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Council to consider secondary suites options, consult with community members

A draft bylaw to allow secondary suites in all single-family residences will be considered by Council in July – to be followed by extensive community consultation starting as early as this summer and running into the fall.

“Council is sensitive to the concerns of established neighbourhoods while trying to address the current housing issues,” says Mayor Andy Adams. *“We encourage community members to participate in upcoming consultation opportunities to tell us what you think of the proposal to allow secondary suites in residential zones.”*

“As a growing community with vacancy rates at an all-time low and housing costs at an all-time high, more secondary suites could help increase the supply of affordable housing, a goal of both the Official Community Plan and the Affordable Housing Strategy,” adds Chris Osborne, the City’s acting manager of long range planning. *“Having a legal secondary suite can also be a ‘mortgage helper’ and allow people to age in place or live with family in an independent way. Secondary suites also reduce per person energy use and urban sprawl.”*

As part of the report to Council, the City reviewed secondary suites in other comparable B.C. municipalities. The report confirmed that the majority of comparable British Columbia municipalities either currently permit or are considering secondary suites in single family residential zones to increase density and housing affordability.

The City is currently developing a community consultation plan. Council will also seek direct input from the Community Planning Advisory Committee, development community, non-profit housing sector, and wider community outreach by neighbourhood.

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Background:

- In 2013, there were an estimated 350 legal suites and 250 illegal suites in Campbell River.
- The City’s rental vacancy rate in 2013 was 7.5 per cent. Despite the 211 new apartment units constructed between 2013 and 2018, the vacancy rate has dropped to 0.5 per cent.
- Currently, there are approximately 153 additional multi-family units under construction, and 337 potential units under review by the City.
- While the escalation of housing prices has slowed in recent months, the average price of a single-family home in Campbell River as of May 2019 was \$475,832. In 2013 that figure was \$249,000. While the cost of the average house in Campbell River almost doubled in six years, average household income rose by eight per cent over that time.
- The City of Campbell River allows bed and breakfast accommodations in most of the zones that don’t currently allow secondary suites.
- City building inspectors indicate that although many new homes in Campbell River are built to a size that could comfortably accommodate a secondary suite, the space is typically not being built to readily meet Building Code safety requirements. The most prevalent structural issues building inspectors find with illegal suites are:
 - Lack of egress windows from bedrooms
 - Ceiling does not meet the two-metre minimum height requirement
 - Drywall not rated for fire separation