

Update on the Secondary Suite Process Reform

The Secondary Suite Process Reform report (2018 March 13) proposed a collection of process initiatives and regulatory changes to support and encourage legal and safe suites. At that time, the Suites Registry Bylaw was adopted requiring every suite to be registered with The City to ensure that the suite meets the required development and safety code standards. The associated Registry map and identification stickers for suites help tenants and home buyers to recognize qualifying suites.

To motivate landowners to meet these requirements the following initiatives were undertaken:

- The secondary suite use was added to the remaining residential land use districts that did not allow suites (R-1, R-C1 and R-C1L); and
- Process changes were made providing:
 - online guidance for applicants;
 - City support for landowners through the inspection and application processes;
 - and a two-year amnesty period for development permit fees.

This program has been successful at significantly increasing the number of applications submitted for secondary suites since the changes were implemented (starting 2018 May 1). This increase is shown initially in development permit applications, as the first step in the application process, followed by an increase in building permit applications (see Table 1). Once a building permit is completed, and the suite is inspected to ensure that safety and development standards have been met, then the suite is added to the Suites Registry. Of particular note is the increased application rate in the R-C1 District that did not permit secondary suites prior to March 2018 (see Table 2).

Since July, The City is also offering two new services, these include:

- a process to apply for a development permit for a secondary suite on-site with the Development Compliance Inspector (a process that has resulted in 79 field applications so far); and
- a combined development and building inspection service for landowners to help them determine whether an existing suite is legal and safe and to advise on what is needed to make it legal and safe if it is not (to date there have been 83 of these owner initiated inspections).

These on-site services make it more convenient for landowners to get the information they need to make an existing suite legal and safe and to start the application process.

In addition, The City is proactively contacting landowners where a secondary suite is known to exist to provide information on development and safety requirements and application options and to monitor compliance with permit and registry requirements.

Early indicators show that the regulatory and process changes for secondary suites are having the desired effect of increasing the number of landowners that are participating in the application process to upgrade or build suites that meet basic safety and development standards. As this program matures, the initial increase in applications is anticipated to result in a significant increase in the number of legal and safe secondary suites available in the city.

Table 1: Secondary Suite Applications

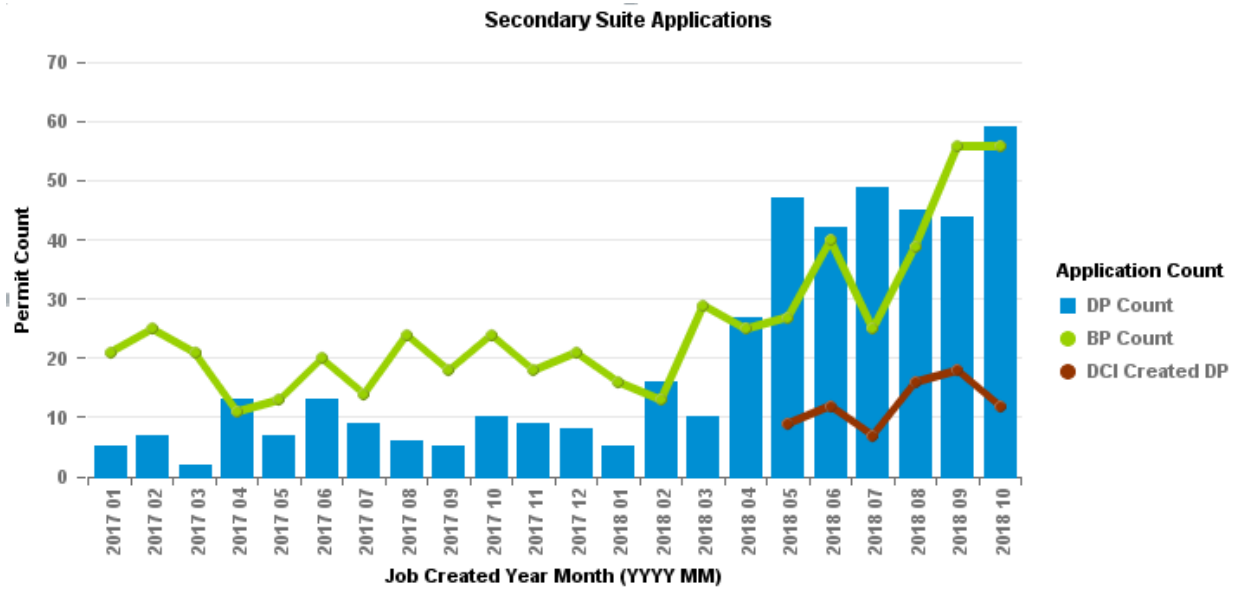


Table 2: Development Permit Applications by Land Use District

