

An Analysis of Secondary Suites as a Policy Instrument in the City of Edmonton

by

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## **Abstract**

This practicum examines the role of secondary dwelling units (secondary suites), as employed by the City of Edmonton, in the implementation of affordable housing policy. It seeks to understand the context in which the City's secondary dwelling unit program was developed, the various components of the program, and the impacts of the program. A review of the literature on this topic, a review of key City documents, a review of permit and grant allocation data, a key informant interview, as well as a survey of target neighbourhood residents were used to inform this study. Results from the study suggest that while that the program has made a significant contribution to the creation of affordable housing stock in the city and is generally supported by residents, details of the program may not be well understood by the public. Finally, possible future directions for the program and for research are suggested.

## **Chapter 1 – Introduction**

For decades, many Canadian cities have been faced with increasing housing affordability problems, and Edmonton is no exception (Moore & Skaburskis, 2004). The city of Edmonton, capital of the province of Alberta, is home to 782,439 people (Alberta Municipal Affairs, 2010). Due in part to brisk economic growth, the city has seen a rapid increase in population, having added approximately 70,000 people since 2005 and 116,000 since 2001 (Alberta Municipal Affairs, 2002, 2006). Increasing housing sale prices, increasing rents and falling vacancy rates contributed to Edmonton's 2007 rental affordability indicator score, falling to its lowest point since 1997, when use of the indicator began (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2007).

In communities where single detached homes represent the dominant form of residential construction, secondary dwelling units present an opportunity to address a variety of policy issues, including housing affordability. A secondary dwelling unit is an independent dwelling unit that has been developed in conjunction with, but is secondary to, a principal residential dwelling. The use of secondary dwelling units offers potential to provide affordable rental housing, to gently increase residential densities, to reduce operating costs to home owners, and to add diversity and flexibility to a neighbourhood.

Towards the mid-2000s, the City of Edmonton began to rethink its policies regarding affordable housing, and increased efforts to find measures to aid in the provision of affordable housing. One initiative chosen by the City of Edmonton introduced changes to the Zoning Bylaw (land use bylaw) meant to increase or introduce opportunities for secondary suites and garage suites. This was part of a phased-in approach to expand or

introduce secondary suites, garage suites and later, garden suites. These units were seen as a source of affordable rental housing and a source of income for homeowners. A grant program was also developed to encourage the development of secondary units in existing and new buildings. Building a new suite or upgrading a suite in an existing home could mean eligibility for government assistance.

### **Purpose of Practicum**

This practicum examines a particular form of housing – the secondary dwelling unit – and its use in housing policy. Specifically, it analyzes and evaluates a particular policy instrument recently used by the City of Edmonton in the context of broader municipal policies related to affordable housing. In examining secondary units, it explores:

- the context in which the policy instrument was developed;
- the process and components of the program, and the manner of delivery;
- the outcomes and effectiveness of the program, according to data and key stakeholders; and,
- perceptions of the program, according to targeted residents.

To expand upon this, the study looks at secondary dwelling units from two perspectives: a high-level, general examination of the policy and policy instruments that were employed, and a neighbourhood-level study involving more localized data collection.

Some of the questions addressed include:

- What is the context of this initiative, and how did it evolve?
- Did the easing of development regulations result in an increase in development applications and permits issued?
- How is funding offered and accessed? How effective has it been?
- How is the commitment to affordable rental housing monitored and enforced?
- What are some of the characteristics of those who develop and rent units?

- What perceptions do targeted neighbourhood residents have of the program?
- What are some of the logical next steps that could be pursued?

The examination of secondary units as a policy instrument in Edmonton may provide useful information for policy-makers or policy analysts in other cities, or for researchers seeking case studies concerning the use of secondary units.

### **Chapter Outlines**

*Chapter 1 – Introduction.* An overview of the purpose of the study, an introduction into the secondary dwelling unit housing type, and the theoretical approach and the research methods used are included. Also provided is a snapshot of community characteristics, rental market conditions, and housing need.

*Chapter 2 – Secondary Dwelling Units: Uses and Impacts.* This chapter presents a review and summary of secondary dwelling units in the literature. Of the sources examined, studies are grouped according by general topic: affordability and household finance; housing the elderly; housing scarcity and smart growth; and, diversity and neighbourhood change.

*Chapter 3 – City of Edmonton Secondary Dwelling Units Program* provides a thorough examination and description of the City of Edmonton’s use of secondary units, based on policy documents, reports, and other municipal documents.

*Chapter 4 – Results.* The results of the permit and funding allocation data review, key informant interviews and targeted neighbourhood survey are presented in.

*Chapter 5 – Evaluation Summary and Future Direction.* A summary is provided that shows the program impacts, components and perceptions, as well as areas for future study and potential program directions.

### **Approach and Research Methods**

The general conceptual framework used is one of program evaluation, with a focus on a particular policy instrument. As Pal (2001, pp. 275-276) explains, policies “attempt to solve and manage public problems, and governments or other parties should know whether interventions are making a difference and are worthwhile.” Program evaluation essentially attempts to determine “how successful a policy has been, whether it has met its objectives, how far it fell short, and what might be done to improve its impact” (p. 275). A “summative evaluation” can be conducted when a program is nearing completion, and can be done to “generate more general knowledge that may or may not be relevant to the program” (p. 276).

Pal goes on to classify several categories of program evaluation, the two most relevant to this study being impact evaluation and process evaluation. Impact evaluation is about measuring outcomes, as “evaluating outcomes is critical to determining whether a program is successful or not in terms of its intended effects” (p. 280). A second category, which is complementary to the first, is process evaluation. This approach seeks to understand what the components of the program are, and how is it delivered – focusing on “how something happens, rather than outcomes or results” (p. 280).

This practicum uses both of those categories of program evaluation to understand and evaluate the City of Edmonton’s secondary units program. The following section explains the research tools used in the study.

## **Document Review**

A review of secondary sources was conducted, specifically including policy documents, Council meeting minutes and reports. These sources were used to develop an understanding of policies, policy goals (generally, and if specified, concrete goals), policy instruments, and implementation mechanisms (which include, but are not limited to regulation, promotion and consultation, and financial assistance). The document review was also useful in creating an overview or timeline of the development of the program, detailing previous research, consultation and feedback, program design considerations, and rationale. The review provided an understanding of how the program was developed and what the specific components of the program were.

Also used were reports and data related to community characteristics and trends, such as housing affordability, household composition, and rental vacancy information. This information helped describe the context in which the policies and programs were devised – particularly related to housing affordability. Other secondary information specific to the target area was obtained through census information, housing market information reports and similar sources.

## **Permit, Funding and Housing Affordability Data**

Research included the collection of development permit data and funding allocation data. Both of these sources were useful in examining and evaluating the rate at which units were developed, and the difference in the number of applications and approvals between Phase 1 (the initial expansion of opportunities for secondary and garage suites) and Phase 2 of the program (which introduced more opportunities and funding for secondary and

garage suites, and introduced garden suites as an option). The data were used as indicators to assess the effectiveness of the program.

To provide additional context, data regarding household characteristics, housing affordability and rental rates were also collected and summarized. This information provides an indication of the need for affordable housing solutions in Edmonton at the time that the policies and programs were being developed.

### **Key Informant Interviews**

Research at this level consisted of semi-structured interviews with several key informants. Key informants can be described as people with specialized knowledge of a subject and act as key figures in the research (Wellington & Szczerbinski, 2007). The semi-structured type of interview was chosen as it allows a good degree of control over the direction of the interview, while still allowing flexibility (p. 84). The key informants were representatives from various municipal departments, including the City Planning and Development Department and Housing Branch. These interviews were used to develop a clear understanding of the policies and tools being evaluated, as well as to gather thoughts, perspectives, and views on the goals, effectiveness of the program, and as a potential source of unpublished data. Key informants were also engaged in a discussion on potential changes to the program. All interviews were recorded to facilitate detailed note-taking, and ranged from 1 to 1 ½ hours. Information gained from the interviews was summarized, grouped and presented according to topic.

## **Neighbourhood Survey**

Information for this component was gathered through a questionnaire survey with a sample size of 595 households. To begin, a particular neighbourhood was selected, based on a number of characteristics including average household income, the presence of renters, a good number of single-detached dwellings, and proximity to transit routes. These factors helped ensure that secondary dwellings units were allowed in the survey area and that the area would be relatively likely to contain at least some suites.

This method was used to collect information about resident perspectives, household information and information about the residence, perception of the secondary unit program, interest in the program, and other information. The results were tabulated and compared, with particular attention paid to differences between renters and homeowners, and the presence of a secondary unit on the property. This method was meant to allow for the examination of the program with greater depth, and enabled the researcher to use methods that would be unavailable on a larger geographic scale (i.e. for a practicum). While findings will be considered particular to the one area of study and not readily generalized, they can provide a clearer perspective on program implementation in the area examined.

On April 9, 2011, surveys were hand-delivered to 595 single-detached houses in the neighbourhood to ensure that the introductory letter and survey invitation were delivered to the desired recipients. Of the 595 delivered, a total of 35 responses were obtained, a response rate of 6%. To enable efficient and affordable data collection, an internet-based survey program (i.e. Survey Monkey) was used to collect responses. The combination of hand delivery and internet collection allowed the surveys to be delivered to targeted

recipients. This approach also eliminated costs associated with providing return envelopes, potentially allowed responses to be collected more quickly, and virtually eliminated data entry (Neuman, 2006, pp. 299-300). Since, 80% of Canadians and 86% of Edmontonians age 16 or older, used the Internet for personal reasons in 2009 (Statistics Canada, 2010), this high rate of access increased the likelihood that residents would be able to respond using the web survey.

Respondents were offered the opportunity to enter their name into a draw for a gift certificate to a local grocery store as a token of gratitude for their participation, and to provide incentive for a prompt response.

### **Defining Secondary Dwelling Units**

This practicum refers to three types of secondary dwelling units: secondary suites, garage suites and garden suites. A secondary dwelling unit is an independent dwelling unit that has been developed in conjunction with a principal residential dwelling. Most often, they are created out of underutilized space in a single detached house hence the common name “basement suite” or “attic suite”. Secondary units often fall into three categories: those created within new or existing residential buildings (secondary suite), those incorporated into accessory structures like garages (garage suite) and those that stand alone (garden suite). There are a number of other terms used to describe this form of housing, including granny flats, basement suites, accessory apartments, accessory dwelling units, and garden flats. In this report, secondary suites, garage suites and garden suites are *types* of secondary dwelling units.

In order to distinguish secondary units from other forms of housing like semi-detached houses, a clarification is necessary. These suites are secondary in that they are

subordinate to the principal dwelling unit in size, location, appearance and occupancy. A secondary unit is not separately owned, and essentially remains under the control of the principal unit and its owner(s). A semi-detached unit, on the other hand, is a two-dwelling structure that can be owned by two different parties.

City of Edmonton definitions for secondary suites, garage suites, and garden suites are appended to this document.

### **Housing Affordability in Edmonton**

This section provides context regarding general housing characteristics and affordable housing need in Edmonton. The need for affordable rental housing solutions can be seen in the rental vacancy rates, rental costs, housing need indicators, and housing affordability indicators described in *Table 1*.

The City of Edmonton defines affordable housing as housing that “requires no on-going subsidies and that is targeted for occupancy by households who earn less than the median income for their household size and pay more than 30% of that income for housing and require no in-situ support services” (City of Edmonton, 2010b). As *Table 1* shows, there are many households in Edmonton that spend more than 30% of total income on housing costs. The household types that are more likely to spend more than 30% of household income on housing costs include lone-parent households, and non-family households with one or more persons. Households that include a couple, with or without children, are much less likely to be spending more than 30% of income on housing.

**Table 1 – Housing Affordability in Edmonton (2006 Census)**

	Housing Affordability		
	Count	% of total	
Household type	Total - Housing affordability	Spending less than 30% of household income on housing costs	Spending 30% or more of household income on housing costs
Total - Household type	401,910	77%	23%
Family households	273,890	85%	15%
One family only households	248,130	84%	16%
Couple family households	213,855	88%	12%
Without children	95,880	88%	12%
With children	117,975	88%	12%
Lone-parent family households	34,270	65%	35%
Other family households	25,765	87%	13%
Non-family households	128,020	61%	39%
One person households	106,535	58%	42%
Two or more person households	21,485	75%	25%

(Statistics Canada, 2008)

To illustrate how a low income single parent household might fare, one can look to an analysis conducted by CitySpaces Consulting (2006, p. 7). According to the analysis, a single parent family earning 80% of median income (using Statistics Canada 2004 tax filer data) could afford a maximum monthly rent of \$628 without paying more than 30% on housing costs. *Tables 2 and 3 and Figure 1* show both the vacancy rates and the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Edmonton between 2000 and 2009:

**Table 2 – Rental Vacancy Rates, Edmonton, 2000-2009**

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Rental Vacancy Rate (%)	1.4	0.9	1.7	3.4	5.3	4.5	1.2	1.5	2.4	4.5

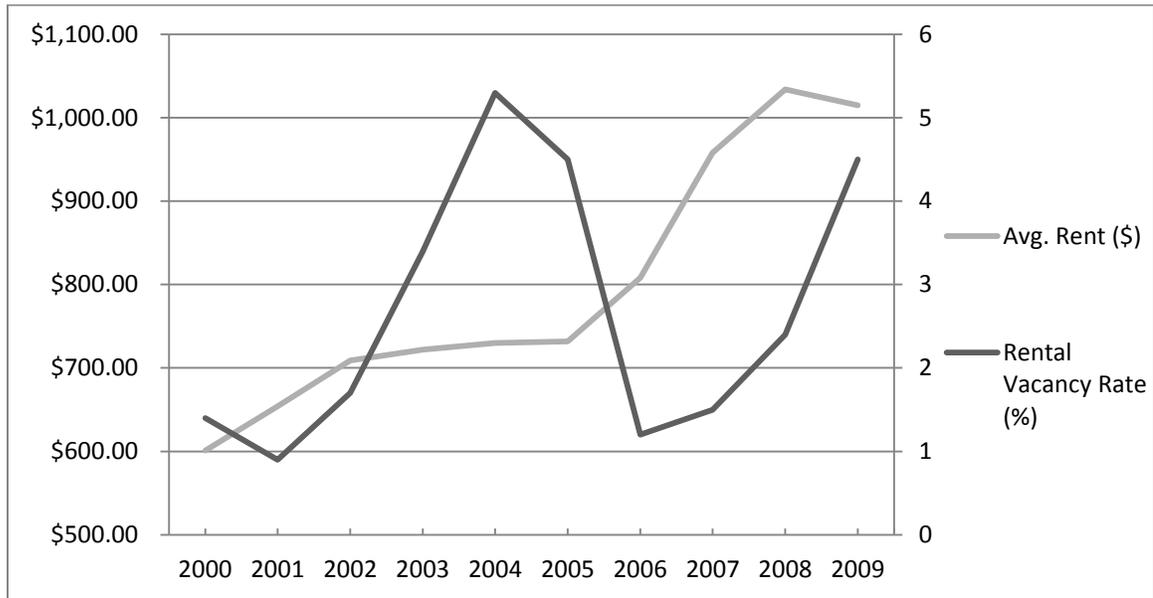
(Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), 2010c)

**Table 3 – Average Rent for Two-Bedroom Apartments, Edmonton, 2000–2009**

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Avg. Rent (\$)	601	654	709	722	730	732	808	958	1,034	1,015

(CMHC, 2010a)

**Figure 1 – Rental Vacancy Rates and Average Rent, Edmonton, 2000-2009**



(CMHC, 2010a, 2010c)

Core housing need, as defined by the CMHC, is another indicator of inadequate housing.

A household is in core housing need if its housing does not meet one or more of the adequacy, suitability or affordability standards and it would have to spend 30 per cent or more of its before-tax income to pay the median rent (including utility

costs) of alternative local market housing that meets all three standards. (CMHC, 2009, p. 63).

Adequate housing refers to housing which does not require any major repairs, whereas suitable housing has “enough bedrooms for the size and make-up of resident households,” and affordable housing “costs less than 30 per cent of before-tax household income” (CMHC, 2010, p. 63).

The data for Edmonton show that affordability, compared with adequacy or suitability, is the most important reason for core housing need, as is generally the case in Canada (CMHC, 2010, p.66). Surveys have also shown that it is those who are in the lowest quintile income group in Canada that most often have a core housing need, ranging between 61% of households in 2002 to 55% in 2007 (p. 66). Longitudinal studies by the CMHC (2010) also show that in terms of tenure type, renters had the “highest incidence of ever living in core housing need and the greatest persistence,” while “individuals living in female lone-parent households and unattached senior women were the most likely to ever live in core housing need and had the greatest persistence (of family types)” (p. 79).

*Table 4*, on the following page, illustrates the general components for core housing need in Edmonton, as well as the characteristics of households in need:

**Table 4 – Characteristics of Households in Core Housing Need, Edmonton, 2006**

	All Households in core housing need		Renters in core housing need		Owners in core housing need	
	# of households (000's)	Incidence	# of households (000's)	Incidence	# of households (000's)	Incidence
All households	41.2	10.6%	28.8	24.6%	12.5	4.6%
<i>Components:</i>						
<i>Below affordability standard only</i>	31.8	8.2%	22.0	18.8%	9.8	3.6%
<i>Below suitability standard only</i>	1.8	0.5%	1.5	1.3%	0.3	0.1%
<i>Below adequacy standard only</i>	1.2	0.3%	0.5	0.4%	0.7	0.3%
<i>Below multiple housing standards</i>	6.5	1.7%	4.8	4.1%	1.7	0.6%
Household type						
Senior-led	10.6	15.1%	7.1	39.4%	3.5	6.7%
Family	0.9	2.3%	0.4	8.9%	0.5	1.4%
Non-family	9.7	31.2%	6.7	50.1%	3.0	16.8%
Individuals living alone	9.6	32.3%	6.7	51.2%	2.9	17.5%
Female	7.5	34.6%	5.1	55.4%	2.4	19.1%
Male	2.1	26.0%	1.5	40.8%	0.5	12.9%
Non-Senior-led	30.6	9.6%	21.6	21.9%	9.0	4.1%
Family	17.4	7.5%	11.1	22.1%	6.2	3.5%
Couples with Children	5.7	4.8%	3.0	17.1%	2.7	2.7%
Couples without Children	2.4	3.4%	1.7	10.3%	0.7	1.3%
Lone Parent Families	8.9	26.1%	6.3	41.5%	2.6	13.8%
Female	8.2	29.9%	5.9	45.7%	2.3	16.0%
Male	0.7	10.9%	0.5	18.9%	0.3	6.5%
Non-Family	13.3	14.8%	10.5	21.8%	2.8	6.7%
Individuals Living Alone	11.5	16.4%	9.1	25.2%	2.4	7.1%
Female	5.9	19.1%	4.5	29.4%	1.4	9.1%
Male	5.6	14.2%	4.6	22.0%	1.0	5.5%
Individuals Sharing with Others	1.8	9.3%	1.4	11.9%	0.4	4.9%

(CMHC, 2009)

NB: The incidence of households in core housing need is a comparison to total number of each specific household type.

As shown in this section, households in Edmonton were faced with low rental vacancy rates, and year-over-year increases in average rental costs. The number of households facing housing need, based on a combination of affordability, suitability and adequacy issues, numbered in the thousands. Based on numbers such as these, the City advanced affordable housing as a priority, and consequently, began a program which used secondary dwelling units to contribute to improving this situation.

### **Summary**

This chapter has provided an overview of the purpose of the study, an introduction into the secondary dwelling unit housing type, and the theoretical approach and the research methods used. Community characteristics, rental market conditions, and housing need were outlined to give the study some context. *Chapter 2 – Secondary Dwelling Units: Uses and Impacts will* present a review and summary of secondary dwelling units in the literature. Of the sources examined, studies are grouped according by general topic: affordability and household finance; housing the elderly; housing scarcity and smart growth; and, diversity and neighbourhood change.

## Chapter 2 – Secondary Dwelling Units: Uses and Impacts

Discussions of secondary dwelling units, their impacts, and their potential to address particular policy issues have been present in the planning and housing literature for decades. That said, academic writing on this topic has not occurred with any particularly frequency. In studying this topic, it is found that the literature ranges primarily from the early 1980s to the early 2000s, and is conducted from a variety of theoretical and topical perspectives.

A broad view of the approaches to this topic has been used, with works grouped under the following headings: *affordability and household finance*; *housing the elderly*; *housing scarcity and smart growth*; and, *diversity and neighbourhood change*. These terms are used to generally describe the approaches or themes that have been taken in research that deals with secondary suites. *Affordability and household finance* is used to describe literature that tends to deal primarily with the issue of affordability – both from the perspective of the renter and the homeowner and the issues that households deal with when considering their housing options. *Housing the elderly* refers to the numerous studies that have considered accommodation for the elderly – particularly their ability to remain in the community – and the potential that secondary suites offer. It should be noted that a number of studies conclude that this particular approach is not all that well suited for elderly homeowners. Literature on *housing scarcity and smart growth* generally deals with the subject in relation to theories of smart growth, urban intensification and related impetuses. In these articles, it is common to find studies related to household change and the concept of surplus space in housing stock. Indeed, it could be said that efficiency and use of space factor into a number of studies as well.

Finally, commonalities with respect to *diversity and household change* include changes in household lifecycles, and theories of diversity and social mixing in communities.

Arguably, the most comprehensive study of secondary suites to date is that of Martin Gellen (1985). Gellen examines the trend of secondary suite conversion, and presents an assessment of their potential role in housing policy. The perspective of this study is quite broad, and spans several of the headings identified above.

Gellen estimated that between 1973 and 1980, there were on average 50,000 to 65,000 secondary suite conversions throughout the United States – which is nearly 15% of all rental units added to the housing inventory during that period. Additionally, an estimated twelve to eighteen million houses in the United States have space to accommodate a secondary suite. This is based in part on the changing nature of the family, which increasingly is made up of smaller households. This decline in household size has been the result of a number of social phenomena, including falling fertility rates, the growth of two-person households (including empty nesters), and growing numbers of people who are able to live by themselves instead of with relatives or in boarding houses. This has resulted in an increase in the average number of rooms occupied per person, and an increase in the number of homeowners with surplus space.

Gellen writes that there are two types of problems generated by secondary suites – those based on physical impacts including parking, traffic, and alterations to the exterior appearance of the structure, and those that concern social and cultural conflict. The latter has much to do with the deviation from the traditional image of housing, family and neighbourhood, and the use of zoning to promote homeownership and producing social environments that are suitable for families with children. Yet, in examining the

environmental impacts of secondary suite development, the study found that while neighbourhoods vary in their capacity to absorb conversions, they rarely alter the single family character of a neighbourhood.

The regulation of illegal or nonconforming secondary suites can pose problems for municipalities. Owners may wish to keep secondary suites concealed for a number of reasons, including avoiding property taxes or income taxes, avoiding the costs associated with compliance to standards and regulations, or perhaps avoiding an inspection that might turn up other violations. Detection of non-conforming suites is often difficult, and orders to comply and fines are often ineffective. Compared to by-right approvals with very restrictive regulations and procedures, Gellen notes that simple administrative applications requiring departmental approval with no hearings had a higher number of applications and approvals. Financing can also be a form of control, in that the costs of compliance can be reduced for the homeowner in exchange for financial aid, thereby reducing the incentive for illegal conversions.

### **Affordability and Household Finance**

Affordability problems occur for both renters and owners. A study by Moore and Skaburskis (2004) found that there has been a progressive increase in the number of low income households with housing affordability problems. Affordability problems for renters grew substantially throughout the nineties, but also for owners with mortgages. Those homeowners with mortgages and affordability problems were commonly younger married couples and lone parents. For renters, the most severely affected were single parents and unattached females. This trend has certainly continued to the present, with the burden of housing affordability issues being borne mainly by low income single

people and lone parent families (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2008). Housing prices, on average, increased faster than income growth, even for couples and two-parent families. Indeed, lone parent families and singles are doubly challenged as they faced growing barriers to affordable home ownership while also facing historically low rates of rental housing construction.

A study of the Montréal rental housing market in the 1970s suggested that the local-amateur economy provides a substantial portion of the low-cost housing available (Krohn et al., 1977). Compared to the professional economy, which expects high returns, and which has high capital and labour costs, the local-amateur economy is different in several respects. Generally, it relies on older housing, which can be cheaper to rent and own, and is not motivated by high rates of return. The operation of this other economy is also based on its own efficiencies and principles. For example, owners may use non-market resources including labour done in one's free time, or channelling personal or social obligations, or the exchange of labour or services for reduced rent. In these and other ways, the local-amateur economy is able to avoid costly market-based exchange costs, enabling a reduction in the cost of rental housing. Furthermore, resident owners within strong communities often play an important role in social control and can aid in dispute resolution. If there is an acceptance that non-professional owners provide a valuable service, then acknowledging their role should be a priority. Support including real estate, tax or legal assistance could be extended, as could financial assistance.

Hare (1993) outlines the benefits of secondary suites in improving housing affordability. Citing a number of community studies, Hare points out both the amount of surplus space in single detached houses and the need for affordable rental space. Hare, citing a 1989

study by Patrick H. Hare Planning and Design, estimates that in a community with favourable zoning, one might expect approximately one secondary unit per 1,500 single detached dwelling to be produced. The cost to produce a secondary suite was found to generally be one third less than to produce than a conventional rental unit, and rents at less than a conventional unit. Another study in Babylon, New York found that renters of secondary suites spent on average \$178 less per month on housing costs than renters of other units (Rudel, 1984). Finally, Hare (1993) finds that the successful introduction of secondary suites requires carefully drafted zoning, adequate oversight to gain political acceptance, advice and counselling for homeowners wishing to add a suite, and, finally, leadership that can ease fears and hold the various groups together.

Where a stock of secondary units exists, homeowners face the decision to rent the unit, or to use the space as part of the main dwelling. Ruud and Nordvik (1999) find that economic arguments are important determinants in the decision to rent. It follows that the number of units available for rental is not fixed, and does change with the need, circumstance and choices made by the homeowner. The authors analyzed both Norwegian Housing Census information and original data collected for this study. The study also compared modern data to historical records of households offering sleeping space to lodgers, and suggests that the choices faced today are not unique to the period studied (1990s), and have historical precedence. While this is a useful narrative in showing historical similarities, it is not certain that the data can be applied to the study of secondary dwellings. A similar study estimates that the imposition of a flat 28% tax on net rental income from secondary suites would negatively impact the perceived

advantages of renting out a secondary unit, resulting in a 17% reduction of the number of these rental dwellings (Nordvik, 2000).

For the owner of a single-family house, Nordvik (2000) notes that a welfare gain of renting a secondary unit comes from both the economic gain of rental income and also the stabilizing factor that it affords. This gain can be found in reducing the number of moves necessary over a housing career, and by allowing earlier entry into a single-family dwelling. For the renters of secondary dwellings (as much as 6% of Norwegian households), the alternatives to shared accommodation are mainly homelessness, lodging with family, or buying or renting accommodation at a rate which is more than they can afford without significant reduction in other consumption.

On the other hand, some researchers would argue that secondary units are undesirable features to prospective homebuyers. Citing a study by Sirmans and MacPherson, Lang (2005) notes that hedonic modelling employed to isolate the effect of particular attributes on prices suggests that features such as secondary suites, professional offices and fences can result in a reduction in selling price while features such as sprinklers, wooded lots and water views tended to add to the selling price. The areas included in the study, it should be noted, tended to be suburban in both location and characteristics, which may suggest that there are other markets where this may not be the case.

### **Housing the Elderly**

Most people would prefer to stay in their own homes as they age rather than move elsewhere. Yet for some who live in larger single-family houses, the prospect of maintaining their present home while facing reduced mobility, fixed incomes, increased

maintenance and utility costs or a partial loss of independence can be seen as a barrier to that preference.

For example, in a survey of elderly individuals living in the U.S. Northwest, 68% identified their present homes as the place they preferred to stay, while 22.8% were planning to move, and another 8.7% were undecided (Wagnild, 2001). The top four reasons for staying were: feelings of independence and control; feelings of safety and security; being near family and familiarity with their surroundings. When asked about what might make them move, the most frequent response was the inability to maintain the property, and then financial reasons, the need for safety and security, and then inadequate family support. Another study looked at the moving plans of older adults with a poor housing fit (Erickson et al., 2006). What motivated these people in considering a move were concerns about maintenance, desire for a more appropriately sized house, help with future needs, and a location near family.

For seniors, housing has an impact on being valued and valuable member of the community. Rather than isolating groups from one another, intergenerational living could be promoted. As Pollack and Gorman (1989) point out, a community can be enhanced by the presence of older people. One perspective is that younger people might begin to have a more positive impression of the elderly when they play an active role in an integrated community. Another is that an intergenerational population will “lessen the dramatic fluctuation in the demand for community services that many suburban communities face” (p. 2). Finally, the ability for seniors to age in place could reduce the need for nursing or retirement home beds and specialized care.

Furthermore, the growth in elderly households and single-person households has increased the need for accessible locations, and therefore for higher densities (Newman & Kenworthy, 1999). The transportation and mobility options of an older adult can be profoundly increased by an increase in density.

To respond to this, there have been attempts to modestly increase densities in traditionally low density neighbourhoods through the use of secondary units in a number of new communities. Secondary units are often brought up in discussions of aging in place for senior citizens (Blackie, 1986). Aging in place generally refers to older persons remaining in their homes as long as possible and can be extended to the services that are provided to the homeowner or family of the homeowner such as repairs and modifications to the home, financial assistance, and general guidance. Pollack and Gorman (1989) present an analysis of the regulation of aging in place, including the regulation of secondary units, which can be directly linked with the aging in place option. Where a municipality has disallowed secondary units, but wishes to make use of this housing stock, it may ignore the units altogether or react to only obvious and flagrant violations. On the other hand, zoning can be used to “prevent, proscribe, and – to some degree – describe” how secondary units are to be used (Pollack & Gorman, 1989, p. 6).

Pollack and Gorman found there to be generally four ways of regulating secondary units: by using a licensing procedure, by granting variances, through conditional use permits, and by right through zoning. Licensing, it is argued, moves regulation from the legislative to the bureaucratic system, which risks being unresponsive to the needs of the community. Granting variances in this manner goes against their intended use, and removes the possibility of periodic review. Conditional use, on the other hand, is often

favoured by municipalities. This allows secondary suites to be reviewed on a case by case basis, offering more control. However, the process needed to obtain approval, which may include hearings and appeals, can be difficult, time consuming, and subject to risk, and may work against the intent of creating more secondary suites. Allowing secondary units as of right in all or in certain districts is the easiest and least costly to administer, but takes away a certain amount of community control.

Secondary unit conversion programs that target elderly homeowners are often less successful than anticipated (Retsinas & Retsinas, 1991). Indeed, many of the conversion programs that were looked at by Retsinas and Retsinas were either discontinued due to lack of interest, or had very lacklustre results in terms of meeting their intended objectives. Generally, there were two intended beneficiaries: the elderly widow or widower living alone in a single detached house, and the renters who seek affordable accommodation and have a relatively small household. The authors conclude that elderly homeowners often do not have the interest or the capacity to borrow money, oversee renovations and act as a landlord. Indeed, those who are most interested in secondary suite conversions are those owners who are best able to handle borrowing, building, administering the rental of the unit, and are most often middle-aged. While the one goal of increasing the supply of affordable rental housing may be achieved, the other goal of aiding the elderly homeowner is less likely.

Similarly, Varady (1988a, 1988b, 1990) found that there is a gap between level of interest of elderly homeowners in secondary suites (between 10% and 15% were interested) and their capacity to implement the addition of a suite. Studies involving elderly homeowners in the USA found that age is negatively correlated with interest in secondary

unit conversions. Yet, the factors that increased interest in secondary units included uninsured medical expenses, unemployment, living alone, poor health, long-standing neighbourhood attachment and having a risk of premature institutionalization. Varady concludes that those who are most interested often lack physical, emotional or financial capacity to independently carry out the addition of a secondary suite or to deal with a tenant, and therefore require certain counselling or assistance.

Another study, based on a survey of secondary unit owners and a review of literature, sought to determine the extent to which these suites benefit the elderly (Chapman & Howe, 2001). Using a survey of owners with legal units, the authors collected data on why the unit was built, its cost and size, how much rent is charged, and whether the occupants exchange services. What they found is that the homeowners ranged in age from 23 to 82, but had a mean age of 50. 27% of the owners who had added suites were over the age of 60, 13% were over 65, while approximately half were between the ages of 40 and 60. The majority of tenants were either under the age of 49 or over the age of 70. Of the 151 persons living in the main house or the secondary suite, only 12 were under the age of 18, and the average household size was 2.16 persons in the main unit, and 1.2 persons in the suite. The main reasons for adding the suite were economic, and were common across age categories. The added security of having a tenant was mentioned by approximately one third of respondents of all ages. Adding a unit for a family member was more common among respondents aged 50-59 (40%) and those over 60 (33%). 11 out of the 45 houses (24%) had owners or tenants over the age of 65. Based on the fact that the owner of a secondary unit is as likely to be the child of an older person as an older person him/herself, and that more conversions are made by middle-aged than by

elderly homeowners, the authors conclude that allowing only seniors to add suites is counter-productive in aiding the elderly population. Yet, over time, the elderly person does have the benefit of additional income, help if needed, and space for a caregiver. In terms of financial benefits, a secondary dwelling unit can help a homeowner more than a home equity conversion (Pastalan, 1983). Assuming that conversion costs are low, the former were found on average to outperform equity loans.

### **Housing Scarcity and Smart Growth**

The addition of secondary units is frequently suggested as a means of adding additional housing and increasing density in a neighbourhood (Wheeler, 2004). This increased density, linked with infill housing, is often considered a step in decreasing the need for greenfield development, or for addressing housing shortages. Smart growth is “primarily a reaction to the sprawling form of urbanization, characterized by low overall densities, a rigid specialization of land uses and a near total dependence on the automobile” (Filion, 2003, p. 50). The literature on smart growth and policy documents tend to recommend the redirection of urban growth inwards, the use of infill and brownfield development, land use patterns that support walkability, cycling or transit, and the protection of green space. There have been repeated calls for higher residential densities in order to sustain transportation alternatives. It has been shown that density patterns are closely linked to transportation and therefore energy use (Newman & Kenworthy, 1999).

Andrews (2005) points to the City of Santa Cruz, which turned to secondary units as a way to address a shortage of housing units. Through a review of zoning regulations, assistance programs and policies, background studies conducted for the City, as well as media coverage and community meetings, Andrews provides an overview of the Santa

Cruz approach. Previously, the creation of a secondary unit was subject to severe restrictions, costly and challenging to obtain the necessary permits. The City had also faced a situation in which landlords were creating illegal secondary suites in detached houses as well as garden suites in yards. The solution that was chosen included: zoning changes to remove barriers to suite creation; a reduction in application fees; a community outreach strategy to encourage participation as well as to address the concerns of residents; design prototypes prepared by architects; and offering technical assistance in the form of design, construction and engagement techniques. Also offered was financial assistance in the form of low interest loans, development fee waivers, and social enterprise grants for eligible contractors. Andrews found that public opposition to the program was minimal.

In a number of places, it was found that the conversion of rental apartment building into condominiums and the economically difficult prospect of building new rental apartments could negatively impact the number of rentals available. At least one new development in Burnaby has addressed this issue using secondary suites – but in multi-family buildings (Macht, 2007). Faced with the choice of providing student housing and capitalizing on the lucrative condominium market, the developer, Simon Fraser University and the City of Burnaby sought a third option. What resulted were secondary units in up to half of the units. Macht found that monthly rents ranged from \$525 to \$700, providing an opportunity for students to rent units from condominium owners, who would also benefit from rental income.

One study in British Columbia examined the relationship between the fees applied to secondary suites and the impact of secondary suites on infrastructure and services (Geary

et al., 1999). This study found that while user fees are often applied to secondary unit as a way to generate revenue and to compensate for services rendered and/or infrastructure used, they did not always reflect the actual impact of these suites. Two case studies – one urban area and one outer suburb – presented similar results in some regards, but were dissimilar in others. The number of total residents in homes with a secondary suite and in homes without a suite, for example, was higher in the suburb than in the urban area. Yet the number of cans of waste produced, the amount of water used, and the number of cars owned was not found to be proportional to the number of units in the house. A number of municipalities made the simple assumption that the rates of consumption of these goods would double in houses with suites. This however, was not found to be the case, nor did the number of occupants simply double. The authors present a number of policy options, including applying fees based on consumption (i.e. metering water, tagging waste for pickup), or not charging based on policy objectives (i.e. promoting secondary suites) or based on demographics (in older areas, where household sizes are smaller).

### **Diversity and Neighbourhood Change**

Newman and Kenworthy (1999) put it well when they wrote that, all “OECD countries have passed the baby boom and its echo and are now moving towards an absolute decline in the number of young couples seeking family housing, while there is a growing demand for housing suitable for the elderly,” which is associated with an “unprecedented increase in the number of single-person households” (p. 295). Even earlier, Pollack and Gorman (1989) warned of a dramatic increase in the number of older adults, some of whom have or will have difficulty coping with the costs and physical demands of remaining in their homes and neighbourhoods.

Flexibility in housing design has been around for a long time, but has also recently been re-visited by a number of authors (Friedman 2002; Howe 1990). The Techbuilt House, for example, is an old design that was meant to be adaptable through the lifecycle of its owners – from new family to empty nest (Gellen, 1985). Friedman has argued for greater diversity and flexibility in suburban design, and proposed design solutions that help achieve them. While it is difficult to foresee future occurrences, environmental, demographic and economic trends tend to point towards higher land prices, smaller households, and greater environmental and ecological concerns. Building flexibility into communities through permissive regulations in a manner that is gradual, open-ended and resident-initiated is one way to ensure that housing responds to the needs of residents, in terms of affordability, best-fit, and opportunities for employment. Allowing residents to subdivide their homes to contain rental units, permitting secondary dwelling units, and permitting small scale professional offices is an important component in Friedman's proposal.

It is noted that there is often stigma attached to shared housing, in the various forms in which it occurs. Even though the nuclear family arrangement is not the only household type, there are often ideological, legal and cultural beliefs that privilege the single-family house. Based on available evidence, there is very little to support the notion that shared housing negatively affects the value of single-family housing (Hemmens et al., 1996). Along with the benefit of reduced housing cost, shared housing can bring social and personal benefits to users. This type of housing arrangement can provide a valuable source of affordable housing, and can accommodate the increasing number of single-person households. Neighbourhood and community stability is also seen to occur, as

different age groups can continue to stay in their home neighbourhood as circumstances change. With a more stable, diverse population, public facilities can remain in use, and aging housing stock can be kept in use.

Secondary units have also been seen as a way to promote intergenerational communities (Ritzdorf, 1987). Responding to planning literature which treats secondary units mainly as a means of increasing density in large, underutilized homes, Ritzdorf argues that this is also a means of promoting communities which better respond to the needs of both the young and the old. The practice could be beneficial to the elderly and to families who could maintain a house they could not otherwise afford alone. A 1984 survey cited by Ritzdorf (1987) found that while 40% of communities studied had considered secondary units ordinances, only 5% had actually adopted one. The vast majority of communities did not permit, define, or regulate this housing form.

A familiar topic in planning literature is that of “place diversity,” which Talen defines as a normative view concerning “the combination, in particular places, of people of varying incomes, races, genders, ethnicities, household sizes, lifestyles, and, in addition, non-residential activities comprising different uses and functions of land” (2006, p. 234).

Talen organizes theories used to support place diversity in this way: place vitality, economic health, social equity, and ecology and sustainability. Empirical studies of attempts at social mixing show that results have generally been positive, and that socioeconomic stratification is far from inevitable. While there is strong support for diversity, there is relatively little in the way of planning and design strategies meant to help achieve it. The addition of secondary units, one way of enabling diversity through the integration of different housing types in one place, is cited as one of the most direct

approaches. These strategies can see neighbourhoods as a place where one may improve their standing in place, where age diversity may be accommodated, and where a degree of social mixing can occur (Talen, 2006).

Secondary dwelling units, then, can serve as a way to promote diversity. Using this concept to promote mixed neighbourhoods is one way to avoid the social and cultural silos that serve as temporary accommodation for current lifestyles and social standing. Residents are able improve their standing in the same neighbourhood, many different ages can be accommodated, and different income and tenure groups can intermingle.

There are a number of alleged benefits of mixed tenure and mixed income communities, particularly for those who have come from a lower status area or from an area of concentrated poverty (Kearns & Mason, 2007). These benefits can include better quality and better access to public and private services, or increased rates of employment. In terms of social and behavioural effects, some research indicates that there can be fewer incidences of anti-social behaviour, better upkeep of property, raised aspirations, and better educational outcomes. At the community level, there may be increased social interaction between social groups, an enhanced sense of community, and greater residential stability through less frequent moves. Finally, in terms of overcoming social exclusion, it is proposed that mixing populations can reduce the stigma of affordable or social housing, and increase connectivity and access to resources, and enhance social networks.

The study results from Kearns and Mason show that there are modest improvements in access to facilities and services and a slight drop in reported neighbourhood problems in areas of mixed tenure and mixed income dwellings (2007). There must be a substantial

base of non-socially housed, relatively well-off residents in order to maintain these gains, as an overconcentration of social housing compared to owner occupied housing can result in a poorly performing neighbourhood (in terms of the measured variables).

Based on available evidence, Joseph et al. (2007) found that the concept of residential stability does lead to improved social networks and better social cohesion. This is, of course, a long-term process, and there have been few studies that have tracked these benefits among mixed-income neighbourhoods. Also, the greatest contribution appears to come from the ability of higher-income residents to maintain order and to attract resources to the community.

### **Summary**

Studies on the uses of secondary units in public policy have indicated that these secondary units can potentially provide affordable rental housing, gently increase residential densities, reduce operating costs to home owners, and add diversity and flexibility to a neighbourhood. When secondary units are used as a housing policy solution the emphasis is often on the regulations that allow or prohibit secondary units, the codes and the designs of the housing form that accommodate them, or on programs that promote them. While communities vary widely in their approach – from very permissive to severely restrictive – a number of studies point to the fact that this type of housing exists and likely contributes substantially to the stock of housing in many cities and towns.

Of the potential community benefits, renters gain access to affordable accommodation, while homeowners benefit from rental income. Should residential population density fall in a neighbourhood – due perhaps to aging residents or changing family structures –

secondary suites can help to maintain or increase density while maintaining the character of the neighbourhood. Similarly, they are a way to introduce a more diverse mix of residents into the neighbourhood, based perhaps on their tenure, income, or household type. Seniors who wish to stay in their homes as they age can take advantage of secondary suites to let part of their houses or properties, which can provide additional income, help maintain the property, and assure that there is someone to watch the property or to provide assistance if required. However, some authors have found that as age increases, the motivation and ability to handle the development of a secondary unit declines.

The flexibility and adaptability of this concept make it useful, but at the same time, lend an element of unpredictability and chance, as needs and preferences are determined by each successive owner. On one hand, the stock of secondary units may be underutilized at first and gradually take form over a number of years, as populations change, or they may be added enthusiastically over a short period of time and gradually be reabsorbed into the principal dwelling.

While there are often concerns that these units would place an unacceptable burden on municipal services, and that unsupportable demand may be placed on a neighbourhood, there are studies that conclude that these burdens generally do not materialize, and that secondary units rarely alter the character of the neighbourhoods in which they are situated. Well-regulated and properly designed units, it seems, may actually increase the value of the properties that host them.

The next chapter provides a thorough examination and description of the City of Edmonton's use of secondary units, based on policy documents, reports, and other municipal documents.

### **Chapter 3 – City of Edmonton Secondary Dwelling Units Program**

For this part of the study, numerous documents, including City Council minutes, City administration reports, consultants' reports, City policy documents, and provincial government reports were examined. The goal of this approach was to explore and document the context in which the policy instrument was developed, and to examine the process and components of the program and the manner in which they were delivered. Certain documents also provided an insight into the reasoning behind certain program details for regulations, and the feedback that was used when developing the program.

#### **City of Edmonton Involvement in Affordable Housing**

Following the 2004 municipal election, the newly elected Mayor, Stephen Mandel, announced that the City would look at affordable housing as an area that needed “significant attention” (City of Edmonton, 2005d, p.3). Councillors Karen Leibovici and Michael Phair co-chaired an initiative<sup>1</sup> to look into the City's role with regards to housing and to develop a plan to address affordable housing.

What was the City's role at this time, and what were the roles of other levels of government in housing? In a 2005 report discussing the roles of the various orders of government regarding housing, the City of Edmonton Administration (2005b) stated that there is “no clear division of responsibilities in the large area of housing for citizens” (p. 1). While acknowledging federal and provincial constitutionally-defined roles, the report noted that the Government of Alberta had delegated certain responsibilities to municipalities, including the regulation of land uses, the regulation of construction and maintenance of buildings, and certain responsibilities with regard to seniors housing.

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<sup>1</sup> Known as the Housing Initiative Team

Historically, the City agreed to share the cost of providing housing for households with low incomes, or special needs. For instance, in the realm of social housing, the City directly owns approximately 1,660 units, and is responsible for a 10% share of the “operating deficit and debt retirement” of the City-owned portion of the 4,500 units managed by the Capital Region Housing Corporation (City of Edmonton, 2005b, p. 1; City of Edmonton 2005a). A number of other City actions related to housing and homelessness issues involved plan development, project administration and seed funding to access funding from the federal and provincial governments (City of Edmonton, 2005a). The City has seen its role as a “limited funding partner” (p. 2). Programs meant to increase household income or to provide support services were perceived as being solely the role of the provincial and federal governments.

The City has actively advocated, in conjunction with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, that the higher orders of government to provide “increased funding for a supply of housing that is adequate and affordable,” and that they work to provide households with adequate income and support services (City of Edmonton, 2005b, p. 3).

The City of Edmonton’s Municipal Development Plan, *Plan Edmonton*, is a key, high-level document meant to provide a strategic overview of the city’s physical, economic and social development over a ten year period. The document provided a basis for the development of more detailed plans and strategies by City Administration. The Plan notes that housing is primarily the responsibility of other levels of government, and as such, provides no strategies to deal with affordable housing, and little in the way of other strategies for housing (City of Edmonton, 1998; CityScape, 2006).

These three strategies dealing with safe and affordable housing form part of the City's high level plan (City of Edmonton, 1998, p. 43):

Strategy 3.5.8 – Work with those levels of government and agencies whose primary role is to contribute to individuals', families', and childrens' basic needs for shelter, food, clothing and safety.

Strategy 3.5.9 – Work with those levels of government and agencies whose primary role is to provide citizen access to adequate, safe and affordable housing.

3.5.10 – Promote safe living and working conditions through the enforcement of standards for health and safety in co-operation with the Capital Health Authority.

These strategies place the City in a subordinate and supporting role compared to other levels of government.

Other key documents addressing affordable housing prior to 2005 include Building Together, The City of Edmonton Low-Income and Special Needs Housing Strategy 2001-2011, released in 2002, which “defines the City's future role in addressing priority housing and homeless needs” as a facilitative role, and positions the City as a limited funding partner, leveraging resources from other levels of government (City of Edmonton, 2005a).

In 2002, having perceived there to be a “significant decline in affordable rental housing production in Edmonton” Council established a multi-stakeholder “Task Force on Affordable Housing”. The following year, Council approved a number of recommendations to encourage the development of affordable housing, mainly under the

Canada-Alberta Affordable Housing Program (City of Edmonton, 2005-2005CLR002, att.3 p.1).

### **Fire and Building Code Revisions**

According to a member of the City's Administration, notification of upcoming changes to the Alberta Building Code and the Alberta Fire Code dealing with safety standards for secondary suites was given in 2005 (Personal communication, May 25, 2011). In May 2006, a Legislative Assembly committee made recommendations providing direction to improve the safety of secondary suites in Alberta, which were subsequently approved by Government (Alberta Municipal Affairs and Housing, Safety Codes Council, 2007a).

The Government of Alberta, having examined the issue, concluded that the "proliferation of secondary suites... as an affordable housing option renewed concerns over the safety and affordability..." of the suites and made changes to the Fire and Building Codes, thereby recognizing secondary suites as a "distinct type of accommodation" (p. 1).

Changes to the Building Code, which regulates new construction, came into force at the end of December, 2006. Changes to the Fire Code, which regulates existing buildings, came into force at the end of December, 2008 (Alberta, 2007a, 2007b). Provisions of the Safety Code Act allow a safety authority – in this case, the City of Edmonton – to approve renovations and upgrades to use upcoming requirements, prior to the date they come into force (2007a). The new code requirements included:

- minimum ceiling heights for rooms (1.95 m);
- windows allowing emergency access for each bedroom;

- suites required to have direct exits (although shared corridors and landings were permitted);
- fire-rated walls separating the suite from the principal unit, and an enclosed furnace;
- interconnected smoke alarms between dwelling units; and,
- dual heating and ventilation systems for new suites (existing suites can still use a single system).

### **Cornerstones: Edmonton's Plan for Affordable Housing Plan**

Cornerstones: Edmonton's Plan for Affordable Housing Plan (City of Edmonton, 2005b) is the result of the Housing Initiative Team's efforts, and is indicative of the City's shifting role in the provision of affordable housing. One important aspect of the Plan:

City undertake an active role in advocating for an increase in income support and service supports for persons in need of short-term housing (emergency housing, and transitional housing) and collaborate with governments, the private sector and the community to provide an additional 2,500 units of long-term housing (long-term supportive housing, social housing, and affordable housing) over the next five years. (p. 19)

Several of the strategies found in the Cornerstones Plan provide a basis for the use of secondary units as a way to provide affordable housing in the city. An initial strategy was the establishment of the secondary suite incentive fund, meant to assist homeowners renovating existing secondary suites:

That Administration in consultation with the Affordable Housing Initiative, prepare a report on how the City could create an incentive fund and program, similar to the RRAP<sup>2</sup> program, to assist homeowners to bring secondary suites up to the building code standards. (p.19)

In addition, Council provides direction for the City to work with stakeholders to find ways to retain existing housing units, or to create additional units. The City will also look into expanding its role related to affordable housing, reviewing its “policies, processes, standards and bylaws” to assist “in the development and/or reduction of cost of affordable housing” (p. 20).

### **Land Use Planning and Affordable Housing**

Following Council’s direction to re-examine policies and strategies, CitySpaces Consulting (2006) was tasked with examining the relationship between land use planning and affordable housing, and generating a series of options and recommendations. The findings of the resulting report, “Key Connections: Affordable Housing and Land Use Planning”, included three high priority items that were “candidates for early implementation” as they were “widely supported, as evidenced through informal and formal consultations” (p. 19).

The first recommendation was to update *Plan Edmonton*, the City’s Municipal Development Plan, to include affordable housing policies. CitySpaces noted that Plan Edmonton was “very weak on affordable housing policy”, and that “[p]olicy should lead regulation” (p. ES-2).

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<sup>2</sup> The Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program is a CMHC program meant to assist lower income homeowners with housing repairs and modifications.

Second in the list of priorities was to “legalize secondary suites” (p. E-1). This action, changing secondary suites to a permitted use, received a high level of support during consultations (p. D-4).

Third, in order to advance these goals, staff should be provided to administer programs, and to aid in the planning review process.

Having studied the options presented in the “Key Connections” study, the City responded in its own report with the following recommendations (City of Edmonton, 2006):

- Amend the Municipal Development Plan to include affordable housing as a priority, and include a number of supporting strategies;
- Amend the Edmonton Zoning Bylaw to increase opportunity for secondary suites in low density residential areas; and
- Consider policy direction and implementation measures to produce affordable housing in new and mature neighbourhoods.

## **Zoning Options – Phase 1**

### **Principles and Benefits**

A number of objectives for affordable housing were developed and would be used to guide the secondary units zoning changes (City of Edmonton, 2007c). The first objective was equitable distribution, in that units would not be concentrated in any one particular area, but rather dispersed throughout the city. The second objective was unobtrusiveness, by which is meant that affordable housing units should not be readily distinguished from regular market housing units. The third objective was that they should be available over the long-term, and not merely as temporary measures.

From the City's perspective, the changes were based on a number of perceived benefits to renters, owners, and to the community at large (p. 12):

For a tenant, a secondary unit can represent lower cost rental accommodation, and can increase the overall supply of housing. Encouraging secondary units provides the opportunity for a tenant to live in a lower density neighbourhood, which is not always a viable option for a small household. In addition, allowing secondary units in mature neighbourhoods can afford the tenant access to the services that are available in such locations.

For the homeowners, having a secondary unit can act as a mortgage helper, providing rental income, and potentially helping them qualify for the mortgage. This measure was also seen as a potential benefit to seniors, allowing them to remain in their home as they age in place and providing an alternative to assisted living.

For the community, bringing in additional residents can help stabilize neighbourhoods with declining populations, or can act to increase density and add vitality to existing neighbourhoods, in a way that will not change the character of the neighbourhood. Other benefits are the addition of socioeconomic diversity and the utilization of existing infrastructure. The benefits of legalized secondary units, as opposed to simply tolerating non-conforming units, are also numerous. Legal suites add a degree of stability to this rental stock – both for the tenant, who is less likely to be displaced in the event that the unit is closed for infractions, and to the homeowner, who is less likely to lose the rental income for the same reason. The City would benefit due to more accurate records and population statistics, and potentially due to increased revenue from population-based

grants from higher orders of government. Finally, legalized units will help with improved health and safety standards and monitoring (City of Edmonton, 2007c).

### **Zoning Regulations Prior to Phase 1**

Prior to the Phase 1 revisions to the Zoning Bylaw, opportunities for secondary suites were very limited, garden suites were not permitted, and garage suites were limited to several custom zones. The opportunity for secondary suites was limited by several factors, the most critical being the opportunity permission, and certain locational restrictions (City of Edmonton, 2007c). Secondary suites were allowed only at the discretion of the Development Officer, which also meant adhering to any conditions or regulations attached to the approval, having to provide notification to neighbours, and that the decision could be appealed by the homeowner or adjacent landowners. This was seen as an impediment to the development of legal secondary suites. The second limitation was the locational and lot size regulations (City of Edmonton, 2007c). Secondary suites were permitted in single-detached houses only on a lot abutting a property that was zoned for industrial, commercial, row housing or apartment uses. An additional 100 m<sup>2</sup> was required to be added to the base lot size for a secondary suite on the property.

### **Zoning Options Considered**

Options for expanding opportunities for secondary suites were discussed (City of Edmonton, 2007c). Specifying the particular zones in which secondary suites are allowed can affect and expand opportunities, and can also affect which locations within the city they might occur (as some zones are more prevalent in certain parts of the city). “Opportunities permissions” (p. 7) can be specified to modify the development permit

process, and can be either a permitted or a discretionary use. Applications where secondary suites are a permitted use must be granted if all conditions are met.

Discretionary uses are subject to certain conditions and the professional judgement of the Development Officer. Having secondary suites as a permitted use with few or simplified conditions would increase opportunities for secondary suites. Reducing both lot size requirements and parking requirements were discussed as being methods to increase opportunities. Removing or modifying lot location requirements (e.g. permitted only on corner lots) could also increase opportunities. Other options included changing the required minimum (or maximum) suite size, the location within the primary dwelling and the number of bedrooms. Restrictions on tenure – requiring owner-occupancy in the principal dwelling – were discussed, as it is used in some municipalities, but was dismissed because existing legislation does not permit Alberta municipalities to regulate tenure (City of Edmonton, 2007c; Municipal Government Act, RSA 2000, s640). Finally, the built form of the structure was considered. Secondary suites were only permitted in single-detached houses, but it was considered an option to extend the opportunity to other forms of housing, such as semi-detached, or row housing in order to increase development opportunities.

### **Phase 1 Zoning Bylaw Amendments**

In 2007, the City of Edmonton (2007b) introduced amendments to the Edmonton Zoning Bylaw, which establishes land use zones to regulate the “use and development of land within specific geographic areas of the City” (City of Edmonton, 2001, s6.1(100)). The changes represented the first of two phases meant to increase the opportunity for

secondary suites and garage suites. The changes can be summarized as follows (City of Edmonton, 2007b):

- Introduced secondary suites as a permitted use;
- In the common RF1, RF2 and RF3 zones, the locational criteria were expanded to corner lots, lots fronting onto service roads, and on lots where a rear lot line abuts a zone where industrial, commercial, row housing, or apartment housing is allowed. Locational requirements were removed in other residential zones;
- The minimum lot area for a house with a secondary suite was reduced to 360 m<sup>2</sup> in all applicable residential zones;
- Conditions for garage suites were added, which included a maximum height of 6 m (or the height of the house), and attention to window and balcony placement meant to minimize privacy issues; and,
- A minimum suite size was set at 30 m<sup>2</sup>, up to a maximum of 70 m<sup>2</sup> (or up to 40% of the area of the principal dwelling), and independent access/egress to the suite was required.

Feedback received from several property owners and the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues had indicated that there would be support for owner occupancy requirements (although public opinion was found to be divided), due to the perception that owners living in the residence would be more responsible for the property and would better supervise tenants (City of Edmonton, 2007b, p. 2). An owner-occupancy requirement was rejected, with the City Administration noting that Alberta municipalities are not allowed to regulate users, only uses of land. It was felt that existing nuisance

bylaws (e.g. property upkeep, noise) were adequate to deal with maintenance or disturbance issues.

Finally, it was recommended that a team from a number of departments be established to: provide services including handling increased zoning, development and building permit inquiries and applications; to develop education and incentive programs; and to respond to bylaw enforcement requests (p. 5). The educational component was meant to address Zoning Bylaw details, as well as Fire and Building Code requirements and would be delivered through the use of a web site and brochures.

Meanwhile the Housing Branch was in the process of building a plan to provide funding for new suites (in existing and in new homes) and to renovate existing suites (p. 5).

### **Municipal Development Plan Amendments**

In 2008, the City's Municipal Development Plan, Plan Edmonton, was amended to include affordable housing as a priority, and to identify a number of supporting strategies (City of Edmonton, 2008b). The new priority demonstrates a shift away from a minimal role in the provision of affordable housing to one that is more involved, and gives the City a more direct role: "In partnership with others, provide access to safe, accessible and affordable housing in all areas of the City, in accordance with Plan Edmonton" (City of Edmonton, 1998, p. 47).

The shift in the approach to affordable housing can also be seen in the new strategies to be pursued, including:

3.9.1 – Work proactively and in partnership with others to meet a wide range of affordable housing needs in all areas of the City... (p. 47)

3.9.2 – Endorse a mix of housing types for a wide range of household types and incomes in all areas of the City that are reflective of the City’s population profile... (p. 47)

3.9.3 – Encourage new development and infill development to incorporate affordable housing that is visually indistinguishable from market housing. (p. 47)

3.9.4 – Work in partnership with other orders of government, private owners and landlords and the community to maintain, upgrade, and expand the new and existing affordable rental housing supply in the City. (p. 47)

3.9.7 – Collect and make funds available to lever capital funding for the provision of long-term affordable housing projects.

Many of these strategies were included in the next iteration of the Municipal Development Plan (*The Way We Grow*), which also added an emphasis on developing affordable housing near LRT stations and transit centres, as well encouraging “no net loss” of affordable housing during infill development (City of Edmonton, 2010d, p. 36).

## **Phase 2 Zoning Bylaw Amendments**

The second phase of the secondary units program was approved in February 2009 expanding the opportunity for secondary suites, modifying requirements for garage suites, and introducing the opportunity for garden suites (City of Edmonton, 2009a).

### **Secondary Suites**

Phase 2 introduced secondary suites a permitted use in all low-density residential zones, and a discretionary use in medium-density zones (as single-detached dwellings are a

discretionary use in those zones) (City of Edmonton, 2008c), while location restrictions for secondary suites were also removed, based on the following rationale:

- Having secondary suites being a permitted use in all low-density residential zones without location restrictions supports the concept that the opportunity be distributed throughout the city; (p. S-2)
- The impacts of secondary suites do not justify location restrictions; and, (p. S-2)
- Discretionary use would discourage people from applying for permits, and may increase disputes between neighbours and application appeals. (p. S-2)

With regard to lot size, the minimum area was kept at 360 m<sup>2</sup>. The floor area for a secondary suite was set at a minimum of 30 m<sup>2</sup>, and a maximum of 70 m<sup>2</sup> or smaller than the main floor for a basement suite, or 40% of the ground floor if the suite is above grade (p. S-2). One additional parking space is also required, although tandem parking is allowed.

### **Garage and Garden Suites**

The Phase 2 Zoning Bylaw amendment modified the requirements for garage suites and introduced the opportunity for garden suites (City of Edmonton, 2008c). Both types of suite were established as a discretionary use in most residential zones, with the following location requirements<sup>3</sup> (p. S-3):

- Corner lots;
- Lots fronting onto service roads;

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<sup>3</sup> Two zones with limited geographic applicability (in Griesbach and Terwillegar neighbourhoods) have no specific location requirements.

- Lots backing onto a lane adjacent to an arterial road, separated by a landscaped boulevard; and,
- Lots where the side or rear lot line abuts row housing, apartment housing, community services zones, or a zone where a park is permitted.

To help minimize the privacy impacts on adjacent properties, a number of privacy regulations were added (p. S-5). These include requiring large windows to face the land or flanking street (on corner lots), and to require offset windows to limit the view into neighbouring yards. Garage suite balconies must face a lane or flanking street, and no roof decks are permitted.

The required site areas are significantly larger than those for secondary suites (p. S-5). For a suite located at grade, the minimum lot size was set at 525 m<sup>2</sup>, while garage suites above grade were set at 460 m<sup>2</sup>.

### **Grant program**

In 2008, the City began offering funding to upgrade or develop secondary suites and garage suites (City of Edmonton, 2008d). 75 % of the total cost of the project is covered under the program, with the applicant expected to contribute the remaining 25 %. The maximum amount of the grant varied according to the type of suite, as shown in the following table:

**Table 5 – Grant Amounts, Phase 1**

Type	Maximum grant amount
Upgrading an existing secondary or garage suite	\$24,000
Building a new secondary or garage suite in an existing home	\$24,000
Building a new secondary or garage suite in a new home	\$8,000

(City of Edmonton, 2008d)

In 2009, the maximum amount for building a new suite in a new home was increased from \$8,000 to \$20,000, and the maximum amount for building a new garage suite was increased to \$24,000 (City of Edmonton 2009b, 2009e). The new maximum grant amounts are shown in the following table:

**Table 6 – Grant Amounts, Phase 2**

Type	Maximum grant amount
Upgrading an existing secondary, garage or garden suite	\$24,000
Building a new garage or garden suite	\$24,000
Building a new secondary suite in an existing home	\$24,000
Building a new secondary suite in a new home	\$20,000

(City of Edmonton, 2009b, 2009c 2009d 2009e)

Initially, applicants had to commit to charging rents that did not exceed 85 % of the average market rent for the same type of suite (based on CMHC reporting) for the five years of the funding agreement, with lease renewals and any new leases being submitted to the Housing Branch (City of Edmonton, 2008d).

In 2009, as directed by Council, an owner-occupancy requirement was added for funding agreements regarding the development of new units (Beck, 2009; City of Edmonton, 2009a). This meant that for the duration of the five year funding agreement the owner had to commit to residing in the principal dwelling when renting out the secondary unit. The same year, the requirement for capping rents at 85% of the market rate was removed. According to a member of the Administration, this was done to remove administrative barriers and to create a more streamlined process (Personal communication, May 23, 2009).

With the removal of the rent cap, the commitment to affordability was based on the applicant being required to commit to renting the secondary unit to a tenant earning less than the median income for their household size (City of Edmonton, 2009d). Other requirements of the program included allowing City inspectors to conduct a preliminary assessment of the work required to bring an existing suite to Code, and submitting two estimates of construction cost, copies of development and building permits, and the proposed floor plan for new units. The City also retained the right to inspect the property over the five year period of the agreement.

## **Funding**

In 2005, City Council directed City Administration to report, in preparation for the 2006 budget, on how the City could “create a new funding pool of \$25 million as leverage to solicit additional amounts from other governments and non-governmental organizations” (City of Edmonton, 2005b, p. 19). The creation of a forgivable or low-interest loan fund would support programs such as home ownership, grow homes and flex-housing, construction of new buildings and the purchase of existing housing (p. 19).

In April 2007, the Government of Alberta announced \$285 million in new funding for housing for 2007-2008, in order to address issues identified by the Alberta Affordable Housing Task Force (City of Edmonton, 2007a). The Task Force was established to “find innovative and practical ways to make affordable housing more accessible and available to Albertans... [and to] consider solutions for homelessness and affordable housing, including subsidized rental, and home ownership” (Government of Alberta, 2007). Funding in the amount of \$45 million was expected to be directed to the City of Edmonton. With this funding, coupled with own-source and federal funding, it was anticipated that \$8.5 million would be dedicated to the development of new units and the renovation of existing secondary units. At this point, it was estimated that 1,000 units could be produced (City of Edmonton, 2007a).

The following year, in 2008, a similar report was produced to look into expected funding and allocations for the Cornerstones Plan (City of Edmonton, 2008a). Total Provincial funding was expected to be \$254.4 million, and Edmonton’s portion was estimated at \$34.3 million – a 24% reduction from the year prior. Administration revised estimates for secondary unit production and renovation to 763 units, with a total cost of \$11.4 million.

The City’s 2009 “Roadmap” report for Cornerstones Plan implementation notes that the City was granted another \$30 million in Provincial funding (City of Edmonton, 2009f). The June 2009 announcement of the Canada-Alberta Affordable Housing Initiative made available a total of \$351 million province wide.

The City’s estimates for affordable housing production were again revised. The total amount dedicated to secondary units was approximately \$12.68 million, with a total of

528 units. New units in new buildings were anticipated to number 80 (15% of total), 317 for new suites in existing buildings (60 % of total), and 131 for upgrading existing units (25 %) (City of Edmonton, 2009f). Overall, the target for units produced under the Cornerstones Plan was revised to 2,670 units.

### Potential Uptake

Based on the changes made in Phase 2 of the program, the City of Edmonton estimated that approximately 130,000 lots may be eligible for secondary suite development (2008c, p. S-2), and that between 10% and 20% of eligible lots may contain a secondary suite over time (p.3).

**Table 7 – Number of Eligible Lots**

Zone <sup>4</sup>	Total	Meeting size criteria	% eligible
RF1	95,990	95,390	99%
RF2	1,923	1,488	77%
RF3	15,353	13,963	91%
RF4	1,727	1,413	82%
RSL	16,161	15,237	94%
RPL	7,998	2,210	28%
other	-	1,258	-
Total	139,152	130,959	-

(City of Edmonton, 2008c, p. B4-1)

Two of the City’s newer single-detached compact lot zones may have limited opportunities for secondary suite development. The RPL zone, for instance, has only 27% of lots that meet the minimum size requirement (p. B4-1). Another zone frequently

<sup>4</sup> (RF1) Single Detached Residential Zone; (RF2) Low Density Infill Zone; (RF3) Low Density Development Zone; (RF4) Semi-detached Residential Zone; (RPL) Planned Lot Residential Zone; (RSL) Residential Small Lot Zone.

used in new developments, the RSL zone, has approximately 94% of lots meeting the minimum size requirement. Other factors, such as the internal configuration of the building, and parking facilities, may also influence suitability for secondary suite development.

Assuming a fairly conservative rate of 10% of all eligible lots developing a secondary suite, approximately 13,000 secondary suites could be produced legally.

### **Consultation**

In June 2007, a general public survey was conducted by Banister Research and Consulting (2007) to gauge opinions regarding secondary suites and potential revisions going into Phase 2 of the program. The survey consisted of telephone interviews with 402 Edmontonians, and was estimated to have a margin of error no greater than 4.9% at the 95% confidence level, 19 times out of 20 (pp. 2-3). Banister ensured that half of respondents were located in mature neighbourhoods, and half in newer neighbourhoods. In addition, 80% were homeowners, and 20% were renters.

Below are summaries of several of the questions and responses (pp. i-iv):

- 66% agreed that providing more support and opportunities for the development of secondary suites would contribute to safe, affordable housing. Renters were more likely to indicate that secondary suites would provide safe, affordable housing;
- 88% believed that secondary suites exist in the city, while 6% believed they did not exist, and another 6% were unsure;
- 33% believed that secondary suites existed in their neighbourhood, whereas 50% believed that they did not exist in their neighbourhood, and 18% were unsure;

- When asked whether it was the City's responsibility to ensure that all existing suites conformed to standards for size and safety, 90% agreed, 5% disagreed and 4% were unsure;
- 83% agreed that conditions should be placed on opportunities for new suites, while 13% disagreed, and 4% gave a neutral response;
- When asked if they thought the principal dwelling should be occupied by the homeowner, 45% agreed, 41% disagreed and 13% were unsure;
- When asked if secondary suites should be allowed in select areas of neighbourhoods, 31% agreed, 55% disagreed, and 11% were unsure;
- Homeowners were also asked whether they would consider developing a suite in their home. 9% indicated that they would be likely to consider it, while 83% indicated they were not likely to, and 6% were neutral; and,
- Of those homeowners who were not likely to consider a suite, 51% would not be bothered if their neighbours did, 27% would have some reservations, and 17% would strongly object.

Feedback received by the City in the lead-up to Phase 2 through an internet survey, open houses, as well as stakeholder sessions showed a strong degree of support for secondary suites, and to a lesser degree, for garage and garden suites (City of Edmonton, 2008e, p. B1.1-11). Public support for the removal of locational restrictions for secondary, garage and garden suites was received from the web survey and from open houses, but was strongest for secondary suites. A community group – the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues' Planning and Development Committee supported the removal of locational requirements, but was in support of the discretionary use permission. As well,

the League and three individual community league organizations supported an owner-occupancy requirement, saying that maintenance and tenant behaviour were perceived to be better with a homeowner present.

Some groups bought up the topic of density caps on secondary unit development (p. B1.4) to limit the number developed in any particular area, citing parking concerns and speculative property purchases. This measure was something that Administration did not support, and that City Council ultimately rejected (City of Edmonton, 2009a, p.12). Administration's rationale for not supporting this measure was that it was inconsistent with the principle of equitable opportunity throughout the city, that it would be difficult to track illegal suites and reabsorbed suites, and that it would favour early entrants over newer ones.

A licensing or temporary permit system was discussed by the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues' Planning and Development Committee, but was also rejected because it would require substantial resources to administer and monitor, and that it might also discourage applicants from making an investment in housing stock, due to the possibility of license revocation (City of Edmonton, 2008e, p. B1.7).

## **Program Monitoring**

### **Applications Received**

Between 2000 and 2006, only thirty Development Permit applications were made, and of those, fourteen were refused, nine expired or were cancelled, and thirteen appealed to the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board. Appeals to the Board resulted in four approvals, eight refusals, and one listed as pending (City of Edmonton, 2007b). In the

period leading up to December 18, 2007, an additional seventeen applications were received (City of Edmonton, 2008e).

Development Officers had indicated that most complaints had come from former tenants, perhaps seeking retribution against the landlord, originating from some sort of dispute between landlord and tenant. Formal reasons given for the complaint were generally based on safety code issues. Complaints from neighbours were also common, and were mostly based on parking issues (City of Edmonton, 2007b).

During a nine month period following the beginning of Phase 1 (December 12, 2007 to August 12, 2008), forty-seven permits for secondary suites were received (City of Edmonton, 2008e). Of those, twenty-five were approved, five were refused, five were cancelled, and twelve were in progress. Sixteen applications for garage suites were received, and of those, only three were approved, eight were refused, and five were in progress. Reports indicate that most secondary suite and garage suite application refusals were based on not meeting the locational requirements.

Between January 9, 2009 and February 10, 2010, approximately half of the 182 secondary suites development permits were associated with the funding program (City of Edmonton, 2010c, p. 1).

### **Complaints and Compliance**

According to staff reports, eighty complaints were received between December 12, 2007 and August 12, 2008 (City of Edmonton, 2008e). Twenty-four of these complaints were deemed to be valid. Of these, compliance was achieved by twelve, six were in progress for compliance, and another six were still under investigation. Forty complaints were

deemed to be invalid, either because the suite in question was not in fact a suite, was unoccupied, had a valid permit, or was a family dwelling. The remaining sixteen complaints were deemed to be inconclusive.

Beginning, in January 2009, two secondary suites compliance teams were established to investigate safety codes issues in illegal secondary suites. Between that point and February of 2010, 257 files had been opened (City of Edmonton, 2010c, p. A2.2). City staff has found that on average, it takes 4.9 months to close a file and bring the suite to an acceptable condition.

### **Cornerstones Evaluation**

In 2010, Nichols Applied Management was retained by the City to provide a third-party evaluation (2010) of the Cornerstones initiative. The authors used a December 31, 2009 cut-off for the evaluation, which focused on two major objectives of the Cornerstones Plan: the creation of additional units, and advocacy for increases to income and support services (p. 1). The report also looked at the actions identified in support of those objectives (which, most importantly for the purposes of this practicum, includes secondary suites), and general public policy objectives.

At this point, the Cornerstones Plan was well on the way to meeting the original objective of 2,500 units. Occupied units numbered 1,438, an additional 278 units were under construction, and 380 units had signed agreements, but had not yet been started, for a total of 2,096 units (p. 11). Secondary suites made up 84 of those units (p. 16).

Estimates for an additional 1,291 units being added over the following four years had been made, 528 of these being secondary suites (p.16). Overall, this would exceed the Cornerstones goal by 890 units. When considering grant program, Nichols noted that

while “significant progress has been made in this area” (p. 28), and that the program had been expanded to include the development of new suites, and also garage and garden suites, effort would still be required in marketing the program, and also in inspection and enforcement to more fully realize its potential.

Administrative capacity, according to Nichols, while still stretched, has benefited from several reorganizations of Housing staff (p. 33). Housing was changed to ‘branch’ status in 2008, and was moved into the planning department in 2008. This change raised the profile of the Housing Branch, allowing it to more effectively raise housing issues within the City organization, and enabling planning and housing staff to work more effectively together.

Looking broadly at public policy benefits, Nichols gives credit to the Cornerstones initiative for raising awareness about affordable housing issues with the provincial and federal governments, and also with the public. From this perspective, it seems likely that this initiative helped convince the Government of Alberta to establish affordable housing as a priority, which was subsequently followed by new funding and support (Nichols, 2010, p. 33).

## **Summary**

Through examination of key City of Edmonton documents, the policy context, components, funding sources, and monitoring mechanisms of the secondary units program are summarized. This section has attempted to describe the evolution of the secondary units program from its inception as a way to bring existing suites up to code, to the spring of 2011 where it has been expanded to encourage the development of secondary units through permissive zoning and financial incentives. Regulatory details

selected – also those considered but not pursued – are described for both phases of the program.

The City identifies a number of rationales for the secondary units program, including affordable housing, neighbourhood stabilization and vitality, socioeconomic diversity, and aging in place, all of which are frequently cited in the literature studying secondary units.

The documents also show how policy development lagged behind as new priorities emerged and programs were developed. Despite this, one can see how the City has repositioned itself as a more active participant in the development of affordable housing.

This fact is illustrated in such documents as the Cornerstones Plan and the amendments to the Municipal Development Plan.

The results of the permit and funding allocation data review, key informant interviews and targeted neighbourhood survey are presented in the following chapter.

## **Chapter 4 – Results of Data Review, Interviews and Survey**

This chapter presents the findings of the permit and funding data review, key informant interviews, and the neighbourhood survey.

### **Key Informant Interviews**

Between May 21, 2001 to May 25, 2011, interviews were conducted with three key members of the City Administration. All three members were involved in the development and implementation of the program. These interviews were meant to deepen the understanding of the policies and programs being evaluated, and to collect the informants' thoughts, perspectives, and views on the goals and effectiveness of the program. This section presents a summary of the interviews, grouped into several subjects or themes.

### **Intended Effects of Secondary Units Program**

When asked about the purpose of the program, respondents spoke about the need to improve affordability of housing in the city, to increase the stock of affordable housing, and also to ensure that new units would be healthy and safe.

Another of the goals mentioned was the need to upgrade existing illegal suites that the City was aware of, with the opportunity to also provide an incentive for owners to bring them up to Code. One respondent called this the City's "carrot" approach to upgrade suites. The other approach is when City inspectors have to become involved. In the event that units have to be upgraded or shut down, there is an opportunity to help fund the upgrade. This, it was noted, would prevent the displacement of many tenants.

The need to produce housing units quickly was also cited as a reason for the program. As one respondent stated, since 2007 was at the peak of an economic boom, which coincided with a large in-migration into Edmonton, “secondary suites were seen as basically the quickest way to create relatively affordable units.”

The City’s Cornerstones Plan included a number of different mechanisms to create affordable housing, one of them being secondary units. This particular form of housing, it was noted in one interview, was a “good starting point to create affordable housing.” Creating units in this manner adds units to the housing continuum, potentially opening up spaces below them as tenants move up and their situation improves, helping with vacancy rates.

### **Development of the Secondary Units Program**

One of the Cornerstones initiatives was to look at a secondary unit grants program. According to one respondent, the grant program was originally focused on upgrading existing suites and was seen as a way of adding to the life of existing units, not adding to the number of units. The City eventually began thinking of ways to expand the program and looked to adding new suites in existing houses, and new suites in new houses. There was a realization that the existing zoning bylaw was not supportive of this initiative, therefore changes to zoning regulations were important. When additional funds were available, the grant program was expanded.

The secondary units grant program was originally modelled on the CMHC’s RRAP program, which is meant to help with the renovation and creation of new suites in existing homes with a focus on aging-in-place. Wherever possible, explained one respondent, pieces were taken from the CMHC project – for example, who qualifies, how

to qualify, or the format of the forms. It became apparent however, that the CMHC standards were very rigid, and it was necessary to make the program more customized to Edmonton. From an administrative perspective, it was important for homeowners to begin spending their own money prior to receiving City funding.

The Government of Alberta was aware that there were problems with secondary suites and decided that suites would have to meet a new standard. Once the Province announced it would be changing fire and building codes to address secondary suites, the City of Edmonton was one of the first to start a program. One respondent pointed out that while the City's program was in place, the new standards would not be in force until 2008. The City requested assistance in this regard, and the Province issued a STANDATA interpretation of the Fire Code – essentially giving opportunities to bring existing suites up to code before the new code came into force.

Lastly, it is interesting to note that inter-departmental struggles were identified as well. There were negotiations held to obtain a reduced cost on water and sanitation servicing, so as not to increase costs to the homeowner. Increased costs might have acted as a disincentive to suite development.

### **Program Effectiveness**

There was consensus among the key informants that the program had been effective, and succeeded in achieving a number of goals. The 2009 “Roadmap” report for the Cornerstones program estimated that 528 units would be created or upgraded, with funding of approximately \$12.6 million (City of Edmonton, 2009f). By March 2011, some 558 permits had been granted for secondary units, of which 272 were associated

with grant funding, and only half of the total funding amount had been accessed (City of Edmonton, 2011).

“The numbers speak for themselves”, explained one respondent, suggesting the program was a success. The removal of locational restrictions and the grant program encouraged an increase in applications. Program promotion by City communications staff and by Council was said to be important for public education and also brought in applicants.

Another respondent explained that there was some debate over whether the income criteria were needed, as secondary suites appeal to certain groups, certain income levels, and are generally self-regulating (in terms of rent) as an affordable housing option.

Removing the rent ceiling, for example, was noted to have removed some administrative barriers and to create a more streamlined process.

From the perspective of one key informant, the program was slow to begin, but “word is getting out and everybody is happy” with the program. They added that the goals of the program have been met, and that additional funds will be requested, as current program funding is predicted to be exhausted in mid-2012. In addition, it was mentioned that Administration feels the program has exceeded expectations, and they do not want to have a gap in service.

### **Progress Monitoring**

In the interviews, respondents were asked to comment on the manner in which progress was monitored, and how it was measured.

Some early estimates were done based on lot size requirements and on interest from homeowners in creating a secondary suite, one respondent commented, and that the City has probably exceeded those early predictions.

Another mentioned that Cornerstones had an overall goal of 2,500 units over five years. The grants program began in the third year of the program, but was supposed to end in 2011. However, the funding has been allocated and can be accessed past 2011. While the goals of the broader Cornerstones program have not yet been met, they are approaching the target. Success, explained one respondent, would be measured by the number of units developed and the amount of money that has been allocated.

Asked about enforcement of rules and regulations, a respondent explained that an enforcement team often goes out with fire inspectors, and is able to compel an owner to obtain building and development permits, and instruct them to repair deficiencies (or have it revert to single unit dwelling). Furthermore, enforcement teams are driving many of the upgrades. Homeowners with existing suites do not frequently come forward willingly, as there are a number of disincentives. These include potential increased income and property taxes, as well as the time and cost of obtaining permits.

Enforcement actions can originate from many sources, including tenants, the police, the fire department, Alberta Health Services, and the Planning Department. If an illegal suite “falls into our lap”, originating in a complaint, the City is obliged to act on it. They added, “we know the problem is bigger than we can handle at this point”, and a proactive approach is not feasible.

Referrals to enforcement teams (Inspection Services) from Capital Health increased after Phase 2 began, which corresponds with the increase of permits issued for existing units.

An increased number of permits for existing units may not mean that new units are being created, but it does increase the stability of those units. That is to say, owners are less worried about having their secondary unit shut down for non-compliance, or losing their mortgage, for instance, and tenants are less worried about having to move.

### **Emerging Patterns**

In one interview, it was noted that a number of meetings had been held with developers interested in redeveloping surplus school sites. However, the same respondent added that the program “helps the little guy” and that it gives opportunities to ordinary homeowners, whereas many programs other are targeted at homebuilders, or affordable housing organizations.

In the opinion of another respondent, there seems to be a concentration in the central core of older existing neighbourhoods. A large percentage of the applications received have to do with upgrading suites and adding new suites in existing buildings. New suites in new houses and garage and garden suites are rare. Still, it was noted that inspectors travel to every part of the city, covering a wide range of neighbourhoods.

When asked who develops these secondary units, respondents noted that young people are using the opportunity as a mortgage qualifier, as all that is needed is a signed purchase agreement, and then they can apply for grants and permits. On the other hand, there has been interest from seniors who want to stay in their home, but do not want to leave the home empty while travelling. It would be a benefit to have a renter living in the house, maintaining the yard, and paying rent.

Regarding the amount of rent being charged for secondary units, one key informant responded that it was difficult to assess. However, with the list of people who were grant recipients that has been compiled, there should be access to concrete information in the future.

### **Common Questions or Comments Received**

One of the most common questions noted by one respondent was, “Why do we have to verify incomes?” The reason for this is that the City’s affordable housing has been targeted at households earning less than the median the income for their household type. At present, it was explained, the owner has to write a promissory note to follow the rules and to rent only to qualified persons. The respondent was uncertain whether this requirement can be regulated effectively, but it was still useful in the event of an inspection, if the contract had been breached.

“Many people who have objected don’t know half of what is going on their street,” stated a respondent referring to common concerns that were heard. Furthermore, some wanted to keep suites out of their neighbourhood, despite the fact that secondary units were already present, operating unnoticed.

Another comment made was that a number of questions were received about parking and traffic. One key informant commented that there is a common fallacy about increased traffic and parking on the street, and that studies have shown that the majority of occupants do not even own a car, and “at any rate, how is this worse than a suburban neighbourhood with a household with four teenagers and four additional cars?”

According to one respondent, the program is improving perceptions about this type of housing, and the phased approach has given people time to adjust. People are seeing that secondary units can be a positive element in their neighbourhood.

The City, according to one respondent, receives a number of technical questions regarding the best practices in development, or about qualified contractors.

### **Recommended Changes to the Program**

#### ***Expand Opportunities to Semi-detached Houses***

Several respondents commented that suites in semi-detached houses should be addressed. It was noted that many existing semi-detached houses already have existing suites, and if City inspectors have to become involved, the only action they can take is to shut them down. This could potentially displace a lot of people.

One respondent noted that some semi-detached units are 300 m<sup>2</sup> or more, and could readily house suites. Many of the semi-detached houses built in the 1970s and 1980s are well configured to house secondary suites, and the housing form in general is likely viable for secondary suite development.

If there are community concerns with this, noted one respondent, there are methods that could be used to address opposition and to gain support. These include parking requirements, reasonable amenity space requirements and employing the discretionary use permission. Expanding upon the idea about additional amenity space requirements, it was noted that the City has avoided this in the past, as it did not seem necessary on account of the parking, and space requirements. It was also seen as a disincentive for

affordable suites, in that having private yard space for the tenant might drive rental price up.

### ***Expand Garage Suite Opportunities***

Opinions were divided on a possible expansion of opportunities for garage suites. Currently, they are limited to corner lots and several other possible locations, and are a discretionary use. One respondent believed locational criteria could be expanded beyond these locations, while another favoured corner lots for garage suites, for privacy issues.

### ***Revise Direct Control Zones***

One respondent suggested revisiting direct control zones (e.g. DC1) in many older areas. These areas had not been included in the zoning bylaw revisions, and therefore had not been adjusted to allow secondary units. Changing this may be as simple as a text amendment, rather than a rezoning, given Council's direction on the matter, and public acceptance.

### ***Remove Owner-occupation Requirement***

To qualify for grants, new units have to be owner-occupied. Several respondents would like to see this change. One informant believes this is a management issue, not an ownership issue, and that problem landlords should be dealt with accordingly. Owner occupation is a value based judgement, not one rooted in fact. One example given was that a well-managed non-profit organization would be ineligible for funding because their homes are not owner occupied.

Another informant commented that there are likely tens of thousands of illegal units in the city – many in the older parts of town – renting both the upstairs and downstairs. However, only new units – not upgrades – have to comply with owner-occupancy, as the City does not want to displace existing tenants. This requirement, in their opinion, is holding back the program. Many developers, for instance, are eager to access this funding and would be able to add a great deal of affordable housing.

### ***Explore Secondary Units in Multi-family Structures***

A respondent raised the prospect of allowing “lock-offs” in condominiums and multi-family buildings. It would be relatively straightforward to add a small secondary suite to the principal unit, both with hallway access, including a lockable passage between the units. The suite could be utilized by the owner, or rented as needed.

### ***Remove Income Requirement***

While the rent cap has been removed, grant recipients still have to rent to people below median income, explained one respondent. The vast majority of landlords meet this requirement, but the median income requirement has to be explained to them. Still, “many interpret this to mean a street person, which is far from the truth”. This requirement could likely be removed. The targeted renter already tends to be lower income, based on the nature of the accommodation. Basement suites may “no longer be the best fit as a person improves his situation, and may move up to an apartment or condo, for example”. Another measure that was suggested was revisiting the agreements to simplify them further.

### *Expedite Permit Approvals*

When asked about timing of permit approvals, one informant suggested that while grant approvals can be completed in a matter of days, development and building permit approvals can take between 2 to 6 months. The lengthy response time inhibits the grant program from reaching greater potential.

## Analysis of Approved Permits and Grants to Date

Development permit data and grant data were obtained from the City of Edmonton from the beginning of the program to the 8<sup>th</sup> of March, 2011. *Table 8* provides a summary of permit and grant approvals, classed according to type of suite, and whether the unit was upgraded or newly developed.

**Table 8 – Development Permits and Grants (December 13, 2007 – March 8 2011)**

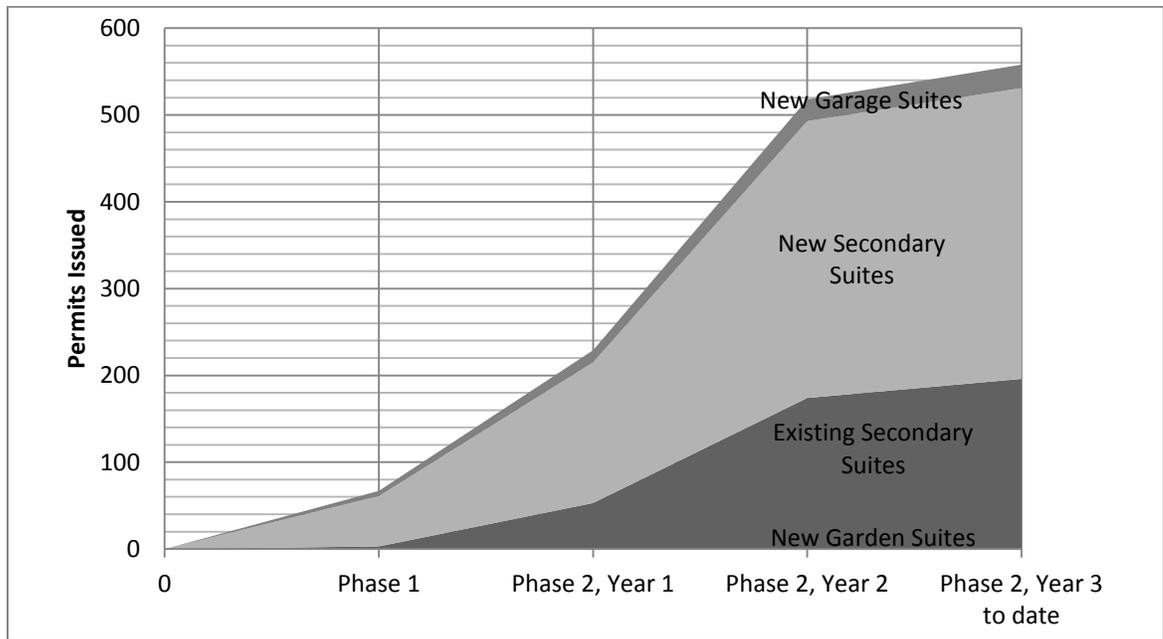
Suite Type	Approved Development Permits			Approved Grants			Grant Dollars Allocated		
	Existing Suites	New Suites	Totals	Existing Suites	New Suites	Totals	Existing Suites	New Suites	Totals
<b>Phase 1</b>									
<i>13 December 2007 to 31 December 2008</i>				<i>1 June 2008 to 31 December 2008</i>					
Secondary	3	58	61	0	13	13	\$0	\$305,655	\$305,655
Garage	0	6	6	0	1	1	\$0	\$24,000	\$24,000
<b>Phase 2, Year 1</b>									
<i>1 January 2009 to 31 December 2009</i>				<i>1 January 2009 to 31 December 2009</i>					
Secondary	49	104	153	17	45	62	\$378,152	\$994,911	\$1,373,063
Garage	0	8	8	0	4	4	\$0	\$98,144	\$98,144
Garden	0	1	1	0	0	0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Phase 2, Year 2</b>									
<i>1 January 2010 to 31 December 2010</i>				<i>1 January 2010 to 31 December 2010</i>					
Secondary	121	157	278	86	65	151	\$1,899,074	\$1,544,980	\$3,444,054
Garage	0	11	11	0	3	3	\$0	\$74,204	\$74,204
Garden	0	0	0	0	0	0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Phase 2, Year 3 to date</b>									
<i>1 January 2011 to 8 March 2011</i>				<i>1 January 2011 to 7 March 2011</i>					
Secondary	22	16	38	19	18	37	\$403,482	\$408,098	\$811,580
Garage	0	2	2	0	1	1	\$0	\$13,074	\$13,074
Garden	0	0	0	0	0	0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Totals To Date</b>									
<i>13 December 2007 to 8 March 2011</i>				<i>1 June 2008 to 7 March 2011</i>					
Secondary	195	335	530	122	141	263	\$2,680,708	\$3,253,644	\$5,934,352
Garage	0	27	27	0	9	9	\$0	\$209,422	\$209,422
Garden	0	1	1	0	0	0	\$0	\$0	\$0
TOTAL	195	363	558	122	150	272	\$2,680,708	\$3,463,066	\$6,143,774

(City of Edmonton, 2011)

The results show that the vast majority of permits and funding were associated with secondary suites (95% of permits, and 96 % of grant funding). Garage suites made up twenty-seven of the permit approvals, and only nine of the approved grant applications. Only one single garden suite permit was issued, with no associated funding.

Figure 2 shows the increase in permits issued over the duration of the program to date, particularly in the second phase of the project, when opportunities for suite development were further expanded. It is also interesting to note that a large proportion of permits were issued for new and upgraded secondary suites.

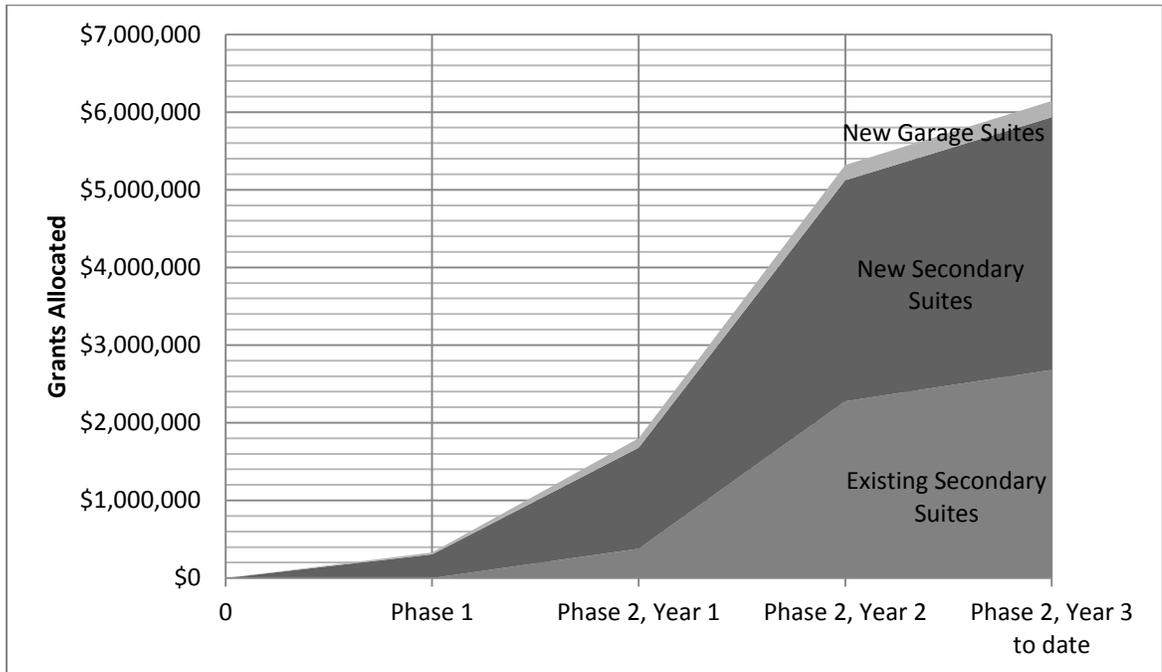
**Figure 2 – Number of Permits Issued (Cumulative)**



(City of Edmonton, 2011)

Figure 3 illustrates that the same can be said regarding grant allocations, showing a steep increase in the second year of Phase 2, when \$3.4 million was allocated, mostly for developing and upgrading secondary suites.

**Figure 3 – Value of Grants Allocated (Cumulative)**



(City of Edmonton, 2011)

Additional permit data was obtained showing the location of permits issued for secondary units. While the information is only current to July 2010, it shows that the majority (71%) of permits were issued for suites within the mature neighbourhood overlay (MNO), which is used to distinguish mature neighbourhoods from newer or developing neighbourhoods. Mature neighbourhoods make up nearly half of all Edmonton neighbourhoods.

**Table 9 – Secondary, Garage and Garden Suite Development Permits in Mature and Outside Mature Neighbourhoods (December 13, 2007 – July 26, 2010)**

	Within MNO	Outside MNO	Total
Secondary Suite	251	102	353
Garage Suite	13	4	17
Garden Suite	1	0	1
Total	265	106	371
%age of Total	71%	29%	100%

(City of Edmonton, 2010a).

By March 2011, part way into the third year of the second phase of the program, 558 permits had been granted for secondary units, of which 195 were for existing units, and 363 were for new units. 272 permits were associated with grant funding, and only half of the total funding amount (\$6.1 million) had been accessed (City of Edmonton, 2011). The rate of permits granted and funding allocated can be seen to increase following the introduction of Phase 2 of the program, and then again during subsequent years.

## **Targeted Neighbourhood Survey**

The survey was meant to collect information about household characteristics, perceptions of the secondary suites program, and other information. Findings were intended to provide a clearer perspective of resident perceptions of program implementation in the neighbourhood examined.

### **Neighbourhood Selection**

For the survey, it was decided to select a neighbourhood that was fairly representative of a mature Edmonton neighbourhood, and that was likely to contain some secondary suites. Based on information about secondary units found in the literature and on City regulations that support the development of secondary suites, the following characteristics were sought: the presence of single-detached homes, suitable low-density residential zoning, low income residents or those with affordability problems, and proximity to transit and services.

### **Allendale Neighbourhood Profile**

Allendale is a mature neighbourhood on Edmonton's south side and was selected for the survey. Development in Allendale began prior to the First World War, but occurred mostly in the 1950s (City of Edmonton, n.d.1). Land uses are primarily residential (mostly low density), commercial (low intensity commercial along 104 Street and 109 Street) and institutional (public school). The neighbourhood is near the University of Alberta, the University of Alberta Hospital, Southgate Shopping Centre, as well as the Whyte Avenue commercial corridor.

The City of Edmonton’s neighbourhood profile (n.d.1) and neighbourhood indicators (2010d) – both based on the 2006 Census of Canada unless otherwise indicated – provide some information regarding the characteristics of residents and dwellings of the Allendale neighbourhood.

Table 10 – Residential Dwellings by Tenure shows the ratio of renters to owners, in the neighbourhood and in the city as a whole. Allendale has a higher proportion of renters compared to the city average (46% vs. 37%).

**Table 10 – Residential Dwellings by Tenure**

Tenure	Number	% Total	City %
Owner Occupied	675	54	63
Renter Occupied	585	46	37
Total	1,260	100	100

(Source: City of Edmonton, n.d.; data from 2006 Census of Canada)

The vast majority of lots in the neighbourhood are zoned (RF3) Low Density Development Zone (City of Edmonton, 2011).<sup>5</sup> Table 11 – Residential Units by Type shows that single-detached housing is the most common form of housing (45%), which is slightly below the city average. The percentage of dwelling units in a semi-detached, triplex or fourplex is 32%, which is well above the city average of 7%. Apartment housing is very close to the city average at 22% of all units in the neighbourhood.

**Table 11 – Residential Units by Type**

Type of Unit	Number	% Total	City %
Single-detached house	575	45	50

<sup>5</sup> The purpose of this Zone is to provide primarily for Single Detached and Semi-detached Housing while allowing small-scale conversion and infill redevelopment to housing forms containing up to four Dwellings per building, and including Secondary Suites under certain conditions

Semi-detached, triplex, fourplex	410	32	7
Row house	-	-	10
Apartment > 5 storeys	-	-	9
Apartment < 5 storeys	285	22	23
Moveable dwelling	-	-	1
Total	1,270	100	100

(Source: City of Edmonton, n.d.1; data from 2006 Census of Canada)

*Table 12 – Journey to Work (Employed Labour Force)* illustrates that residents of Allendale are more likely to commute by public transit, bicycle or walking than the City average, and are less likely to commute by automobile.

**Table 12 – Journey to Work (Employed Labour Force)**

Method of Transport	People	% Total	City %
Car, truck, van as driver	935	62	71
Car, truck, van as passenger	90	6	8
Public transit	230	15	13
Walk	125	8	6
Bicycle	105	7	1
Motorcycle	-	0	0
Taxicab	10	1	0
Other	10	1	1
Total	1,505	100	100

(Source: City of Edmonton, n.d.; data from 2006 Census of Canada)

These figures are likely due to the neighbourhood's proximity to multiple transit and walking routes. 109 Street is a major north-south high frequency transit route, 82 (Whyte Avenue) is a major commercial avenue, and features a number of east-west high frequency transit routes. Several low frequency bus routes also run through the interior of the neighbourhood. Nearby 111 Street is a Light Rail Transit (LRT) route, linking

major destinations such as the University of Alberta, MacEwan University, the downtown area and several other shopping, employment, and entertainment areas.

*Table 13 – Housing and Household Characteristics* provides some information on the characteristics of households and dwellings. Median incomes are somewhat lower than the city average, as are average rent costs and house assessments. The potential number of households that may face housing affordability problems is indicated by the number of households with low income and the number that are paying in excess of 30% of income on shelter.

**Table 13 – Housing and Household Characteristics**

	<b>Allendale</b>	<b>City of Edmonton</b>
# Dwellings needing major repairs	170 (13.5%)	17,955 (0.06%)
% Households paying more than 30% of income on shelter costs (2006)		
Tenant households	39.3%	39.3%
Owner households	17.7%	16.7%
Prevalence of low income after tax (2005)	14.7%	13.4%
Median household income (2006)	\$50,487	\$57,085
Average household size (persons)	2.1	2.4
Average house assessment (2010)	\$309,124	\$360,723
Average rent cost (2006)	\$748	\$761

(Source: City of Edmonton, 2010d [data from 2006 Census of Canada, City of Edmonton Assessment and Taxation Branch]; Statistics Canada, 2006)

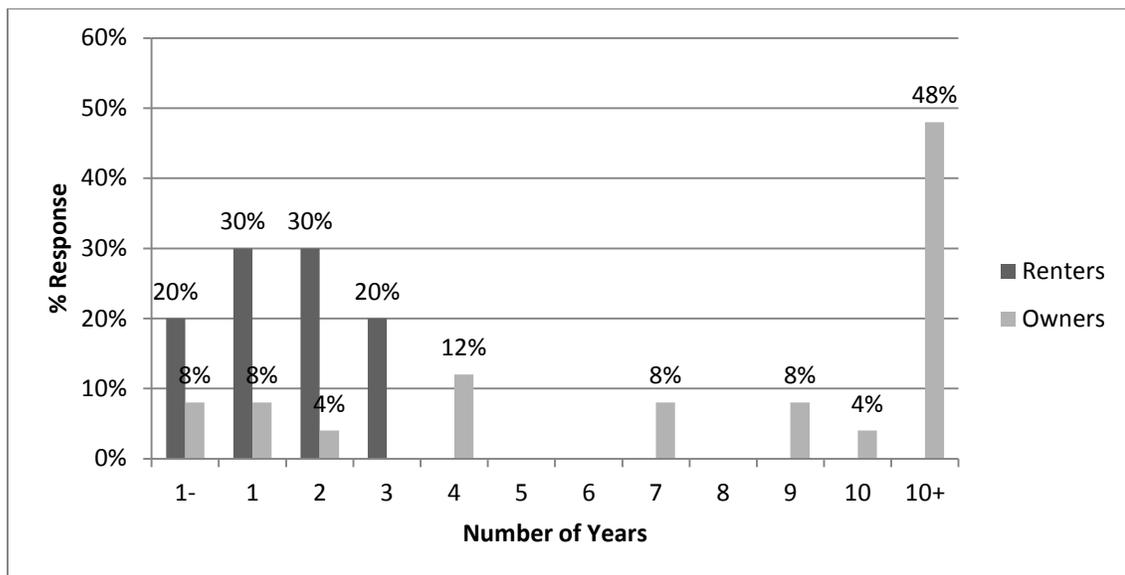
### **Survey Results**

A total of 35 responses were received from residents living in single-detached homes in the neighbourhood. As this represents an approximate 6% response rate, results should be used with caution and may not be generalizable to the entire targeted group.

### *Length of Tenure and Location of Previous Residence*

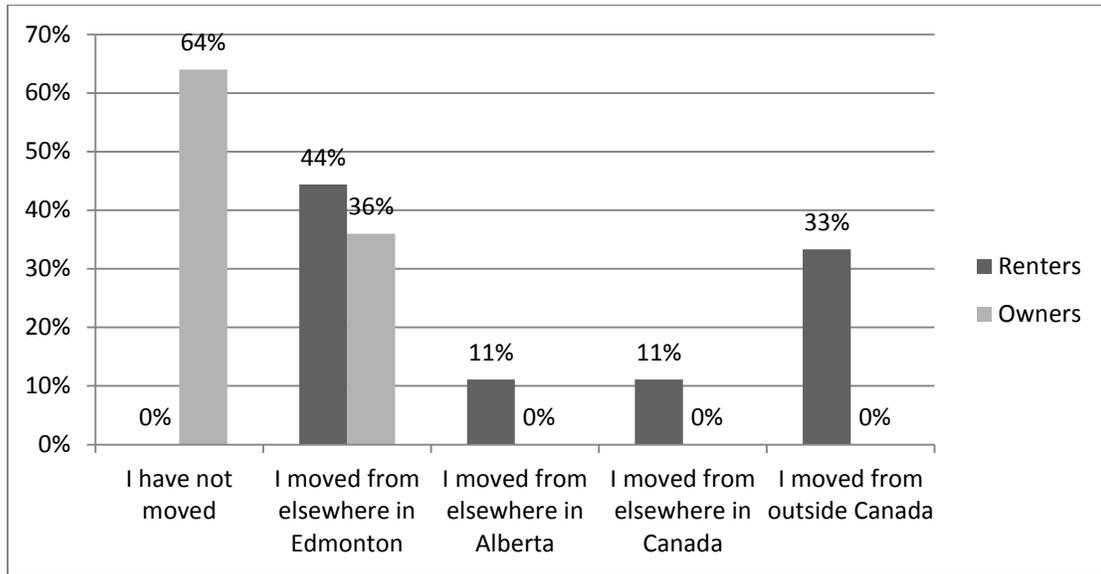
Residents were asked to indicate how long they have lived at their current address (see *Figure 4*). Homeowners were more likely to have lived at the same address for a greater period of time. Nearly half had lived there for 10 years or more, while 32% had lived there between four and ten years, and 20% had lived there for two years or less. Renters appear to be a more transitory group, with all respondents indicating that they had lived at their current address for three years or less.

**Figure 4 – Length of Tenure**



When compared to their location five years ago, homeowners indicated that they had either not moved, or had moved elsewhere in Edmonton. Renters, however, had all moved during this period, most often within Edmonton or from outside Canada.

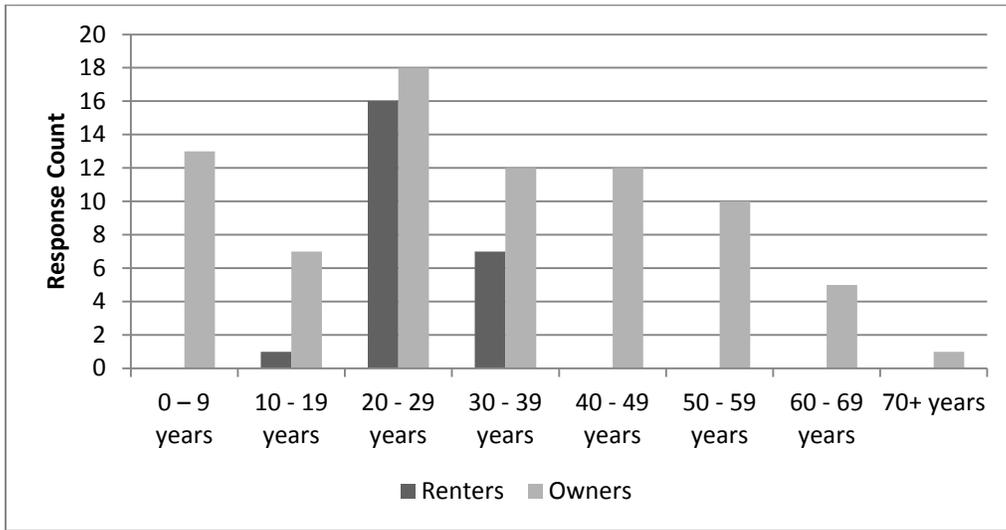
**Figure 5 – Location of Previous Residence**



***Number and Age of Residents***

Residents were asked to indicate the number of residents in their household, by age category. *Figure 6* shows owners were found to have a greater range of ages, scoring responses from under one year of age to more than seventy years. Responses from renters indicated that all were aged between ten and thirty-nine years. The average number of people in a renter-occupied household was 2.4, while the average number of people in an owner-occupied household was 3.12.

**Figure 6 – Age of Residents**

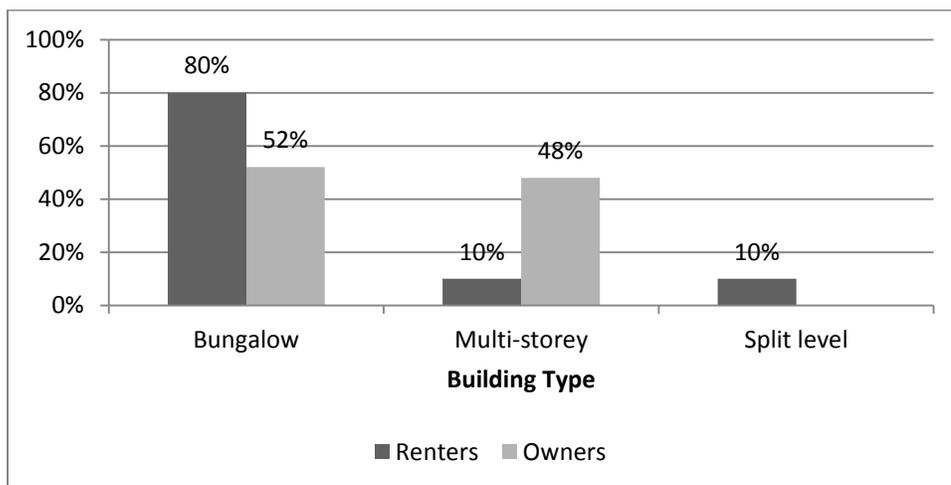


***Building Type***

As *Figure 7* illustrates, most structures were either bungalows or multi-storey houses.

Homeowners with suites in their house were more likely (78% of total) were more likely to own bungalows, whereas homeowners without suites were more likely (62.5%) to own multi-storey houses.

**Figure 7 – Building Type**



### *Rental Decision Rationale*

Renters were asked to rate certain factors that influenced the decision to rent their current residence. Factors associated with cost were rated as important by all respondents.

Proximity to transit and work or school locations were also rated as being important by most respondents. Size and number of bedrooms was rated as important by 44%, and unimportant by 22%. Opinions regarding the availability of parking was somewhat divided, but is also notable for having zero ‘very important’ ratings.

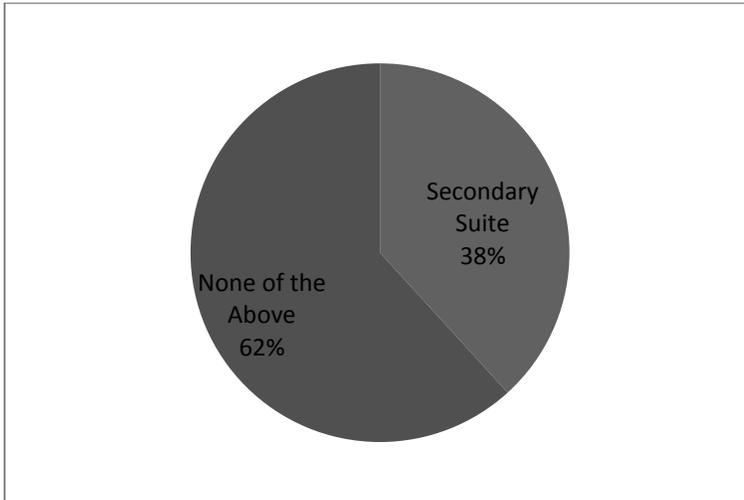
**Table 14 – Rental Decision Rationale**

	Very important	Somewhat important	Neutral	Somewhat unimportant	Very unimportant
Cost incl. rent, utilities, and transportation	78%	22%	0%	0%	0%
Size and number of bedrooms	11%	33%	33%	11%	11%
Close to transit	22%	67%	0%	11%	0%
Close to family and/or friends	11%	33%	11%	11%	33%
Close to work and/or school	56%	33%	0%	11%	0%
Availability of parking	0%	44%	11%	11%	33%

### *Presence of Secondary Units*

Respondents were asked whether the house in which they were residing contained a secondary unit. Nine homeowners and four renters indicated that there was a secondary suite in the house, however, as both the tenant and homeowner living in the same house could both have responded, this count could be higher than is actually the case.

**Figure 8 – Presence of Secondary, Garage or Garden Suite**



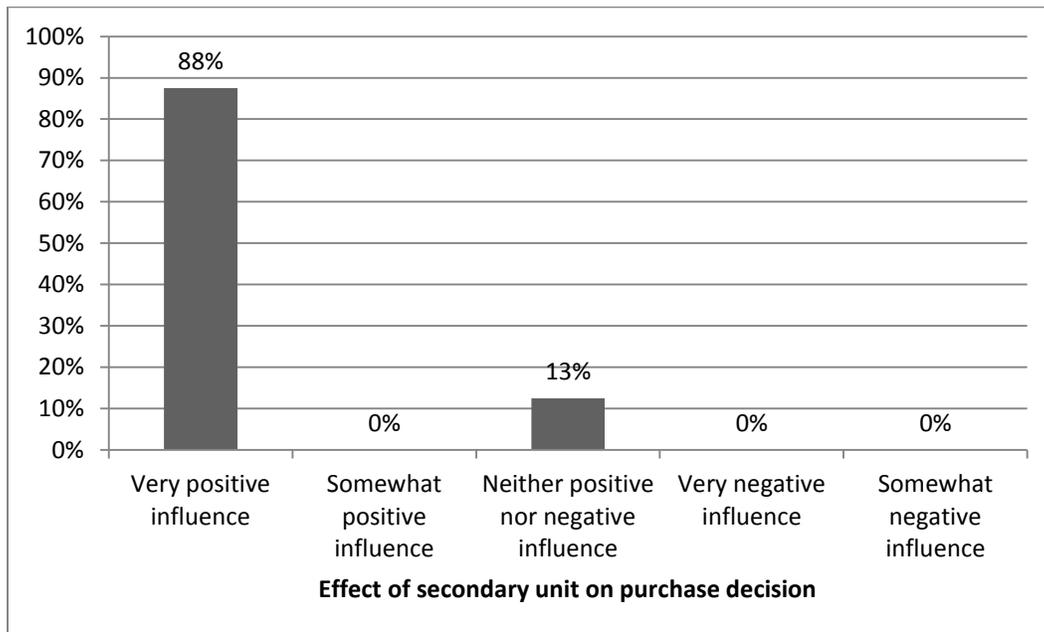
If homeowners indicated the presence of a secondary suite, garage suite or garden suite, they were then prompted to answer if the suite was created while they were living there, and if the presence had a positive or negative influence on their decision to purchase the house.

**Table 15 – Timing of Development of Suite**

Was the secondary unit (secondary suite, garage suite or garden suite) created while you were living here?		
	Response %	Response Count
Yes	22%	2
No	78%	7
Unsure	0%	0

Three respondents indicated that the suite was not being rented because it was being used for another purpose. Being unable to find a tenant was not selected as the reason for the vacancy by any respondents. For example, one respondent comments that they “actually no longer rent our basement suite and use it for personal rec room type area.”

**Figure 9 – Effect of Secondary Unit on Purchase Decision**

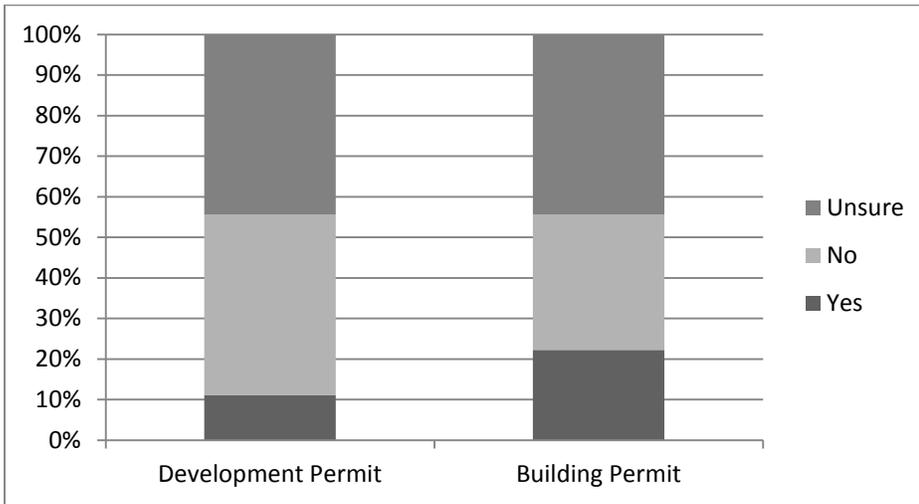


When asked whether the primary motivation for building or owning a secondary unit was (1), as a source of rental income, (2) to house family or (3) for another reason, all of the respondents, with the exception of one, indicated that it was for rental income. The other respondent indicated that the suite was in existence when the house was purchased.

When asked whether development and building permits had been issued, most respondents indicated that they had not been issued, or that they were unsure.

One respondent commented that their “In law suite was built by original owner in 1961 when he completely rebuilt his 1958-aged home. I only assume he had proper permits. The restriction of using the suite for only in-laws was removed as part of my purchasing the house in 1978.”

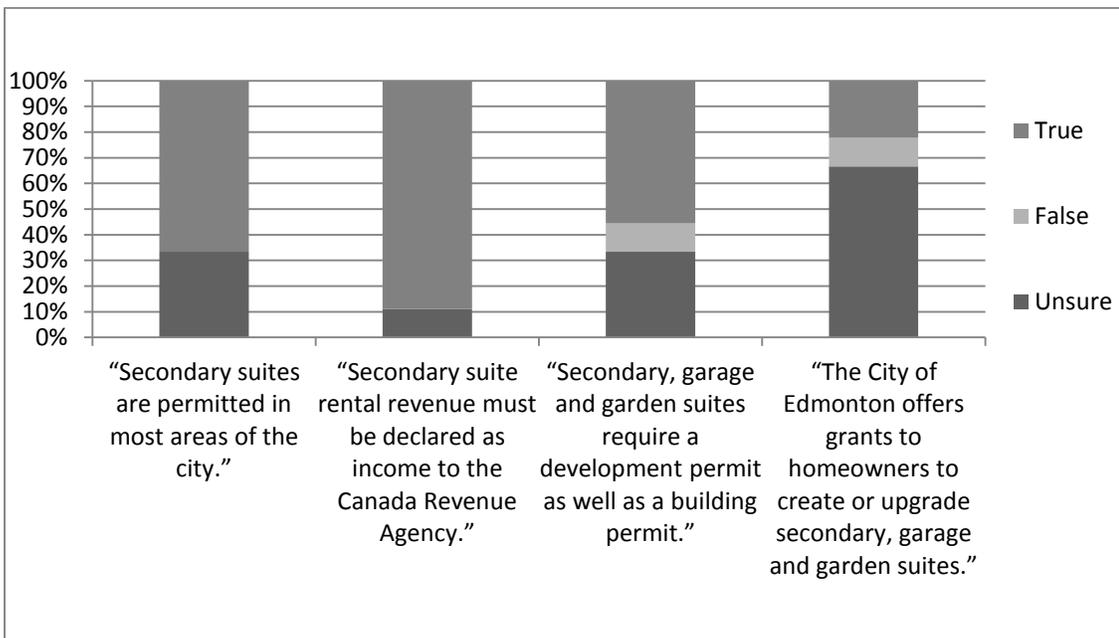
**Figure 10 – Knowledge of Development and Building Permits Issued**



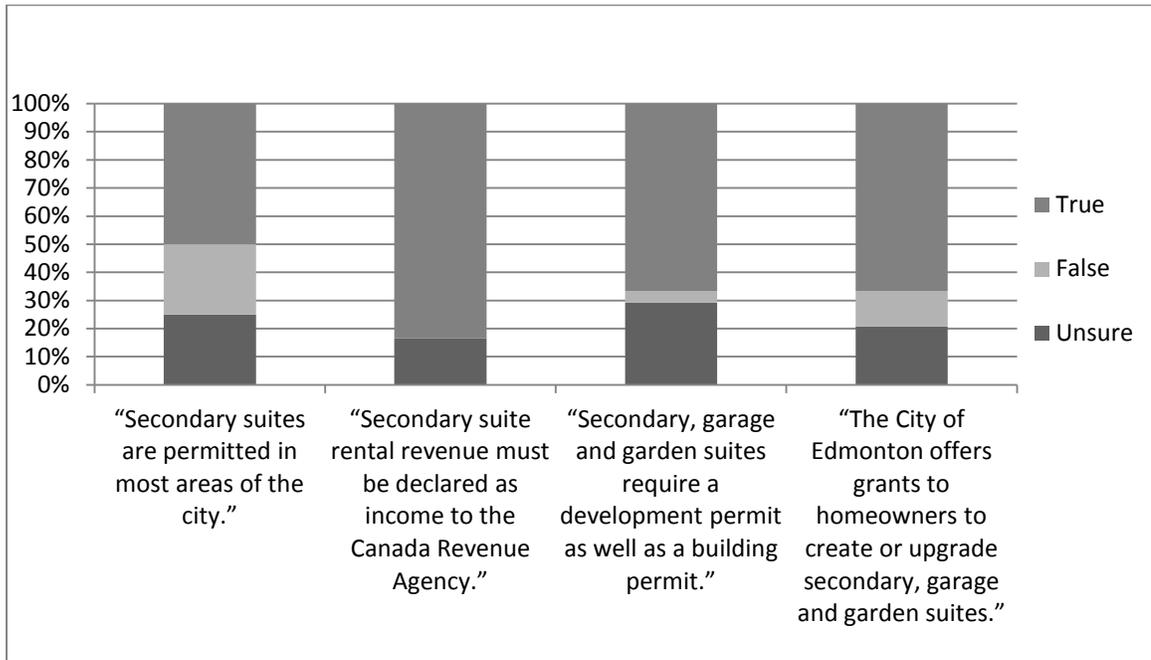
***Familiarity with Regulations and Program Details***

Respondents were asked if certain statements were true or false, or if they were unsure (all statements were factually true). The questions were meant to test residents’ knowledge of the program.

**Figure 11 – Knowledge of Rules and Grants: Renters**



**Figure 12 – Knowledge of Rules and Grants: Owners**



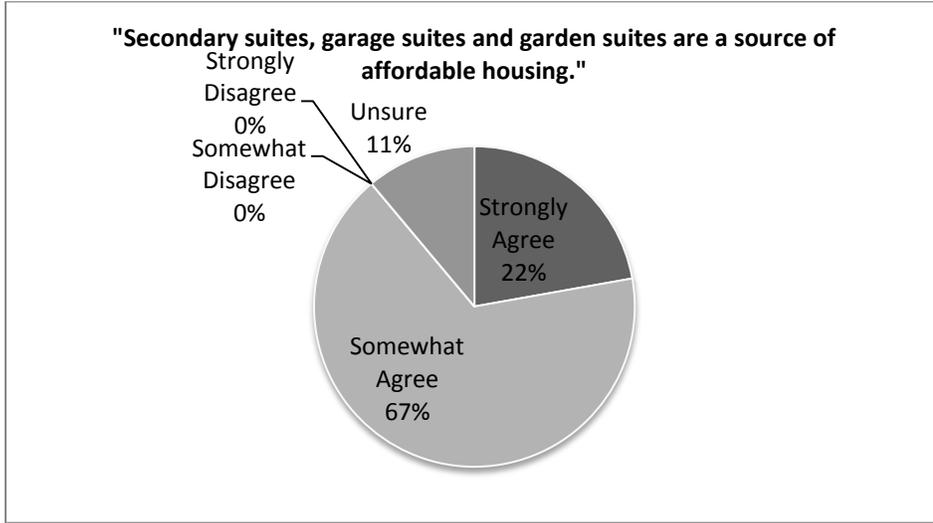
Renters tended to have more ‘true’ answers than owners when asked if secondary suites were permitted in most areas of the city, and if rental revenue must be declared. Renters in houses with suites all answered ‘true’ to these questions, while owners with suites were more likely to answer correctly.

Homeowners were more likely than renters to answer ‘true’ when asked whether development and building permits were required. Of these, homeowners with a suite were more likely to answer correctly than owners with no suite (88% vs. 56%).

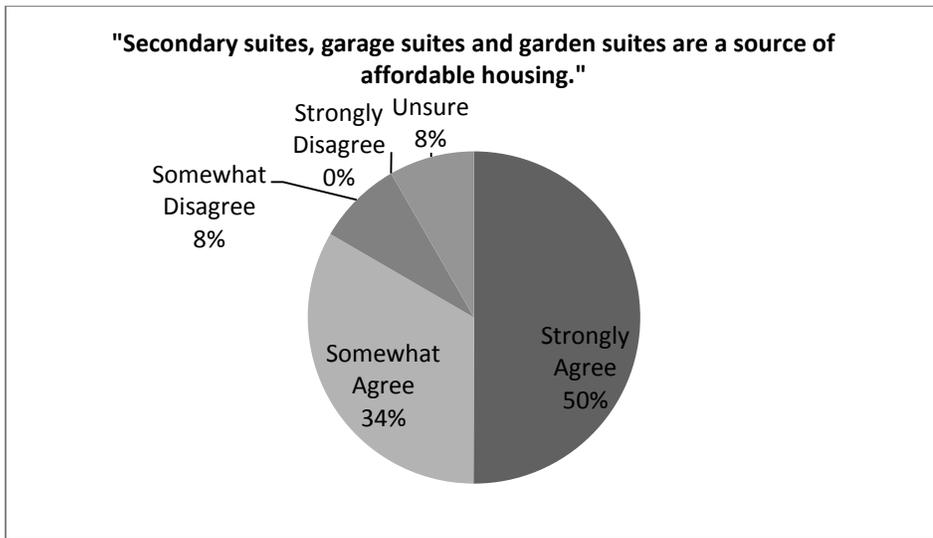
When asked whether the City offers funding, only 22% of renters answered ‘true’, while just less than 70% of owners indicated the same. Owners without suites in the homes were slightly more likely to have given a ‘true’ response.

Overall, respondents (renters and owners) agreed with the statement that secondary units are a source of affordable housing, while renters and owners living in a house with a suite present provided a greater degree of support.

**Figure 13 – Secondary Units as a Source of Affordable Housing: Renters**

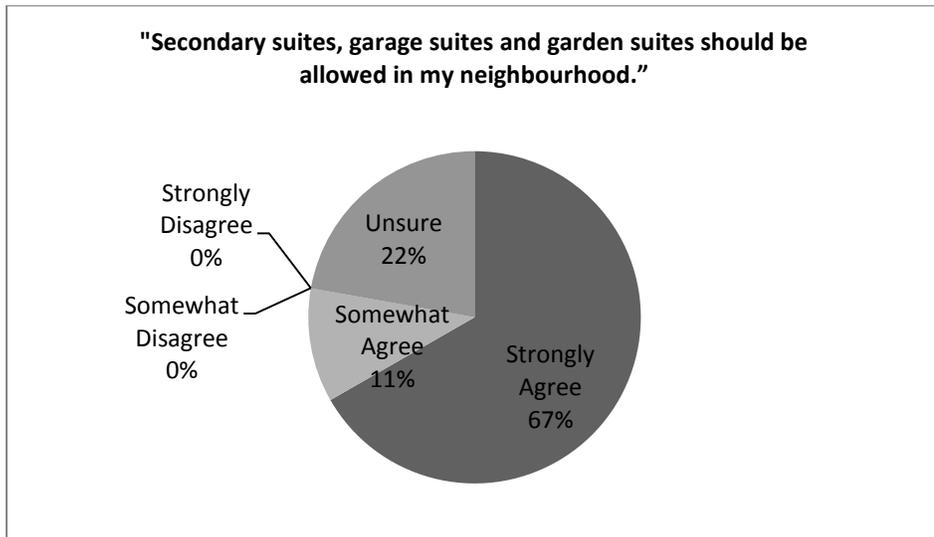


**Figure 14 – Secondary Units as a Source of Affordable Housing: Owners**

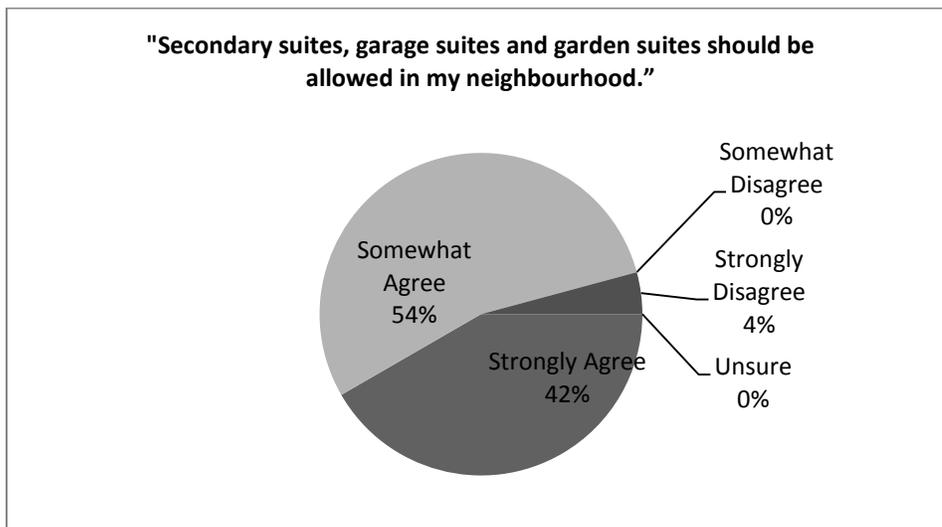


Similarly, respondents agreed with the statement that secondary units should be allowed in their neighbourhood. Renters and owners living in a house with a suite present also provided a greater degree of support for this statement.

**Figure 15 – Allowing Secondary Units in the Neighbourhood: Renters**

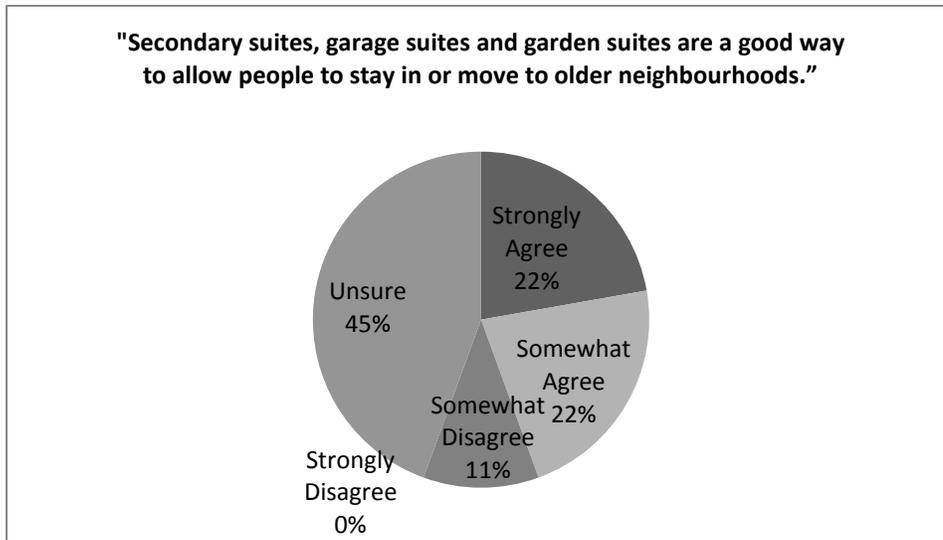


**Figure 16 – Allowing Secondary Units in the Neighbourhood: Owners**

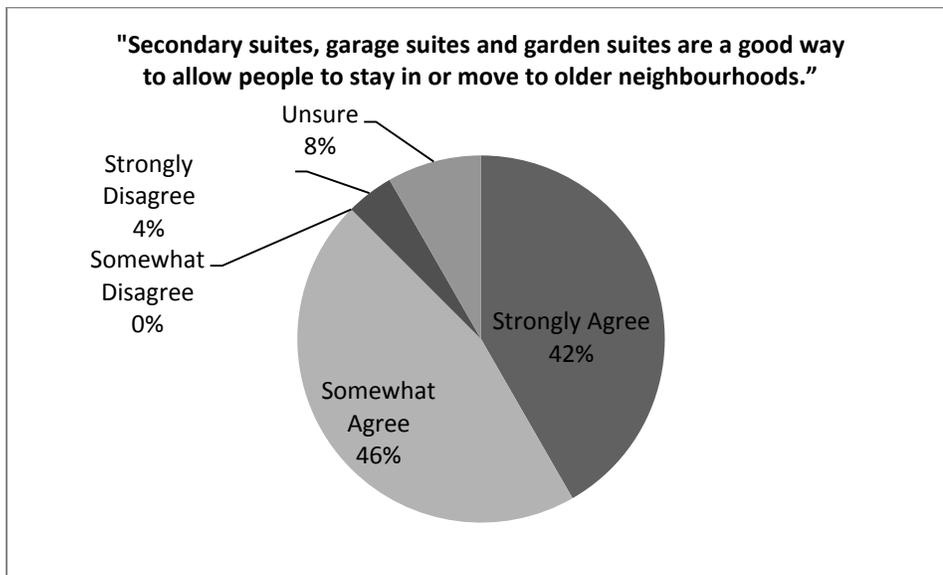


Finally, respondents were asked whether they agreed that secondary units are a good way to allow people to stay in or move to older neighbourhoods. This statement received a high degree (88%) of support from homeowners. A high proportion of renters indicated that they were ‘unsure’ if they agreed with this statement, while 44% agreed.

**Figure 17 – Staying In or Moving To Older Neighbourhoods: Renters**



**Figure 18 – Staying In or Moving To Older Neighbourhoods: Owners**



### **Other Comments Received**

One respondent commented that “Edmonton should consider more design options, such as front to back duplexes, splitting large lots into two smaller lots, and other options that other cities use to encourage higher density.” This suggests that to aid in the City’s efforts to direct more of the city’s growth into mature neighbourhoods, there are a number of different options that could be tried, for which there may be public support.

Two respondents made remarks that had to do with parking, for instance that “[p]roperties should include sufficient parking for the number of vehicles driven by the residents of the property,” and that “[m]ore renters in an area can lead to more problems such as lack of parking space such was the case this winter when the roads became very narrow.” It is interesting to note that while parking is raised as an issue, neither respondent explicitly states that existing secondary units are a source of parking problems.

## **Summary**

Data for secondary units permits and grant allocations show that to date, way into the third year of the second phase of the program, 558 permits had been granted for secondary units, of which 195 were for existing units, and 363 were for new units. 272 permits were associated with grant funding, with approximately six million dollars having been allocated.

Interviews with key informants provided additional information on the development of the program, its goals and effectiveness, emerging patterns, and provided a number of recommended changes to the program.

Some of the most striking findings of the neighbourhood survey included the positive influence that the presence of a secondary unit had on purchase decisions. Also interesting was that most respondents were not aware of development and building permits being issued for a secondary unit in the house they occupied. While many respondents believed that secondary suites were permitted in most parts of the city, many were unaware of permit requirements, and of the availability of grants. Most agreed that secondary units were a source of affordable housing, and that they should be allowed in their neighbourhood. Overall, it could be stated that among respondents, secondary units were roundly supported as a general concept and that details of the program and of regulations were not particularly well understood.

The following chapter summarizes the program impacts, components and perceptions, and suggests areas for future study and potential program directions.

## **Chapter 5 – Evaluation Summary and Future Direction**

This practicum set out to examine a number of aspects of the secondary dwelling unit program:

- Outcomes and effectiveness of the program, according to data and key stakeholders;
- Context in which the policy instrument was developed;
- Process and components of the program, and the manner in which they are delivered;
- Perceptions of the program, according to targeted residents.

This section provides a summative evaluation of the program’s impacts, components, an overview of perceptions of the program and finally, some areas for further examination by the City.

### **Program Impacts**

Several of the key questions asked involving program impacts included “Did the easing of development regulations result in an increase in development applications and permits issued?”, “How is funding offered and accessed?” and “How effective has it been?”

Detailed goals for the secondary unit program are not available; however, three of the major goals from the Cornerstones Plan did guide the development of the program. The goals were as follows:

- To create 2,500 units of long-term housing over the next five years;
- To find ways to retain existing housing units, or create additional units; and,
- To create an incentive program to bring secondary suites up to Code.

Permit approval and grant allocation data show that the program has been effective in upgrading existing units dwelling units and in the development of new secondary units. To date, permits have been issued for 195 existing suites, and 363 new suites. Over six million dollars has been allocated for new and existing suites, with the remainder projected to be allocated before the end of 2012. This represents a fairly significant contribution to the overall goals of the Plan. This is supported by the perceptions of certain key informants, who have stated that the program has met or exceeded expectations, making it quite effective.

### **Program Components**

Two of the questions that were asked when research began were:

- What is the context of this initiative, and how did it evolve?
- How is the commitment to affordable rental housing monitored and enforced?

This research has examined the manner in which secondary dwelling units came to be used as an affordable housing tool to support the priorities and policies of the City of Edmonton. This section provides a brief overview of the major components of the program, as documented in preceding portions of this report. The research shows, beginning with the work of the Housing Initiative Team, and the subsequent Cornerstones Plan that was developed, how secondary dwelling units were introduced as a tool to implement the policy of providing affordable housing.

By 2007, the City brought in changes to the Zoning Bylaw meant to increase or introduce opportunities for secondary suites and garage suites. This was part of a phased-in approach to expand or introduce secondary suites and garage suites in the city. Prior to

this reform, opportunities for legal secondary suites had been very limited, and garage and garden suites were not an option, with some rare exceptions.

The second phase further expanded opportunities for secondary suite development and opened up more possibilities for the development of garage and garden suites, subject to a number of restrictions.

By 2008, the city had established an expanded grant program to encourage the development of secondary and garage suites in existing and new buildings. For example, building a new suite or upgrading a suite in an existing home could mean eligibility for up to \$24,000 in assistance. This funding was conditional, subject to a commitment by the homeowner to offer a rental rate of 85% of the average market rate for a comparably sized unit in the city of Edmonton for a period of five years.

It has also been shown that enforcement of regulations has been passive rather than proactive. Response is based largely on complaints, due to the fact that compliance teams would be overwhelmed by the sheer number of secondary units in existence and because displacing existing residents runs contrary to the key objective of providing affordable housing.

### **Program Perceptions**

Another area that was examined was the perception of the program by targeted residents. The study looked at some of the characteristics of homeowners who develop and rent suites, and asked “What perceptions do targeted neighbourhood residents have of the program?” The results of the targeted survey research suggest that further evaluation of citizens’ perspectives of the program should be undertaken. A snapshot of respondents

from one city neighbourhood should not be taken to represent the opinions of residents city-wide, but provide a limited indication that knowledge of the program may be lacking. The survey also suggests that there seems to be support for the program and for secondary dwelling units in general. However, knowledge of program details was found to be fairly low among both homeowners and renters. The City may wish to consider further studies using representative survey methods, and potentially increased education and awareness initiatives.

### **Contributions to Literature**

This research contributes to program analysis and case study literature dealing with secondary dwelling units and affordable housing. It serves to confirm existing knowledge on the topic, and raises questions for further discussion and research. From what has been shown in *Chapter 2*, this practicum can serve to reinforce a number of previous findings:

- **Secondary dwelling units are an effective tool to promote affordable housing.**

This report supports previous findings that secondary dwelling units can provide affordable housing, by showing that they are used a major affordable housing policy instrument in the City of Edmonton. The results of the document review and interviews suggest that secondary units rent for less than conventional units, a fact which is also discussed in the literature.

- **Owners may wish to keep secondary suites concealed.** It is often discussed in the literature that regardless of whether or not they are permitted, secondary units will likely be present in most communities. Previous studies suggest those secondary unit owners who have avoided obtaining permits may cite reasons such

as such as avoiding taxes, avoiding the costs of compliance, or avoiding inspections, or simply bureaucratic barriers. Permit data and interview results suggest that most secondary units in the city are nonconforming, and the number of permits issued to existing units is low compared to the overall number of units that are likely present in Edmonton.

- **Secondary suites are relatively cost effective to develop.** Given the results of the interviews conducted and the data and documents reviewed, modest public-source investment was found to have encouraged the development of affordable rental units. Previous studies suggest that secondary dwelling units cost less to produce than similarly sized conventional units. The presence of illegal suites suggests that some homeowners choose, by their own accord, to create secondary units and to operate them as rental housing.
- **The impacts of secondary dwelling units are not major issues.** Results of public opinion surveys, the targeted neighbourhood survey, and the program analysis reinforce what has been found in other studies. One point is that secondary units do not alter the nature of the neighbourhoods in which they are located, as has been asserted by a number of sources, and also there is a strong degree of public support for this form of housing. This practicum also supports previous studies that show the impact on utilities and parking supply, for instance, are not equivalent to the number of units added to a given neighbourhood.

## **Areas for Future Study and Potential Program Directions**

Finally, the study looked at some of the logical next steps that could be pursued. There are a number of suggestions for further study and consideration to advance the City's priorities and policies. Through discussions with key informants, a number of possibilities have been identified and could be pursued by the City:

- **Expand Opportunities to Semi-detached Houses.** The possible expansion of the program to include semi-detached houses should be examined. Semi-detached structures are a potentially viable platform for the development of secondary units.
- **Expand Garage Suite Opportunities.** The City could look at the possibility of expanding opportunities for garage suites. Some options could include loosening locational requirements, reconsidering use permissions, and lot and suite size requirements.
- **Review and Amend Direct Control Zones.** A number of direct control zones in the city have not been amended to reflect the direction taken in the standard land use zones. While some of these zones allow for the development of single-detached houses, they have not been changed to allow for the development of secondary dwelling units. The City may wish to look at amending these zones, in order to provide further opportunities for the development of secondary units.
- **Remove Owner-occupation Requirements.** Another possibility is the removal of owner-occupation requirements linked to secondary unit grants. This may simplify and streamline funding agreement delivery, while still maintaining the goal of providing affordable rental accommodation. Further study could be

undertaken to assess whether this would be a benefit or impediment to the program goals.

- **Explore Suites in Multi-family Structures.** Another expansion of opportunities for secondary units would be in condominiums and multi-family buildings;
- **Remove Income Requirement.** One other topic for study could be whether the removal of income reporting requirements in funding agreements would be a benefit or impediment to the program's goals. It could be the case that this requirement is not needed due to the lower rental market value of secondary units.
- **Expedite Permit Approvals.** The difference in the length of time needed for development and building permit approvals and funding approvals has been noted. It may be beneficial to the program to examine whether application review periods could be reduced.
- **Investigate Average Rent.** It would be interesting and useful to look into the average monthly rent paid for a secondary dwelling unit compared to conventional rental unit. Collection of data could be through classified advertisements, or accessed through secondary dwelling unit program contacts.
- **Public Education.** The City could continue public education efforts, using research on public support for the program, research on the impacts of the program, and information on regulations, and program offerings. Changing public perception of this form of housing may require efforts to correct misinformation and to disseminate research findings.
- **Barriers to Garage and Garden Suite Development.** Because the number of permits and grants issued for garage and garden suites are much lower compared

to secondary suites, it would be worth investigating to see what some of the impediments to developing these units are. Based on the findings—which could include cost, regulations, physical impracticability, etc.—modifications could be made to zoning regulations or to the grant system to assist in their development. Findings would also be useful for researchers looking into the applicability of this portion of the program.

- **Investigate Parking Requirements.** Parking requirements can make a major contribution to the affordability and feasibility of an affordable housing project. The City should consider investigating actual parking demand for a secondary dwelling unit. Depending on results, modification of parking requirements may be justified, particularly in walkable mature neighbourhoods with access to transit.
- **Persistence of Illegal Units.** Another topic of future research could include the reasons that owners of secondary dwelling units do not apply for permits or funding. Given the number of secondary units that are likely in existence in the city, the number of permits granted for existing units is quite low. It would be both interesting and constructive to look into the reasons behind owners' decisions not to pursue the appropriate permits. While we can speculate that it may have to do with cost of permits, fear of having the suite shut down, the costs of renovation, the desire to avoid taxation, or simply the hassle, the causes could be further investigated.

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## **Appendix A – Interview Guide**

## Key Stakeholder Interview Guide

The following questions will be used to guide interviews with key stakeholders:

- Generally speaking, what is the City trying to achieve with the secondary suites program?
- What was your involvement in the preparation of the secondary suites program?
- How was this particular policy instrument chosen to part of the City's affordable housing policy?
- How effective would you say this approach has been in upgrading or creating secondary suites, garage suites, and garden suites? Have you met your goals?
- How do you measure the success (or lack thereof) of this program? How is progress monitored?
- To what extent has funding been accessed?
- Have you noticed any patterns emerging regarding who develops suites, for what reason, and in any particular location?
- What types of questions or comments do you most often received from Edmontonians?
- What changes, if any, would you make to the program?

## **Appendix B – Consent Form**



UNIVERSITY  
OF MANITOBA

Faculty of Architecture  
City Planning

201 Russell Building  
84 Curry Place  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
Canada R3T 2N2  
Tel: (204) 474-6578  
Fax: (204) 474-7532

### **Research Project Title**

An Analysis of Secondary Suites as a Housing Policy Instrument in the City of Edmonton

### **Researcher**

Matthew Gratton

### **Background**

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

This practicum examines a particular form of housing – secondary suites – and its use in housing policy. Specifically, it analyzes and evaluates a particular policy instrument recently used by the City of Edmonton in the context of broader municipal policies related to affordable housing and residential intensification. In examining secondary suites, it explores:

- The context in which the this policy instrument was developed;
- The process and components of the program, and the manner in which they are delivered;
- The outcomes and/or effectiveness of the program, according to key stakeholders;
- Perceptions of the program, according to targeted residents.

### **Research Procedures**

You are being asked to participate in my research. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in a short interview (approximately nine questions). You may also be contacted at a later date to provide follow-up comments.

### **Risk**

This project does not involve any more risk than you would experience in your everyday life.

### **Confidentiality**

Your privacy is important. Interviews will be digitally recorded, transcribed, and stored on the researcher's personal computer. All files will be password protected. Recordings and transcriptions will be permanently deleted one year after my thesis defense. Names will *not* be used in my thesis, or in any other publications. Quotes, if used, will not be attributed to you, nor will your job title be used.

### **Feedback**

If you wish, a copy of the final research report can be sent to you. To do this, please check the box following your signature.



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Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

**Contact Information**

Researcher: Matthew Gratton  
Graduate Student, University of Manitoba  
Telephone: 780 [REDACTED]  
Email: umgrattm@cc.umanitoba.ca or [REDACTED]@gmail.com

Research Advisor: Dr. Ian Skelton  
Professor, University of Manitoba  
Telephone: 204 [REDACTED]  
Email: iskelton@cc.umanitoba.ca

This research has been approved by the Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board (JFREB) of the University of Manitoba. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 204.474.7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Copy of final research requested

Preferred email (only to disseminate research) \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix C – Survey Questionnaires**



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201 Russell Building  
84 Curry Place  
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Tel: (204) 474-6578  
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Dear Resident:

As part of a graduate research project looking into secondary suites, garage suites and garden suites ('secondary dwelling units') in the city of Edmonton, residents of your neighbourhood are being asked to take part in a short online questionnaire. This questionnaire explores residents' experiences with, knowledge of, and opinions of secondary units. Some general questions are also asked about the characteristics of households and their housing to provide some context.

For your reference, page 2 of this letter contains some definitions and illustrations of secondary suites, garage suites and garden suites.

**Instructions:**

If you are a **RENTER** please use the following link to complete the survey:

[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/edm\\_renter](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/edm_renter)

If you are the property **OWNER** please use the following link to complete the survey:

[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/edm\\_owner](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/edm_owner)

*Note: Both a homeowner and renter can complete the survey. Please feel free to share this letter with the homeowner or renter of the house or suite.*

Please complete this questionnaire only if you are 18 years of age or older.

To thank you for participating, you will be given a chance to enter your name into a draw for a \$100 Safeway gift card. At the end of the survey, please enter an email address or phone number to be entered into the draw. This information will be used for no purpose other than to notify the winner. Please enter by **May 7, 2011**.

If you have any questions or comments regarding the research, please contact the undersigned.

Regards,



Matthew Gratton  
Graduate Student, University of Manitoba  
umgrattm@cc.umanitoba.ca



## Definitions

This survey refers to three types of dwelling units:  
*secondary suites, garage suites and garden suites.*

For the sake of simplicity all three types of units are sometimes referred to in the survey as secondary dwelling units. Each of these three secondary units feature cooking facilities, food preparation, sleeping and sanitary facilities which are *physically separate from those of the principal dwelling* on the property.

**Secondary Suite** means a dwelling located within a single detached house. A Secondary Suite has an entrance separate either from a common indoor landing or directly from the side or rear of the structure. A Secondary Suite may be located in a basement or above-grade.

**Garage Suite** means a dwelling located above a detached garage; or a single-storey dwelling attached to the side or rear of, a detached garage. A Garage Suite has an entrance separate from the vehicle entrance to the detached garage, either from a common indoor landing or directly from the exterior of the structure.

**Garden Suite** means a single-storey accessory dwelling, which is located in a building separate from a single detached house. A Garden Suite is often located in a back yard (garden).

*Source: Planning & Development  
Department, City of Edmonton*

# Secondary Dwelling Units Survey - OWNERS

## 1. Introduction

Thank you for participating in this survey.

As part of a graduate research project looking into secondary suites, garage suites and garden suites ('secondary units') in the city of Edmonton, residents of your neighbourhood are being asked to take part in a short online survey. This survey explores residents' experiences with, knowledge of, and opinions of with secondary units. Some general questions are also asked about the characteristics of households and housing to provide some context.

Before beginning the survey, please confirm that you are the homeowner, and not a renter. There are two slightly different surveys for each of the two categories.

Let's begin! This survey should take no more than ten minutes of your time.

## 2. Informed Consent ('The Fine Print')

# Secondary Dwelling Units Survey - OWNERS

Please read through this page. It contains information about the project, your privacy, how I will use the collected information, and how to ask any questions you might have.

Research Project Title: An Analysis of Secondary Suites as a Housing Policy Instrument in the City of Edmonton

Researcher: Matthew Gratton, Graduate Student, University of Manitoba

Background: This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

This practicum examines a particular form of housing – secondary suites – and its use in housing policy. Specifically, it analyzes and evaluates a particular policy instrument recently used by the City of Edmonton in the context of broader municipal policies related to affordable housing and residential intensification. In examining secondary suites, it explores:

- The context in which this policy instrument was developed;
- The process and components of the program, and the manner in which they are delivered;
- The outcomes and/or effectiveness of the program, according to key stakeholders;
- Perceptions of the program, according to targeted residents.

Research Procedures: You are being asked to participate in my research. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete a short questionnaire (up to twenty questions).

Risk: This project does not involve any more risk than you would experience in your everyday life.

Confidentiality: Your privacy is important. The information collected through the questionnaire cannot be linked to a name or address, since you are not being asked to provide either. Should you choose to provide an email address for the prize draw, or to request the survey results, it will be used only for the stated purpose. Your email address will not be used for any other purpose, and will never be shared with anyone or published. This information will be stored digitally, in password protected files, on the researcher's personal computer and will be permanently deleted one year after the thesis defence.

Feedback - If you would like to see the survey results once they are collected and summarized, you may request a copy. To do this, you may enter an email address on the last page of the survey.

Clicking 'Next' on this survey indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

## Contact Information

Researcher: Matthew Gratton, Graduate Student, University of Manitoba

Telephone: 780 [REDACTED]

Email: umgrattm@cc.umanitoba.ca

Research Advisor: Dr. Ian Skelton, Professor, University of Manitoba

Telephone: 204 [REDACTED]

Email: iskelton@cc.umanitoba.ca

This research has been approved by the Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board (JFREB) of the University of Manitoba. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 204.474.7122. Please print this page for your records and reference.

3.

## 1. How long have you lived at your current address? (Approximate number of years)

# Secondary Dwelling Units Survey - OWNERS

## 2. Please indicate the number of people in your household, categorized by age.

0 - 9 years	<input type="text"/>
10 - 19 years	<input type="text"/>
20 - 29 years	<input type="text"/>
30 - 39 years	<input type="text"/>
40 - 49 years	<input type="text"/>
50 - 59 years	<input type="text"/>
60 - 69 years	<input type="text"/>
70+ years	<input type="text"/>

## 3. What kind of house do you live in?

- Bungalow
- Multi-storey
- Split level

## 4.

## 4. How many bedrooms does the house contain?

Number of bedrooms:

## 5. Compared to where you lived 5 years ago, which of the following apply?

- I have not moved
- I moved from elsewhere in Edmonton
- I moved from elsewhere in Alberta
- I moved from elsewhere in Canada
- I moved from outside Canada

## 6. Does your property contain one of the following types of dwelling units?

- Secondary Suite
- Garage Suite
- Garden Suite
- None of the Above

## 5.

## Secondary Dwelling Units Survey - OWNERS

**7. Was the secondary unit (secondary suite, garage suite or garden suite) created while you were living here?**

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

**8. How did the presence of secondary unit influence your decisions to purchase the house?**

- Very positive influence
- Somewhat positive influence
- Neither positive nor negative influence
- Very negative influence
- Somewhat negative influence

**9. Was a development permit granted for the secondary unit?**

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

**10. Was a building permit granted for the secondary unit?**

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

**6.**

**11. Is the household currently occupying the secondary unit related to the homeowner?**

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

# Secondary Dwelling Units Survey - OWNERS

## 12. How much of the work to build the secondary unit by each of the following:

	(All of the work)	(Most of the work)	(Some of the work)	(None of the work)	(Unsure)
The homeowner (including friends, family, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>				
Hired contractor (e.g. professional builder, tradesman or handyman)	<input type="radio"/>				

## 13. What was the primary motivation for building or owning a secondary unit?

Source of rental income

To house family

Other (please specify)

## 14. If the suite is currently vacant, for what reason?

Cannot find someone to occupy it

Using the space for another reason

Other (please specify)

7.

## 15. How familiar are you with the City of Edmonton's rules about secondary suites, garden suites and garage suites?

Very familiar

Somewhat familiar

Somewhat unfamiliar

Completely unfamiliar

Unsure

## Secondary Dwelling Units Survey - OWNERS

**16. The following questions are meant to gauge residents' knowledge of secondary, garage and garden suites. Please indicate whether each statement is true or false:**

	True	False	Unsure
"Secondary suites are permitted in most areas of the city."	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
"Secondary suite rental revenue must be declared as income to the Canada Revenue Agency."	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
"Secondary, garage and garden suites require a development permit as well as a building permit."	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
"The City of Edmonton offers grants to homeowners to create or upgrade secondary, garage and garden suites."	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**17. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?: "Secondary suites, garage suites and garden suites are a source of affordable housing."**

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Unsure

**8.**

**18. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?: "Secondary suites, garage suites and garden suites should be allowed in my neighbourhood."**

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Unsure

**19. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?: "Secondary suites, garage suites and garden suites are a good way to allow people to stay in or move to older neighbourhoods."**

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Unsure

## Secondary Dwelling Units Survey - OWNERS

**20. Are there any additional comments you wish to make?**

**9.**

Thank you for participating in this survey.

**21. To thank you for participating, anyone leaving their contact information below will be entered into a draw for a \$100 Safeway gift certificate.**

**Please leave an email address or telephone number below so that you can be contacted if your entry is drawn. This information will be used to contact the winner, not for any other purpose.**

**22. If you are interested in seeing the survey results once they are summarized, please enter an email address in the box below.**

# Secondary Dwelling Units Survey - RENTERS

## 1. Secondary Dwelling Units Survey - Renters

Thank you for participating in this survey.

As part of a graduate research project looking into secondary suites, garage suites and garden suites ('secondary units') in the city of Edmonton, residents of your neighbourhood are being asked to take part in a short online survey. This survey explores residents' experiences with, knowledge of, and opinions of with secondary units. Some general questions are also asked about the characteristics of households and housing to provide some context.

Before beginning the survey, please confirm that you are a renter, and not the homeowner. There are two slightly different surveys for each of the two categories.

Let's begin! This survey should take no more than ten minutes of your time.

## 2. Informed Consent ('The Fine Print')

# Secondary Dwelling Units Survey - RENTERS

Please read through this page. It contains information about the project, your privacy, how I will use the collected information, and how to ask any questions you might have.

Research Project Title: An Analysis of Secondary Suites as a Housing Policy Instrument in the City of Edmonton

Researcher: Matthew Gratton, Graduate Student, University of Manitoba

Background: This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

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- The context in which this policy instrument was developed;
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## 1. How long have you lived at your current address? (Approximate number of years)

# Secondary Dwelling Units Survey - RENTERS

## 2. Please indicate the number of people in your household, categorized by age.

0 - 9 years	<input type="text"/>
10 - 19 years	<input type="text"/>
20 - 29 years	<input type="text"/>
30 - 39 years	<input type="text"/>
40 - 49 years	<input type="text"/>
50 - 59 years	<input type="text"/>
60 - 69 years	<input type="text"/>
70+ years	<input type="text"/>

## 3. What kind of house do you live in?

- Bungalow
- Multi-storey
- Split level

## 4.

## 4. How many bedrooms does the house contain?

Number of bedrooms:

## 5. Compared to where you lived 5 years ago, which of the following apply?

- I have not moved
- I moved from elsewhere in Edmonton
- I moved from elsewhere in Alberta
- I moved from elsewhere in Canada
- I moved from outside Canada

## 6. When you selected your current residence, how important were the following factors?

	Very important	Somewhat important	Neutral	Somewhat unimportant	Very unimportant
Cost - including rent, utilities, and transportation	<input type="radio"/>				
Size and number of bedrooms	<input type="radio"/>				
Close to transit	<input type="radio"/>				
Close to family and/or friends	<input type="radio"/>				
Close to work and/or school	<input type="radio"/>				
Availability of parking	<input type="radio"/>				

## Secondary Dwelling Units Survey - RENTERS

### 7. Does your property contain one of the following types of dwelling units?

- Secondary Suite
- Garage Suite
- Garden Suite
- None of the Above

5.

### 8. Do you occupy the secondary unit, or the main unit?

- Secondary Unit
- Main Unit
- Unsure

### 9. Is the household currently occupying the secondary unit related to the homeowner?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

6.

### 10. How familiar are you with the City of Edmonton's rules about secondary suites, garden suites and garage suites?

- Very familiar
- Somewhat familiar
- Somewhat unfamiliar
- Completely unfamiliar
- Unsure

## Secondary Dwelling Units Survey - RENTERS

**11. The following questions are meant to gauge residents' knowledge of secondary, garage and garden suites. Please indicate whether each statement is true or false:**

	True	False	Unsure
"Secondary suites are permitted in most areas of the city."	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
"Secondary suite rental revenue must be declared as income to the Canada Revenue Agency."	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
"Secondary, garage and garden suites require a development permit as well as a building permit."	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
"The City of Edmonton offers grants to homeowners to create or upgrade secondary, garage and garden suites."	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**12. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?: "Secondary suites, garage suites and garden suites are a source of affordable housing."**

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Unsure

**7.**

**13. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?: "Secondary suites, garage suites and garden suites should be allowed in my neighbourhood."**

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**14. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?: "Secondary suites, garage suites and garden suites are a good way to allow people to stay in or move to older neighbourhoods."**

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Unsure

## Secondary Dwelling Units Survey - RENTERS

**15. Are there any additional comments you wish to make?**

**8.**

Thank you for participating.

**16. To thank you for participating, anyone leaving their contact information below will be entered into a draw for a \$100 Safeway gift certificate.**

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## **Appendix D – Ethics Approval**



UNIVERSITY  
OF MANITOBA

Ethics  
Office of the Vice-President (Research)

CTC Building  
208 - 194 Dafoe Road  
Winnipeg, MB R3T 2N2  
Fax (204) 269-7173  
www.umanitoba.ca/research

## APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

March 7, 2011

**TO:** Matthew Gratton (Advisor I. Skelton)  
Principal Investigator

**FROM:** Brian Barth, Chair [REDACTED]  
Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board (JFREB)

**Re:** Protocol #J2010:003  
"An Analysis of Secondary Suites as a Housing Policy Instrument in  
the City of Edmonton"

Please be advised that your above-referenced protocol has received human ethics approval by the **Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board**, which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement. This approval is valid for one year only.

Any significant changes of the protocol and/or informed consent form should be reported to the Human Ethics Secretariat in advance of implementation of such changes.

**Please note:**

- If you have funds pending human ethics approval, the auditor requires that you submit a copy of this Approval Certificate to the Office of Research Services, fax 261-0325 - please include the name of the funding agency and your UM Project number. This must be faxed before your account can be accessed.
- if you have received multi-year funding for this research, responsibility lies with you to apply for and obtain Renewal Approval at the expiry of the initial one-year approval; otherwise the account will be locked.

**The Research Ethics Board requests a final report for your study (available at: [http://umanitoba.ca/research/ors/ethics/ors\\_ethics\\_human\\_REB\\_forms\\_guidelines.html](http://umanitoba.ca/research/ors/ethics/ors_ethics_human_REB_forms_guidelines.html)) in order to be in compliance with Tri-Council Guidelines.**

## **Appendix E – Definitions**

**Secondary Suite** means development consisting of a Dwelling located within, and Accessory to, a structure in which the principal use is Single Detached Housing. A Secondary Suite has cooking facilities, food preparation, sleeping and sanitary facilities which are physically separate from those of the principal Dwelling within the structure. A Secondary Suite also has an entrance separate from the entrance to the principal Dwelling, either from a common indoor landing or directly from the side or rear of the structure. This Use Class includes the Development or Conversion of Basement space or above-grade space to a separate Dwelling, or the addition of new floor space for a Secondary Suite to an existing Single Detached Dwelling. This Use Class does not include Duplex Housing, Semi-detached Housing, or Apartment Housing, and does not include Garage Suites, Garden Suites, or Boarding and Lodging Houses. (City of Edmonton, 2001, s. 7.2(7))

**Garage Suite** means an Accessory Dwelling located above a detached Garage (above Grade); or a single-storey Accessory Dwelling attached to the side or rear of, a detached Garage (at Grade). A Garage Suite is Accessory to a building in which the principal Use is Single Detached Housing. A Garage Suite has cooking facilities, food preparation, sleeping and sanitary facilities which are separate from those of the principal Dwelling located on the Site. A Garage Suite has an entrance separate from the vehicle entrance to the detached Garage, either from a common indoor landing or directly from the exterior of the structure. This Use Class does not include Secondary Suites or Garden Suites. (City of Edmonton, 2001, s. 7.2(3))

**Garden Suite** means a single-storey Accessory Dwelling, which is located in a building separate from the principal Use which is Single Detached Housing. A Garden Suite has cooking facilities, food preparation, sleeping and sanitary facilities which are separate from those of the principal Dwelling located on the Site. This Use Class does not include Secondary Suites or Garage Suites. (City of Edmonton, 2001, s. 7.2(4))