

# Charter Bylaw 18484

Text Amendment to Zoning Bylaw 12800 to Create Opportunities for Secondary Suites on Smaller Lots, and in Semi-detached, Duplex, and Row Housing

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## **Purpose**

To allow for Secondary Suites on Smaller Lots, and in Semi-detached, Duplex, and Row Housing.

## **Readings**

Charter Bylaw 18484 is ready for three readings after the public hearing has been held. If Council wishes to give three readings during a single meeting, Council must unanimously agree "That Charter Bylaw 18484 be considered for third reading."

## **Advertising and Signing**

This Charter Bylaw has been advertised in the Edmonton Journal on August 3, 2018 and August 11, 2018. The Charter Bylaw can be passed following third reading.

## **Position of Administration**

Administration supports this Bylaw.

## **Previous Council/Committee Action**

At the April 17, 2018, Urban Planning Committee meeting, the following motion was passed:

That Administration prepare amendments to Zoning Bylaw 12800 as generally outlined in the April 17, 2018, Urban Form and Corporate Strategic Development report CR\_3825, and return to a future City Council Public Hearing following further conversation with EPCOR, Fire Rescue Services and other stakeholders to address service implications.

## **Report**

### Background

Secondary suites are self-contained dwellings that are typically located in the basement of a home. Secondary suites provide a form of residential intensification that is sometimes referred to as "invisible density" because they generally do not change the exterior appearance of the building in which they are located. Secondary Suites are currently restricted to single detached homes on properties greater than 360 square metres in size within Zoning Bylaw 12800.

At a community level, secondary suites support the availability of housing choice by providing greater housing diversity in neighbourhoods. Secondary suites can also help create more resilient communities by responding to changing household demographics.

For example, a household may wish to rent out a secondary suite when the children move away from home, resulting in a similar number of people in the home, but with a different household composition.

At an individual level, secondary suites provide rental income to homeowners, which can make homeownership or aging in place more affordable. Suites may provide housing options at a lower cost than other types of rental units, as well as the opportunity for a renter to live in a variety of neighbourhoods.

### Current State

Starting in 2007, a series of progressive bylaw amendments have been made to remove barriers to the development of secondary suites and to mitigate impacts to adjacent properties. Since 2009, all single detached homes located on a property larger than 360 square metres have been eligible for a secondary suite. As of August 2017, there were approximately 3,500 secondary suites with development permits, representing roughly 1.7 percent of Edmonton's stock of single detached housing. EPCOR conducted an analysis of single detached homes with secondary suites that showed water consumption increased by roughly one third, rather than double, the rate of a single detached home without a secondary suite. This suggests that suites do not significantly change the overall population levels of individual properties or homes, but rather that the suites balance out changing household demographics.

At the April 17, 2018, Urban Planning Committee meeting, questions were raised related to amenity area and potential density increases for secondary suites in row housing. Further information on these points, in addition to information on the neighbourhood distribution of suites and other technical analysis, is provided in Attachment 2 - Data and Analysis.

### Proposed Amendments

Following a motion from City Council to explore opportunities for secondary suites in semi-detached and row housing on June 21, 2016, Administration conducted a range of research and public engagement. This resulted in a series of proposed amendments that would increase opportunities for secondary suites in Edmonton that were presented to Urban Planning Committee in April 2018. Administration was subsequently directed by Urban Planning Committee to prepare amendments to Zoning Bylaw 12800 for a future public hearing. The proposed amendments will:

- Allow secondary suites in semi-detached and duplex housing wherever these housing forms are allowed.
- Allow secondary suites in row housing wherever these housing forms are allowed.
- Remove the minimum lot size requirement for secondary suites, creating opportunities for secondary suites on narrow or smaller lots across the city.
- Adjust maximum floor area for secondary suites built above grade, or partially above grade to increase flexibility in interior layout.

See Attachment 3 - Summary of Amendments for further explanation of the proposed amendments, and Attachment 4 - Mark-up of Proposed Text Amendment. Attachment 5 - Regulations in Other Cities provides a scan of regulations for secondary suites in other cities across Canada.

### Promoting Safety

A common theme that emerged through public engagement was the need to ensure all secondary suites are properly permitted to encourage safe and healthy living spaces. The amendments will provide a potential path to compliance for existing suites in semi-detached and row housing, as well as suites in single detached housing on smaller lots, allowing homeowners who were previously unable to receive development permits to now apply.

Allowing development permit approvals for suites within these units enables these suites to be reviewed for compliance with the Alberta Fire Code and Alberta Building Code. Administration notes that current Alberta Building Code requirements may create challenges in adding secondary suites in certain circumstances, especially in existing row houses, even when a development permit can be issued. Building code requirements will be clearly communicated to interested homeowners applying for development permits. Administration will also continue to offer Cornerstone Grants for affordable suites, which can cover half the cost of developing a secondary suite to a maximum of \$20,000.

Administration also proposes a range of other proactive initiatives aimed at increasing compliance for secondary suites, including an education campaign, online registry, and a temporary adjustment to permit fees for existing secondary suites. Please see Attachment 6 - Safety, Compliance, and Education Initiatives for further information on current enforcement statistics and recommendations moving forward.

### Service Implications

Since April 2018, Administration, including Development & Zoning Services and Fire Rescue Services, has held further conversations with EPCOR to determine the necessary short and medium term actions to ensure appropriate water flow and hydrant spacing guidelines for the addition of secondary suites. Please see Attachment 2 - Data and Analysis for further information.

### Conclusion

Public consultation and data analysis suggest that allowing more opportunities for secondary suites will provide additional housing choices in neighbourhoods with limited cumulative effect due to low overall uptake and shifting demographics. Additional opportunities for secondary suites will also have a positive impact for individuals by making homes more affordable and providing more housing choices for Edmontonians.

While the proposed amendments expand opportunities to obtain development permits for secondary suites, it is important to note that in some cases, homeowners may be

limited by factors such as the Alberta Building Code and the cost of developing or upgrading a suite. The proposed amendments will be coupled with a robust compliance and education program to bring awareness to the various requirements, and promote safety in secondary suites.

### **Policy**

This proposed bylaw supports *The Way We Grow*, Edmonton's Municipal Development Plan:

- 3.5.1.1 Support redevelopment and residential infill that contribute to the livability and adaptability of established neighbourhoods (see Map 1: Land Development Concept) and which are sensitive to existing development.
- 4.2.1.1: Support neighbourhood revitalization, redevelopment and residential infill that contributes to the livability and adaptability of established neighbourhoods.
- 4.2.1.6: Optimize the use of existing infrastructure in established neighbourhoods.
- 4.4.1.1: Provide a broad and varied housing choice, incorporating housing for various demographic and income groups in all neighbourhoods.
- 4.5.1.1: Work proactively and in partnership with others to meet a wide range of affordable housing needs in all areas of the city.

### **Corporate Outcomes**

This bylaw contributes to the corporate outcomes “Edmonton is attractive and compact” and “Edmonton is an environmentally sustainable and resilient city” as it will facilitate more efficient use of land and development of new housing units in new and established areas of the city that can meet the needs of households over time.

### **Public Consultation**

Administration undertook a range of public engagement activities in support of this report, including:

- A survey conducted through the Insight Community in June 2017, with 1,778 responses
- In-person engagement at the Engage Edmonton events held on November 14, 16, 23, 30, 2017 and December 7, 2017, with a total of 616 people in attendance
- An additional survey conducted through the Insight Community, the project's public engagement website, and at the Engage Edmonton Events in November and December 2017, with 2,130 responses.
  - 1,650 responses were received through the Insight Community
  - 452 responses were received through the project website
  - 29 responses were received at Engage Edmonton events

A majority of Edmontonians surveyed indicated support for removing the minimum lot size for secondary suites, and allowing them in semi-detached, duplex, and row housing. See Attachment 7 - Public Engagement for detailed results.

Administration circulated a draft of this report and Bylaw on May 28, 2018, to the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues Planning Committee, each individual Community League, Urban Development Institute - Edmonton Region, Canadian

Homebuilders' Association - Edmonton Region, Infill Development in Edmonton Association, and individuals who had expressed interest in being informed about this project. Canadian Homebuilders' Association - Edmonton Region indicated support from their membership. Infill Development in Edmonton Association expressed full support of the proposed Charter Bylaw and commented that it will be important to effectively communicate the changes to enable homeowners to bring secondary suites into compliance. Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues Planning Committee raised concerns about changes to the calculation of floor area. Administration clarified that this regulation had not been changed.

Administration has also received a number of calls from members of the public inquiring into the proposed changes and the opportunity to add a suite to their property.

### **Attachments**

1. Charter Bylaw 18484
2. Data and Analysis
3. Summary of Amendments
4. Mark-up of Proposed Text Amendment
5. Regulations in Other Cities
6. Safety, Compliance, and Education Initiatives
7. Summary of Public Engagement