

Fix It First

1. Find the suites that already exist. (neighbors, bylaw, Rentfaster ads, census, Kijiji)
2. Start enforcing the rules for suites in zoned areas first. They have no reason to not legalize based on zoning (there is nothing stopping them).
When only 3 % of suites in the city are legal, work on the other 97% first. Don't add more to the mix before you have a WORKING system in place for the ones that already exist.

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3. Suites need to be “secondary”. That implies there is a primary homeowner living in the home and the suite is truly “secondary”. No duplexes or double rentals.

Mayor’s position on suites in last election:

Make them a permitted use in all R-1 neighborhoods with 3 conditions:

1. They are built and approved to current building codes.
2. There must be reserved off-street parking spot (waived if within 500 m of an LRT station)
3. **The home must be the primary residence of the homeowner.**

Abbotsford example

- Abbotsford has a proactive program to seek out illegal suites.
- A bylaw enforcement officer checks newspapers for rentals and drives through neighbourhoods to look for signs of secondary suites, and then checks to see whether they are registered.
- If not, a bylaw enforcement officer contacts the owner to make them aware that they have to register the suite.
- If a suite is discovered, the owner has two choices – either register the suite or remove it.
- To register an existing suite owners pay \$550. An inspector comes out to ensure major code items are dealt with. Fire separation is the primary concern.
- To decommission a suite the city charges a \$60 fee. A qualified electrician is required to disconnect the 220 outlet and cover it over with metal. Inspection must also confirm removal of the stove and range hood and any barriers between the suite and the rest of the home.
- A new suite in a new or existing home costs \$250 to register and is required to be built to code. Owners with secondary suites pay an extra \$250 per year for utilities.
- **Owner must sign an annual affidavit swearing that he owns and occupies the property.**
It is a legal statutory declaration.

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4. Create a registry of legal suites. Create a demand for this. Landlords will want to be included, tenants will want to see it. Make it possible to track the legal suites.
5. Start a licensing / sticker program. Annual renewal provides a way of monitoring them, as well as a means of compliance and enforcement. Provides a way of getting rid of the “bad” ones. “Good” suite landlords won’t find this onerous.

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6. Carrot or stick approach? There have to be penalties for suites that are non-compliant, otherwise you penalize the ones that do everything correctly and spend money to do so.

If you start enforcing the rules, you are more likely to get some compliance.

When 97% are not legal, existing penalties or rules are likely not being applied or enforced.



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7. Hire some bylaw officers specifically for secondary suites. Fund them partly through permits, license fees. Put aside funding for them, recognizing that suites cost the city nothing while providing tens of thousands of homes without additional infrastructure or building requirements.

If we are going to have 16,000 suites in the city, this is more than a small town. Create a bylaw team to monitor them and enforce the rules for them.

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8. If homeowners saw a working system with licensing, bylaw enforcement, homeowners living in the property, most concerns would be alleviated. There would be a lot less resistance towards suites.

When we don't see any controls or monitoring of "bad" suites, we have to object to all of them.

This is not NIMBYism, it is proactive awareness.

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9. Rezoning 4 Wards is not the answer.

Councillor Andre Chabot: rather than forcing secondary suite zoning on neighbourhoods that don't want it, the city should start by cleaning up the rental stock it already has. Many properties in Calgary are zoned correctly for secondary suites, but haven't been built to proper safety code. In many cases, property owners are simply unaware their suite is illegal.

“We've got 120,000 properties that currently have the appropriate zoning in the city,” Chabot said. “Why don't we maximize on those existing properties that have the appropriate land use before looking at a more broad-based approach in the city as a whole.”