

## **Safety, Compliance, and Education Initiatives**

Promoting safe housing for Edmontonians is a primary objective of these amendments. Because Zoning Bylaw 12800 currently precludes certain properties from getting a development permit for a secondary suite, these properties are also not able to come forward for review under the Alberta Building Code or Alberta Fire Code. This can lead to both suites with no safety review, or situations where secondary suites that provide safe housing that fully complies with the Alberta Building Code are required to be decommissioned allowed due to restrictions in Zoning Bylaw 12800.

The proposed changes to Zoning Bylaw 12800 to allow secondary suites in a range of housing forms will provide homeowners with the opportunity to bring their suites into compliance, while keeping their tenants housed and the supply of housing choice unaffected.

### **Development Compliance**

Out of the 609 development permits issued for secondary suites in 2017, 528 (87 percent) were obtained voluntarily, while 81 (13 percent) were obtained as a result of development compliance enforcement. While compliance related permits represent a small portion of secondary suite permits, secondary suite inspections represent a significant portion of the Residential Living Development Compliance team's workload. From March to December 2017, the Development Compliance team received 148 complaints about secondary suites, and 41 complaints about apartment housing, which includes secondary suites not located in a single detached house. Anecdotally, the team reports that the majority of apartment complaints relate to secondary suites in semi-detached, duplex and row housing.

In 2017, 35 percent of complaints about secondary suites in single detached housing and 18 percent of complaints about apartment housing were found to be invalid, meaning there was no contravention of Zoning Bylaw 12800 taking place. Of the total 1133 inspections completed in 2017, the team performed 516 inspections for secondary suites in single detached housing, and 297 for apartment housing. These numbers include re-inspections of properties that were found not to be in compliance, and inspections that had to be rescheduled because the team was unable to gain interior access.

In examining case files, it was found that it took an average of 30 days longer to complete a compliance file for apartment housing than for secondary suites in single detached housing. This additional time is likely a result of the fewer options available for secondary suites to be brought into compliance when located in semi-detached, duplex or row housing. Even if a suite is safe,

Compliance Officers must require that the suite be decommissioned because secondary suites are currently not permitted in housing forms other than single detached housing.

The proposed amendments are expected to help reduce the amount of time and resources the Residential Living Development Compliance team spends on enforcing restrictions on secondary suites in semi-detached and duplex housing, row housing, and houses on narrow lots that may comply fully with the Alberta Building Code. This in turn can allow compliance resources to be focused on higher priority residential living situations by allowing otherwise safe units to obtain development and building permits through a relatively straightforward process.

### **Permit Application Fees**

Homeowners applying for existing, unpermitted developments are charged double the standard application fees as a penalty for undertaking development without a permit. In order to encourage homeowners with currently unpermitted secondary suites to bring these developments into compliance, this double fee penalty would be waived for secondary suite application brought forward voluntarily by homeowners for one year following the passage of the proposed amendments. Bringing homeowners into the permitting process will enable these suites to be reviewed and inspected by safety codes officers to verify compliance with the Alberta Building or Fire Code. Developments that are not brought forward voluntarily that are found to be in contravention of Zoning Bylaw 12800 or the Alberta Building or Fire Code will continue to be subject to penalty fines and Municipal Government Act orders.

### **Education and Awareness**

Administration plans to raise awareness of the changes to secondary suite regulations in Zoning Bylaw 12800 and the importance of obtaining permits. Administration has developed an educational and marketing campaign to coincide with the passage of the proposed Charter Bylaw to expand opportunities for secondary suites. This information will encourage homeowners to obtain permits for their secondary suites and let homeowners who may have not qualified for a permitted secondary suite in the past know that there may be new opportunities available to them. The information will also highlight the upcoming changes to the Alberta Fire Code as an additional incentive for older, unpermitted suites to come forward.

Administration is also developing a database of permitted secondary suites that will be available to the public, through the use of OpenData, similar to what is shown in Figure 1 below. This will allow potential tenants of a secondary suite to see whether there are permits in place.

Figure 1

