

Rosedale Development Permit Committee

The Mayor and Councillors of the City of Calgary

Calgary, Alberta

Dear Mayor and Councillors,

The Rosedale Community Association and its residents are opposed to the amendments that have been proposed to the bylaw that governs secondary suites in the City of Calgary. We have surveyed our residents, and the answer we received was a clear “no” to the amendments as proposed.

Our reasons for opposing the proposed bylaw include the following.

One, although we support the goal of safe housing for Calgarians, the argument that the “legalization” of secondary suites in Wards 7, 8, 9 and 11 will ensure safety is mistaken. Legalization does not ensure or enhance safety. Legalization does not mean that some or all of the currently existing but arguably unsafe illegal secondary suites will be brought to Code and registered.

The short of it is that the prerequisite to registration of any sub-Code illegal secondary suite is the owner’s substantial investment of money to bring the suite to Code. In our view, that financial investment is the real barrier to secondary suite safety, and not the allegedly cumbersome approval process.

That said, we are not opposed to the improvement of a permit application system that some say is invasive, onerous and massively inefficient. The process can be corrected for those neighbourhoods suited to stranger-occupied secondary suites without applying new substantive rules to neighbourhoods like ours that are unsuitable to and have rejected stranger-occupied secondary suites.

Two, although we support the goal of accessible and affordable housing for Calgarians, the argument that the “legalization” of secondary suites in Wards 7, 8, 9 and 11 will lead to accessible and affordable housing is mistaken. As previously stated, the cost to owners of bringing sub-Code secondary suites to Code so that they may apply to the City can only result in increased rents corresponding to the substantial financial investments entailed by upgrading. Any new secondary suites will entail substantial conversion investment by the owner; the result, again, will be market rents. Market rents in Calgary’s inner city are not affordable rents.

Indeed, the City’s own projections are that the “legalization” of secondary suites in Wards 7, 8, 9 and 10 will not change the populations within those wards significantly. In other words, this “legalization” will not result in any significant increase to housing stock in those Wards.

Three, although we support the proposition that home owners should be able to provide housing for elderly parents, other family members and care-givers, there is nothing in the current bylaw that prevents such housing. It is therefore disrespectful and wrong to invoke the rights of owners to provide housing for family members and caregivers as a reason why the proposed bylaw amendments should go forward.

The key distinction being overlooked is this: secondary suites are about completely separate accommodations occupied by strangers. Where there is an existing relationship between the owner of the main home and the occupant of the nearly-separate living accommodation, a completely independent and separate secondary suite is likely unnecessary. If a fully independent suite is required for a family member there should be accommodations within the bylaw for this purpose without necessitating a complete zoning change as is proposed.

Four, we believe that the substantial existing stock of notoriously illegal secondary suites speaks to the City's lack of resources or lack of will to police those illegal suites. This is particularly troubling when the proponents of "legalizing" secondary suites consistently invoke the safety issue as a reason for the proposed "legalization." Logically, the only secondary suites that will be newly licensed under the proposed bylaw changes will be those that conform to Code. Those secondary suites that do not now comply with various Codes will remain illegal, and the associated safety concerns will remain.

Assuming that safety is and has been a pressing issue in relation to some or most illegal secondary suites, Calgarians had and have the right to expect a vigorous enforcement of *the existing law*. The proponents of "legalizing" secondary suites seem to say that there will be more enforcement efforts with respect to non-Code secondary suites because of "legalization." This argument is illogical. Unsafe unregistered secondary suites will remain and the City will be further under-resourced as it struggles to police both the increased housing stock that proponents of the amended bylaw say will result (but see above re the City's prediction of no significant increase to housing stock) and those secondary suites that remain unregistered.

Five, we believe that the lifting of lot size and suite size restrictions will jeopardize tenants in older housing stock, possibly with grandfathered secondary suites, because of the constant risk of the property being sold for redevelopment. Any new stranger-occupied secondary suites will be a developer-driven phenomenon tending towards non-resident owners. Those few individuals with the resources to purchase a lot in our neighbourhood for construction of their personal residence will not be planning on sharing their back yard with an arm's length (stranger) tenant.

Six, secondary suites were disallowed in this community more than 30 years ago, which is a lifetime in terms of ownership. Current resident owners have reasonably relied on the neighbourhood's R1/RC1 zoning because of the character and standards that are protected by the R1/RC1 designation. None of those owners ever thought they would be able to install stranger-occupied secondary suites, and all of those owners have relied on the R1/RC1 designation to protect their property values.

Properties with stranger-occupied secondary suites are likely to be owned by non-residents, which means that the neighbourhood will be compromised in its ability to directly enforce community

standards of upkeep of properties including cleaning of sidewalks. Rosedale residents will be forced to resort to Bylaw Enforcement on a regular basis which will mean the expenditure of more rate-payer resources. We know that Bylaw Enforcement is already over-burdened.

Seven, the proposed bylaw amendments provide no significant upside for anyone in our community. The amendments do entail clear downsides, and will constitute a further barrier to entry to home ownership in this community because of the developers who will, predictably, swoop in and outbid traditional buyers, doubling the number of built units on each lot without having to make a case for legal subdivision.

We are also in agreement with Councillor Chabot's editorial that appeared in the May 7th edition of the Calgary Herald.

As a community, we have said "no" to a proposal that brings no benefit to our community and threatens to do us harm at the same time. Please respect our wishes by voting against the Bylaw changes that are coming before you on Monday, May 11, 2015.

Sincerely,

The Community of Rosedale Executive Committee

Rosedale, Calgary

Cc: Rosedale Executive Secretary and members of the Rosedale Development Permit Committee