



## Administration Report

**Report Date:** May 8, 2013  
**Meeting Date:** May 13, 2013

**To:** City Manager  
**From:** Manager of Development Services  
**Subject:** Secondary Suites Public Consultation Process

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### PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with a summary of the community consultation completed with regards to secondary suites and provide Council with the next steps in considering policy change on secondary suites.

### SUMMARY

- Council has directed Staff to bring forward policy amendments to secondary suites for their consideration.
- Consultation regarding secondary suites has included thus far a survey, workshop, information flyer, webpage populated with information, open house, presentation to neighbourhood associations and the affordable housing action group.
- Staff is now in process of researching a few policy options that resulted from consultation to date and drafting amending bylaws.

### STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Local Government Act – Section 879

### COUNCIL POLICY

Official Community Plan No. 1630, 2007  
Zoning Bylaw No. 1662, 2009

### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

Community Health and Safety: Affordable Housing.

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None at this time

### BACKGROUND

#### Summary of Consultation to Date

Staff has undertaken a number of projects and actions related to housing and secondary suites over the past few years which are listed in the following table.

| Date            | Event   |
|-----------------|---|
| 2009            | Completed an affordable housing needs assessment  |
| May 2010        | Completed a secondary suites survey   |
| Sept 29<br>2010 | Held Affordable Housing Fall Workshop   |
| Oct 2010        | Council received report on secondary suite policy considerations  |
| Oct 2011        | City obtained funding for an Affordable Housing Strategy  |
| 2012            | Numerous groups contacted through Affordable Housing Strategy Research and development.   |
| 2012            | Council reaffirmed direction to review policy and to consult public   |
| 2012            | Information flyer prepared and distributed to City residents; link to City web page with additional information.                        |
| Nov 2012        | Held an open community meeting on the Affordable Housing Strategy   |
| Feb 2013        | Presentations to the South Quesnel Neighbourhood Association, North Quesnel Neighbourhood Association, Affordable Housing Action Group. |

As a whole most people seemed to support the general concept of legalizing suites to ensure proper permits and utility billing are in place. However there were some issues identified that Staff feel can either be addressed in the policy amendments or through education.

Through the consultation exercises noted above Staff identified the following areas of concern around secondary suites:

- 1) Safety;
- 2) Parking;
- 3) Pets;
- 4) Utilities; and
- 5) Property maintenance.

**Safety** issues were expressed regarding existing ‘illegal’ suites and desire to bring them up to a certain standard and around a perceived increase in traffic that would be associated with secondary suites. Staff will be recommending that the City use the policy change process to promote and educate the public on safety. Information will be available for what the standard safety features are for a secondary suite are (checklist for key features available for the public and on our website (for example exit doors, bedroom windows, HVAC dampers). We will encourage prospective tenants to inquire at City Hall as to whether a building permit was obtained for the suite.

Staff will bring forward for Council consideration incentives such as waiving building permit fees for two years for new suites and/or for bringing existing suites up to current code if owners desire.

**Parking** is seen as issue primarily from the perspective of increasing parking on the street and to a lesser extent the issue of increasing the number of vehicles and area of parking on a lot. Parking was repeatedly mentioned as a concern by the Neighbourhood Associations. It was also noted that many houses in North Quesnel do not have off street parking or adequate off street parking

Staff feel that the existing parking requirements are sufficient but will look into the City’s policies around street parking to determine what changes could be considered to ensure parking on street is not convenient for secondary suites.

**Pets:** It was identified that the City recently brought controls on the number of domestic animals and that it should be ensured this is maintained. In other words there was a fear that having a suite would allow the

doubling of animals on a lot. Staff will ensure that the regulations are clear that having a suite does not increase the number of animals per property.

**Utilities:** Some people believe paying duplex rates for a house with a suite is fair, some think it should be less. Staff will review options for changes to utility rates for suites and provide recommendation to Council for discussion.

**Property maintenance** was identified as a concern and especially thought to be an issue where absentee landlords are concerned. It was identified by some that requiring that the owner of the property be an occupant would alleviate many of their concerns.

Staff has concerns regarding the enforcement of this type of policy but do recognize that this is a policy a number of communities have utilized. Prior to bringing amending bylaws to Council, direction on whether or not owner occupancy is a desired requirement is requested. Staff is currently researching and will bring a review of other community's experiences with the proposed bylaws for consideration.

### **Public Consultation for Bylaw Amendment Consideration**

Secondary suites are commonly identified as the most sensitive issue in B.C. communities. This has proven true in our community as well. As such it is important that the City ensure that the process in amending policy continues to be open and transparent.

The City's current policy allows Council to spot zone for secondary suites on a case by case basis in single dwellings. To change this secondary suite policy to allow in all single dwellings without a spot zone an amendment to the Official Community Plan and Zoning bylaw are required

In order to amend the Official Community Plan Council must first determine if appropriate consultation with persons, organizations and authorities it considers be affected has taken place (Section 879 Local Government Act). If not further consultation direction should be provided. Staff recommends making this determination once amending bylaws are brought forth.

Once Council is satisfied with the consultation then it must go through bylaw adoption procedures which will include (Sections 882 and 890 Local Government Act);

- 1) Receiving amending bylaws for consideration;
- 2) a first reading;
- 3) consideration of the plan amendments in conjunction with the City's financial plan and waste management plan;
- 4) hold a public hearing on the proposed official community plan;  
- (public hearing must be advertised in at least two consecutive newspapers)
- 5) provide third reading and adopt.

#### **Recommended Timeline:**

June 3 – Receive Staff report recommending policy changes for discussion

June 10 - Receive proposed bylaw amendments for consideration and advise on any further public consultation deemed appropriate

Sep 9 – Provide First Reading

Sept 23 – Public Hearing

### **ATTACHMENTS**

None

## **OPTIONS**

Council may take any of the following options:

- 1) Identify future consultation options Council deems necessary.
- 2) Receive for information and request Staff to bring forth policy changes for Council consideration.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

***THAT COUNCIL*** receives for information the City Planner's report on public consultation for secondary suite policy amendments.