

Proposed Suite Safety Campaign

The vision to develop standards for safe secondary suites was led by the Province in 2002. Alberta Municipal Affairs undertook a 3 year stakeholder consultation (2003-2005) to establish safety provisions for secondary suites. The standards that came into effect in 2007 for Secondary Suites were established based on four primary outcomes:

- 1) Standards for secondary suites should be developed under the Alberta Building and Fire Codes, Province wide, for use in single-family homes to address the need for safety and affordability.
- 2) Municipalities should have the choice of determining when and where secondary suites will be permitted.
- 3) Standards for secondary suites should apply to both new and existing homes.
- 4) Province wide standards for secondary suites should accommodate the goal of affordability, provided acceptable safety standards are in place.

In support of the above noted outcomes the Suite Safety Campaign is a proposal to undertake a coordinated and concerted 18 month effort to convert as many existing illegal and likely unsafe suites into legal and safe suites as possible.

Objectives of the Campaign

- 1) Protect the safety of the tenants;
- 2) Ensure that essential development requirements are met; and
- 3) Provide a consistent, fair, equitable and simple approach to regulate secondary suites.

Principles of the Campaign

- 1) In a Single Detached Dwelling, and where suites are listed as a permitted use, approvals should be accommodated through a building permit for the duration of the 18 month period.
 - a. When a suite does not meet the rules of the Land Use Bylaw, a Development Permit is required prior to granting approval.
- 2) Suites older than January 1, 2007 only need to comply with the requirements of the Alberta Fire Code.
- 3) For backyard suites, approvals should continue to be accommodated through a discretionary Development Permit.
- 4) Secondary and backyard suites should be constructed above the 1:100 designated flood level to improve Calgary's residential resiliency.

Actions:

- 1) Create a Land Use Bylaw Amendment which will exempt Secondary Suites, where they are already permitted, from the need for a Development Permit.
 - a. Return through Calgary Planning Commission with the required Land Use Bylaw Amendment in June 2015.
- 2) Establish a Secondary Suite Registry where Secondary Suites that have completed all required permits and have received permission to occupy from The City can be readily identified by potential renters and homebuyers. The registry should:
 - a. Be at minimal expense to The City to setup and administer.
 - b. Include a nominal fee for the homeowner.
 - c. Be available for the public on line at Calgary.ca.
 - d. Identify homes with suites that have met City and safety standards and have been issued a Building Permit for a secondary suite.

- 3) Work with the realty industry in Calgary to encourage promotion of legal and safe suites.
- 4) Create a public education information program targeting homebuilders, homeowners and renters with a focus on:
 - a. The process for constructing legal suites.
 - b. Realistic cost considerations in meeting Alberta safety standards.
 - c. Implications of maintaining an illegal suite.
- 5) Pilot a safety campaign targeted at existing secondary suite owners with the goal of informing and encouraging those owners to bring their suites up to acceptable safety standards.
- 6) Continue with an enforcement strategy aimed at reducing the number of chronic offenders of land use and safety rules for secondary suites.
- 7) Track and monitor community concerns related to the performance of registered suites.