bill 90, 207.2). Yet granting municipalities the power to do so has not resulted in widespread implementation of Garden Suites. Many municipalities have chosen to restrict, or not allow, the usage of Garden Suites in their Official Community Plan.

As Garden Suites are intended to be temporary, most municipalities in Ontario grant temporary use permits for Garden Suites and require the smallest lot areas, usually no more than 300m<sup>2</sup> or the minimum lot area for the zone.

### **British Columbia**

There are not many instances of Garden Suites in British Columbia; instead, there are coach houses or detached secondary suites. Typically, coach houses and detached secondary suites are regulated by the municipality in the same manner as attached secondary suites; however, detached suites are regarded differently than attached suites in the eyes of the BC Building Code, (these suites are subject to sections addressing additional single family dwellings).

In certain instances, municipalities will not allow detached suites but will grant a variance for a coach house on a case-by-case basis.

### **United States of America**

American examples are predominantly from cities in the states of Washington and California. The high number of Garden Suites in these cities is due to very high housing prices and state legislation in the two states, requiring cities to allow Garden Suites as a permitted use. The state of California has legislated Garden Suites. However, although all cities are required to permit them, requirements for Garden Suites vary considerably amongst cities in each state.

Some cities in other states have implemented similar strategies; as these are cities that have chosen to allow Garden Suites (rather than required to do so), their ordinances are typically less restrictive. However, their reasons for implementing Garden Suites are diverse.