



March 5, 2018

The City of Calgary
Councillors Offices (8001)
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To: All Members of Calgary City Council

RE: Secondary Suite Process Reform – Notice of Motion C2017-1249

Your Worship and Members of Council,

The Federation of Calgary Communities (The Federation) is the support organization for Calgary's 151 community associations, as well as many other community-based non-profit organizations including ten resident associations. The Federation of Calgary Communities works to support community associations on learning more about good planning practices and recognizes that there are as many different positions on Secondary Suites as there are communities.

Since 2010, the Federation has been advocating for better education and engagement on Secondary Suites in Calgary. We have been supporting our members in learning more about Secondary Suites while teaching them about good planning practices as they research and form their own positions.

We continue to hear the following issues with Secondary Suites from member organizations and residents:

Public Engagement: The Federation has a concern that the engagement process was not deliberate or with intent. In speaking with administration they believe engagement has happened at every council meeting where applicants present their reasons for obtaining a secondary suite and residents opposed and in favour speak to the individual application. Administration also cited that the timeline was too short to do a proper robust engagement of affected residents. The Federation approached the City about a broader stakeholder consultation plan and was told a letter would be sent to impacted parties. A letter was sent to some but not all. This we believe is not true consultation, it is informing.

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City Communication: We heard from communities that the changes were difficult to understand, written in planning jargon and that it was difficult to access more information and to receive clarification. The letter that was sent out to residents required that residents accessed the City of Calgary's website, and navigate it to find more information. The letter was not written in plain language and also failed to define terms, processes and impacts. It fell short of clearly communicating a land owner's right to communicate back to the City. In the past, the City has introduced different ways to provide feedback like 311, Engage Portal and Planning & Development Map. In fact, 311 was utilized but not advertised and the Engage Portal and Planning & Development Map weren't activated. The only opportunity to provide input according to the letter was through sending a letter to Council, or speaking at the public hearing on March 12. Presenting at council is highly intimidating for most people and we heard from communities that some residents felt uncomfortable speaking in front of Council, or could not afford to take the day(s) off and wished that there were opportunities to submit feedback online.

Association Communication to Residents: Given the quick turnout for the project, many community associations could not inform their residents - as they required 30 days' notice to post in their newsletters. We recognize that the City asks for comprehensive engagement from community associations, but it is difficult for them to do so given the constraints listed above. Anticipating this eventual vote, many community associations were proactive and did an excellent job informing their residents prior to the letter sent about the proposed changes, and some even took the time to host their own open houses. However, they didn't have time to add the backyard/laneway discussion. In addition, many community associations could not answer questions from residents as they themselves were unsure. The Federation made a tip sheet to help clarify the information.

Inclusion of Laneway/Backyard Suites: This appears to be an add-on and it came as a surprise to the Federation, despite us communicating on this matter with Administration. While we appreciate that there has been work on creating laneway housing guidelines, these have been kept internally. There has been no discussion or education from the City of Calgary on this and residents do not understand the impact of laneway houses to the community at large.

We also heard of other worries over enforcement, building code, process and parking. In addition, there are many opinions on the Registry. This, combined with the highlighted issues above, has further lowered community confidence in the City of Calgary's ability to manage the implementation of this impactful bylaw change.

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We recognize we need a process for managing Secondary Suites. Nonetheless, we feel that a proper consultation and education on the proposed process should have been conducted prior to and during the creation of the registry, policy and land use bylaw changes. We would have hoped and expected that the City of Calgary would have led by example on the expectations of engagement and consultation.

We have advocated for our communities and concerned residents to write and to speak to council on why Secondary Suites are important to them and the need for the need for more consultation and education.

We hope that you carefully weigh their input prior to your debate and decisions.

Sincerely,

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Urban Planner

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Executive Director

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