



## POLICY REPORT DEVELOPMENT AND BUILDING

Report Date: June 10, 2009  
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Meeting Date: June 16, 2009

TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: Director of Planning, in consultation with the Managing Director of Social Development and the Chief Building Official

SUBJECT: Enabling Secondary Suites within Apartments in Commercial Districts, the Downtown District and Southeast False Creek

### RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT, the Director of Planning be instructed to make application to:
- (i) amend Section 2 of the Zoning and Development By-Law to introduce land use definitions for a "principal dwelling unit combined with a secondary dwelling unit", "secondary dwelling unit", and amend Section 10 of the Zoning and Development By-law to specify a minimum dwelling unit size for a secondary dwelling unit (combined with a principal dwelling unit), a maximum of one kitchen and a minimum of one complete bathroom for a secondary dwelling unit (combined with a principal dwelling unit), both generally in accordance with Appendix A;
  - (ii) amend the C-2, C-2B, C-2C, C-2C1 and C-3A District Schedules to enable a secondary dwelling unit combined with a principal dwelling unit in multiple dwellings (apartments) and in mixed-use developments, generally in accordance with Appendix A; and
  - (iii) amend the Southeast False Creek Official Development Plan By-law to encourage secondary dwelling units combined with principal dwelling units in multiple dwellings (apartments) and in mixed-used developments, generally in accordance with Appendix B;

FURTHER THAT the application be referred to a Public Hearing and be approved;

AND FURTHER THAT the Director of Legal Services be instructed to prepare the necessary by-laws, generally in accordance with Appendices A and B, for consideration at the Public Hearing.

- B. THAT subject to approval of the by-laws at the Public Hearing, the by-laws be accompanied at the time of enactment by the Principal Dwelling Unit combined with a Secondary Dwelling Unit Guidelines, generally as outlined in Appendix D to be adopted by resolution of Council.
- C. THAT subject to approval of the amending by-laws, the Parking By-law be amended generally in accordance with Appendix C.

FURTHER THAT the Director of Legal Services be instructed to prepare the necessary amendments to the Parking By-law, generally in accordance with Appendix C.

#### **GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS**

The General Manager of Community Services recommends approval of the foregoing recommendations A to C.

#### **CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS**

The City Manager RECOMMENDS approval of the foregoing.

#### **COUNCIL POLICY**

On June 10, 2008, Council adopted the EcoDensity Charter and approved a set of EcoDensity Actions, including priority Action C-6: More Options for Rental Secondary Suites. That action directs staff to report back on ways to provide more options for rental secondary suites including: "secondary suites in zones where secondary suites are not currently permitted (i.e., apartments)."

Current Council priorities for affordable housing support work on a variety of housing initiatives, including more opportunities for secondary suites.

#### **SUMMARY**

This report proposes zoning amendments to enable secondary suites in apartments and mixed-use developments in commercial districts, in residential areas of the Downtown District and in Southeast False Creek.

While zoning changes in the recent past have enabled secondary suites in conjunction with a single-family house, and more recently in apartments that are part of comprehensive developments (i.e., East Fraser Lands), they have not enabled secondary suites to be provided in apartments in existing zoning districts. The main features of the proposal are:

- The secondary suite is a self-contained unit, smaller than its principal unit, and with a separate external door into a corridor or outside, and a shared internal door which can be locked off;

- Secondary suites are enabled but not required;
- The suite would have a smaller minimum unit size than otherwise currently permitted and livability guidelines would address aspects such as light, privacy and noise;
- The suite would not be allowed to be separately strata titled from its principal unit; and
- No additional parking would be required above what would otherwise be for principal units of this size, but the suites would require bicycle parking.

The proposal responds to the Council priority for affordable housing. Potential benefits of the proposed amendments are:

- More housing choices in areas with close proximity to frequent transit service, community amenities including educational institutions, and the goods and services of daily life;
- More rental opportunities for seniors, students and individuals on lower incomes;
- More opportunity for assistance to the housing unit owner (i.e., mortgage helper);
- More flexibility and long term adaptability in multi-residential building design; and
- Cost effective means to co-locate with family members or caregivers.

Staff has reviewed the proposal with Vision Implementation Committee members on May 14 (these are neighbourhood groups set up after completing a *CityPlan* Community Vision, for follow through on program implementation), and several individual developers regarding feasibility. In addition, two public open houses are scheduled for June 18 and 24 as well as meetings with any other interested groups.

## PURPOSE

This report seeks Council approval to refer zoning amendments to a Public Hearing. The purpose of these amendments is to enable secondary suites in apartment and mixed-use developments in various C (commercial) zones, residential areas of the Downtown and Southeast False Creek, all of which are areas with frequent transit service and capacity for new apartment or mixed-use developments. The amendments are accompanied by proposals for changes in the Parking By-law and adoption of guidelines.

## BACKGROUND

### 1. Housing Initiatives Context

This report on secondary suites in apartments and mixed-use developments is one of several initiatives that involve zoning amendments in line with Council priorities on Affordable Housing and Sustainability, as well as directions contained in the EcoDensity Initial Actions. In addition to secondary suites, Council is considering functional basements and laneway housing. These initiatives enable provision of mortgage helpers, rental opportunities, and a cost effective means to co-locate with close family members (i.e. elderly parents) or caregivers. They provide greater flexibility, affordability and long-term sustainability in the city's housing stock, and do so in a manner that provides little or no visible change in neighbourhoods.

## 2. History of Secondary Suites

A secondary suite is a self-contained dwelling unit which is smaller in area than the principal residence in the same building. Secondary suites (one per house) are permitted in single family areas as well as in single family houses in duplex and apartment zones.

Many recently adopted Council land use policies already facilitate consideration of secondary suites in apartments at the rezoning stage. These include the East Fraser Lands (EFL) Official Development Plan, the Oakridge Centre Policy Statement, the Arbutus Centre Policy Statement and EcoDensity Action A-2: Rezoning Policy for Greener Larger Sites. However, prior to this report, consideration has not been given to permitting secondary suites in existing apartment and mixed-use zoning districts.

## 3. SFU UniverCity Example

At SFU UniverCity, this concept was introduced as part of a large-scale phased development. Inspired by “lock-off” suites commonly used in resort hotel developments, the development includes 25 secondary suites (combined with a principal dwelling unit) designed and built in the first phase. The units sold quickly.

The combination dwelling units were demonstrated in two different housing forms. The Novo 1 development is a 10-storey apartment. Principal dwelling units average 65 m<sup>2</sup> (700 sq. ft.); secondary suites average 18.6 m<sup>2</sup> (200 sq. ft.). All of the 15 secondary suites are rented by students with rents of approximately \$400 per month.

The One University development is a stepped, 7- to 10-storey mid-rise building. The secondary suites are ground level townhouses with principal dwelling units averaging 83.6 m<sup>2</sup> (900 sq. ft.) and secondary suites from 23 m<sup>2</sup> to 37.2 m<sup>2</sup> (250 to 400 sq. ft.). All of the 10 secondary suites are on two levels. Some are rented by couples while others are occupied by extended families, with the primary family living upstairs and the grandparents living downstairs utilizing the separate entry and kitchen arrangements.

## DISCUSSION

Various zoning amendments are proposed to enable secondary suites in apartments and mixed-use developments as outlined below:

- Section 1 - secondary suite description
- Section 2 - the areas of the city for secondary suites in apartments
- Section 3 - secondary suite unit requirements, including unit size

In addition, the following sections propose Parking By-law amendments, draft livability guidelines and discuss other considerations:

- Section 4 - secondary suite parking requirements
- Section 5 - draft guidelines
- Section 6 - no strata titling
- Section 7 - Building By-law considerations
- Section 8 - number of secondary suites per project

- Section 9 - infrastructure, utilities and amenities
- Section 10 - monitoring secondary suites
- Section 11 - public consultation

## 1. Secondary Suite Description

### *Proposal*

The Zoning and Development By-law does not include a definition for a secondary suite with an apartment unit. Currently, development applications cannot be considered for these types of proposals.

To facilitate future consideration, staff proposes zoning amendments that introduce new land use terms and accompanying definitions for “principal dwelling unit combined with a secondary dwelling unit” and “secondary dwelling unit.” Appendix A details the proposed amendment.

### *Rationale*

With new land use terms and definitions in place, this helps to create the opportunity for projects to be built which include some secondary suites in the overall housing mix.

There are several characteristics which differentiate this form of housing from a typical dwelling unit. A secondary suite is combined with a principal dwelling unit. The suite is self-contained and smaller in size than the principal unit. There must be an internal door between the two units, which can be locked off, enabling both units to function independently if need be. The secondary suite can not be a separate strata lot to ensure rental opportunities.

Enabling these secondary suites in an apartment unit does not change the building form as it remains the same general size and shape permitted under the zoning. During the EcoDensity consultation process, suites were considered a form of “invisible” density in terms of their impact on the physical character and appearance of a neighbourhood (as no additional built density is proposed). Yet, they have significant environmental and affordability benefits.

## 2. Areas of the City for Secondary Suites in Apartments

### *Proposal*

Staff proposes adding these suites to three major types of apartments and mixed-use areas where they are not currently allowed: C-2, C-2B, C-2C, C-2C and C-3A Districts (mixed-use) along arterials, residential areas of the Downtown and Southeast False Creek. Appendices A and B detail the proposed amendments.

### *Rational*

Introducing suites into certain C districts will help to create more housing choices along arterials and more rental opportunities for seniors, students and individuals on lower incomes. There is significant unutilized residential zoning capacity in the C districts.

The Downtown District ODP is a broad land use policy, adopted by by-law, which encourages more people to live, work, shop and visit in the downtown. By introducing a new land use and definition for secondary suites into the Zoning and Development By-law, the opportunity is automatically enabled for secondary suites in those Downtown areas which encourage residential use. No amendments are needed for the Downtown District ODP.

The SEFC ODP is a broad land use policy, adopted by by-law, which enables affordability and sustainability through a diversity of housing choices. There are several parcels of land remaining within the boundaries of the Southeast False Creek area which could be redeveloped in the future. Amending the ODP By-law to include a specific reference to defined space for potential rental accommodation (i.e. secondary suites) would encourage future development proposals to be considered at the rezoning stage.

In other areas, many recently adopted Council policies already facilitate consideration of secondary suites in apartments at the rezoning stage. These include the East Fraser Lands Official Development Plan, the Oakridge Centre Policy Statement, Arbutus Centre Policy Statement and EcoDensity Action A-2: Rezoning Policy for Greener Larger Sites.

The RM (apartment) districts are not proposed to accommodate secondary suites in apartments at this time. In 2007, Council adopted the Rental Housing Stock Official Development Plan by by-law for these areas, which means that for developments proposing six or more dwelling units, existing rental units cannot be demolished or converted unless the developer replaces or contributes to replacement of an equal number of rental units; or provides another form of affordable housing.

Provision of secondary suites in apartments would not equate to 1:1 rental replacement housing, nor would it be another form of affordable housing, because the secondary suites are not guaranteed rental. While it is true that the secondary suites would not be allowed to be strata titled separately from their principal unit, they could be used like any secondary suite in a house -- i.e., for a family member (e.g., new baby, young adult, elderly parent) or rented out. It is likely that their use could change over time to reflect the life cycle of the occupant of the principal unit.

Thus, flexibility remains with the owner of the strata lot to rent the suite independently or use the space for their own use. Before this type of housing could be considered for the RM districts, further analysis would be needed to ensure that existing affordable rental housing stock would not be in jeopardy of being demolished.

### 3. Secondary Suite Unit Requirements

#### *Proposal - Minimum Unit Size*

To encourage more affordable housing choices, a lower minimum floor area is proposed for secondary suites in apartments. Staff proposes a zoning amendment which would enable a minimum unit size of 26 m<sup>2</sup> (279.8 sq. ft.) to be considered, which may be relaxed to 19 m<sup>2</sup> (204.5 sq. ft.), if the design and location of the unit provides satisfactory living accommodation, having regard to the type of occupancy proposed. Appendix A details the proposed amendment.

***Rationale***

Current zoning regulations permit a minimum dwelling unit floor area of 37 m<sup>2</sup> (398.3 sq. ft.). Dwelling units may be permitted as low as 29.7 m<sup>2</sup> (319.7 sq. ft.) in area, if the design and location of the unit provides satisfactory living accommodation, having regard to the type of occupancy proposed, most frequently for non-market affordable housing. The current zoning regulations do not enable consideration to be given to secondary suite floor areas below these minima.

The proposed secondary suite outright size of 26 m<sup>2</sup> (279.8 sq. ft.) is smaller than current zoning, but larger than other similar suites shown in Table 1 below. This is largely because the other examples have in-building amenities such as meeting rooms and fitness rooms, as well as being part of a large scale, new comprehensive development. For secondary suites in apartments, this report proposes a relaxation to 19 m<sup>2</sup> (204.5 sq. ft.), which would be based on similar considerations, or other enhanced livability features.

Development permit proposals in the C zones and the Downtown District would be subject to the proposed secondary suite unit size minima. Other projects which involve a rezoning to CD-1, such as the remaining parcels in Southeast False Creek would have greater flexibility in determining a secondary dwelling unit size.

Table 1. Comparison of Minimum Unit Sizes

Location	Minimum Unit Size
Current Zoning & Development By-law provision	37 m <sup>2</sup> (relax to 29.7 m <sup>2</sup> ) - dwelling unit
This report	26 m <sup>2</sup> (relax to 19 m <sup>2</sup> ) - secondary dwelling unit (noting that this report seeks affordability, and at the same time applies to existing zoning schedules with a variety of types of buildings and locations in the city)
SFU UniverCity	24 m <sup>2</sup> (noting that a lower outright size is appropriate because this is a comprehensive rezoning of a large site with many predetermined aspects, including amenities)
EFL (East Fraser Lands)	19 m <sup>2</sup> (noting that this is a large site rezoning as above for SFU)
Recently approved social housing sites	18.6 m <sup>2</sup> (noting that these are units planned with in-building amenities such as lounges on each floor)

***Proposal - Kitchen and Bathroom***

Currently, a self-contained dwelling unit is required to provide at least one complete bathroom unit and no more than one kitchen unit. Staff proposes that zoning amendments be introduced into the appropriate sections of the Zoning and Development By-law. Appendix A details the proposed amendment.

### *Rationale*

These proposed amendments are to ensure that the same provisions are available for a secondary suite.

#### 4. Secondary Suite Parking Requirements

##### *Proposal*

Staff proposes that the introduction of secondary suites would not require any additional parking. This is consistent with the existing Parking By-law, which bases parking requirements on floor area for multi-family developments. This is because experience shows that car ownership is proportional to unit size. Dividing individual units into a primary and a secondary unit is not expected to increase parking demand if no additional floor space is provided.

However, it is proposed that additional bicycle parking spaces be required as it is expected that occupants of the secondary suites will be more likely to use bicycles. Appendix C details the proposed consequential amendment to the Parking By-law.

##### *Rationale*

Ensuring that secondary suites provide no additional parking requirements makes sense because the building is not increasing in size. This approach is consistent with the City's requirements for EFL secondary suites. Also, new, small secondary suites will appeal to people who are less likely to have cars and more likely to travel by transit, by bicycle or by walking. These units are in areas well-served by transit.

A note on parking for laneway housing (LWH) and parking for secondary suites in apartments: Council is receiving two reports at the same Council meeting that includes incentives for new rental opportunities - i.e., this report on permitting secondary suites in apartment buildings, and a report on allowing LWH in single family areas. While the parking recommendations are different in each report, they follow a consistent approach, as follows:

- For the secondary suites in apartments, no additional parking is proposed. This is because the total amount of building on the site is not increasing.
- For LWH, an additional parking space is being proposed versus what would otherwise be required on most sites. This is because the total amount of built space on the site is increasing. Thus, the recommendation for 2 parking spaces means, for most houses, that 1 additional space would be required with the new LWH.

#### 5. Guidelines

##### *Proposal- Livability*

Staff proposes that Council adopt Guidelines (refer to Appendix D) which state development objectives and principles to be taken into consideration in designing secondary suites and would be used to assist both applicants and City staff in developing and evaluating development proposals.



### *Rationale*

In addition to dwelling unit size, residential livability also encompasses a variety of other measures including access to natural light, ventilation (windows) and sound separation. All of these need to be integrated into a project's design. Some, such as natural light and ventilation, are dealt with in the Zoning and Development By-law; others, such as sound separation are in the Building By-law. The guidelines will ensure that a secondary suite is livable, having further regard for these and privacy, sound insulation, security and outdoor space.

## **6. Non Strata Titling**

### *Proposal*

The secondary suite would not be permitted to be defined as a separate strata lot. This objective would be achieved, as a condition of development permit issuance, through the execution of a covenant and registration against the title of the property. This approach is referenced in the Explanatory Note of the draft Guidelines (refer to Appendix D).

### *Rationale*

This approach would encourage affordability and enable the suite's use as either rental housing or family use (i.e., extended family members, caregiver).

## **7. Building By-law Considerations**

### *Proposal*

No by-law changes are needed. However, should Council accept the recommendations contained in this report, the Chief Building Official will issue an explanatory bulletin to assist designers with Building By-law requirements related to this form of housing design.

### *Rationale*

The Building By-law mandates that all apartments be separated from one another by a separation which prevents the spread of fire between units as well as controls the impacts of sound between the units. The objective is achieved through the construction of a typical wall assembly consisting of wood or steel studs, insulation and drywall.

Since the recommendations in the report require all secondary suites to be separated from the principal unit by a wall and have an independent egress door to the common public corridor from both the principal and secondary suite, there are no barriers in the Building By-law to prevent this type of design. As such no amendments are required to the Building By-law. The Building By-law will continue to mandate the appropriate fire and sound separation between the secondary suite and the principal unit in order to ensure a reasonable level of comfort and life safety for persons living in these types of units.

## 8. Number of Secondary Suites per Project

### *Proposal*

This report recommends that the total number or percentage of secondary units permitted for a building not be pre-determined to allow flexibility for secondary suites in all sizes of apartment buildings, including smaller buildings, and to allow the market to determine a feasible mix.

### *Rationale*

SFU and EFL set limits to the number and percent of units with secondary suites. At SFU there is both a minimum and a maximum -- a minimum of 10 units and a maximum amount of 50 percent of total units. EFL limits secondary suites to a maximum of 25 percent of total units. However, in both instances these clauses apply to large scale comprehensive developments, with predetermined size and scale. On the other hand, the proposed secondary suites in this report will be in existing zoning districts notable for a wide variety of building sizes and often smaller buildings with low numbers of total units.

Setting a percentage limit in advance would likely result in inadvertently ruling out what would be very desirable proposals. Staff considered any down-sides to this flexible approach, but felt that in order to move ahead with this initiative, the flexibility is necessary to see what the market can provide. Monitoring will take place to identify how the new zoning is working. In effect, what is being created is the opportunity in a building for what would otherwise have been 2-bedroom units, to be a 1-bedroom with a secondary suite.

Note: While it would be technically feasible to retrofit an existing apartment to include a secondary suite from a Building By-law point of view, it would mean also meeting the Guidelines which may or may not be possible, given window configurations, etc.; and would most likely also require the approval of the strata council. Staff therefore, expect retrofits to be very limited, but would include this in the monitoring.

## 9. Infrastructure, Utilities and Amenities

Infrastructure and utility adequacy should be assessed at the time of the development application to accommodate suites in the locations specified earlier in the report. All development applications, including those buildings with secondary suites, are subject to a Development Cost Levy collected at the building permit stage. These monies help pay for facilities including parks, child day care facilities, replacement housing (social/non-profit housing) and engineering infrastructure.

## 10. Monitoring Secondary Suites

Staff proposes to monitor all development applications for secondary suites in apartments and mixed-use developments in the locations previously specified. Staff will report to Council if further zoning amendments are needed to address identified issues.

## 11. Public Consultation

Many ideas for secondary suites came out of EcoDensity consultation and have been reinforced through the current Council discussions on housing affordability. Staff reviewed the secondary suites in apartments with Vision Implementation Committee members on May 14 (these are neighbourhood groups set up after completing a *CityPlan* Community Vision, for follow through on program implementation), as well as with several individual developers regarding feasibility. Also two open houses are scheduled for June 18 and 24, as well as meetings with any other interested groups so that they are well informed if they wish to participate at the Public Hearing.

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications with respect to City budget, fees or staffing.

### CONCLUSION

This report recommends referral to Public Hearing a package of amendments which include certain sections and District Schedules of the Zoning and Development By-law, together with the Southeast False Creek ODP By-law.

The zoning amendments proposed in this report will help to provide for new options for rental secondary suites in apartment buildings and mixed-use developments. To accomplish this, the zoning amendments enable secondary suites in certain locations of the city and provide a minimum unit size, together with Guidelines (including a reference to non strata titling of the secondary suite) for Council approval as outlined in Appendix D. Consequential amendments to the Parking By-law are also recommended.

The proposed amendments will help to meet Council's priorities for affordable housing by enabling the opportunity for smaller secondary dwelling units that are also livable. As with suites in single family houses, the proposed secondary suites in apartments can increase affordability on two fronts: by providing smaller more affordable rental housing in multi-residential areas; and by assisting homeowners as "mortgage helpers."

\* \* \* \*

DRAFT AMENDMENTS TO THE  
ZONING AND DEVELOPMENT BY-LAW

Note: A By-law will be prepared generally in accordance with the provisions listed below, subject to change and refinement prior to posting.

Section 2 - Definitions

- Principal Dwelling Unit combined with a Secondary Dwelling Unit - a dwelling unit which is a principal residence combined with one secondary dwelling unit which is smaller than the principal residence. Both have separate external access and shared internal access which the owner or occupant of the principal residence is able to lock off from the principal residence.
- Secondary Dwelling Unit - means a secondary dwelling unit referred to in the above definition.

Section 10 - General Regulations

- Secondary Dwelling Unit - minimum floor area of 26 m<sup>2</sup>, however the Director of Planning may permit a lesser floor area of 19 m<sup>2</sup> if the design and location of the Secondary Dwelling Unit provides satisfactory living accommodation, having regard to the type of occupancy proposed.
- A minimum of one complete bathroom unit, comprising one water-closet, one hand wash-basin and one bathtub or shower, contained within each secondary dwelling unit.
- A maximum of one kitchen within each secondary dwelling unit.

C-2, C-2B, C-2C1 and C-3A Districts Schedules - conditional use

- Dwelling Unit, combined with a Secondary Dwelling Unit, in conjunction with any of the outright or conditional uses listed in the relevant C District Schedule;
- Principal Dwelling Unit combined with a Secondary Dwelling Unit in a Multiple Dwelling, provided that the Development Permit Board is of the opinion that the site is suitable for residential use.

C-2C District Schedule - conditional use

- Dwelling Unit combined with a Secondary Dwelling Unit, in conjunction with any of the outright or conditional uses listed in the C-2 District Schedule.

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DRAFT AMENDMENTS TO THE SOUTHEAST FALSE CREEK  
OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN BY-LAW

Note: A by-law will be prepared generally in accordance with the provisions listed below, subject to change and refinement prior to posting:

Southeast False Creek Official Development Plan By-law

- Section 4 - the City encourages housing forms designed with the flexibility to incorporate defined space for potential rental accommodation within a single dwelling unit in order to contribute to a wider range of housing options.

DRAFT CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS  
TO THE PARKING BY-LAW

Note: A consequential amending by-law will be prepared generally in accordance with the provisions listed below, subject to change and refinement prior to posting.

Section 4.2.1.13 (a)

- In Column 1 - add principal dwelling unit combined with a secondary dwelling unit, or for a dwelling unit combined with a secondary dwelling unit, in conjunction with other uses in the following districts: C-2, C-2B, C-2C, C-2C1, C-3A
- In Column 2 - The principal dwelling unit, including the floor area of the secondary dwelling unit is subject to the parking requirement specified in section 4.2.1.13; there is no additional requirement for a secondary dwelling unit. However, a secondary dwelling unit will be considered a separate dwelling unit for the purpose of calculating visitor parking and car-sharing vehicle/space requirements.

Section 6.2.1.2

- In Column 1 - add principal dwelling combined with a secondary dwelling unit, or for a dwelling unit combined with a secondary dwelling unit, in conjunction with other uses in the following districts: C-2, C-2B, C-2C, C-2C1, C-3A
- In Column 2, Class A - add a minimum of 1.25 spaces for every dwelling unit and a minimum of 0.75 spaces for every secondary dwelling unit.
- In Column 2, Class B - add no requirement for secondary dwelling unit.

\* \* \* \* \*

DRAFT PRINCIPAL DWELLING UNIT  
COMBINED WITH A SECONDARY DWELLING UNIT GUIDELINES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

As a condition of Development Permit approval for a **Principal Dwelling Unit combined with a Secondary Dwelling Unit**, the registered owner shall execute a covenant which must be registered against the title of the property prior to issuance of the Development Permit. The covenant is to ensure that the number of strata lots created upon registration of a strata plan is consistent with the number of approved principal dwelling units (i.e., the secondary dwelling unit cannot be defined as a separate strata lot).

**1 Application and Intent**

These guidelines are to be used in conjunction with a district schedule of the Zoning and Development By-law, the Downtown District Official Development Plan or a CD-1 By-law, which permit a **Principal Dwelling Unit combined with a Secondary Dwelling Unit**. These guidelines should be consulted in seeking approval for these conditional uses.

Secondary dwelling units are self-contained units which are smaller than the principal dwelling unit. Each unit must have direct access to a hallway, corridor or the outside, and a shared internal door which can be locked enabling both units to be independent.

The intent of these guidelines is to encourage functional and livable secondary dwelling units which are designed in combination with a principal dwelling unit. These Guidelines are only applicable for development permit applications, and applicants should also refer to the Vancouver Building By-law.

**2 General Design Considerations**

An application for the conditional use of a **Principal Dwelling Unit combined with a Secondary Dwelling Unit** will require approval by the Development Permit Board or the Director of Planning. In the consideration to allow this use, livability will be a primary goal. These guidelines delineate a set of principles for livability which include light and ventilation, privacy, sound insulation, security and outdoor space.

The minimum unit size for the secondary dwelling unit is 26 m<sup>2</sup> which may be further reduced to 19 m<sup>2</sup>. Since livability is directly related to the size of a dwelling unit, units that are smaller than 26 m<sup>2</sup> should compensate for the reduced size and attain the same standard of livability through increased enhancements of the other livability features listed below.

## 2.6 Light and Ventilation

Natural day light and well ventilated spaces are essential to occupant comfort and well-being. Ensuring good day lighting and proper ventilation is an especially important design consideration for secondary dwelling units, owing to their small size and limited window area. For all secondary dwelling units, the entirety of the main living space should be enabled to be bright and naturally lit during the daytime. Secondary suites with two exterior walls are preferred to enable cross ventilation through the unit.

- (a) For all secondary dwelling units that are 26 m<sup>2</sup> or smaller, a minimum of one large window in an exterior wall equal in area to 15 percent of the total floor area of the secondary dwelling unit must be provided. This window should provide a direct line of sight to the exterior from at least 50 percent of the secondary dwelling unit.
- (b) A minimum of two operable vents should be placed as far apart as possible, to facilitate good air flow.
- (c) Design elements such as higher ceilings and reflective light shelves that allow light further into the secondary dwelling unit are encouraged, particularly where there are deeper units. When the principal living area, including the kitchen space, is more than 7.6 m deep, a strategy to provide natural light to the rear portion of the area must be demonstrated.
- (d) If an enclosed balcony is being provided as the outdoor amenity space, then the glazing around the exterior perimeter of the balcony should have maximum transparency from floor-to-ceiling to ensure good day lighting into the remainder of the dwelling unit.
- (e) Inboard, habitable spaces not immediately adjacent to an exterior window and which rely on "borrowed daylight" are discouraged.

## 2.8 Noise

Good sound separation between the principal dwelling unit and the secondary dwelling unit is a key aspect of good livability. While a minimum STC rating is specified for partitions between the principal dwelling unit and the secondary dwelling unit, sound transfer is also possible between adjacent units through operable windows or balconies.

- (a) Care should be taken in the placement of balconies, windows and their operable vents to minimize adjacencies.
- (b) Where casement windows are used, the windows should swing in opposite directions to lessen sound transfer between units.

## 2.9 Privacy

In addition to good sound separation, the physical privacy of the occupant should be considered. Although comfort level and familiarity between co-inhabitants may vary, the room layout should enable privacy concerns between co-habitants to be respected.



- (a) Common points of entry should be located away from the main living/sleeping areas so that direct sight lines are minimized.
- (b) Balconies should be separated and well screened.

### **Safety and Security**

The secondary dwelling unit should be clearly delineated from the principal dwelling unit. Suites should be designed to allow a sense of security and well being.

- (a) Entry doors to the principal and secondary dwelling units that are distinct and separate must be provided.
- (b) Internal doors that connect the principal and secondary dwelling units should be equipped to provide security from each unit.
- (c) Access into the secondary dwelling unit from an adjacent balcony of the principal dwelling unit should not be possible.

### **2.11 Access and Circulation**

The introduction of secondary dwelling units has the potential to increase the number of main entry doors facing a common corridor. This has the potential to create a sense of overcrowding within the corridor and create privacy conflicts between dwelling units. Access to suite entries and the circulation in common areas should be designed to minimize these potential conflicts.

- (a) Primary access to the secondary suite is to be from a common corridor or directly to the outside.
- (b) Where there is direct corridor access, the door should be located as far as possible from the entry to the principal dwelling unit to enhance unit identity and privacy.
- (c) Doors should not align directly with doorways across the common corridor.
- (d) Where doors must be grouped together, the doorways should be recessed approximately 0.6 m from the common corridor.
- (e) Providing generous corridor widths to increase comfort and to distance front entry doors from each other should be considered.

### **3 (Reserved)**

### **4 Guidelines Pertaining to Regulations**

#### **4.10 Horizontal Angle of Daylight**

For a secondary dwelling unit, the horizontal angle of daylight may be reduced to an unobstructed distance of 6 m for the large window of the main living/sleeping area. Secondary dwelling units with a second exterior wall may have a secondary window with the unobstructed distance reduced up to 3.7 m.

### **5 (Reserved)**

## 6 Internal Design and Facilities

### 6.1 Living/Sleeping Space

Due to small unit size, the principal living area in a unit may also serve as the main sleeping area. As such, this area should be designed to accommodate a multitude of different functions.

- (a) The minimum width of the main living/sleeping space should be 3 m; wide enough to accommodate a fold down bed and circulation space and day lighted by a large window.
- (b) The sleeping area may be located in a wall recess away from the main living area, but the space should remain contiguous with the main living area and not be enclosed.

### 6.2 Entries

Consideration should be given to the design of the entries with regard to privacy, unit identity, sight lines and the direction of the door swing.

### 6.3 Bathroom

Complete bathroom facilities are required in each secondary dwelling unit and should offer visual and aural privacy from the remainder of the unit.

- (a) Bathrooms should be equipped with a wash-basin, toilet and a shower or bath.
- (b) Bathrooms should be physically separated from the remainder of the unit by partitions and a door to ensure privacy and to isolate noise and odours.
- (c) The size of the bathroom will depend on the design. In all cases, adequate space around fixtures should be provided to allow unimpeded use.
- (d) Due to limited space, bathroom facilities may be separated and provided for in more than a single room. An example would be a water closet and a separate room for bathing. In these cases, it is expected that rooms containing the toilet and the shower/bathtub are physically separated from the remainder of the dwelling unit.

### 6.4 Kitchen

Each kitchen should be equipped with a sink, ample counter space for food preparation and areas for a cooking heat source and a modestly-sized refrigerator.

## 7 Open Space

### 7.2 Semi-Private Open Space

When secondary dwelling unit sizes are less than 26 m<sup>2</sup> or when the provision of private open space is not possible for every unit, semi-private open space must

be provided as the main outdoor amenity for the secondary dwelling unit. This can be provided in the form of a common roof deck accessible to all residents.

### 7.3 Private Open Space

Privacy for residents should be considered.

- (a) Usable private open space should be provided for each secondary dwelling unit in the form of balconies, decks or patios.
- (b) The private open space should have a minimum single horizontal dimension of 1.8 m and minimum area of 4.5 m<sup>2</sup> and should be designed to capture sun and views where possible, as well as to avoid noise and to take account of visual privacy and security.
- (c) A fully-glazed balcony enclosure to reduce noise may be appropriate.
- (d) Alternatively, a suite that is designed to provide a strong open relationship with the exterior in the form of large operable windows and/or "Juliet" balconies may also be considered. Such operable doors and windows should allow a large amount of area to be open to the exterior, such as casements, sliders, double or single hung types. The amount of openness to the exterior should be large enough to accommodate 2 adults standing side-by-side.