

NO: R240

COUNCIL DATE: November 15, 2010

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council** DATE: **November 15, 2010**
FROM: **General Manager, Planning and Development** FILE: **3750-15**
SUBJECT: **Secondary Suites - By-law Amendments and Policies**

RECOMMENDATION

The Planning and Development Department recommends that Council:

1. Receive this report as information;
2. Approve the directions, conditions and limitations as described in this report in relation to allowing one secondary suite per single family dwelling and instruct staff to take such further actions as are necessary to implement the said directions, conditions and limitations, including, where necessary, further reports to Council complete with recommendations; and
3. Authorize the City Clerk to bring forward for the required readings and to set a date for the related public hearing, amendments to Surrey Zoning By-law 1993, No. 12000 (the "Zoning By-law") as documented in Appendix "A" to this report, that, if adopted, will allow a "secondary suite" as a permitted use in each of those zones that currently allow "single family dwelling" as a permitted use.

INTENT

The purpose of this report is to obtain Council approval:

- of a framework to legalize one secondary suite per single family dwelling;
- for Zoning By-law and other policy amendments to allow for one secondary suite per single family dwelling;
- to proceed with a public education and information program in relation to allowing one secondary suite per single family dwelling
- to introduce appropriate fees in relation to secondary suites relative to the demand that such suites place on City infrastructure and services; and
- to develop a process for identifying where "manor houses", being multi-family residential buildings, would be appropriate to locate, and to develop a new zone(s) to permit such a housing form.

BACKGROUND

At its Regular Meeting on December 14, 2009, Council received Corporate Report No. R235, which provided an update on the process leading to a Housing Action Plan for the City. Stakeholders in consultation sessions conducted for the Housing Action Plan identified secondary suites as a key issue to be addressed.

Secondary suites support the City's affordable housing goals by providing ground-oriented rental housing for a range of tenants and a "mortgage helper" for homeowners in relation to making home ownership more affordable. Suites also provide flexibility as family and household compositions change; however, unauthorized suites may be a source of tension between neighbours and may not offer safe accommodation or security of tenure for tenants, or security of rental income for homeowners who are dependant on this income for mortgage payments.

A review of secondary suite policies in other Metro Vancouver municipalities found that all other municipalities now have a general policy of widely permitting secondary suites, subject to various conditions appropriate to each community's context.

In June, 2010 staff retained Ipsos Reid to gather reliable and representative public opinion to inform policy development on secondary suites. A statistically significant random telephone survey was conducted between June 28 and July 6 and a web-based survey was hosted on the City's website from June 28 to July 16. The telephone survey found an overall level of 63% support for a policy of permitting one secondary suite in all single family homes in the City. Council was informed on June 7, 2010 of the survey questions by way of Corporate Report No. R134 and of the survey results on July 26, 2010 by way of Corporate Report No. R184. A copy of Corporate Report No. R184 is attached as Appendix "B".

During its Regular Meeting on July 26, 2010, Council endorsed a broad policy direction of permitting one secondary suite per single family dwelling subject to the conditions outlined in Corporate Report No. R184. During that same meeting, Council authorized staff to proceed to develop detailed policies and implementation strategies in consultation with the Secondary Suites Focus Group, the public and other stakeholders, for Council's consideration and approval.

The Secondary Suites Focus Group includes representation from the following organizations:

- Greater Vancouver Home Builders' Association;
- Surrey Ratepayers Association;
- West Panorama Ridge Ratepayers Association;
- Fleetwood Community Association;
- Surrey Association for Sustainable Communities; and
- Fraser Heights Community Association.

Consultation on policies and strategies to implement the secondary suite policy direction were carried out with:

- the Secondary Suite Focus Group at three meetings in September and October;
- the Development Advisory Committee; and
- staff from each of the City Departments that has an interest in aspects of secondary suite policy implementation.

DISCUSSION

Based on the above-referenced consultation, the following areas need to be addressed in the implementation strategies related to permitting secondary suites in single family dwellings:

- Zoning and policy amendments;
- Public education and information program;
- Utility and community impact fees;
- Approach for multiple suites and multi-family residential buildings; and
- "No suites" neighbourhoods.

Each of these areas is addressed separately in the following sections of this report.

Zoning and Policy Amendments

Secondary suites are currently permitted, under certain conditions, in the following residential zones:

- Single Family Residential Secondary Suite (RF-SS) Zone;
- Single Family Residential (12) Coach House (RF-12C) Zone;
- Single Family Residential (9) Coach House (RF9-C) Zone; and
- Special Single Family Residential (RF-9S) Zone.

To permit one secondary suite per single family dwelling, amendments to the Zoning By-law will be necessary. The use "Secondary suite" will need to be added as a permitted use in the following single family residential and agricultural zones that currently permit a "single family dwelling":

- General Agriculture (A-1) Zone;
- One-Acre Residential (RA) Zone;
- Acreage Residential Gross Density (RA-G) Zone;
- Half-Acre Residential (RH) Zone;
- Half-Acre Residential Gross Density (RH-G) Zone;
- Cluster Residential (RC) Zone;
- Single Family Residential Oceanfront (RF-O) Zone;
- Single Family Residential (RF) Zone;
- Single Family Residential Gross Density (RF-G) Zone;
- Single Family Residential (12) (RF-12) Zone;
- Single Family Residential (9) (RF-9) Zone; and
- Comprehensive Development Zones (CD) that permit a single-family dwelling.

This amendment in each of these zones does not mean that all single family residential properties in the City will automatically be permitted a legal secondary suite. This relates to the fact that some single family dwellings are on lots that are covered by a Land Use Contract ("LUC"), a Building Scheme and/or a Restrictive Covenant that prohibits a secondary suite. Each application for a secondary suite will need to be reviewed for such restrictions.

Where a LUC does not permit secondary suites, the owner of a lot covered by the LUC may apply for a partial discharge of the LUC on the lot that he/she owns.

If a Building Scheme registered against the title of a lot prohibits a secondary suite on the lot, the owner of the lot must obtain the consent for an amendment to the Building Scheme from all other property owners that are party to the Building Scheme.

If a Restrictive Covenant registered against the title to a property, to which the City is a party, prohibits a secondary suite on the lot, the City may agree to an amendment to the Restrictive Covenant to eliminate the prohibition.

The Zoning By-law currently sets the following conditions for a secondary suite in a single family dwelling:

- the home must be owner-occupied;
- only one secondary suite is permitted per single family dwelling;
- a secondary suite is prohibited in conjunction with a coach house; and
- a home with secondary suite must provide one additional off-street parking space.

It is recommended that these conditions remain in place.

The City Policy Manual currently contains several policies which are intended to act as a guide as to where secondary suites should not be legalized; however, the policies were adopted well over a decade ago and, in consideration of the number of secondary suites in neighbourhoods throughout the City, no longer reflect the needs of the City. To permit secondary suites more broadly across the City, certain City policies will need to be repealed.

Public Education and Information Program

The legalizing of secondary suites in existing single family dwellings and permitting them in new single family dwellings will require a comprehensive public education and information program that is available in multiple languages and multiple forms (plain language written materials, dedicated telephone information line, web content, mail-outs, etc.).

The public education program should provide information on secondary suites, as follows:

- To Homeowners and Home Builders on:
 - the process for constructing legal suites;
 - realistic cost considerations in meeting BC Building Code safety standards; and
 - implications of maintaining an illegal suite.
- To Prospective Renters and Homebuyers on:
 - homes that have met safety standards and have been issued a building permit for a secondary suite; and
 - homes that have been constructed as "suite-ready" and where a secondary suite may be added without costly retrofitting.

One focus in legalizing secondary suites is to encourage suites in new construction to meet the safety standards in the BC Building Code. Recording information in the City's Building Division database on the status of each single family dwelling with respect to any secondary suite that is contained within the dwelling and making this information available to consumers will encourage informed decision-making and safe construction practices.

Utility and Community Impact Fees

Under the City's Secondary Suite Cost Recovery Strategy, utility fees are collected from known secondary suites, whether they are permitted by zoning or not. In 2009, secondary suite utility fees were collected from approximately 14,400 homes with unauthorized suites (those not conforming to the Zoning By-law and/or not constructed with the necessary permits). In 2009, the secondary suite utility fee was \$695 per year for homes without water meters and \$106 per year for homes with water meters. For water-metered homes, water and sewer utility fees are based on the metered consumption, so the separate secondary suite utility fee of \$106 reflects only fees related to garbage and recycling collection.

Since 1998, all new homes that have been constructed in Surrey have a water meter. The City's Volunteer Water Meter Program provides older non-metered homes with the opportunity to have a water meter installed free of charge. It is recommended that one of the conditions that an owner would need to satisfy to legalize a secondary suite would be a requirement to install a (free) water meter for the property within which the secondary suite is proposed to be (or is) located.

In the Ipsos Reid telephone survey of Surrey residents, 81% of respondents agreed with the approach of charging homes with suites an additional utility fee to offset the higher cost of City services. Secondary suites bring with them an increased number of people living in single family dwellings with the consequent impact on the use of City amenities and increased demand on services. These impacts need to be assessed with a view to introducing appropriate secondary suite fees to reflect the demand that they place on City amenities and services.

Approach for Multiple Suites and Multi-Family Residential Buildings

Council's direction is that one secondary suite be permitted in conjunction with a single family dwelling in each zone in the Zoning By-law that permits a single family dwelling as a permitted use. There are no provisions for multiple "secondary suites" in a single family dwelling under the BC Building Code. Consequently, current practice in Surrey is for By-laws & Licensing Services to initiate a process to eliminate multiple suites from any single family dwelling where multiple suites are known to exist. The process is a responsive one, where communication takes place between staff and the property owner to ensure adequate time is provided for tenants to find new accommodation. Given the absence of provisions in the BC Building Code for multiple dwelling units within a single family dwelling, the practice of initiating closure of "multiple suites" on a complaint-driven basis will be continued by staff. Staff will continue to provide a sufficient period of time to allow existing tenants to find alternative affordable accommodation.

A key aspect in the efforts to eliminate multiple suites from single family dwellings is public education. Materials will be prepared in multiple languages and across a range of media that will explain the rationale and process for closing multiple suites in single family homes. These materials will explain the consequences of maintaining multiple suites, the transition period for phasing out these suites and the housing options that are being developed to replace multiple suites. In addition, the City will work with the Fraser Valley Real Estate Board (FVREB) to prevent the marketing of single family houses as multiple-suite income properties. The FVREB has indicated its support for such a partnership.

In parallel with efforts to close multiple suites with an appropriate transition period, staff will develop new residential zones that will permit the construction of "manor house" units in appropriate locations. These "manor houses" would contain multiple-dwelling units that are similar in scale and "look" to a single family house, and could be built on smaller parcels than would be typical for a townhouse or apartment project. These structures would be built to the standards of the BC Building Code and provide affordable rental units. A neighbourhood planning and consultation process will be initiated to determine the most appropriate locations for this housing type.

"No Suites" Neighbourhoods

Some neighbourhoods may be opposed to permitting secondary suites within their neighbourhood area. In such instances residents of those neighbourhoods could petition the City and propose additional conditions to the basic secondary suite policy that would be applicable to a defined neighbourhood area. Such a mechanism already exists and has been successfully used by neighbourhoods to maintain the form and character of their neighbourhoods within the City. Following this same process, a petition could be brought to the City to rezone a defined neighbourhood area to a Comprehensive Development Zone in which secondary suites are not permitted.

Comparison to the Approach Taken by Other Municipalities

The directions, conditions and limitations as proposed in this report reflect what are viewed as the best practices of other municipalities in the Region in relation to the process of authorizing a "secondary suite" use in single family dwellings.

Legal Services Review

Legal Services has reviewed this report and are satisfied.

SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

The development of implementation strategies and detailed policies to allow for one secondary suite per single family dwelling in the City responds to a number of the socio-cultural goals contained in the Surrey Sustainability Charter, in particular:

- SC9—Adequate, Appropriate and Affordable Housing; and
- SC12 – Adapting to Demographic Change.

CONCLUSION

Secondary suites are a reality in most neighbourhoods in Surrey and represent a significant share of the rental accommodation in the City. Suites provide affordable, ground-oriented housing for tenants, and provide a "mortgage helper" for homeowners in relation to making home ownership more affordable. Secondary suites are found on a Region-wide basis and almost every local jurisdiction in the Region permits suites in most single-family homes.

The Surrey Zoning By-law currently permits secondary suites in several zones, but the majority of secondary suites are found in zones where they are not currently permitted. The Zoning By-law amendments and policy changes recommended by this report take a measured and pragmatic

approach to permitting secondary suites in most single family dwellings in the City. Neighbourhoods that do not want secondary suites will have an option to address their interests.

Multiple secondary suites in a single-family dwelling will not be permitted, but in eliminating such multiple secondary suites staff will continue to be sensitive to the needs of the tenants and landlords by providing a transition period during which tenants will be able to relocate to alternative affordable housing. A new "manor house" zone is proposed to be made available to provide another affordable housing option in appropriate locations.

Public education and communications are an integral part of the implementation process for legalizing second suites more broadly across the City and materials will be developed to educate homeowners, prospective homeowners, renters and homebuilders on the processes and requirements for constructing and maintaining legal secondary suites.

Secondary suites impose added burdens and costs on the City in relation to infrastructure and services. Annual cost recovery fees are proposed to be charged on properties that contain a secondary suite. The implementation of the proposed secondary suite policy may also require additional staff resources, particularly in the areas of by-law enforcement and building permits and building inspections. The resources required to implement Council's direction will be the subject of a future Corporate Report.

Based on the above discussion it is recommended that Council:

- Approve the directions, conditions and limitations as described in this report in relation to allowing one secondary suite per single family dwelling and instruct staff to take such further actions as are necessary to implement the said directions, conditions and limitations including where necessary further reports to Council complete with recommendations; and
- Authorize the City Clerk to bring forward for the required readings and to set a date for the related public hearing, amendments to the Zoning By-law, as documented in Appendix "A" to this report, that, if adopted, will allow a "secondary suite" as a permitted use in each of those zones that currently allow "single family dwelling" as a permitted use.

Original signed by
Jean Lamontagne
General Manager,
Planning and Development

DL:HC:saw

Attachments:

Appendix "A" - Proposed Amendments to Surrey Zoning By-law, 1993, No. 12000

Appendix "B" - Corporate Report No. R184

**Proposed Amendments to
Surrey Zoning By-law, 1993, No. 12000, as amended**

The following amendments are proposed to Surrey Zoning By-law, 1993, No. 12000, as amended:

AMENDMENTS TO PART 1 DEFINITIONS

1. Density – Unit

Amend the definition of "Density – Unit" as follows:

After the words "total number of *dwelling units*" and before the words "constructed or proposed", insert the words "excluding *secondary suites*".

2. Dwelling – Single Family

Delete the definition of "Dwelling – Single Family" in its entirety and replace it with the following new definition:

"Dwelling – Single Family

means a detached *building* used for residential purposes that consists of one *dwelling unit*, and where permitted by this By-law, one *secondary suite*."

3. Secondary Suite

Amend the definition of "Secondary Suite" as follows:

After the words "means a secondary *dwelling unit*, located within" and before the words "an owner-occupied *single family dwelling*", delete the words "the structure of".

AMENDMENTS TO PART 4 GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. Bed and Breakfast and Boarding and Lodging

Insert a new Sub-section B.2(d) as follows:

"(d) The *bed and breakfast* use and *boarders* or *lodgers* are not permitted in a *building* containing a *secondary suite*."

AMENDMENTS TO AGRICULTURAL ZONES

1. Part 10 A-1 Zone

Amend Section B.2 after the words "One *single family dwelling*" by inserting the words "which may contain one *secondary suite*".

Amend Section J by deleting the phrase "Not applicable to this Zone." and replacing it with the following:

"1. A *secondary suite* shall:

- (a) Not exceed 90 square metres [968 sq.ft.] in floor area; and
- (b) Occupy less than 40% of the habitable floor area of the *building*."

2. **Part 11 A-2 Zone**

Amend Section J by deleting the phrase "Not applicable to this Zone." and replacing it with the following:

"1. A *secondary suite* shall:

- (a) Not exceed 90 square metres [968 sq.ft.] in floor area; and
- (b) Occupy less than 40% of the habitable floor area of the *building*."

AMENDMENTS TO RESIDENTIAL ZONES

1. **Part 12 RA Zone**

Amend Section B.1 after the words "*One single family dwelling*" by inserting the words "*which may contain one secondary suite*".

Amend Section J by inserting the following:

"2. A *secondary suite* shall:

- (a) Not exceed 90 square metres [968 sq.ft.] in floor area; and
- (b) Occupy less than 40% of the habitable floor area of the *building*."

2. **Part 13 RA-G Zone**

Amend Section B.1 after the words "*One single family dwelling*" by inserting the words "*which may contain one secondary suite*".

Amend Section J by deleting the phrase "Not applicable to this Zone." and replacing it with the following:

"1. A *secondary suite* shall:

- (a) Not exceed 90 square metres [968 sq.ft.] in floor area; and
- (b) Occupy less than 40% of the habitable floor area of the *building*."

3. **Part 14 RH Zone**

Amend Section B.1 after the words "One *single family dwelling*" by inserting the words "which may contain one *secondary suite*".

Amend Section J by deleting the words "Not applicable to this Zone." and replacing with the following:

"1. A *secondary suite* shall:

(a) Not exceed 90 square metres [968 sq.ft.] in floor area; and

(b) Occupy less than 40% of the habitable floor area of the *building*."

4. **Part 15 RH-G Zone**

Amend Section B.1 after the words "One *single family dwelling*" by inserting the words "which may contain one *secondary suite*".

Amend Section J by deleting the phrase "Not applicable to this Zone." and replacing it with the following:

"1. A *secondary suite* shall:

(a) Not exceed 90 square metres [968 sq.ft.] in floor area; and

(b) Occupy less than 40% of the habitable floor area of the *building*."

5. **Part 15A RC Zone**

Delete Section B.1 and replace with the following:

"1. One *single family dwelling* on an individual lot, which may contain one *secondary suite*.

Insert a new Section J as follows and renumber accordingly:

"J. **Special Regulations**

1. A *secondary suite* shall:

(a) Not exceed 90 square metres [968 sq.ft.] in floor area; and

(b) Occupy less than 40% of the habitable floor area of the *building*."

6. **Part 15B RF-O**

Amend Section B.1 after the words "One *single family dwelling*" by inserting the words "which may contain one *secondary suite*".

Amend Section J by deleting the phrase "Not applicable to this Zone." and replacing it with the following:

"1. A *secondary suite* shall:

(a) Not exceed 90 square metres [968 sq.ft.] in floor area; and

(b) Occupy less than 40% of the habitable floor area of the *building*."

7. **Part 16 RF Zone**

Amend Section B.1 after the words "One *single family dwelling*" by inserting the words "which may contain one *secondary suite*".

Amend Section J by inserting the following:

"2. A *secondary suite* shall:

(a) Not exceed 90 square metres [968 sq.ft.] in floor area; and

(b) Occupy less than 40% of the habitable floor area of the *building*."

8. **Part 16A RF-SS Zone**

Delete Section J.2 and replace it with the following:

"2. A *secondary suite* shall:

(a) Not exceed 90 square metres [968 sq.ft.] in floor area; and

(b) Occupy less than 40% of the habitable floor area of the *building*."

9. **Part 17 RF-G Zone**

Delete Section B.1 and replace it with the following:

"1. One *single family dwelling*, which may contain one *secondary suite*."

Amend Section J by deleting the phrase "Not applicable to this Zone." and replacing it with the following:

"1. A *secondary suite* shall:

(a) Not exceed 90 square metres [968 sq.ft.] in floor area; and

(b) Occupy less than 40% of the habitable floor area of the *building*."

10. **Part 17A RF-12 Zone**

Amend Section B after the words "one *single family dwelling*" by inserting commas and the phrase ", which may contain one *secondary suite*,".

Amend Section J by deleting the phrase "Not applicable to this Zone." and replacing it with the following:

"1. A *secondary suite* shall:

(a) Not exceed 90 square metres [968 sq.ft.] in floor area; and

(b) Occupy less than 40% of the habitable floor area of the *building*."

11. **Part 17B RF-12C Zone**

Amend Sub-section B.2(a) after the words "One *secondary suite*" by deleting the words "where the *lot* is an interior *lot*".

Amend Section J by deleting the phrase "Not applicable to this Zone." and replacing it with the following:

"1. A *secondary suite* shall:

(a) Not exceed 90 square metres [968 sq.ft.] in floor area; and

(b) Occupy less than 40% of the habitable floor area of the *building*."

12. **Part 17C RF-9 Zone**

Amend Section B after the words "one *single family dwelling*" by inserting commas and the phrase ", which may contain one *secondary suite*,".

Amend Section J by inserting the following:

"3. A *secondary suite* shall:

(a) Not exceed 90 square metres [968 sq.ft.] in floor area; and

(b) Occupy less than 40% of the habitable floor area of the *building*."

13. **Part 17D RF-9C Zone**

Amend Sub-section B.2(a) by italicizing the words "secondary suite".

Amend Section J by inserting the following:

"3. *A secondary suite shall:*

(a) Not exceed 90 square metres [968 sq.ft.] in floor area; and

(b) Occupy less than 40% of the habitable floor area of the *building*."

14. **Part 17E RF-9S Zone**

Amend Sub-section B.2(a) by italicizing the words "secondary suite".

Amend Section J by inserting the following:

"2. *A secondary suite shall:*

(a) Not exceed 90 square metres [968 sq.ft.] in floor area; and

(b) Occupy less than 40% of the habitable floor area of the *building*."



CORPORATE REPORT

NO: **R184**COUNCIL DATE: **July 26, 2010****REGULAR COUNCIL**

TO: **Mayor & Council** DATE: **July 26, 2010**

FROM: **General Manager, Planning and Development** FILE: **3750-15**

SUBJECT: **Public Opinion Survey Results and Policy Direction on Secondary Suites**

RECOMMENDATION

The Planning and Development Department recommends that Council:

1. Receive the summary of the results of a public opinion survey on secondary suites;
2. Endorse a broad policy direction with the goal of permitting one secondary suite per single family home, subject to conditions and limitations as outlined in this report; and
3. Based on the above broad policy direction, authorize staff to develop detailed policies and implementation strategies in consultation with the Secondary Suites Focus Group, the public and other stakeholders for Council's consideration and approval.

INTENT

The purpose of this report is to update Council on the results of a public opinion survey on secondary suites conducted for the City by Ipsos Reid, and to recommend a broad policy direction related to secondary suites for Council's consideration.

BACKGROUND

At its Regular Meeting on December 14, 2009, Council received Corporate Report No. R235. This report provided an update on the process leading to a Housing Action Plan for the City. One of the key issues identified by stakeholders in consultation sessions conducted for the Housing Action Plan was secondary suites in single family dwellings. A comprehensive review of policies on secondary suites in other municipalities around the region was conducted. This review revealed a general permitting of secondary suites throughout the region, with various conditions and restrictions appropriate to each community's context.

To gather reliable and representative public opinion to inform policy development on secondary suites, the City retained Ipsos Reid to conduct a statistically significant telephone survey of Surrey residents from across the entire City and a companion web-based survey. A Secondary Suites Focus Group, including representation from neighbourhood associations and community groups was also assembled to provide input into the survey. On June 7, 2010, Council received Corporate

Report No. R134 and provided comments to staff that resulted in further refinements to the survey.

That Corporate Report noted that the Mayor has established a Housing Focus Group to consider and make recommendations regarding adjustments that the City should consider in relation to its by-laws, policies and regulations related to single family housing, including the matter of secondary suites. The Focus Group includes representation from the following organizations:

- Greater Vancouver Home Builders' Association;
- Surrey Ratepayers Association;
- West Panorama Ridge Ratepayers Association;
- Fleetwood Community Association;
- Surrey Association for Sustainable Communities; and
- Fraser Heights Community Association.

The Focus Group endorsed the subject survey. The survey that was conducted is documented in Appendix I. The Focus Group has discussed the recommendations of this report.

The random telephone survey was conducted between June 28 and July 6, while the web-based survey was hosted on the City's website and remained open from June 28 to July 16.

DISCUSSION

Survey Participation

The telephone survey included 1,200 randomly selected households from across Surrey, with allocation quotas in each of four geographical areas (South Surrey, Cloverdale, Newton/Fleetwood and Whalley/Guildford). This survey was conducted in English but survey respondents were provided the option of a "call back" Punjabi language survey. Of the 1,200 telephone surveys completed 1,141 were conducted in English, and 59 in Punjabi. The telephone survey yielded statistically valid data with a margin of error of +/- 2.8% based on the stratified random sample design and the number of surveys conducted.

The web-based survey was open to any resident of Surrey and was accessible through a link displayed prominently on the City's homepage. The web survey was advertised widely in local print media and on posters at City recreation centres and libraries. This survey was available in the four most common languages spoken in Surrey households being: English, Punjabi, Tagalog (Philippines) and Korean. By the time the web survey closed on July 16, over 1,500 surveys had been completed online. Detailed tabulation and a summary of the web survey results are on-going. While the results of the web survey are not considered to be statistically valid, the survey provided an opportunity for wide community participation and input.

The surveys were designed to:

- measure overall levels of support among Surrey residents for permitting secondary suites in single-family homes;
- probe the reasons that residents either support or do not support the general permitting of suites;
- gauge support for various potential components of a secondary suites policy; and

- determine patterns of public opinion on suites, by areas of the City, demographic categories and type of residence.

Telephone Survey Results

The telephone survey results, as summarized by Ipsos Reid, are documented in Appendix II.

Key findings of the survey include:

- An overall level of 63% support for a policy of permitting one secondary suite in all single-family homes in the City. Such a policy would be in line with most other municipalities in Metro Vancouver, including Delta, which is currently proceeding with approval of a policy to allow one secondary suite in all single family homes;
- There is some variation in support for suites between different communities in the City (from a high of 65% in Newton/Fleetwood to a low of 57% in South Surrey);
- The main reasons stated for supporting suites are related to making homeownership more affordable and providing affordable rental housing; and
- The main reasons for not supporting wider permitting of suites are related to parking issues, general congestion/crowding, traffic congestion and concerns about equitable payment of property taxes and utility charges.

In terms of attitudes about positive aspects of secondary suites:

- 90% of respondents agreed (either "strongly" or "somewhat") that suites help to make homeownership more affordable;
- 88% agreed that suites can help families stay together, either by helping children or elderly parents with their housing needs;
- 81% agreed that secondary suites are a good way of providing affordable rental housing;
- 74% agreed that suites help to provide an added level of security; and
- 65% agreed that suites are a good way of providing for increased density in neighbourhoods without changing neighbourhood character.

In terms of attitudes about negative aspects of secondary suites:

- 85% of respondents agreed that suites put more pressure on available on-street parking;
- 79% agreed that more suites will increase traffic congestion on local streets;
- 60% agreed that households with secondary suites do not contribute fairly through utility fees and/or property taxes; and
- 49% agreed (and 50% disagreed) that secondary suites have a negative impact on the "look and feel" of local neighbourhoods.

In response to various possible regulations regarding secondary suites:

- 89% of respondents agreed that homes with suites must provide an additional parking space on their lot;
- 81% agreed with the approach of charging homes with suites an additional utility fee to offset higher costs of City services;
- 81% agreed that secondary suites should be brought up to building code standards or be closed;

- 75% agreed that the owner(s) of the property should live in the home that contains a secondary suite;
- 69% agreed that single family homes should be restricted to only one secondary suite each;
- 49% agreed (and 49 % disagreed) that suites should only be permitted in some neighbourhoods;
- 48% agreed (and 51% disagreed) that all new single family homes should require "rough in" plumbing and electrical to permit future suite conversion that meets the building code; and
- 47% agreed (and 52% disagreed) that some neighbourhoods could be eligible for multiple suites per home, if specifically approved by Council.

Of the respondents to the survey:

- 74% owned their own home (this is in keeping with the 75% homeownership level in Surrey according to the Census);
- 62% lived in single-family homes (compared with 66% according to the Census);
- 21% of respondents indicated that there was a secondary suite in their home (18% with one suite, 3% with two suites in the home); and
- 11% of respondents indicated that if permitted it was either "definitely" (2%), "very likely" (3%) or "somewhat likely" (6%) that they would install a secondary suite in their home. Further analysis of the data is needed to determine whether these respondents also already live in a home with a suite.

Web Survey

The final web survey results are still being summarized by Ipsos Reid, since the survey closed on July 16, 2010. However, based on preliminary results, the pattern of responses is similar to that of the random telephone survey, with some notable differences, including:

- The web survey was completed by a higher proportion of owners of homes (90%) than the random telephone survey, and by a higher proportion of people living in single detached homes (80%);
- Opinions on support for a policy permitting one secondary suite in all single family homes was more polarized in the web survey. In the web survey 41% "strongly supported" allowing secondary suites in all single family homes and 34% "strongly opposed" such a policy. The corresponding percentages in the random telephone survey were 29% "strongly support" and 21% "strongly oppose" this policy;
- Overall levels of support for allowing one secondary suite in all single family homes was lower in the web survey, with a total of 55% support in the web survey, rather than 63% support in the random survey.

Staff will further analyze the results of both surveys as detailed policy is developed in consultation with the community as recommended in this report.

Policy Direction

Based on the results of the public surveys and on consultation with stakeholders and the Secondary Suites Focus Group, the following broad policy direction on secondary suites is recommended for Council's consideration:

"Permit one secondary suite in all single family homes in the City, subject to a number of conditions and restrictions, including:

- *Prohibiting multiple suites in a house, along with a transition strategy for phasing out circumstances that currently exist where homes contain multiple suites and the development of "triplex" and other zones such as fee simple row housing with the goal of creating a wider range of housing options in Surrey;*
- *Requiring the registered owner of a home with a secondary suite or a coach house to reside on the premises;*
- *Prohibiting 1 additional secondary suites on properties where zoning already allows for a coach house or a secondary suite;*
- *Requiring a home with a secondary suite to provide an additional off-street parking space;*
- *Requiring a home with a secondary suite to pay appropriate utility fees to offset the added costs of City services; and*
- *Ensuring existing secondary suites comply with life safety Building Code requirements, along with a transition strategy for bringing existing suites into compliance.*

In addition, the policy direction is to include a mechanism for neighbourhood groups wanting to propose additional conditions to the basic suites policy that would apply only within a specific area.

The policy will be accompanied by an education and communication plan, and by a strategy to ensure effective compliance and enforcement of the policy."

If Council endorses this broad policy direction, more detailed policy and implementation strategies will be developed in consultation with stakeholders and the Secondary Suites Focus Group. These detailed policies will then be presented to Council for consideration in the context of the Housing Action Plan, along with any necessary amendments to City by-laws and/or Council-adopted policies.

SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

The public opinion survey and subsequent policy development related to secondary suites responds to a number of the socio-cultural goals contained in the Surrey Sustainability Charter, in particular:

- SC9—Adequate, Appropriate and Affordable Housing; and
- SC12 – Adapting to Demographic Change.

CONCLUSION

The telephone survey and the companion web-based survey on secondary suites were designed to gather reliable and representative public opinion on the issue of more widely permitting secondary suites in the City. The survey results show general City-wide support for a policy direction of permitting one secondary suite per single family house, subject to a number of conditions and limitations, along with mechanisms to ensure compliance and the ability for neighbourhoods to propose additional conditions that apply only in a particular area. Such a policy is in line with those in virtually every other municipality in the region. The results confirm that suites are seen as an important part of an affordable housing strategy, and that issues of parking and congestion need to be carefully addressed.

Based on the above discussion it is recommended that Council:

- Receive the summary of the results of a public opinion survey on secondary suites;
- Endorse a broad policy direction with the goal of permitting one secondary suite per single family home, subject to conditions and limitations as outlined in this report; and
- Based on the above broad policy direction, authorize staff to develop detailed policies and implementation strategies in consultation with the Secondary Suites Focus Group, the public and other stakeholders for Council's consideration and approval.

Original signed by
Jean Lamontagne
General Manager,
Planning and Development

DL:saw

Attachments:

Appendix I City of Surrey Secondary Suite Survey

Appendix II Ipsos Reid Report

City of Surrey Secondary Suite Survey

Hello, this is _____ calling from Ipsos Reid, a professional public opinion research firm. We are not selling anything. Today we're talking to a random sample of Surrey residents about issues affecting your community. Please be assured that this survey is completely confidential.

(IF NECESSARY, ADD: The survey will take about 8 minutes to complete.) (INTERVIEWER NOTE: If inconvenient timing, schedule a call back).

May I please speak with the person in your household 18 years of age or older who most recently had a birthday? Is that you?

Yes **[CONTINUE]**

Don't know **[ASK AGAIN, IF STILL DK/REF THEN THANK AND TERMINATE]**

No

May I speak to that person? **[READ INTRODUCTION]**

A. First of all, do you or does anyone in your household work for **(READ LIST)?**

[RANDOMIZE]

The City of Surrey

An advertising agency

The media, that is a radio or TV station or a newspaper or magazine

A market research firm

[ALWAYS LAST] (DO NOT READ) None

[IF 'NONE' IN QA, CONTINUE. OTHERWISE, THANK & TERMINATE.]

B. To confirm, do you live in the City of Surrey?

Yes

No

[IF 'YES' IN QB, CONTINUE. OTHERWISE, THANK & TERMINATE.]

C. Which of the following best describes the community you live in? **(READ LIST – STOP READING WHEN ANSWER PROVIDED)**

[RANDOMIZE]

Cloverdale

Fleetwood

Guildford

Newton

South Surrey

Whalley/City Centre

[IF 'DK/REF' IN QC, THANK & TERMINATE.]

D. RECORD GENDER (DO NOT ASK)

Male
Female

SUPPORT FOR SECONDARY SUITES

This survey is about secondary suites, also known as basement suites. A secondary suite is a separate, self-contained living space located within the structure of a single family home.

Currently, secondary suites are not permitted in the majority of residential zones in the City of Surrey. However, secondary suites are permitted in some zones if the property is properly zoned and the homeowner has obtained the appropriate building, plumbing, and electrical permits.

1. Prior to this survey, were you aware that secondary suites are permitted in some zones in the City of Surrey?

Yes
No

2. Do you generally support or oppose allowing secondary suites in all single family homes in the City of Surrey, including in your neighbourhood? (Is that strongly or somewhat support/oppose?)

Strongly support
Somewhat support
Somewhat oppose
Strongly oppose

[IF 'STRONGLY/SOMEWHAT SUPPORT' IN Q2, ASK Q3. OTHERWISE, SKIP TO Q4.]

3. Why do you support allowing secondary suites in all single family homes in the City of Surrey? Any other reasons? [ACCEPT 2 MENTIONS]

[IF 'STRONGLY/SOMEWHAT OPPOSE' IN Q2, ASK Q4. OTHERWISE, SKIP TO Q5.]

4. Why do you oppose allowing secondary suites in all single family homes in the City of Surrey? Any other reasons? [ACCEPT 2 MENTIONS]

ATTITUDES TOWARDS SECONDARY SUITES

[ASK ALL]

5. I'm going to read you some statements about secondary suites and would like you to tell me the extent to which you agree or disagree with each one, using a scale of strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree. The first one is [INSERT ITEM]. How about [INSERT ITEM]? (REPEAT LIST IF NECESSARY)

[RANDOMIZE]

Secondary suites are a good way of meeting the need for rental housing

Secondary suites help make homeownership more affordable for homebuyers

Secondary suites give homeowners who live alone a greater sense of security due to the proximity of a second person in the residence

Secondary suites help families stay together by providing a home for an adult child or elderly relative

Secondary suites put increased pressure on crowded streets where parking is already limited

Secondary suites increase traffic congestion in local neighbourhoods

Secondary suites have a negative impact on the look and feel of local neighbourhoods

Households with secondary suites do not contribute fairly to utility billings or property taxes

Secondary suites are a good way of increasing density without changing the character of neighbourhoods

Strongly agree

Somewhat agree

Somewhat disagree

Strongly disagree

VIEWS ON SPECIFIC REGULATIONS

6. Most municipalities in Metro Vancouver allow secondary suites in most single family homes. However, the bylaws regarding secondary suites vary from municipality to municipality. I'm going to read a number of different restrictions regarding secondary suites. For each one, please tell me if this is something you would support or oppose in the City of Surrey. The first one is [INSERT ITEM]. (Is that strongly or somewhat support/oppose?) How about [INSERT ITEM]? (REPEAT LIST IF NECESSARY)

[RANDOMIZE]

All townhouses are allowed to have one secondary suite

Only single family homes in some neighbourhoods are allowed to have a secondary suite

Single family homes in some neighbourhoods can have more than one secondary suite provided that Council has provided approval for multiple suites in that residence

All new single family homes must have plumbing and electrical rough in for a secondary suite regardless of whether or not the homeowner intends to have a secondary suite

Owners of a single-family home that has a secondary suite must live either in the principal residence or the secondary suite

Secondary suites are prohibited in single family homes which also contain a home-based business such as a daycare

Homes with secondary suites must provide an additional parking space on their lot

Strongly support

Somewhat support

Somewhat oppose

Strongly oppose

7. Homes with secondary suites have a higher utility usage and result in added costs to the City's water, sewer, and garbage services. To help cover these costs, the City of Surrey charges homeowners with a known secondary suite an extra secondary suite utility fee. Do you support or oppose this approach? (Is that strongly or somewhat support/oppose?)

Strongly support
Somewhat support
Somewhat oppose
Strongly oppose

As mentioned, currently secondary suites are only permitted in the City of Surrey in certain zones and if the homeowner has the appropriate building, plumbing, and electrical permits.

8. Would you support or oppose the City of Surrey instructing owners of unauthorized secondary suites to either rezone their property and bring it up to building code standards, or to close down the suite?

Strongly support
Somewhat support
Somewhat oppose
Strongly oppose

INCIDENCE OF SECONDARY SUITES

Changing topics slightly...

9. Do you own or rent your current place of residence?

Own
Rent

10. What type of housing do you currently occupy? **(READ LIST) [ACCEPT 1 MENTION]**

[DO NOT RANDOMIZE]

Single, detached house
Duplex, triplex, or semi-detached
Apartment
Townhouse or rowhouse
Secondary suite

(DO NOT READ) Other [specify] (NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: IF RESPONDENT SAYS 'CONDOMINIUM', ASK: Do you mean an apartment, townhouse, or duplex?)

[IF 'OWN' IN Q9 AND 'SINGLE, DETACHED HOUSE' IN Q10, ASK Q11-Q12. OTHERWISE, SKIP TO Q13.]

11. How many, if any, secondary suites does your home contain? **(RECORD NUMBER)**

[RANGE 0-10]

[IF '0' IN Q11, ASK Q12. OTHERWISE, SKIP TO Q13.]

12. If the City of Surrey decided to allow secondary suites in all single family homes, how likely is it that you would install a secondary suite in your home in the next two years? Would you say **(READ LIST)**?

Definitely will
Very likely
Somewhat likely
Not very likely
Not at all likely

DEMOGRAPHICS

[ASK ALL]

Finally, I just want to ask you some questions for statistical purposes.

13. In what year were you born? **(RECORD YEAR)**

[RANGE 1900 TO 1992]

14. How many years have you lived in the City of Surrey? **(RECORD NUMBER OF YEARS) (IF LESS THAN 1 YEAR, ENTER 0)**

[RANGE 0 TO 100]

15. Which of the following categories best describes your household's income? That is, the total income before taxes of all persons in your household combined? Please stop me when I've reached your category. **(READ LIST)**

Under \$30,000
\$30,000 to less than \$60,000
\$60,000 to less than \$90,000
\$90,000 or more

16. Lastly, in order to know how to classify your responses, can you please provide me with your postal code? **(IF NECESSARY, ADD:** I assure you that this information will remain completely confidential. We only use it for classification purposes.)

On behalf of myself, Ipsos Reid, and the City of Surrey, thank you for helping us to complete this survey!