

SECONDARY SUITES
IN
SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS

ORLANDO J. TOEWS

January 7, 1992



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THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
FACULTY OF ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

The undersigned certify that they have read,
and recommend to the Faculty of Environmental
Design for acceptance, a Master's Degree
Project entitled
Secondary Suites in Single Family Residential Districts
submitted by Orlando J. Toews in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
of Master of Environmental Design.

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ABSTRACT

Secondary Suites in Single Family Residential Districts

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January 7, 1992

prepared in partial fulfillment of the requirements

of the

M.E.Des. degree

in the Faculty of Environmental Design

The University of Calgary

Theresa Baxter, Supervisor

This study examines the issue of secondary suites in single family residential districts. These residential districts usually permit only one dwelling unit per structure. An examination of recent demographic changes reveals that the population is growing but aging. Traditional family composition is shifting towards more but smaller single parent families and people living alone. These changes have an impact on future housing needs. Cities have dealt with secondary suites in single family districts in various ways: banning suites, permitting only family members to occupy suites, and permitting suites with some restrictions. Policy documents, existing land use bylaws, and the attitudes of single family residential district (R-1) residents in the City of Red Deer are examined. These are combined with analyses of social and economic considerations as well as population demographics to produce recommendations as to how the City of Red Deer should handle the issue of secondary suites in its R-1 districts. The study concluded that secondary suites are a viable housing form and therefore should be a permitted use, with restrictions, in Red Deer's R-1 districts.

Key Words

- Secondary or Accessory Suites/Units
- "family" or "inlaw" suites/units
- single family dwelling
- land use bylaw
- residential districts
- density
- demographics

TABLE of CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract.....	i
List of Figures.....	iv
Chapter 1: An Introduction to Secondary Suites.....	1
Chapter 2: Demographics Relevant to Housing and Secondary Suites.....	12
Chapter 3: How Do Various Cities Handle Secondary Suites?.....	20
Chapter 4: The City of Red Deer and Secondary Suites.....	40
Chapter 5: Attitudes Regarding Secondary Suites in Red Deer.....	61
Chapter 6: Socio-Economic Considerations.....	69
Chapter 7: Recommendations.....	87
Appendix 1: Excerpts from City of Red Deer Land Use Bylaw 2672/80.....	96
Appendix 2: Red Deer R-1 Resident Questionnaire.....	98
Appendix 3: Profile of Red Deer R-1 Dist. Questionnaire Respondents....	103
References.....	108

LIST of FIGURES

Figure 2.1	
Family Types: Canada and Alberta, 1976 and 1986.....	13
Figure 2.2	
Single-Parent Families as a Percentage of All Families:	
Canada and Alberta, 1976 and 1986.....	14
Figure 2.3	
One-Person Households as a Percentage of All Households:	
Canada, 1976 and 1986.....	15
Figure 2.4	
Average Household Size: Canada, 1976 and 1986.....	16
Figure 2.5	
Percentage of Households Paying 30% or More of Income	
on Housing by Tenure: Canada and Alberta, 1986.....	18
Figure 4.1	
Location Map: Red Deer.....	41
Figure 4.2	
Population over Time: Red Deer.....	44
Figure 4.3	
Population by Age: Red Deer.....	44
Figure 4.4	
Residential Housing Types: Red Deer, 1990.....	46
Figure 4.5	
Land Use: Red Deer.....	50
Figure 4.6	
Area of Developed Residential Districts in Red Deer, 1990...	51
Figure 5.1	
Do You Know of Any Accessory Suites in Your Neighbourhood?..	62
Figure 5.2	
How Did You Gain Knowledge of the Suite?.....	62
Figure 5.3	
Should Accessory Suites be a Permitted Use in R-1 Areas?....	63
Figure 5.4	
What Controls Should Be Placed on Accessory Suites?.....	64

Figure 5.5	
Would You Consider Building a Suite in Your House?.....	65

Figure 5.6	
What would be the Negative and/or Positive Impacts of Allowing Accessory Suites in R-1 Areas?.....	66

CHAPTER 1

AN INTRODUCTION TO SECONDARY SUITES

This study will examine the issue of secondary suites from various perspectives in order to determine their possible impact on single-family dwelling districts. This, in turn, will be applied to the city of Red Deer and recommendations will be made as to how Red Deer should handle the issue of secondary suites in single-family residential districts. The investigation of this issue will include a study of: relevant literature, demographic changes, policy documents, attitudes of Red Deer's R-1 residents, and socio-economic aspects of secondary suites.

METHODOLOGY

The research for this study consists primarily of literature review and evaluation in conjunction with interviews of key people involved in policy formation, enforcement, and related fields. A mail-in questionnaire was also conducted in order to obtain information regarding the attitudes of Red Deer R-1 district residents towards secondary suites.

A literature review has been carried out in order to gain an overall general picture of the issue and related housing topics. Other documents, such as official plans and working documents, are utilized throughout the study. Interviews and discussions with key people, primarily in the City of Red Deer and the Red.

Deer Regional Planning Commission, have been conducted in order to gain their perspective and insights on the issue.

A mail-in questionnaire was conducted in order to gain an understanding of the attitudes and concerns of Red Deer's R-1 district residents regarding secondary suites. Appendix 2 contains a copy of the questionnaire and the accompanying cover letter. A total of 1000 copies of the questionnaire were distributed throughout R-1 residential districts in Red Deer. Anonymity was maintained since respondents were not asked to identify themselves. A total of 239 responses were received prior to the cut off date and these responses form the basis of the survey findings.

Interviews or surveys of identified illegal suite residents and landlords would not have been appropriate for this study for several reasons. First, the identification of illegal suites is a very difficult process simply because they are illegal. Secondly, landlords and tenants of illegal suites would be reluctant to participate for fear of legal repercussions. This would likely produce biased or limited responses.

The information gathered through literature research, interviews of key people, and the survey has been synthesized to produce policy and practice/enforcement recommendations concerning accessory suites in Red Deer.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

The first chapter of this study includes an introduction to the subject as well as a definition of the term "secondary suite". This chapter concludes with a brief review of literature that directly addresses the issue of secondary suites. The second chapter describes some of the recent demographic changes in Canada that are affecting household composition and therefore housing needs. The third chapter examines how several other Canadian cities have grappled with the existence of illegal secondary suites in their single-family districts. Chapter four looks at Red Deer: its present situation, its bylaws, and how it has deals with secondary suites. The fifth chapter discusses the views and attitudes of Red Deer's R-1 residents regarding secondary suites. The sixth chapter discusses the social and economic concerns of secondary suites, both in general and in Red Deer. Chapter seven outlines recommendations on how the City of Red Deer could handle the issue of secondary suites in single-family residential districts.

DEFINITIONS

Before a full discussion can be carried out, it is important that the key terms be defined. Since this study is focused on secondary suites, it is crucial that this term be clarified. Martin Gellen, of the Department of City and Regional Planning,

University of California, Berkeley, states that:

A secondary suite is a dwelling unit added to an existing residential structure (often in a basement or attic), which uses space that is surplus to the primary dwelling or dwellings in the structure. As such, it is an accessory use. A secondary suite can also be added onto an existing structure as an extension in the rear yard or, in some cases, by building a second storey onto a one-storey house. (Gellen 1982, 1).

In another of his works, Martin Gellen uses a similiar definition:

An accessory apartment is a dwelling unit which is subordinate to a principal unit in terms of size location and appearance, and is located on the same lot. An accessory unit is usually created by the conversion of existing floor space within the structure itself or sometimes by the addition or conversion of an accessory structure on the lot. It is used solely as a rental unit, or for occupancy by the family member or sub-family. (Gellen 1983, 1).

Patrick Hare presents a variety of terms that refer to secondary suites. This list ranges from "single family conversions", "mother-in-law apartments", to "secondary residences", and even "kangaroo apartments" (Hare 1981, 1). Despite this wide variety of terms, Hare states that they are basically all the same thing and thus can be described in the same manner:

All of these terms refer to an independent unit that shares, at most, an entrance, a yard and parking, with the primary unit. Accessory apartments must be

distinguished from "shared housing" - in which kitchens and often major facilities are used in common - and from "granny flats,"...small, removable cottages placed in rear or side yards to permit older people to live independently, but in close proximity to the main residence,.... (Hare 1981, 1).

These definitions illustrate some of the key elements that distinguish secondary/accessory suites from other types of housing. First of all, a secondary suite is an independent or self-contained dwelling unit. It has its own kitchen and bathroom facilities as well as living, dining, and sleeping areas. Secondly, the suite is located, either wholly or partially, within another dwelling unit. Typically the suite or unit occupies space that is surplus or underutilized in the primary dwelling unit.

For this study, then, "secondary or accessory suite/unit" will refer to a self-contained, independent dwelling unit, that is located within the building envelope of an existing dwelling unit. This study is focused on the issue of secondary suites in R-1 residential districts; districts that generally do not permit any building types except single-family structures. The focus will not be on residential districts that already allow secondary suites as a permitted land use.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Most of the available literature that deals with secondary suites is focused on specific urban settings. This is particularly true of material produced at the city or municipal level. Therefore, some of the issues, circumstances, and possible solutions expressed in these documents are specific to that particular setting. This does not, however, discount the value of such literature because many urban areas face similar problems and various authors have expressed analogous views and concerns regarding this issue. Similar concerns may often produce similar responses which are fine tuned for each local situation. The following is a brief review of literature that addresses the issue of secondary suites.

In 1982, Martin Gellen produced a working paper entitled Economic Aspects of the Regulation of Secondary Suites. Gellen examines secondary suites as an economically viable housing form. Viability is contingent upon a variety of factors. These factors include such things as: the condition and specifics of the building in which the suite is to be built, material and labour costs, owner participation in construction, permit fees, incentives, property tax rates, building and health code requirements, and whether or not the suite will be legal in terms of zoning regulations. The conclusion that Gellen arrives at is that secondary suites can be an economically viable housing form.

Each of the factors listed above can play an important and even decisive role in determining economic viability. It is through the control or use of these factors that viability is determined.

Gellen used the example of four secondary suite conversions to illustrate his point. These examples of secondary suite conversions were drawn from the San Francisco-Oakland metropolitan area. It must be pointed out that these examples, though valid, are specific to a particular time and place. Within the specific context, a large American city in the early 1980s, Gellen's conclusion is appropriate. Some of Gellen's findings are applicable to Red Deer's situation.

In 1983, Martin Gellen produced another working paper on the topic of secondary suites entitled Accessory Suites and Single-Family Zoning. The abstract from this paper is an excellent summary of Gellen's argument.

This paper argues for the liberalization of zoning laws to permit development of accessory apartments and other forms of structural house conversion in single-family districts. The protection of single-family districts through zoning regulation was originally justified as being in the public interest because it helped promote residential neighborhoods suitable for child-rearing and made homeownership affordable to all classes. However, the relationships between residential building type, family forms and housing tenures which single-family zoning sought to bolster and protect are today becoming unravelled under the impact of social and economic change. This paper discusses these changes, explores some of their implications for zoning, and examines some of the ways in which exclusive single-family zoning can be modified

so as to permit a greater diversity of building types and lifestyles without sacrificing the environmental values associated with this form of low-density residential land-use. (Gellen, 1983)

Gellen argues that zoning must keep pace with social, demographic and economic changes in society. The paper presents two alternatives to traditional single family zoning: first, accessory apartment zoning, incorporating the use of special use permits that limit the quantity of secondary suite conversions in a given area; and secondly, lifestyle-neutral zoning, incorporating density control solely through bulk or building envelope controls, independent of household composition or size.

Gellen has presented valid observations and offered some potentially viable suggestions. But once again, it must be kept in mind that Gellen is writing from an American perspective. It may be true that many of his observations regarding demographic, social, and economic changes are generally true for both Canadian and American societies, but Canadian and American approaches to land-use controls are different and therefore Gellen's solutions must be assessed with their context in mind.

In 1981, Patrick Hare produced a work entitled, Accessory Apartments: Using Surplus Space in Single-Family Houses. Hare addresses some of the issues and concerns raised by the concept of permitting accessory apartments in single-family houses. These include such concerns as their affect on property values,

the number of suite conversions that would take place, and whether or not suites should be permitted in new houses. This discussion is followed by a sampling of specific zoning provisions that illustrate how a variety of communities have addressed these concerns. Hare concludes by providing sample ordinance language for an ordinance that permits accessory apartments.

Patrick Hare's short work is useful in that it discusses some of the prevalent issues associated with secondary suites. Some of the concerns faced in the United States regarding secondary suites are similar to those in Canada. However, Hare's work is ten years old and he is writing only from an American perspective. Therefore, the value of the examples of specific zoning provisions of various American communities is limited in light of the fact that Canadian and American land-use controls and approaches are not identical. Hare states that he does not advocate that accessory apartments be permitted in all single-family residential zones or in all communities.

In 1983, Klein & Sears Research and Planning Ltd. presented the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario with an eleven volume study entitled Study of Residential Intensification and Rental Housing Conservation. A major objective of the study was, "to examine the opportunities and constraints that exist for meeting

some of the future additional housing needs in Ontario during the 80's and 90's through the intensification of existing residential neighbourhoods." (Klein and Sears 1983, 1:1).

The consultants concluded that residential intensification, which included suite conversions as one type of intensification, was "a realistic and economically feasible long-term approach to meeting a portion of Ontario's rental housing needs...." (Klein and Sears 1983, 1:48). Recommendations were provided for municipal and provincial governments so that they could minimize the constraints and maximize the opportunities for intensification. It must be kept in mind that these recommendations were made regarding Ontario's housing situation in the early 1980's. They do not translate directly into Red Deer's situation in the 1990's.

SUMMARY and CONCLUSION

This study is concerned only with secondary suites in single family dwelling districts. Secondary suites in this study refer only to self-contained dwelling units within the existing or permitted building envelope of a primary dwelling unit. This excludes separate buildings such as "granny flats" which share a residential lot with a single family dwelling.

The information presented and the conclusions and recommendations drawn by the various authors in the literature review are generally sound and valid. The challenge of this study is to evaluate and synthesize this information, along with other information, in order to make recommendations that are appropriate to Red Deer's situation regarding secondary suites.

CHAPTER 2

DEMOGRAPHICS RELEVANT TO HOUSING AND SECONDARY SUITES

An examination of national and provincial census material reveals some interesting trends in household and family characteristics that have relevance regarding the issue of secondary suites and their possible role in present and future housing.

Between 1976 and 1986, the number of single-parent families in Canada increased from 559,335 to 853,645, a 52.6 percent increase while traditional husband-wife families showed only a 13.8 percent change increasing from 5,168,560 to 5,881,330. The total family increase was 17.6 percent for the same period, increasing from 5,727,895 in 1976 to 6,734,975 in 1986.

Alberta demonstrated an even more dramatic increase in single-parent and traditional families during this same period. Between 1976 and 1986, single-parent families in Alberta increased from 41,200 to 72,855, a 76.8 percent increase. Traditional families increased from 407,570 to 543,460, a 33.3 percent. The total number of families increased from 448,770 to 616,320 in Alberta, a 37.3 percent increase (Canada's Lone-Parent Families. 1984) (The Nation: Families. 1987). See Figure 2.1 and Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.1

FAMILY TYPES

CANADA and ALBERTA, 1976 and 1986

FAMILY TYPE	1976	1986	PERCENTAGE CHANGE 1976 - 1986
=====			
A L B E R T A			

SINGLE-PARENT	41200	72855	76.8
TRADITIONAL	407570	543460	33.3

TOTAL	448770	616315	37.3
=====			
C A N A D A			

SINGLE-PARENT	559335	853645	52.6
TRADITIONAL	5168560	5881330	13.8

TOTAL	5727895	6734975	17.6
=====			

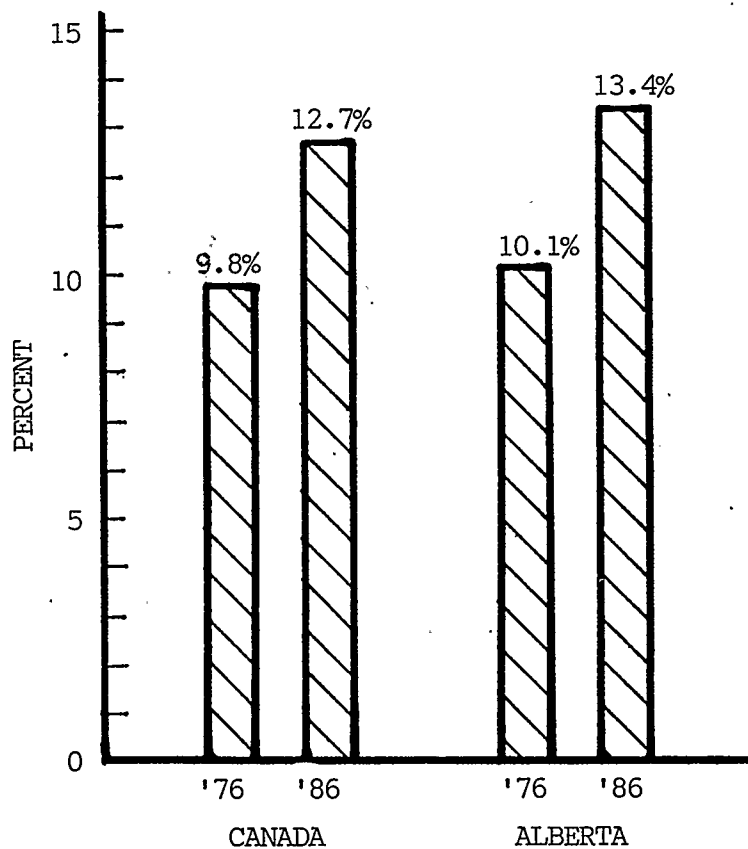
Single-parent families tend to be small; in 1986, 56.7 percent of Canadian female led families were comprised of one child and 30.5 percent had two children (Burch 1990, 18). In other words, only 12.8 percent of single-parent mothers had more than two children. In Alberta, approximately 14.0 percent had more than two children in 1986 (Burch 1990, 21).

Another trend is the increase in the number of people who live alone. In 1976, more than 1.2 million people lived alone, approximately 16.8 percent of all Canadian households (Living

Alone. 1984). By 1986, the number of people living alone rose to 1,934,755 comprising 21.5 percent of all households in Canada (The Nation: Dwellings and Households Part 2. 1989). See Figure 2.3. In Alberta, 179,155 people lived alone, 21.4 percent of all Albertan households in 1986 (The Nation: Dwellings and Households Part 2. 1989).

Figure 2.2

SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES as a PERCENTAGE OF ALL FAMILIES
CANADA and ALBERTA, 1976 and 1986.



The one-person household is growing faster than any other household size comprising 21.5 percent of all households in 1986 compared to 16.8 percent in 1976 and only 7.9 percent in 1956.

Figure 2.3

ONE-PERSON HOUSEHOLDS as a PERCENTAGE of ALL HOUSEHOLDS
CANADA, 1976 and 1986



In Alberta, the percentage of one-person households rose from approximately 6.2 to 8.8 percent between 1971 and 1981. Only two-person households are more numerous accounting for 30.1 percent of the total in 1986. Those living alone are primarily the young and the elderly; approximately one third of the people who live alone are between 20 and 34 years old and another third are 65 and over. One-person households are predominantly an urban phenomenon; approximately 90 percent of them exist in urban

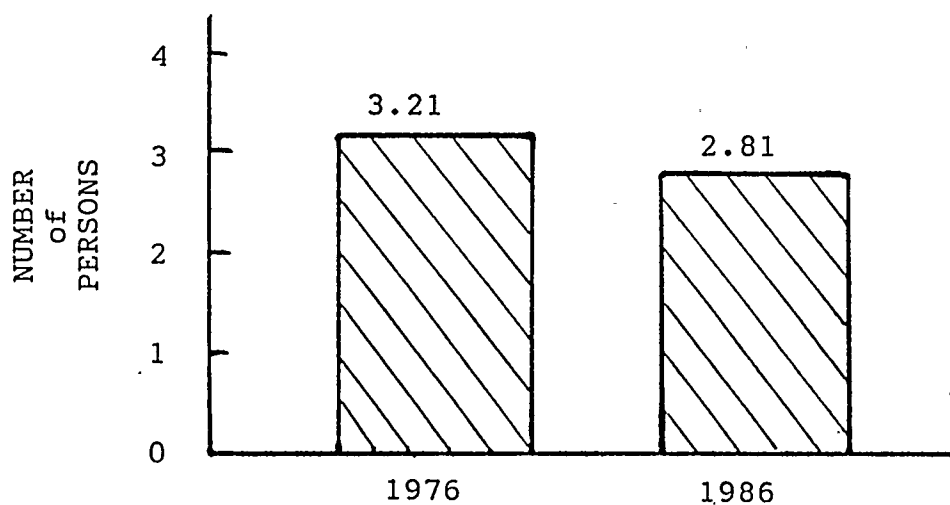
areas. Those that live alone are twice as likely to be renters as owners (Living Alone. 1984).

A trend related to the increase in one-person households is the decline in household size. Between 1976 and 1986, the Canadian population increased by 10.1 percent and the number of households increased by 25.5 percent. During the same period, however, the average household size decreased from 3.21 to 2.81 persons (Filion and Bunting 1990, 14). See Figure 2.4. The average number of persons per household in Alberta was 2.8 in 1986 (The Nation: Dwellings and Households Part 2. 1989).

Figure 2.4

AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE

CANADA, 1976 and 1986



People are also living longer. In Alberta, the average male lived to be 71.0 years old and the average female lived to be 78.2 years in 1976. By 1986, this figure rose to 73.3 years for males and 80.3 years for females (Population Projections: Alberta 1987-2016. 1988, 16).

The changes in family and household structure are related to the issue of affordable housing. The affordability of housing depends on various factors: income level, household size, production costs, availability of land, the amount borrowed to purchase a house, and interest rates. For example, a \$100,000 house may be affordable for a particular family if interest rates are low. But that same house may not be within their range of affordability if interest rates rise by one or two percent.

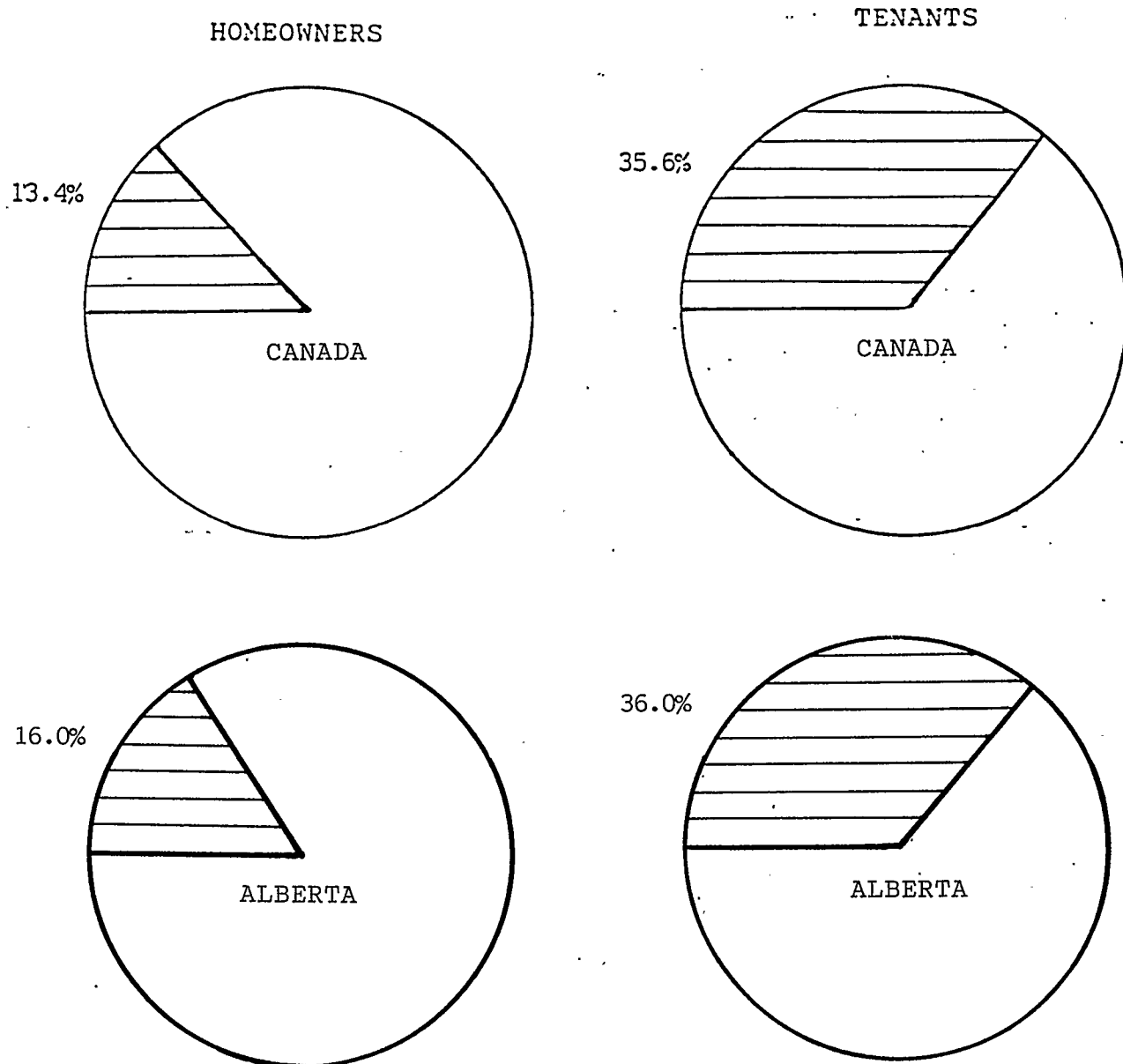
Statistics Canada states that a housing affordability problem exists when a household allocates 30 percent or more of its income towards housing expenses (Filion and Bunting 1990, 7). Using this definition, 13.4 percent of Canadian home owners and 35.6 percent of tenants had a housing affordability problem in 1986 (Filion and Bunting 1990, 21). See Figure 2.5. In Alberta, 16 percent of urban homeowners and 36 percent of tenants had an affordability problem in 1986 (Filion and Bunting 1990, 34).

The household type that suffers the most from affordability problems is the tenant single-parent; 55 percent of these

households spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing (Filion and Bunting 1990, 22). Of tenants who live alone, approximately 45 percent spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing (Filion and Bunting 1990, 22).

Figure 2.5

PERCENTAGE of HOUSEHOLDS PAYING 30% or MORE of HOUSEHOLD INCOME on HOUSING, by TENURE: CANADA and ALBERTA, 1986



SUMMARY and CONCLUSION

Briefly, then, the picture to be drawn is that of a growing but aging population comprised of more but smaller units or households. People living alone and families headed by single-parents with fewer children are growing in proportion to more traditional family structures. Many other groups, notably young adults and the elderly, are increasing in size. They tend to live alone and rent rather than own. Affordable housing is a problem for many of these people.

These trends have and will continue to have an impact on both the quantity and type of housing required and demanded by a changing population. The traditional single detached home or the typical apartment building may not adequately meet the changing housing needs of this widening spectrum of society. Smaller single income households headed by one parent or adults who live alone may find suitable and affordable housing more and more difficult to obtain.

CHAPTER 3

HOW DO VARIOUS CITIES HANDLE SECONDARY SUITES?

Each city or urban area has its own unique qualities and problems. Geography, population size, demographics, available services, resources, attitudes, and values vary from city to city and affect a city's composition. These unique properties, whether they are viewed as assets or liabilities, play a large role in determining how issues such as secondary suites are handled in each city both in terms of policy and enforcement.

This is not to deny that similarities exist between cities. All cities must struggle with common challenges such as the provision of adequate infrastructure, the maintenance of quality of life, and the availability of affordable housing. Illegal secondary suites are a phenomena common to many cities. It is estimated that 10 to 20 percent of single-family dwellings in urban North America contain an illegal secondary suite (McAfee 1987, 115).

It is useful to examine how other cities grapple with secondary suites, whether legal or illegal, in order to better understand the issue as a whole and to get an idea of how the issue can be effectively addressed in a particular urban setting, namely Red Deer. Cities that do not permit secondary suites in single-family districts will be examined first followed by those

cities that either allow secondary suites in single-family districts or are in the process of reviewing their policy concerning this issue.

Medicine Hat, Alberta

According to Vic E. Link, Manager of Inspection, Development & Licence, secondary suites are not permitted in Medicine Hat (Link 1990). Enforcement is not actively pursued; it is carried out based upon complaints received. Upon receiving a complaint, an inspection is carried out by the Building Inspector or Development Officer. The owner is then given a period of time within which to comply with the land use by-law. So far no cases have gone to court (Link 1990).

Calgary, Alberta

The City of Calgary enforces its land use by-laws concerning illegal suites on a complaint basis. R. B. York, Chief Development Officer for Calgary, provided a description of the procedure followed once a complaint is received (York 1990). An Enforcement Officer investigates the complaint to determine if a violation has occurred. The property owner is advised of any violation and is given a reasonable time to rectify the situation. If the owner complies, no further action is taken. If not, the next step is to issue an order to comply.

The owner may appeal the order to the Development Appeal Board. If the Appeal Board does not uphold the order, the complaint is concluded. However, if the Appeal Board rules in favor of the City's compliance order, the enforcement action continues through the courts, if necessary. Of the several cases that have gone to court in the last few years, most have resulted in a conviction.

Susan Rigby, treasurer of the Calgary Association of Renters, claims that the City's policy of only investigating illegal suites when a formal complaint has been received has fostered the present situation where Calgary now contains approximately 10,000 illegal suites (Beaty 1990, A1). Ms. Rigby does not delineate her estimate of 10,000 illegal suites into grouping according to type and location. She does not state how many of the estimated 10,000 illegal suites are secondary suites in single-family houses in R-1 districts. Mr. York states that the City does not know how many illegal suites exist in Calgary (York 1991).

Edmonton, Alberta

T. J. Loat, Land Use Planning Branch Manager for Edmonton's Planning and Development Department, states that a conservative estimate would put the number of single family dwellings with secondary basement suites in Edmonton at 2,300 (Loat 1991).

Approximately 25 percent of these are located in RF1 (Single Detached Residential) districts which do not permit secondary suites. All thirteen residential districts in Edmonton allow more than one dwelling unit per building, either as a permitted or discetionary use, except in RF1, RR (Rural Residential), and RMH (Mobile Home) districts. Like Medicine Hat and Calgary, Edmonton does not actively pursue illegal suites; enforcement is on a complaint basis.

In the past, however, this was not always the case. According to a 1989 Edmonton Journal article, Edmonton Telephones was asked to contact city inspectors whenever it received a request to install a telephone line in a suite which looked like it might not conform to land-use regulations. The City received protests regarding this practice and has since stopped asking the telephone company to report possible land-use bylaw infractions (Farrell 1989).

The City receives approximately 100 complaints per year regarding illegal suites (Loat 1991). Once an illegal suite situation is identified, the owner is asked to comply with the by-law by either shutting down, which means the tenants must vacate the unit, or applying for multiple unit status. If the unit is located in a RF1 district, multiple unit status will be refused. Failure to comply will result in the City's Law Department getting involved until the problem is resolved.

Richmond, British Columbia

There are no residential areas zoned to accommodate secondary suites in the City of Richmond according to H. H. Meiklejohn, Manager - Property Use Division for the City of Richmond (Meiklejohn 1991). Thus illegal suites cannot be legalized. Enforcement of the regulations is carried out by the Property Use Inspectors in the Permits & Licences Department. Complaints concerning illegal suites are usually resolved by owner compliance. When compliance has not been achieved, the case goes to court, where the City has generally been successful in obtaining a conviction.

Compliance with the single-family dwelling zoning is based on two criteria (Carline, correspondence attached to Meiklejohn letter, 2 Oct. 1989). The first is internal access: if there is any internal barrier, even a lockable door, that is intended to prevent regular access between two independent living quarters or sections of the house, then the property fails the test. The second test is that of occupancy. Does the principal household meet the definition of a "single family", such as all members being related by blood or marriage, or if not, does the household contain no more than six unrelated persons? These criteria are designed to accommodate living arrangements involving extended families. Also there may be no more than two boarders/lodgers in addition to the principal household.

Burnaby, British Columbia

The District of Burnaby permits "Family Suites" which may be licenced only for relatives of the building owner or his/her tenants. A restrictive covenant is also required which states that the land will be used in accordance with the zoning by-law. An annual licence fee of \$30.00 is mandatory (Caselton and Robertson 1989, 8-9).

Delta, British Columbia

Delta does not allow secondary suites in single family dwellings, except under certain circumstances, according to the Corporation of Delta Administrative Manager, Peter Repin (Repin 1991). Enforcement is carried out on a complaint basis by the By-law Enforcement Officer.

Under the 1977 Delta Zoning By-law No. 2750, "In-law suites" are permitted; the occupant(s) must be related by blood, marriage, or adoption to the principal occupant(s) of the dwelling in which the in-law suite exists. In-law suites must not occupy more than 25 percent of the space in the physical building and must be supplied with one additional off-street parking space. An annual permit, costing \$25.00, must be obtained from the Director of Permits and Licences along with a sworn statutory declaration in order for a in-law suite to be

legal. As an alternative, single family dwellings are allowed to have a maximum of two roomers, boarders, or lodgers.

District of North Vancouver, British Columbia

In December of 1988, the District of North Vancouver changed its zoning by-law to permit Family Residential Units (FRUs), or In-law suites, within single family homes, provided certain conditions are met (Caselton and Robertson 1989, 8). These conditions include such features as two on-site parking spaces, a maximum FRU size of 700 square feet or 40 percent of residential floor space, annual registration of FRUs, owner occupation of the home containing the FRU, a sworn statutory declaration proving the occupants are related to the owner, and mutual access to both units by all occupants. The aim is to restrict the use of secondary suites to family groups only.

Toronto, Ontario

In 1987, the Policy Development Division of the Metropolitan Toronto Planning Department produced a background report entitled Metropolitan Plan Review Report No. 4: Housing Intensification. This report was part of a program to review the 1980 Official Plan for the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto. The plan applies to the Cities of Toronto, Etobicoke, York, North York, Scarborough, and the Borough of East York. The report indicates

that the population of Metro Toronto is aging but relatively stable, and household size is decreasing. If this trend continues, 209,000 additional housing units are predicted to be required by the year 2011 (Metropolitan Plan Review Report No. 4: Housing Intensification. 1987, i). This is coupled with a projected increase in employment opportunities in the Metro area and a subsequent increase in commuter traffic.

"In order to improve the relationship between where people live and work and to more fully utilize Metro's existing infrastructure, a number of measures to encourage residential intensification are recommended." (Metropolitan Plan Review Report No. 4: Housing Intensification. 1987, i). Four methods to encourage residential intensification were examined in the report: subdivision of vacant land parcels; small scale infill construction; large scale redevelopment of areas for higher density use; and conversion of existing dwellings to increase the number of housing units that can be accommodated. Conversion would include such activity as the addition of an accessory suite in an existing single family house.

The report states that opposition to conversions has centered on such issues as parking availability, property values, and neighbourhood deterioration. The report claims that these concerns are often exaggerated and based more on perception than reality (Metropolitan Plan Review Report No. 4: Housing

Intensification. 1987, iv). However, the report states that conversions should be restricted to communities where there is local support; they should not be forced on a community (Metropolitan Plan Review Report No. 4: Housing Intensification. 1987, iv). Conversions are an inexpensive (low public cost) housing form that also help lower home ownership costs and provide extra income for older homeowners who have extra space in their homes (Metropolitan Plan Review Report No. 4: Housing Intensification. 1987, v). The report recommends, then, that the Metropolitan Official Plan be amended to support conversion as a technique to obtain more housing in the Metro area (Metropolitan Plan Review Report No. 4: Housing Intensification. 1987, v).

In 1989, the Policy Development Division of the Metropolitan Toronto Planning Department issued a report entitled Metropolitan Plan Review Policy Report No. 2: Housing Intensification. This report reiterated what was stated in the 1987 background report concerning the creation of accessory units through conversion of existing housing stock.

The creation of accessory units within residential dwellings is a form of housing intensification which should be supported in principle across Metropolitan Toronto. Regardless of the intensity of emotion which surrounds this issue, there appears to be little substantiated evidence to suggest that accessory units should not become a universally permitted use subject to reasonable municipal standards of land use control. A positive and proactive policy regarding accessory units at the Metropolitan level would recognize the current resources in the existing housing stock to satisfy, in part, the demand for housing. This source

of housing supply can be made available at relatively affordable prices and in the short term. (Metropolitan Plan Review Policy Report No. 2: Housing Intensification. 1989, 38)

Presently, accessory apartments are a permitted use in most areas of the City of Toronto, except in R1 areas which permit only single-family houses (Stanley 1991). Enforcement of by-law infractions regarding illegal suites is done on a complaint basis (Stanley 1991). Approximately 16.5 percent of all residential districts in Toronto are designated as R1 (Stanley 1991).

In March of 1991, David Spence, a housing policy planner for the City of Toronto Planning and Development Department, submitted a status report, which examined possible amendments to the zoning by-law to allow conversions in R1 areas, to the Land Use Committee (Spence 1991, 1). The report stated that the most appropriate option, with regard to the conversion of residential buildings, was to allow converted houses in R1 areas, but limit the total number of units within each structure to two (Spence 1991, 6). This limit on the number of units would minimize any impact on the character of the neighbourhood (Spence 1991, 6).

However, the report was subsequently rejected. David Spence believes the report was rejected at this early stage for various reasons. These reasons include concerns about loss of neighbourhood character, decreases in property values, and lack of sufficient parking if R1 areas were allowed to carry out

accessory suite conversions (Spence, personal communication, 1991). Spence believes that though concerns over property values and parking have some validity, neighbourhood character in R1 areas would not be greatly impacted because conversion participation rates in R1 areas would probably be quite low (Spence 1991, 4).

Thus, even though accessory suites are not presently a permitted use in Toronto's R1 areas, both the Province of Ontario and Metropolitan Toronto support the idea of allowing accessory dwelling units in single-family houses as a method of increasing densities, and thereby better utilizing existing infrastructure and services, and providing more housing to meet present and projected future needs.

Vancouver, British Columbia

During the 1930s, suites were permitted in single-family areas to encourage owners to maintain larger houses (McAfee 1987, 114). The federal government encouraged cities to permit suites in single-family homes in order to relieve wartime housing shortages during the 1940s (McAfee 1987, 114).

In the late 1950s, the City decided to close all suites in RS-1 (detached single-family) areas (McAfee 1987, 114). Exceptions were allowed in cases where a suite was occupied by

family members (McAfee 1987, 114). The closure program was eventually halted in the 1960s as a result of a low vacancy rate in Vancouver (McAfee 1987, 114).

A 1974 Planning Department survey found that 65 percent of owners did not want suites in their area (McAfee 1987, 114). Much of the early 1980s were characterized by withholding enforcement regarding suites, particularly suites occupied by family members of owners, and financial and medical hardship cases (McAfee 1987, 114-115).

In 1986, "hardship" suites were disallowed, as were second or summer kitchens in houses; family or in-law suites remained a permitted use in all single-family areas, provided an affidavit naming all occupants was signed and registered (Caselton and Robertson 1989, 6). This clamp-down, therefore, was focused primarily on revenue suites.

Vancouver's problem with illegal secondary suites is compounded by the fact that single-family (RS-1) zoning covers approximately 70 percent of the city (McAfee 1987, 114). This is in marked contrast to Toronto where R1 areas make up approximately 16.5 percent of all residential areas (Stanley 1991). With such a dominance of single-family residential districts in Vancouver, fewer options are available to those who do not need or desire single-family type housing. This is

evidenced by the estimated existence of between 21,000 and 26,000 suites in RS-1 areas (McAfee 1987, 114). In some neighbourhoods, up to 60 percent of houses are estimated to contain suites; in others, it may be as low as 10 percent (McAfee 1987, 114).

In 1988, the City initiated discussions with individual neighbourhoods concerning suites in their RS-1 areas. The public was given two options (Caselton and Robertson 1989, 6). The first option was to retain their RS-1 area zoning and therefore phase out revenue suites over a ten year period. Family suites would remain a permitted use in RS-1 districts. The second option was to have RS-1 rezoned to a new designation, RS-1S, which would permit one suite in a house and require that the suite be licenced and meet prescribed standards. Through these discussions, each area or neighbourhood is allowed to determine how it wants to respond to revenue suites. The decision of whether or not to permit revenue suites in a particular area is made at the neighbourhood level, not at the city or individual level.

Surrey, British Columbia

It is estimated that there are approximately 5,365 illegal suites in Surrey (Caselton and Robertson 1989, 13). By-law enforcement is primarily on a complaint basis with an average of about 97 complaints per month concerning illegal suites (Caselton

and Robertson 1989, 13). During 1988, roughly 40 illegal suites per month were being shut down as a result of complaints (Caselton and Robertson 1989, 13). In addition to complaint investigation, plan checkers advise by-law enforcement staff when a building permit is issued where they believe a suite may be installed. Thus enforcement is reactive, proactive and preventative in nature.

In December of 1989, policy analyst Jane Caselton, and long range planner Judith Robertson submitted a report entitled Secondary Suites to the Surrey Council. The report examined the issue of legalizing secondary suites in Surrey. The report was prompted by the combination of unlicensed (illegal) suites, the high level of complaints, and the closure of licensed suites (temporary dwelling units or TDUs) which were set to expire in August of 1990 (Caselton and Robertson 1989, i). There were only 501 active TDUs (temporary dwelling units) in Surrey at the time the report was written (Caselton and Robertson 1989, 13). A TDU is a dwelling unit of temporary duration that was in existence prior to August 1, 1975 and was licensed prior to August 1, 1985 (Caselton and Robertson 1989, 13).

The report considered three basic options in regard to illegal suites. One was to eliminate them. This, however, would reduce the supply and range of available affordable housing in Surrey and would entail high enforcement costs (Caselton and

Robertson 1989, 17). The second option was to simply ignore the issue and only deal with suites on a complaint basis. This option, however, ignores health and safety aspects associated with illegal suites. It also creates uncertainty and fear for tenants because they have few, if any, avenues of recourse whereby disputes or problems can be addressed (Caselton and Robertson 1989, 18). The third option was to legalize suites and thereby control or minimize their impact on the community (Caselton and Robertson 1989, 18). This third option was favoured by the authors of the report.

Legalizing suites would not occur without some drawbacks (Caselton and Robertson 1989, 19). These include the requirement of additional staff to carry out licencing, inspection, and enforcement duties. Meeting standards and paying permit fees could possibly result in higher rent for tenants of rental suites. And finally, closures of suites that do not meet standards may result in fewer suites being available to meet housing needs. The report did not estimate the number of owners who would be willing to carry out conversions in their homes if the process were legalized. This activity might offset the number of closures of substandard suites.

The benefits of legalizing suites were also given consideration in the report (Caselton and Robertson 1989, 18-19). The community would benefit from the expanded range or spectrum

of housing options offered by legalized suites. As well, existing tenants of suites that meet standards, would not be forced to move out, thereby lessening the burden on the existing housing supply. Legalized suites could also be taxed since their existence would be known. Finally, illegal suites and their tenants do not necessarily show up in the usual census data collection process. Thus accurate population estimates are difficult to achieve. This, in turn, makes planning for services, such as schools, more difficult, and also affects government grants that are determined on a per capita basis.

Benefits would also be enjoyed by owners and tenants of secondary suites (Caselton and Robertson 1989, 19). A workable method of legalizing suites would ensure that health and safety standards would be met. Greater certainty would exist for both tenant and owner if a system of standards and enforcement is in place. Tenants would not have to live in fear of losing their residence; owners would not have to worry about lost income resulting from a complaint based closure. Tenants included in census gathering would appear on voters lists and also be included in planning matters. Finally, homeowners could include income generated by a secondary suite when applying for a mortgage loan.

The Secondary Suites report made several recommendations regarding the permitting of secondary suites in single family zones. These recommendations include the following:

- suites be non-tenant specific
- suites should exist only in owner-occupied houses
- suites be allowed in both new and existing structures
- suites be allowed in all residential areas
- suite size be regulated
- off-street parking be provided
- building code standards be met for new houses and modified for existing houses
- non-conforming suites be closed immediately if they violate safety/health standards; otherwise suites would face an upgrading or phasing out period
(Caselton and Robertson 1989, 41)

The report recommended that suites be permitted in all urban residential areas with a provision for groups of individuals to "opt out" and thereby establish areas where suites are not permitted. Likewise, developers of new subdivisions would have to choose whether they wanted to permit or exclude secondary suites in new subdivision (Caselton and Robertson 1989, 40).

On August 13, 1990, Surrey Council approved the rezoning of properties on an individual basis to permit secondary suites (Judith Robertson, letter to the author, 15 Jan. 1991). Since the decision by Surrey Council to allow secondary suites is so recent, its effect cannot yet be fully determined.

SUMMARY and CONCLUSION

It is apparent that most urban areas are grappling with the issue of illegal secondary suites in one way or another. A common method of handling illegal suites is to investigate and enforce only when a complaint is received. Active enforcement requires adequate resources in order to be effective. The resources required include additional personnel and time; both cost money. Given the number of possible illegal suites, particularly in larger cities, the task of enforcement could be immense. Enforcement is further hampered by the fact that if suites are illegal, owners and tenants will likely be very reluctant to cooperate with an investigation. Owners fear legal costs, fines, and lost revenue; tenants fear the loss of their residence.

Interestingly, "family" or "in-law" suites are often permitted uses in single family areas that do not permit revenue suites. This seems to be a concession to allowing extended families to live together. These family suites result in a higher density in a specific area and likely create a higher demand for services such as water, sewer, and electricity. Higher traffic and noise levels are also common byproducts of higher densities. It is inconsistent, from the point of providing services or infrastructure, to permit densification via family suites but not revenue suites. A person requires a

certain measure of services regardless of whether or not they are related to the owner. Land use bylaws that limit secondary suites only to "family" is a control, whether intentional or not, on users and not just use.

Allowing "family" or "in-law" suites is, perhaps, a step in the right direction; it is a realization that housing needs vary from family to family. Families or households do not necessarily fit neatly into clearly defined categories. Permitting "family" suites is a realization that various housing needs can be met, in part, through modification of land use controls to permit secondary suites in single-family residential districts.

Some cities and governments have realized the need to address housing requirements, particularly the need for affordable housing. Cities like Vancouver and Surrey have gone a step further and done something about it by allowing secondary suites in some, if not all, residential areas. Such steps are not necessarily easy; the process of implementing and enforcing changes is not easy or inexpensive. These costs will likely be offset, to some degree, by the benefits they will produce.

Safe and affordable housing coupled with more efficient utilization of land resources and services as a result of increased residential densities will help counter the expenses

incurred by urban sprawl. In cities such as Vancouver, where the lack of land to expand onto has raised housing costs, the provision of a greater quantity of affordable housing in the form of secondary suites, particularly for middle to low income earners, could lessen the demand or need for subsidized housing. Governments and taxpayers, in turn, would benefit from a lower tax burden.

CHAPTER 4

THE CITY OF RED DEER AND SECONDARY SUITES

Profile of Red Deer

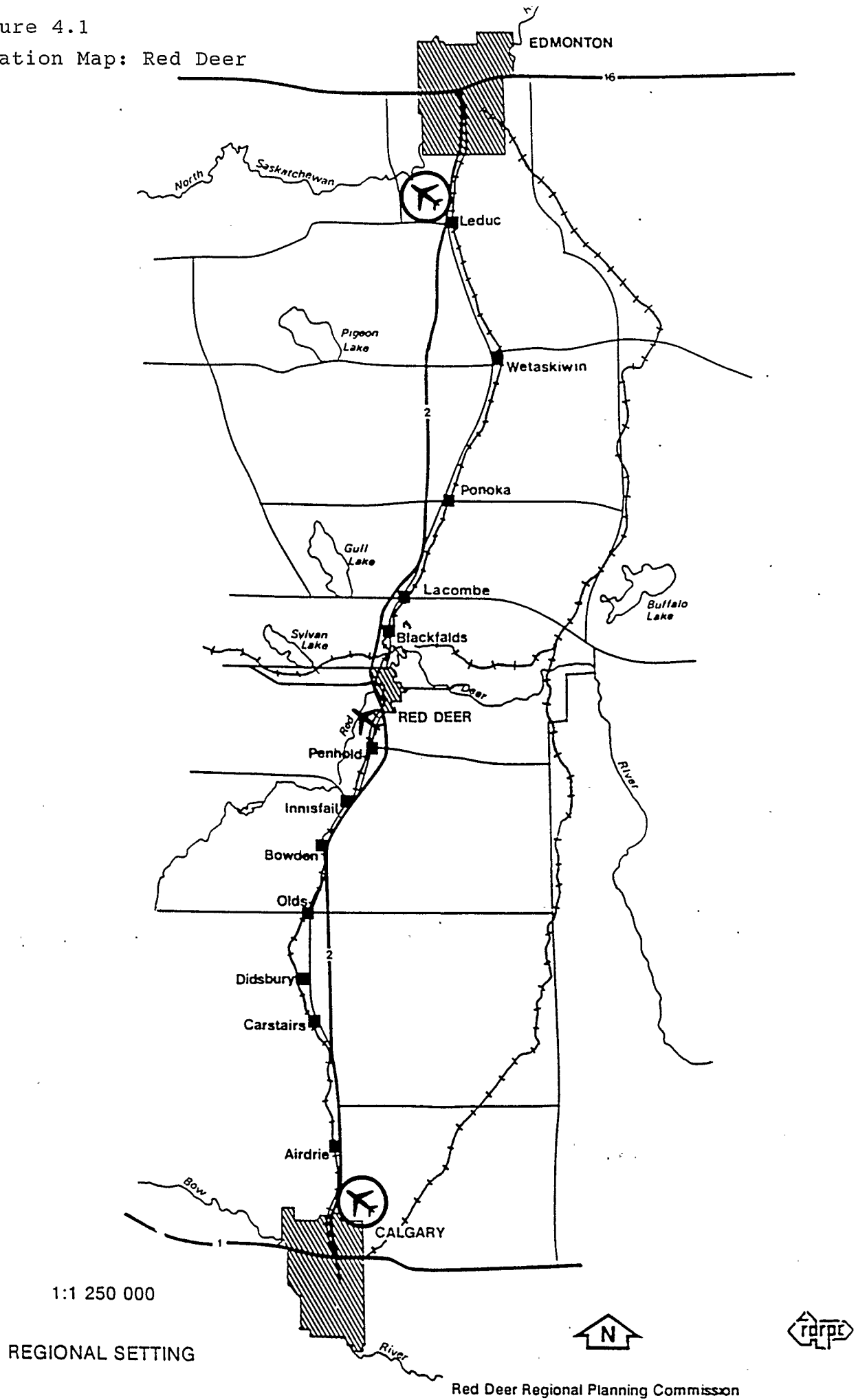
The City of Red Deer is situated in the rolling parkland of central Alberta midway between Calgary and Edmonton along Highway #2. (See Figure 4.1) The Red Deer River flows through Red Deer dividing it into north and south areas. Approximately 40 percent of residents live north of the river and the remaining 60 percent to the south (Red Deer Community Profile. 1991, 3.2).

The downtown core consists of predominantly low rise office and retail buildings. Most buildings in the core are two to three storeys high and are a mixture of both old and new buildings. Many of the newer buildings were built during the boom period of the late 1960s to the early 1980s. With the exception of several department stores and banks, most downtown businesses are small scale, local operations. The downtown core, with its low buildings and many single lane streets with angle parking, has a small town feel that reflects Red Deer's past.

Much of the commercial and retail activity, including Red Deer's two main shopping malls, is located not in the core, but along Gaetz Avenue which runs the length of the city from north to south. Outside the downtown core, most commercial and

Figure 4.1

Location Map: Red Deer



retail areas are geared towards automobile traffic and thus, are not very convenient for pedestrian traffic. The commercial and retail strip and the two malls located along Gaetz Avenue, including many chain stores and restaurants, are not distinguishable from those found in most urban settings.

Most residential areas near the centre of Red Deer contain a mixture of housing types, typically older single detached units and newer multiple dwelling units, such as duplexes and walk up apartments. Newer neighbourhoods, located mostly on the northern and eastern edges of the city, are dominated by low density single detached dwellings; 90 percent of which are owner occupied (Red Deer: the Future is Now. 1992, 5). Only 52 percent of all housing units in Red Deer are owner occupied (Red Deer: the Future is Now. 1992, 5).

Red Deer's population is fairly transient: only 31 percent of the population has lived in their present residence for more than 5 years. Approximately 30 percent have lived in their present residence for less than 1 year (Red Deer: the Future is Now. 1992, 56). Most residential neighbourhoods, particularly newer ones, are similar to those found in other urban settings in Alberta. There is nothing that marks them as being distinctively Red Deer in character.

The local economy is dominated by the service sector. Approximately 73 percent of the labour force is employed in the service sector, 12 percent in secondary industry such as construction and manufacturing, and 15 percent in primary industries like oil and gas extraction (Red Deer: the Future is Now. 1992, 4). The unemployment rate in Red Deer was 9.4 percent in 1991; the Canadian average was 10.3 percent (Red Deer: the Future is Now. 1992, 4). In 1987, Red Deer's average income per taxable return was \$24,392, approximately \$600 higher than the national average (Red Deer: the Future is Now. 1992, 25).

Red Deer has experienced tremendous growth over the last thirty years. See Figure 4.2. The population grew from 18,762 in 1960 to 26,906 in 1970. The following decade saw it rise to 41,371 by 1980, and as of 1990, Red Deer's population was 56,922 (City of Red Deer 1990 Census Results. 1990, 1). The twenty year period from 1970 to 1990 saw Red Deer's population more than double. The population is projected to reach 73,000 by the turn of the century (Red Deer - Central Alberta: The Future is Now. 1990, 1). Figure 4.3 provides a breakdown of Red Deer's population by age.

An examination of the 1986 and 1990 City of Red Deer Census Results shows that Red Deer is experiencing changes in its demographics. Like the rest of Alberta and Canada, Red Deer's population is slowly aging. In 1986, Red Deer's average age was

Figure 4.2

POPULATION over TIME: RED DEER

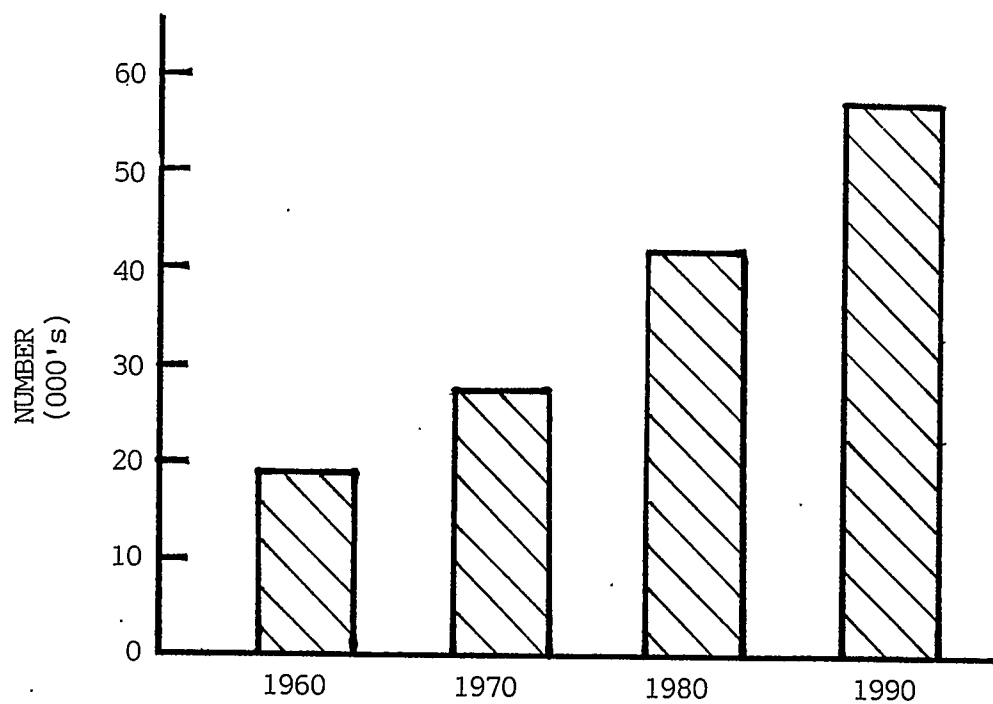
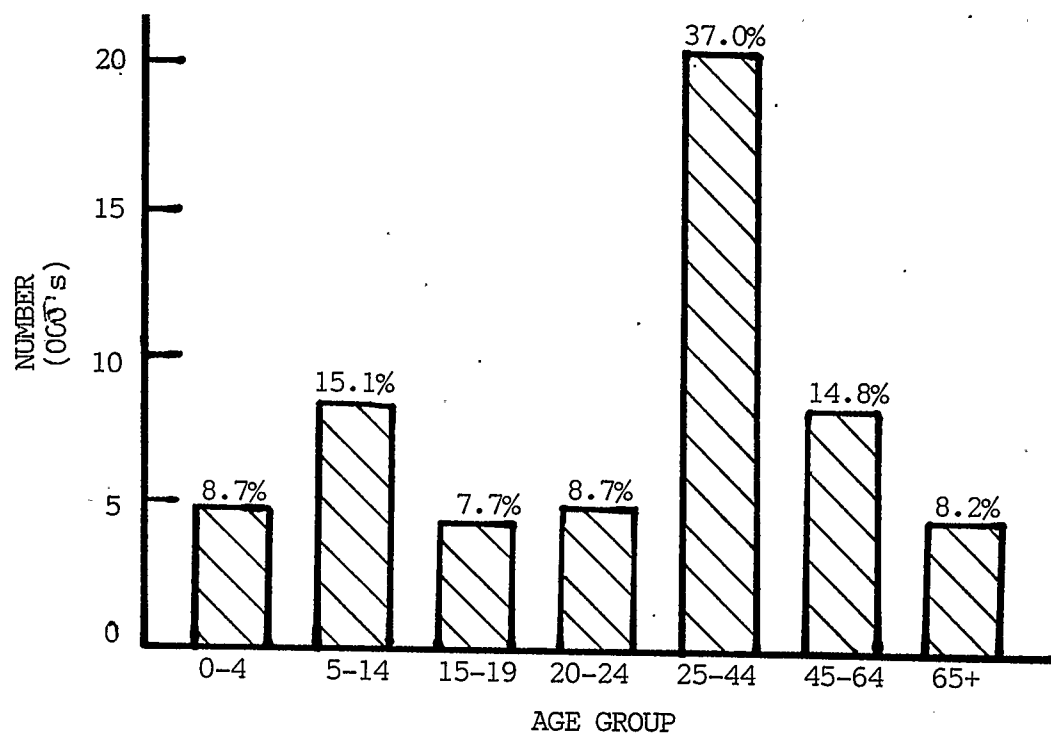


Figure 4.3

POPULATION by AGE: RED DEER 1990



28 for males and 30 for females. By 1990, the average age increased to 29 and 31, respectively. The percentage of residents 65 and older increased from 7.06 percent of the total population in 1986 to 8.20 percent in 1990. Between 1986 and 1990, Red Deer's total population increased by 7.77 percent. During the same period, Red Deer experienced a 25.13 percent increase in its 65 and older population.

Red Deer, like Canada as a whole, has witnessed a slight decrease in household size. The average household size for the whole of Red Deer decreased from 2.62 persons per household in 1986 to 2.57 in 1990. The average household size also dropped slightly for single detached dwelling units: from 3.09 persons per household in 1986 to 3.03 in 1990. These figures indicate that, similar to provincial and national trends, Red Deer is aging slightly and its household size is decreasing.

The City Census states that in 1990, there were 22,298 residential units in Red Deer (City of Red Deer 1990 Census Results. 1990, 6). Approximately 567 (2.54 percent) of these units were vacant (City of Red Deer 1990 Census Results. 1990, 6). When combined with the population figure of 56,922, minus 1,098 institutional residents at the Michener Centre, this results in approximately 2.57 persons per dwelling unit. There are 10,288 single detached dwelling units, 48.87 percent of all dwelling units, in the city. A total of 162 (1.58 percent) of

these units are vacant. An additional 410 single detached units contain a total of 459 known suites. Therefore, some single detached units contain more than one suite. See Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4

RESIDENTIAL HOUSING TYPES: RED DEER, 1990

	Total Units	Percent of Total	Vacant Units	Occupants	
				Number	Avg.
Single Detached	10,228	45.9	162	30,532	3.03
Single Detached with Suite	410	1.8	10	979	2.44
Suite in Single Detached	459	2.1	50	579	1.40
Duplex	1,311	5.9	20	3,932	3.04
Triplex/Fourplex	1,074	4.8	31	2,655	2.53
Town Housing Row Housing	1,989	8.9	52	5,087	2.62
Apartment	5,858	26.3	191	9,150	1.61
Mobile Home	906	4.1	51	2,162	2.52
Group Home	34	0.2	0	39	1.14
Other	24	0.1	0	714	29.75
Michener Centre				1,098	
TOTAL	22,298	100	567	56,922	2.62
			(excluding Michener Centre)		2.57

Source: City of Red Deer 1990 Census Results

Suites contained within single detached dwellings have an average of 1.40 occupants. Single detached units with suites, have an average of 2.44 occupants. Thus a single detached dwelling with an accessory suite has an total average of 3.84 (2.44 + 1.40) occupants. Single detached units that do not contain an accessory suite have an average of 3.03 occupants. Consequently, single detached houses that contain accessory suites have, on average, less than one additional occupant more than regular single detached houses. In light of this low figure, it is doubtful that secondary suites contained within single detached houses place any major strain on neighbourhoods in terms of services or infrastructure.

It must also be kept in mind that the number of single detached houses in Red Deer that presently contain a secondary suite is also very low. According to the Red Deer's 1990 Census, they account for only 3.85 percent of all single detached houses. Given that the number of secondary suites in single detached houses is low, it must be concluded that their present impact on Red Deer neighbourhoods is minimal.

Red Deer's Land Use Bylaw

Red Deer's present Land Use Bylaw, Bylaw No. 2672/80, was passed by Council in 1980 (Strader 1991). This lengthy document contains the relevant information pertaining to land use in Red

Deer. The Bylaw states: "The purpose of this Bylaw is to prohibit or regulate and control the use and development of land and buildings within the City of Red Deer to achieve the orderly and economic development of land..." (City of Red Deer Land Use Bylaw No. 2672/80. 1980, 11).

In order to achieve "the orderly and economic development of land," the Bylaw must necessarily set out definitions for various terms pertinent to land use. Many of these terms are relevant to the issue of secondary suites. Appendix 1 contains some of the definitions used in the Bylaw. The Bylaw does not include a definition of a "family", but its definition of a "household" comes the closest to defining "family". "'Household' means an individual, or two or more persons related by blood, marriage or adoption, or a group of (up to) five unrelated persons, all living together as a single housekeeping unit and using common cooking facilities." (City of Red Deer Land Use Bylaw No. 2672/80. 1980, 7).

The Bylaw contains provisions for four residential districts:

R-1 for low density

R-2 for general residential

R-3 for multiple family

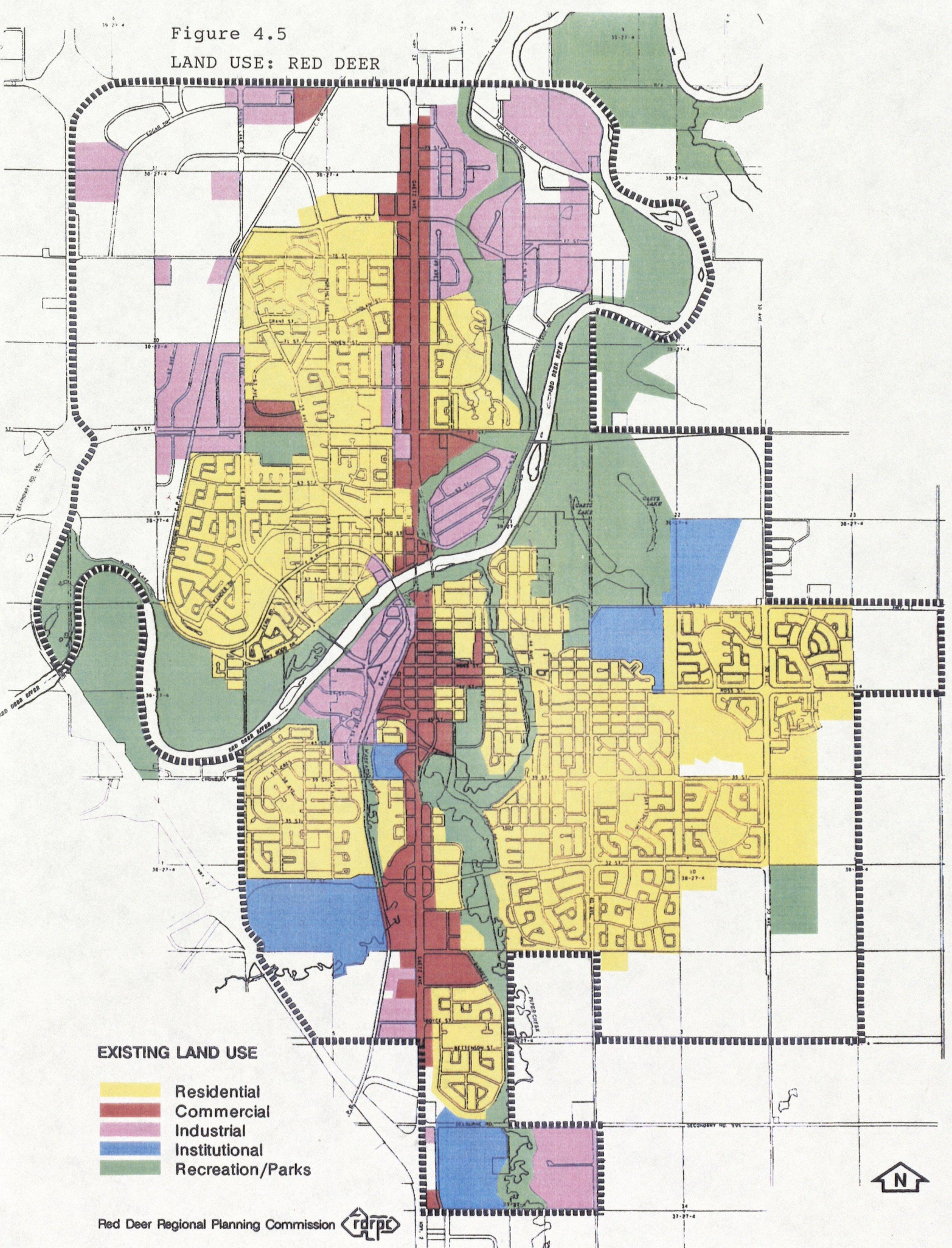
R-4 for relocatable dwelling units (mobile homes)

The Bylaw does not list any specific density of units per

acre/hectare for these residential districts. The general purpose of the R-1 district is to "provide land which will basically be used for low density residential development." (City of Red Deer Land Use Bylaw No. 2672/80. 1980, 74). The purpose of the R-2, general residential district, is stated as being "to provide a medium density residential area with a mixture of housing types and residential accommodation and at the same time control, regulate and encourage the development or redevelopment of residential uses that are compatible with both neighbourhood, the immediate site and the growth policies of the General Municipal Plan." (City of Red Deer Land Use Bylaw No. 2672/80. 1980, 77). The purpose of R-3 district is to "accommodate and control medium and high density residential development." (City of Red Deer Land Use Bylaw No. 2672/80. 1980, 81). And finally, the R-4 district exists to "provide land for relocatable dwelling units and relocatable dwelling unit parks." (City of Red Deer Land Use Bylaw No. 2672/80. 1980, 84). Figure 4.5 is a map showing Red Deer's existing land uses.

Red Deer's predominant residential district is R-1. This is evidenced by the proliferation of single detached houses in Red Deer. Nearly one half of Red Deer's 22,298 residential units are comprised of single detached units (see Figure 4.4). A subcategory of the R-1 district is the R-1A, which permits duplexes as a discretionary use. Other than the discretionary use of duplexes, R-1A is identical to R-1 in terms of land use.

Figure 4.5
LAND USE: RED DEER



R-2 districts, which allow for basement suites, exist primarily in small clusters interspersed throughout Red Deer. With the exception of a few locations, R-2 districts are small in comparison to R-1 districts. Much of what characterizes R-2 districts, in terms of size and location, is also true for the R-3 districts. Typically, R-2 districts occupy locations bordering neighbourhood boundaries or arterial and collector roadways. Figure 4.6 shows the amount of developed residential land in each of Red Deer's residential land use categories.

Figure 4.6

AREA OF DEVELOPED RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS IN RED DEER (1990)

RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT	AREA in HECTARES	PERCENTAGE of TOTAL
R-1	989.76	67.37
R-1A	167.72	11.42
R-2	137.07	9.33
R-3	177.10	7.97
R-4	57.52	3.91

TOTAL	1469.17	100.00

Source: Red Deer Regional Planning Commission; unpublished data

Secondary Suites in Red Deer

Secondary suites are not a permitted or discretionary use within R-1 districts in Red Deer (City of Red Deer Land Use Bylaw No. 2672/80. 1980, 74). The only exception to this rule is if it can be proven that a suite, in an R-1 area, existed there prior to the adoption of the 1980 Bylaw and has not been unoccupied for more than six months at a time (Strader 1991).

A much broader range of permitted uses exist in the R-2 district. Section 6.6.2.2(2) of the Bylaws lists "one basement dwelling unit per detached dwelling" as a permitted use (City of Red Deer Land Use Bylaw No. 2672/80. 1980, 77). However, other than limiting the number of suites to one, no other restrictions are listed in the Bylaw. There is no set minimum or maximum secondary unit size or parking space requirements listed. Neither is there a limit on the number of occupants nor any other qualification set for occupants of basement suites, other than those already set out in the bylaw definition of a "household". The Bylaw does not mention a minimum or maximum limit on the number of dwelling units per acre or hectare.

Unlike other cities which only permit "family" or "in-law" suites, Red Deer has not put qualifications on the occupants of "basement suites". This eliminates or avoids an enforcement issue faced by cities that do permit only "family" or "in-law" suites: namely, the matter of proving or disproving the

relationship between occupants of a secondary suite and the occupants of the primary dwelling unit. This does not, however, make enforcement an easy task in the R-1 districts. Enforcement in Red Deer, as in many other cities, is carried out on a complaint basis. Limited resources, in terms of personnel, money, and time, restrict enforcement to a reactive role (Strader 1991).

Some illegal suites are brought to light through the tax assessment process which is carried out every five to seven years. However, there is no active or formal sharing of information between tax assessors and bylaw enforcers (Strader 1991). Enforcement is limited to complaints. When a complaint is received, the violator usually is sent a letter demanding compliance with the Bylaw. Most violators do comply resulting in the removal or closure of the illegal suite in a R-1 district.

Other Relevant Policy Documents

The discussion above focuses on the present situation in Red Deer. In light of this, how well does existing policy relate to Red Deer's situation? An examination of various policy documents reveals a common theme: the efficient use of land and other resources are goals worth striving for. This theme is reiterated in the Northwest Area Structure Plan. The list of objectives for the plan include:

- (a) to provide for orderly, compatible and economical land uses and development,
 - (b) to provide for the economical and efficient extension of utility services,...
- (Northwest Area Structure Plan. 1989, 4)

The plan also states that utility servicing will be based on a density of 50 persons per hectare. How this figure was arrived at is not stated. The expected density is estimated at 43 persons per hectare (Northwest Area Structure Plan. 1989, 9).

The East Hill Concept Plan also uses the same figures, engineering density of 50 persons per hectare and anticipated real density of 43 persons per hectare, as its basis for desired densities (East Hill Concept Plan. 1989, 2).

In reality, Red Deer's average residential density was only 38.74 persons per hectare in 1990 (56,922 people/1469.17 ha.). This covers all residential districts, including the higher density R-2 and R-3 districts. Since R-1 areas are designated as low density areas, it is likely that R-1 densities are below the 38.74 persons per hectare average. Clearly, then, actual densities have fallen short of expected densities. Thus, there is an underutilization of existing infrastructure at present densities in Red Deer.

The Red Deer Regional Plan, produced by the Red Deer Regional Planning Commission in 1986, also stresses that higher densities should be strived for:

4.3.3 Infilling and higher densities should be pursued in urban municipalities in order to make more efficient use of land thereby reducing the need for urban expansion onto surrounding rural land. (Red Deer Regional Plan. 1986, 14)

According to the Red Deer Regional Plan, the pressure to expand can also be eased through careful redevelopment of older areas within urban areas. The Red Deer Regional Plan states:

4.3.6 Where an older urban area is to be improved or redeveloped, attempts should be made to incorporate the existing architectural character, urban landscape and other positive characteristics into the improvement or redevelopment scheme. (Red Deer Regional Plan. 1986, 14)

In light of these statements in the Red Deer Regional Plan, the inclusion of secondary suites in the redevelopment of older urban areas may be a suitable means by which higher densities can be achieved in a manner that is sensitive and consistent to the existing urban character and form.

The City of Red Deer General Municipal Plan, produced in 1980, is a major policy document containing broad policy statements concerning such issues as housing, infrastructure, development, and redevelopment. One of the City's stated policies in the General Municipal Plan (GMP) is to strive for a "moderate increase in densities by adopting programs to encourage innovative housing techniques...." (City of Red Deer General Municipal Plan. 1980, 10). The GMP continues by declaring that

"programs will be adopted to encourage and promote redevelopment of areas of older housing stock in the form of single family dwellings or multi-family depending on local circumstances" (City of Red Deer General Municipal Plan. 1980, 10). The City also wishes to "encourage the provision of a full range of housing choices" for its citizens (City of Red Deer General Municipal Plan. 1980, 10). However, the GMP does not go into detail regarding how these goals and targets will be achieved.

These statements in the GMP are coupled with other GMP policies stressing the efficient use of energy resources, conservation of land, and an increased level of transit service (City of Red Deer General Municipal Plan. 1980, 14). There appears to be nothing in these policy statements that is incompatible with the use of secondary suites in existing single detached dwellings. Secondary suites would increase densities moderately and thereby contribute to more efficient use of energy, infrastructure, transit services, and land as well as increase the number and diversity of housing options for Red Deer's citizens.

The gap between policy and practice can often be a wide one. The GMP states that Area Redevelopment Plans (ARPs) are to be drawn up for some of the older districts in the city; districts that are to have programs to "encourage and promote redevelopment of areas of older housing stock" (City of Red Deer

General Municipal Plan. 1980, 10) To date no ARPs have been put into effect or even drawn up (Klassen 1991). On the other hand, a Concept Plan for the East Hill area and an Area Structure Plan for the Northwest area of Red Deer were drawn up in 1989. These areas contain the bulk of new residential development within Red Deer.

Perhaps it is a question of priorities given the limited time and resources necessary to complete a plan. But such a long time lag, over ten years in the GMP, between the statement of policy and its implementation can be costly. The longer the gap of time between policy and practice, the greater the risk that the policy may be outdated in its approach, assumptions, and conclusions. Red Deer has grown and changed over the last decade and the policies as stated in the 1980 GMP may require review and possibly revision if they are to be appropriate and relevant to Red Deer's present situation. This must be done before implementation of policies can be carried out.

Other Considerations

Red Deer has an abundance of land available to it for development (Strader 1991). Abundance of supply, in turn, helps keep land prices relatively low. For the buyer, there may be no direct economic incentive to encourage him/her to seek higher residential densities. The result is that low density R-1 areas

are the predominant residential districts in Red Deer, both in terms of number of dwelling units and in the amount of land designated for such use.

But this occurs at a cost, a cost that may not always be realized by the homeowner. The development of new land is not inexpensive. The provision of infrastructure and services is not inexpensive. For example, the construction of a typical ten metre wide residential road costs approximately \$505 per metre (Goranson 1991). Therefore, a road in front of a fifteen metre lot frontage costs approximately \$7575. Some of these costs may be borne by land developers. However, the developer must cover this cost by raising the cost of the housing units he/she is building. This cost is eventually passed on to the home buyer via higher housing prices.

The provision of services and maintenance, such as transit service and fire protection, road repairs and snow removal, are added on top of this. These ongoing costs are usually covered through taxes. The provision of services is more efficient when densities are higher. For example, a transit system is more efficient to run when the urban area it serves has a high density population. Ridership is higher for a given distance in a high density area than in a low density one. Less time and fuel is required to run the system when distances are shorter. These savings, in turn, can be translated into lower fares for users or

more frequent service on routes. Snow removal for a given distance of road is less expensive per capita when densities are higher. These are the types of concerns, among others, that must be taken into consideration by the City when drawing up policies regarding housing options and residential densities.

As a smaller city, Red Deer does not face the same pressures or forces that many larger cities experience which create or encourage the demand for higher densities. Commuting distances and traffic congestion are not as great as in large urban areas such as Vancouver or Calgary. Consequently, Red Deer has not experienced such things as the influx of infill housing into older residential areas or the need to provide freeway style roadways as have larger cities.

SUMMARY and CONCLUSION

Red Deer's population continues to grow but its population is aging slightly and its household size is decreasing slowly. Residential densities are below planned and expected levels. Therefore, land and infrastructure are not being used at full efficiency levels. Presently, secondary suites are not a permitted use in Red Deer's predominant R-1 residential districts. Enforcement of the Land Use Bylaw is on a complaint basis. Secondary suites are a permitted use in R-2 districts. Suite use is not limited to family members as in other cities.

Various policy documents state that the efficient use of land and resources are goals worth striving for. These documents encourage higher residential densities as well.

The response to these trends and issues as well as the possible role of secondary suites in meeting stated policies of increased densities and efficient use of land and resources must be tailored to fit Red Deer. Policies regarding those needs and goals must be re-evaluated and brought up to date, if necessary, and then implemented effectively.

CHAPTER 5

ATTITUDES REGARDING SECONDARY SUITES IN RED DEER

What are the attitudes and opinions of Red Deer's R-1 residents towards secondary suites? This chapter will attempt to answer this question by examining the responses received from a mail-in survey conducted in Red Deer's R-1 residential districts.

The questionnaire was distributed to 1000 residences in Red Deer's R-1 districts. Logistics limited the distribution of surveys to a maximum of 1000. The results are based on the 239 responses received. A sample of the questionnaire and cover letter are in Appendix 2. Many survey questions regarding attitudes were of the nominal scale, i.e. "Yes", "No" categories; therefore, statistical manipulation is limited. None of the respondents were asked to give their name or address. This was done to encourage a high level of participation and honesty in survey replies. Appendix 3 contains a profile of the questionnaire respondents.

Figure 5.1 shows that 22.6 percent of respondents claimed to know of an accessory suite in their neighbourhood. 57.4 percent of these said they gained this knowledge by personal observation. See Figure 5.2. Perhaps a more reliable verification of the existence of a suite was obtained by the 38.9 percent who claimed to have gained their knowledge from the owner of the suite or the

16.7 percent who got the information from a tenant of the suite.

Figure 5.1

DO YOU KNOW of ANY ACCESSORY SUITES in YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD?

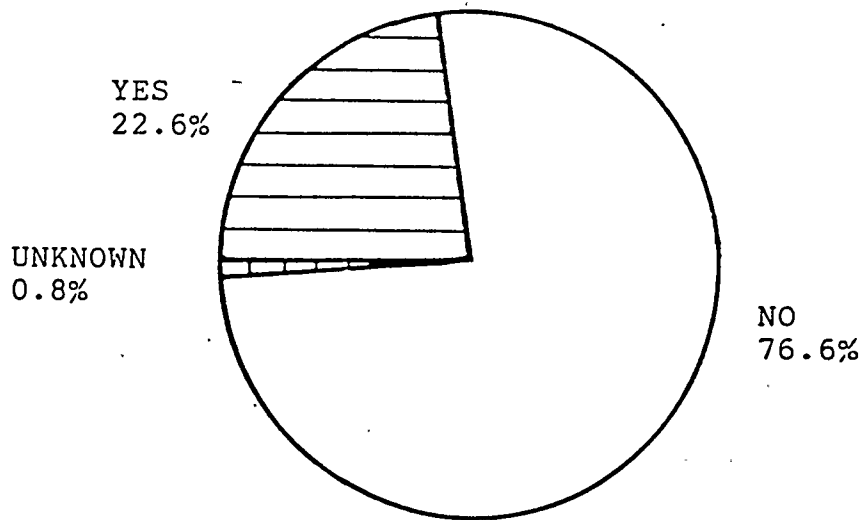


Figure 5.2

HOW DID YOU GAIN KNOWLEDGE of the SUITE?

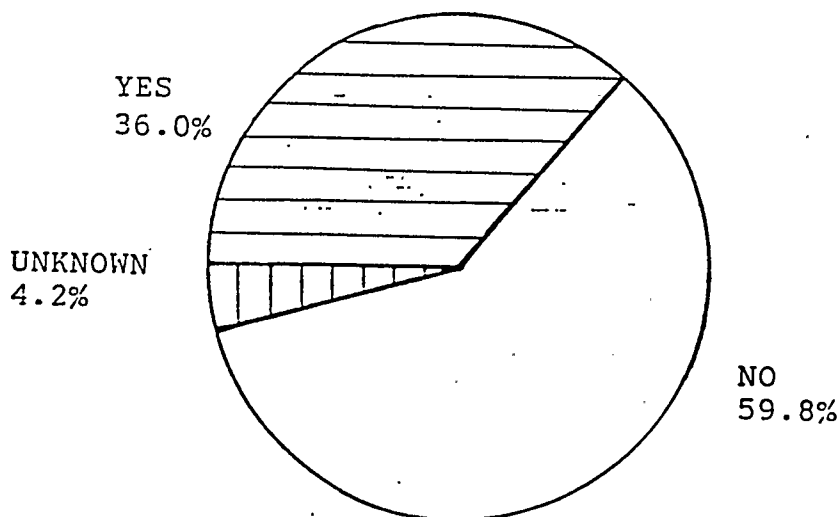
SOURCE	PERCENTAGE of "YES" RESPONDENTS
From the Owner	38.9
From the Tenant(s)	16.7
From Neighbours	25.9
From Personal Observation	57.4
Other	9.3
Unknown	1.9

The survey responses indicate that many R-1 area residents are concerned about secondary suites in their neighbourhoods. As Figure 5.3 shows, a majority of respondents, 59.8 percent, are against permitting secondary suites in R-1 districts. However, over one third, 36.0 percent, of the respondents said that

secondary suites should be a permitted use in R-1 districts.

Figure 5.3

SHOULD ACCESSORY SUITES be a PERMITTED USE in R-1 AREAS?



The respondents provided further information into what types of controls or restrictions would be necessary if suites were to be a permitted use. Figure 5.4 shows that the most common restriction expressed was that houses containing a suite be owner-occupied. This was closely followed by the need for adequate off-street parking. The third and fourth most frequent restrictions were limits on the number of tenants per suite and the number of suites per neighbourhood. Limiting suite use to family or relatives ranked only fifth among expressed concerns.

Figure 5.4

IF ACCESSORY SUITES WERE A PERMITTED USE,
WHAT CONTROLS SHOULD BE PLACED ON THEM?

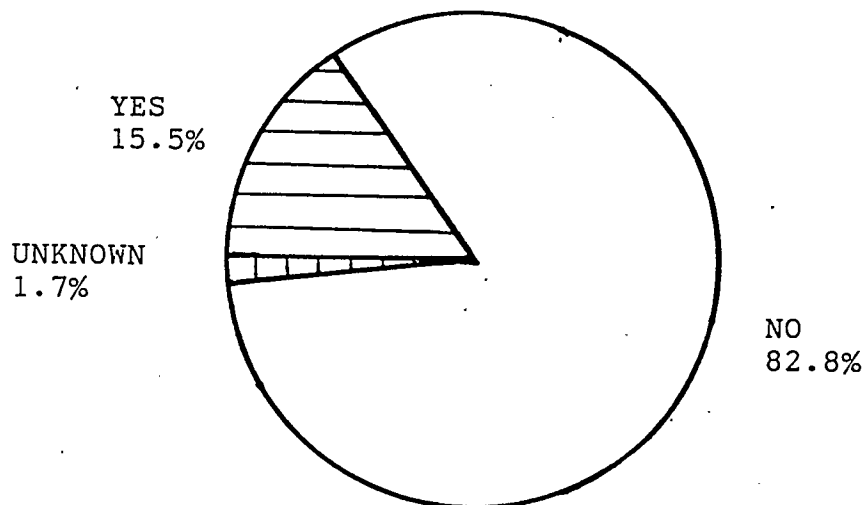
CONTROL	PERCENTAGE of ALL RESPONDENTS
Restrict Suite Size	14.2
Limit Number of Tenants	54.0
Restrict Suites to Family/Relatives	21.8
Houses containing Suites be Owner-Occupied	61.1
Require Adequate Off-Street Parking	61.0
Quotas on Number of Suites per Neighbourhood	35.1
Other	7.9
Unknown	3.8

When asked if secondary suites were a legally permitted use in R-1 areas, would they consider building/installing one, 82.9 percent of respondents said "No" and 15.5 percent said "Yes". See Figure 5.5. The survey did not determine how many of those who said "Yes" would actually build a suite; but it is likely that not all of the "Yes" respondents would act on their claim.

The two most frequently offered reasons for not building a suite were the desire to maintain as much privacy as possible and simply a lack of interest. The two most frequent reasons for building a suite were the desire for more income and a desire to help extended family members. With only 15.5 percent of respondents claiming an interest in building a suite, and the likelihood that only a portion of these would act on such a claim, it is reasonable to assume that, even if suites were a permitted use in R-1 areas, the number of suites built would not be high.

Figure 5.5

IF ACCESSORY SUITES WERE A LEGALLY PERMITTED USE,
WOULD YOU CONSIDER BUILDING/INSTALLING A SUITE IN YOUR HOUSE?



WHY? (YES)	FREQUENCY
Extra Income/Help Mortgage	19
Help Family/Relatives	11
Extra Company/Security	3
Better Utilization of House	2

WHY NOT? (NO)	FREQUENCY
Want Privacy	91
Not Interested	30
Not Enough Space	21
Too Many Hassles	20
Not Enough Parking Space	4
Noise	4
Do not Want Strangers in House	3
Possible Damage to Property	3
House Not Designed for It	3
Lower Resale Value of House	2
Safety Concerns	2
Would Stress Services	2
Overcrowding	2
Would Destablize Neighbourhood	2
Want R-1 to Stay As Is	2
Traffic Concerns	1
Installation Costs	1
Too Old to Handle It	1

The three most frequently expressed concerns regarding the negative impact of secondary suites were the possible increase in parking congestion, higher traffic volume, and more noise in the neighbourhood. On the other hand, the three most frequently expressed possible positive impacts were increased income, more low cost housing, and the provision of housing for extended family. See Figure 5.6.

Figure 5.6

WHAT WOULD BE THE NEGATIVE and/or POSITIVE IMPACTS of ALLOWING ACCESSORY SUITES in R-1 AREAS?

NEGATIVE IMPACTS	FREQUENCY
-----	-----
Lack of Parking	115
Increased Traffic	73
Increased Noise	34
Overcrowding	33
More Transients	32
Decreased Property Values	30
Lack of Property Upkeep	15
Safety (Design)	7
Increased Crime	6
No More Low Density Areas	6
Less Privacy	4
Overload Utilities	4
Overcrowd Schools	4
Increased Taxes	1
Increased Disease	1
Increased Insurance	1
Decreased Quality of Life	1
Decreased Security	1

POSITIVE IMPACTS	FREQUENCY
-----	-----
Increased Income	36
More Low Rent Housing	28
Help Extended Family	11
Help Seniors Remain in Own Home	4
Increased Security	4
Better Utilization of House	3
Reduce City Expansion	2
Lessen Housing Shortage	2
Increased School Enrollment	1
More Tax Income for City	1
Improved Homes	1
More Young People in Neighbourhood	1

SUMMARY and CONCLUSION

In summary, only about one third of R-1 respondents are presently in favor of permitting secondary suites in R-1 areas. However, the reasons expressed for their position, whether for or against, vary somewhat; but some common themes or concerns are evident. The most common concerns regarding negative impacts are the possible increase in parking congestion, increased traffic, and increased noise. These are factors that, for the most part, deal with the physical external environment, but they can have an effect on the overall quality of life of R-1 neighbourhoods as well.

The most frequently mentioned positive impacts are increased income, increased availability of low cost housing, and the provision of housing for extended family. These positive impacts are focused primarily on the individual and his/her personal economic and social concerns and less so on the impact on the

neighbourhood as a whole. However, it interesting to note that R-1 residents are concerned about the provision of more low cost housing. This is an impact that goes beyond the personal level to positively impact the community as a whole.

The survey indicates that, if secondary suites were a permitted use in R-1 districts, most respondents favor some restrictions on secondary suites. The primarily restrictions would be that suites be confined to owner-occupied homes and that adequate off-street parking be provided.

CHAPTER 6

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS

"Modern community planning is a distinctive social function, a widely accepted public activity that aims to improve the quality of life in our cities, towns, and regions." (Hodge 1986, 75). The issue of secondary suites cannot be examined from a legal or land use point of view only. A realistic and pragmatic resolution of the issue must encompass a broad range of factors including social and economic considerations. Housing policy is a crucial component of social policy (Goldberg 1983, 61). Planning involves decisions that affect the everyday lives of individuals; therefore, the ramifications and impacts of such decisions must be taken into account in the decision-making process. What, then, are some of the social and economic factors related to the issue of secondary suites?

SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

One of the most important factors to be considered is recent dramatic changes in the social structure of society. The earlier chapter on demographics outlined these changes in more detail, but it is worthwhile to briefly reiterate the general trends. The major trend is that the population is being comprised of more but smaller households. The number of people living alone is increasing. The number of single-parents is also increasing; and

families, in general, have fewer children. The elderly also represent a growing proportion of the population. These trends impact housing in terms of both quantity and type of housing required. "The shift towards smaller households has made a portion of our existing housing single-family stock functionally obsolete; permitting accessory apartments is one way of adapting them to the needs of housing consumers in the market today." (Gellen 1983, 5-6).

Secondary suites hold potential as part of the solution to the new and changing housing needs of society's changing family and household structures. The decrease in average household size may indicate an overconsumption or under utilization of space in single detached houses. Houses are typically getting larger as household size is decreasing. In Winnipeg, for example, the size of the average detached single-family house grew to almost 1,700 square feet in 1990 from 1,350 square feet in 1982 (Blackwell 1991, D1). Nationally, the average home had 5.8 rooms in 1986, up from 5.3 rooms in 1961. Red Deer dwellings had an average of 5.9 rooms in 1986, slightly higher than the national average (Profiles: Alberta: Part 2. 1988, 148).

An issue directly related to this is the use of various definitions in the delineation of acceptable land use in different districts. Some definitions seem innocuous enough on their own, but they are often based on or include terms that have

a cultural or social context. The definition of a "dwelling unit" usually involves the use of a definition of a "family". These definitions of "family" focus on people related by blood, marriage, and adoption. They also limit the number of unrelated persons that can occupy a single dwelling.

Red Deer's land use definitions, excerpts of which are contained in Appendix 1, are no exception. The definitions contained in the Land Use Bylaw use the term "household" instead of "family", but the result is still the same. The term "household" includes the usual group of blood, marriage, or adoption related individuals and allows for up to five unrelated persons. There is no limit set for the allowable number of related persons; only the number of unrelated individuals are limited. This is a control, whether deliberate or not, of users, not just use. It is not user-neutral.

Definitions must keep pace with demographic and family structure changes in society. Definitions need to be adjusted so that they are neutral and thereby do not discriminate, either intentionally or unintentionally, against people based on their relationship to other members of the same household. Red Deer's Land Use Bylaw sets a limit of five unrelated persons per household, but the Bylaw does not stipulate why a limit is set on unrelated persons, but no limit on related persons. It also does not state how the limit of five was arrived at. Limits should

not be biased in favour of traditional conceptions of what a "family" or "household" is or should be. A person requires and consumes the same amount of services and produces the same district densities, regardless of their relationship to others in the same dwelling unit or neighbourhood.

Perceptions by homeowners concerning secondary suites are not always borne out in reality. Patrick Hare briefly mentions a survey conducted by the Tri-State Regional Planning Commission (New York, New Jersey, Connecticut) to illustrate some of the objections raised against secondary suites (Hare 1981, 3). The survey showed that one of the most frequent complaints reported by residents against secondary suites was that they increased traffic. However, when the same residents were asked how they located houses with secondary suite conversions, only one out of 186 respondents replied that increased cars and traffic indicated the location of secondary suites. This example illustrates the point that there is often a large discrepancy between perception and reality on the part of residents.

Other social factors can be difficult to quantify. How can someone's sense of place or sense of community or feelings of belonging be measured? It cannot be said that each unit of sense of community is worth so many dollars. Nor can it be assumed that all people value the same things or value them to the same degree. These social factors might not be easy to measure, but

this does not preclude or negate their relevance to the land use planning process. It is possible to obtain some understanding of what is important to various groups in society.

One study revealed some interesting findings regarding people's choices when moving (Rossi 1980, 202). When asked the question, "What were the important things you had in mind about a place when you were looking around?", the most important criteria given was specific dwelling unit attributes such as size and design. The second most important criteria was location; this included such things as neighbourhood attributes and social composition. This study indicated that people are apparently concerned with the actual physical structure that they live in, as well as its location or neighbourhood.

"A consistent finding in research on housing choice and residential satisfaction has been the preference for suburban settings as child-rearing environments.... The common rationale for this choice are the relative safety of suburban neighborhoods with respect to traffic, the provision of play space, the proximity to good schools,...." (van Vliet 1981, 47:458). Even physical attributes, such as access to a secure yard for small children to play in, may have an important role in choosing to live in a secondary suite rather than more conventional rental housing (Klein and Sears 1983, 7:4-5).

This may be particularly true for single parents who, with only one income, may not be able to buy a single family home but would like to raise their children in such a neighbourhood. Single parents may wish to provide their children with a home in a familiar neighbourhood that can provide amenities such as parks, recreation facilities, shopping, churches, and schools, as well as nearby family and friends. Living in a secondary suite may include the use of a yard for gardening, relaxation, and a play area for children - options not usually open to apartment dwellers. These are a few aspects of quality of life or lifestyle that are difficult to quantify but are nonetheless valid.

Respondents in the Red Deer survey expressed similar concerns regarding the social aspect of housing. The second most frequent reason given for wanting to build a secondary suite was to help family or relatives meet their housing needs. Secondary suites can be seen as a way of housing extended families while ensuring a higher degree of privacy than that offered by shared accommodation. Extended family members, such as grandparents, can remain close to the rest of their family while living in a secure and familiar setting. Several respondents also mentioned that they would like the extra company and enhanced sense of security offered by having a suite in their house.

ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS

Economic factors are closely related to social factors. The economic issues involved with secondary suites can be approached from two sides. On one side are the costs and benefits of secondary suites to the individuals themselves. This includes the landlords, the tenants, and their neighbours. On the other side are the costs and benefits to the city or municipality.

In most cases secondary suites, particularly revenue earning ones, exist because they are economically feasible and beneficial for their owners. If suites did not generate a profit for their owners, they would not build or operate them. This may not be the case for suites that are not used to generate revenue but to house extended family members, such as grandparents. The economic benefit, in such a case, may accrue to the extended family members or the family as a whole. Housing extended family members in a secondary suite may be less expensive for those members than other forms of housing, such as conventional high-rise apartments or institutions. These other forms of housing may entail higher costs; costs, which in turn, would have to be borne by the family.

Many homeowners or potential homeowners desire a secondary suite in their homes because they believe that the revenue generated by a suite will enable them to afford to buy their own

home or continue to own and maintain their existing home (Klien and Sears 1983, 1:21). As mentioned previously, affordability, for those who want to own their own home, can be affected by various forces. Affordability is a mixture of factors including the purchaser's income level, the purchaser's housing needs, interest rates, and prices in the local housing market. In November of 1991, the average selling price of a house in Red Deer was \$93,800, down \$1000 from \$94,800 in November of 1990 (Roche 1991, A1). This indicates that presently Red Deer housing prices are relatively stable. However, Red Deer house values have risen in the long run. In 1986, the average dwelling in Red Deer was valued at \$82,939 (Profiles: Alberta: Part 2. 1988, 148). Between 1986 and 1990, the cost of housing rose by 14.3 percent.

In the Red Deer survey of R-1 residents, the most frequent reason given for wanting to build a secondary suite was to increase income; income that could be applied towards mortgage payments, property taxes, or home maintenance. In 1986, approximately 14.4 percent of Red Deer households, both owners and tenants, faced housing affordability difficulties, spending more than 30 percent of household income on housing (Profiles: Alberta: Part 2. 1988, 148).

The affordability of housing is a major concern for a growing segment of society: people who live alone,

single-parents, and the elderly. For example, Statistics Canada claims that in 1986, 45 percent of those living alone and 55 percent of single-parents faced housing affordability problems (Filion and Bunting 1990, 21-22). Many of the claims made above regarding the appropriateness of secondary suites for extended families also applies to these people.

The elderly often have lower incomes. They are a growing proportion of our society, both absolutely and proportionally, especially the elderly and unattached females, who typically have low incomes (Gunn, Verkley, and Newman 1983, 67). They have passed their prime earning years and are now relying on lower or fixed incomes. This drop in income can potentially limit their housing options. Many are "empty nesters"; their children are grown and have moved out leaving the older homeowner with surplus living space. The typical house that many elderly live in is inappropriately large and expensive to maintain (Gunn, Verkley, and Newman 1983, 35). Retirement income may not keep pace with rising utility costs, property tax increases, and home maintenance costs. But many seniors are and want to remain homeowners; they want to stay and live in familiar areas (Gunn, Verkley, and Newman 1983, 68).

The elderly are a growing proportion of society. In Red Deer, for example, between 1986 and 1990, the overall population of Red Deer increased by 7.77 percent. During the same period,

the 65 and older segment of Red Deer's population grew by 25.13 percent (Red Deer Census 1986; Red Deer Census 1990). While the elderly represent a large and growing segment of our society, that does not make them a homogeneous group in terms of their needs and desires regarding housing. What the elderly want is choices; choices concerning the type, size, and location of housing (Gunn, Verkley, and Newman 1983, 68).

Housing options for the elderly may be limited to extremes: either remain in their present home, which may be too large and expensive to maintain, or move to a high rise apartment or condominium. But this may often require moving out of familiar areas and neighbourhoods. The housing options open to seniors living in smaller cities and towns may be even more limited (Gunn, Verkley, and Newman 1983, 68). With limited housing options in smaller urban centres, secondary suites represent a viable housing alternative for seniors, either to live in or as a means of permitting them to remain in their own homes.

It is precisely for elderly homeowners that the inclusion of a secondary suite in a detached house offers a realistic alternative to their housing needs. The elderly may opt for a secondary suite in order to obtain extra income, a greater sense of security, and perhaps even companionship (Housing Choices for Older Canadians. 198?, 12). As well, it allows them to remain in a familiar neighbourhood. The extra income generated by a

secondary suite enables senior homeowners to better maintain their homes. A well maintained home retains its value and has positive side effects on surrounding property values.

Another spin-off effect of allowing secondary suites may be their ability to enable the elderly to remain in their own homes for a longer time. This lessens the demand for housing that is specifically aimed at seniors, particularly subsidized housing geared towards low income seniors. This lessens the burden on taxpayers.

What effect would allowing secondary suites in single family districts have on property values for homeowners? A major study conducted by Klein and Sears in Ontario states that suites and other types of house conversions can have an influence on property values. "Where conversions are widespread and significantly disrupt the social and family composition, property values will probably be adversely affected.... Where conversion does not disrupt the physical appearance of the housing stock, property values will probably not suffer." (Klein and Sears 1983, 7:9).

The Klein and Sears study also provides the example of the inner-city neighbourhood of the Annex in Toronto. The Annex experienced a shift from being a predominately single family neighbourhood to a heterogeneous blend of incomes and age groups.

Substantial conversions occurred; but the physical house forms remained largely intact. Property values did not decline relative to other similiar neighbourhoods where conversions had not occurred. (Klein and Sears 1983, 7:10).

Patrick Hare agrees with this idea. Hare states that an accessory/secondary suite ordinance is unlikely to make property values decline (Hare 1981, 5). In fact, Hare claims that if a house has the capacity to bring in extra rental income, it is worth more (Hare 1981, 5). Extra income may also increase the owner's ability to maintain or improve his/her house and thereby maintain or increase its value. This may have a positive spin-off effect on surrounding properties.

Economic reasons may also encourage potential renters to consider accessory suites as a viable housing alternative. In most cases, rental rates for secondary suites would be lower than other forms of rental housing (Klein and Sears 1983, 1:26). The location of a suite may also generate economic spin-offs for the tenant. A suite's proximity to place of work, shopping, services, and/or public transit may lessen or even eliminate the necessity and cost of owning and operating an automobile.

Why would secondary suites be less expensive than other types of rental units? One reason is that the conversion of unused space in a house is relatively inexpensive. Since a

conversion could be done within an existing building envelope, the service costs normally incurred in new construction, such as bringing in gas, water, sewer, and electrical utilities, do not exist unless upgrading is required (Gellen 1982, 2-3). It is most likely only a matter of tying into existing services.

In addition, if a suite conversion is carried out within the existing building envelope, extra exterior work is minor. For example, the foundation, external framing, siding, windows, roofing, and insulation already exist and are in place. The possible exception is if it is necessary to install an additional exterior entrance.

Boman Husted of Bowood Developments Inc. of Red Deer estimates that the addition of a 600 square foot secondary suite to the unfinished basement of an average bungalow would cost approximately \$15,000 to \$20,000 (Husted 1991). This works out to a cost of between \$25 and \$33 per square foot. The addition of another external entry/door, if necessary, would cost approximately an additional \$3000 to \$4000, depending on the particulars of each situation.

The homeowner may be able to contribute part of the necessary labour and thereby reduce the cost even more (Gellen 1982, 3). Since conversions are generally small scale, the necessity of borrowing capital is less likely than for large

scale building projects. If a homeowner is able to complete the conversion without borrowing, he/she saves the interest costs of borrowing money.

The upgrading of a house to include a secondary suite would result in an increase in assessed value and subsequently higher property taxes. Nora McIvor, a property assessor for the City of Red Deer, estimates that the 1991 property taxes for a new 1100 square foot three bedroom bungalow with an unfinished basement would be approximately \$1350 (McIvor 1991). The addition of a 600 square foot suite, containing one bedroom, one bath, kitchen, dining, and living area, would only add approximately \$115, or approximately an additional 8.5 percent, to the tax bill of the same house. The inclusion of a secondary suite is not economically prohibitive in terms of additional property taxes for the average homeowner.

Who would benefit from this increase in tax revenue? Obviously the City of Red Deer would benefit directly from an increase in property tax revenue. This increase in tax revenue would help offset the increased cost of regulating and enforcing the legalization of secondary suites in R-1 districts.

The City would benefit in another way. Legalized suites in R-1 districts would increase densities and help bring them closer to their designed levels. Higher densities result in more

efficient use of infrastructure and services. In general, "it is more cost-effective for municipalities to utilize surplus infrastructure capacity in the existing community rather than to build new infrastructure at the suburban fringe." (Klein and Sears 1983, 1:23). This is, however, dependant upon the infrastructure and services cost sharing ratio between government and developers/builders (Klein and Sears 1983, 1:23). The more the developer/builder covers the cost, the less the incentive for the municipality to encourage intensification of existing areas (Klein and Sears 1983, 1:24). Ultimately the individual pays for new infrastructure, either as a purchaser of a new dwelling unit in a new area, or as a taxpayer.

The federal and provincial governments would also benefit from legalized suites since revenue from legal suites would be subject to federal and provincial income tax. If a suite is illegal, revenue from that suite is not likely to be declared by the owner. Undeclared income results in the government losing tax revenue it is otherwise entitled to.

SUMMARY and CONCLUSION

The demographics of society are changing. People are living longer and thus the elderly are a growing proportion of the general population. Household size is decreasing while family composition is changing in favour of single-parents and those

living alone. At the same time, dwelling units are increasing in size. In other words, smaller families are occupying larger homes. A growing portion of homeowners and tenants are also facing housing affordability difficulties. These trends exist in Red Deer and Canada as a whole.

Definitions, as found in land use regulations and bylaws, must keep pace with these demographic changes. Land use definitions of such terms as "family" or "household" must not discriminate, either intentionally or not, against users. They must attempt to be fair and treat all users equitably.

There are various economic costs and benefits of allowing secondary suites to exist in R-1 districts. Owners would benefit from the extra income generated by a suite and tenants would benefit from having affordable housing. The community and government would benefit from extra tax revenue and the efficient use of land, services, and resources gained through higher densities. The cost of a suite, though lower than other forms of housing, may discourage some homeowners from installing one.

Secondary suites would also produce social benefits by increasing housing options. This may take the form of elderly homeowners being able to stay in their own homes longer because of the income gained from having a secondary suite, or single parents, living in a suite, being able to raise their children in

a familiar neighbourhood close to schools and other amenities. Suites may also enable extended families to live together while maintaining a degree of privacy for family members.

It is concluded, therefore, that the social and economic benefits outweigh the costs associated with permitting secondary suites in R-1 districts. This does not imply that no controls should be placed on the location, condition, or composition of secondary suites in R-1 districts. Positive impacts can be encouraged in various ways including changes to land use bylaws to allow secondary suites as a permitted use in R-1 districts, tax breaks for homeowners who carry out a suite conversion, and a simplified permitting procedure for such conversions. Negative impacts can be lessened by tailoring controls so that they mesh with each area's particular situation.

Several factors can be important in trying to lessen negative impacts. The Klein & Sears study in Ontario revealed that households have various concerns when it comes to maintaining the general quality of their neighbourhoods (Klein and Sears 1983, 1:34). People are concerned with: physical changes in their neighbourhoods; the type of households/people moving into units resulting from suite conversions; maintenance or upkeep of new units; whether or not homes with suite conversions are owner-occupied; the extent to which conversions occur; and the provision of off-street parking (Klein and Sears

1983, 1:34). Klein and Sears concluded that the social and economic factors involved with secondary suites would, on the whole, produce limited impacts in single family districts (Klein and Sears 1983, 1:30-33).

Red Deer survey respondents voiced similar concerns over such things as whether or not houses containing suites were owner-occupied, the effect of suites on property values and also property maintenance. Addressing these concerns effectively can help minimize adverse impacts and overcome negative perceptions. The challenge, then, is to encourage the positive social and economic impacts while lessening the negative impacts of allowing secondary suites in single family districts to the point where secondary suites will be an acceptable use for the majority of R-1 area residents. This will increase the likelihood that the results will be equitable and beneficial for both the individuals directly involved and the community as a whole.

CHAPTER 7

RECOMMENDATIONS

Canada's demographics are changing. Household size is decreasing, the population is aging, and single-parent families and people living alone are the fastest growing households in Canada. The affordability of housing is a problem for many Canadians, particular for tenants. These trends, which have an impact on housing needs, are evident in Red Deer as well.

Other cities have dealt with the issue of secondary suites in single family residential districts in various ways. Many do not permit suites in single family districts. Enforcement can be costly in terms of personnel, money, and time. Other cities permit the use of "family" or "inlaw" suites, which limit suite use to relatives. This, however, is a control on users, not use. Therefore, all users are not being treated equitably. Enforcement is impeded by the necessity of proving or disproving the relationship of suite occupants to the occupants of the primary dwelling unit.

Presently, the City of Red Deer does not permit secondary suites in its R-1 districts. However, residential densities are below designed and expected levels. Infrastructure is underutilized and therefore not being used as efficiently as possible. The Red Deer Regional Plan, the Northwest Area

Structure Plan, and the City of Red Deer General Municipal Plan, support the concepts of efficient and economical land use, higher densities in urban municipalities, and the provision of a full range of housing choices. Secondary suites may provide a means whereby densities can be increased and thus, land, services, and infrastructure would be used at a higher level of efficiency.

Only 36.0 percent of surveyed residents in Red Deer's R-1 districts are in favor of permitting secondary suites in their neighbourhoods. Survey respondents expressed concerns about possible negative impacts, such as less parking space and higher traffic and noise levels. Respondents also listed increased income, more low cost housing, and housing for extended family members as possible positive impacts of permitting secondary suites.

From an economic perspective, secondary suites are an inexpensive form of housing. The cost of building a suite is low since suites take advantage of many existing elements such as water, sewer, and electrical hookups, as well as the existing external structure of the primary dwelling. These savings can result in lower rent for the tenant. Rent generated from a suite supplements the homeowner's income, thereby allowing them to better afford to buy or remain in their home.

There are many social aspects of secondary suites to be considered. Secondary suites may permit homeowners to provide housing for extended family members. Suites may also increase housing options in terms of location for single parents who may want to live in a familiar neighbourhood where their children are close to schools and other facilities.

In light of these findings, the following recommendations are made for the City of Red Deer with regard to the issue of secondary suites in single family residential districts. These recommendations are designed to place the City of Red Deer in a pro-active role in dealing with secondary suites. If the issue of secondary suites is ignored, the potential exists for illegal suites to become a problem in the future.

Housing costs and increasing affordability problems create a climate wherein secondary suites, whether legal or not, will likely be a housing form in demand. By regulating secondary suites, negative impacts, such as disruption of neighbourhood life and the failure to meet health and safety standards, could be lessened.

It is evident that other cities, such as Vancouver and Toronto, have been forced to deal with secondary suites in a reactive way. These cities faced high housing demands coupled with limited new developable land. These factors contributed to

housing costs. Illegal secondary suites sprang up to meet the demand for affordable housing, thus requiring policy evaluation and change. Red Deer can avoid these pressures by addressing the issue now.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Red Deer's Land Use Bylaw should be amended to permit secondary suites in R-1 districts.
2. Residents should be given the choice of whether or not they want to permit secondary suites in their neighbourhoods. Suites should not be forced on any neighbourhood.
3. Individual neighbourhoods should be informed and consulted about secondary suites. Residents should be involved in determining how secondary suites could be made acceptable to the majority of neighbourhood residents and what regulations should govern their existence.
4. In order to achieve equitable treatment of all users, secondary suites should not be limited to family use only.
 - Limiting use to family only is a control on USER, not USE.
 - Permitting process and enforcement are complicated by the necessity of identifying and monitoring who resides in the suite.
5. Only one suite per house should be permitted.
 - This will avoid possible overcrowding.

6. Suites should be restricted to owner-occupied houses.
 - This will minimize concerns regarding yard and house maintenance, and tenant-neighbour relations.
 - Owners should be able to choose which unit they will occupy, either primary or secondary.
7. A minimum of at least one additional off-street parking space more than required by the present Bylaw should be provided for each suite.
 - This will help minimize concerns regarding parking congestion.
8. The addition of a secondary suite to a single-detached dwelling must comply with existing Bylaw standards, such as floor area, building bulk, and yard setbacks. Secondary suites should be contained within the primary unit. Suites should not be a separate building/structure.
 - This will aid in the preservation of R-1 district character.

9. The Red Deer Land Use Bylaw definitions should be reviewed, and if necessary modified, in order to eliminate any definitions that discriminate, whether intentionally or not, against users. This would ensure that all residents would be treated equitably regardless of their relationship to other household members. The Bylaw should control use, not users. This review can be undertaken immediately.

- For example, the definition of "Household" should be modified so as not to put a limit on the number of unrelated persons permitted to live in a single dwelling unit. Presently the limit is five unrelated persons, but no limit on related persons.

10. Owners of existing illegal secondary suites should be offered a period within which they can come forward and legalize their existing suites by bringing them up to standard.

- Suites that do not meet health and safety standards should be phased out as soon as possible. Tenants of such suites should be offered assistance in finding other suitable housing.

IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

1. Initially, a city wide information campaign should be conducted to inform city residents about secondary suites in general, and methods of dealing with suites under consideration by the City. This would essentially be a one way flow of information, from the City to residents.
2. This should be followed by a second campaign targeting several individual R-1 neighbourhoods. At this level, information and ideas should flow two ways. Residents would receive more detailed information about suites and possible controls, and the City would receive input and reactions from residents. Various methods could be employed to facilitate the two way flow of information: open houses where planners and residents can meet informally, organized panel and group discussions, and presentations by other cities, that permit suites, describing how they have approached the issue.
3. This information would then be analysed to determine a neighbourhood's level of receptiveness of suites.
4. A recommendation should be made to City Council to allow a pilot project of permitting secondary suites to be conducted in the neighbourhood that is the most receptive to suites. A group of residents, selected, for example, by the

neighbourhood Community Association, would be asked to participate in drawing up specific guidelines for the permitting of secondary suites in their neighbourhood.

- For example, guidelines may involve incentive programs such as tax breaks for individuals who build suites, or the Approving Authority needing the support of immediate neighbours for a suite.

5. After a set time period, the success of the pilot project should be evaluated in conjunction with area residents. Recommendations would then be made to Council concerning the continuation of the project and possible amendments to the Land Use Bylaw.
6. The Red Deer Land Use Bylaw should be amended, concurrently with the implementation process, in order to eliminate any discriminatory definitions, e.g. "Household".

APPENDIX 1

EXCERPTS

from

CITY OF RED DEER LAND USE BYLAW No. 2762/80

RELEVANT EXCERPTS

The City of Red Deer Land Use Bylaw No. 2672/80

"Accessory Use" means a discretionary use of a building or site which the Municipal Planning Commission decides is normally incident and subordinate to the principal use of the building or the site. (p. 4)

"Basement Suites" means a dwelling unit located on the lower floor of a detached dwelling and this lower dwelling is below the grade of the detached dwelling site. (p. 4)

"Boarding House" means a building containing sleeping rooms without cooking facilities, where lodging and meals for four or more persons is provided for compensation. (p. 4)

"Detached Dwelling" means a free standing residential building constructed on site and containing one dwelling unit. (p. 5)

"Discretionary Use" means a use of land, building or other structure that may be permitted by the Municipal Planning Commission after due consideration is given of the impact of that use upon neighbouring land and of the public need for that particular use at that particular location; such a use includes accessory and similar uses and all uses listed as discretionary within the use districts of this Bylaw. (p. 6)

"Dwelling Unit" means one or more rooms that may be used as a residence for a single household with sleeping, living and sanitary facilities, EXCEPT that in the case of a household consisting of two or more persons related by blood, marriage, or adoption three boarders or four foster children may reside therein as part of that household. (p. 6)

"Household" means an individual, or two or more persons related by blood, marriage or adoption, or a group of (up to) five unrelated persons, all living together as a single housekeeping unit and using common cooking facilities. (p. 7)

"Permitted Uses" means the use of land or a building which is permitted in a district and which appears in a use table in the column captioned 'Permitted Uses' and includes a use found by the Municipal Planning Commission pursuant to the provisions of Section 5.1.1 to be similar to a permitted use. (p. 8)

"Similar Use" means a discretionary use of land or a building for a purpose which is not designated in a use table as a permitted use, but is found by the Municipal Planning Commission, pursuant to the provisions of Section 5.1.1, to be similar to a permitted use. (p. 9)

APPENDIX 2

RED DEER R-1 DISTRICT RESIDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Orlando Toews
3721 52 Avenue
Red Deer, Alberta
T4N 4J6

ph. 342-0255

Dear Red Deer Resident:


The enclosed survey is part of a major project that I am working on in order to complete a Master's Degree in Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Calgary. This project focuses on the issue of accessory suites (also called secondary or basement suites) in various cities, including the City of Red Deer. The information gathered through this survey will be used to determine the attitudes of Red Deer residents regarding accessory suites. This survey is an opportunity for you, as a resident of Red Deer, to express your views on this issue. You will also be helping me in the completion of my Master's degree.

The survey is brief and will only require a few minutes of your time. If you are unclear about any of the questions, you may contact me by phone at 342-0255 between 5:00 and 7:00 P.M. for clarification. Please complete the survey as soon as possible and then use the enclosed prepaid postage envelope to return the survey form. I would greatly appreciate a speedy response.

THE INFORMATION YOU PROVIDE WILL BE STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL. I am not asking for the names of any survey respondents. I am, however, asking for your help. Your honest and thoughtful effort is gratefully appreciated.

Please begin the survey by reading the Background Information sheet and then answer the questions on the survey. Once again, THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP.

Sincerely,



Orlando Toews

SURVEY OF R-1 RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS

RED DEER'S RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS

Red Deer, like any other city, contains different housing types to meet the various housing needs of its population. Different housing types and densities are permitted according to several land use classifications. Red Deer's Land Use Bylaw lists four main residential land use districts:

R-1 for low density

R-2 for medium density

R-3 for medium and high density

R-4 for relocatable/mobile dwelling units.

There is also a subdistrict of R-1 called R-1(A) which allows for duplexes. The largest of all residential districts is the R-1.

ACCESSORY SUITES

An accessory suite can be defined as a dwelling unit that is added to an existing residential structure. It is usually a separate self-contained dwelling unit with its own washroom, kitchen, sleeping and living areas. It may have a separate external entrance or a shared entrance. Typically, accessory suites occupy space in a basement or an upper floor or attic. Accessory suites are, in essence, a dwelling unit within a dwelling unit. Presently, accessory suites (also called secondary suites or basement suites) are not a permitted use in Red Deer's R-1 districts unless they were in existence prior to 1980. This does not, however, mean that illegal accessory suites have not been built in R-1 districts since 1980.

PLEASE BEGIN THE SURVEY

1. How many people live in your house at the present?

_____ Adults

_____ Children (under 18 years old)

_____ Boarders/Lodgers (18 years or older)

_____ Others (please specify) _____

2. How many adults are there in each of the following age categories?

_____ 18 to 29 years old

_____ 50 to 64 years old

_____ 30 to 49 years old

_____ 65 or older

3. What is the combined total annual income for all adults (18 and older) in your household?

_____ less than \$20,000 per year

_____ \$20,000 to \$30,000 per year

_____ \$30,000 to \$40,000 per year

_____ \$40,000 to \$50,000 per year

_____ more than \$50,000 per year

4. How many rooms are there in your house?
(Do not include bathrooms or closets) _____ Rooms

5. How long have you lived at your present residence?

_____ 0 to 1 years _____ 1 to 2 years
_____ 2 to 5 years _____ 5 or more years

6. Do you own or rent your present residence?

_____ Own _____ Rent
_____ Other (please specify) _____

7. Other than a single detached house, what other types of housing have you lived in within the last 10 years?
(Please indicate all applicable responses.)

_____ None, only Single Detached house
_____ Duplex
_____ Fourplex/Triplex
_____ Townhouse/Row Housing
_____ Apartment
_____ Basement/Accessory Suite
_____ Mobile Home
_____ Other (please specify) _____

8. If you indicated in Question 7 that you have lived in a Basement/Accessory Suite within the last 10 years, please explain why you chose to live in a Basement/Accessory suite over other types of housing. (Otherwise, please continue with Question 9)

9. What do you think would be the possible positive and/or negative impacts, if any, of permitting accessory suites in R-1 residential districts?

10. Do you think that accessory suites should be a permitted use within R-1 residential districts?

_____ Yes. _____ No.

Why or why not? _____

11. If accessory suites were a permitted/discretionary use within R-1 districts, what controls or restrictions should be put on their existence?

(Please indicate all applicable responses)

- ☐ Accessory suites should not be permitted at all.
- ☐ Restrict the size of accessory suites.
- ☐ Limit the number of tenants permitted in a suite.
- ☐ Restrict tenants to family members or relatives of an accessory suite owner.
- ☐ Require that houses containing accessory suites must be owner-occupied.
- ☐ Require the provision of adequate off-street parking for tenants.
- ☐ Set quotas on the number of suites allowed within R-1 residential districts.
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

12. Do you know of any accessory suites in your neighbourhood?

☐ Yes. ☐ No.

13. If you answered "Yes" to the last question, how did you find out/gain knowledge of the suite's existence? (Please indicate all applicable responses) If you answered "No", please continue with Question 14.

- ☐ From the owner of the suite.
- ☐ From the tenant(s) of the suite.
- ☐ From other neighbours.
- ☐ From personal observations.
- ☐ (please specify) _____
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

14. Why do you think homeowners would build accessory suites in their houses?

15. If you were a homeowner and accessory suites were a legally permitted use in R-1 districts, would you consider building or installing a suite in your house?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Why or why not? _____

APPENDIX 3

PROFILE

of

RED DEER R-1 DISTRICT QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONDENTS

PROFILE OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONDENTS

Figure 1

Average Number of Adults per Household	2.09
Average Number of Children per Household	0.86
<hr/>	
Average Number of Persons per Household	2.95
Average Number of Rooms per Household	7.67

Figure 2

DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLD SIZE

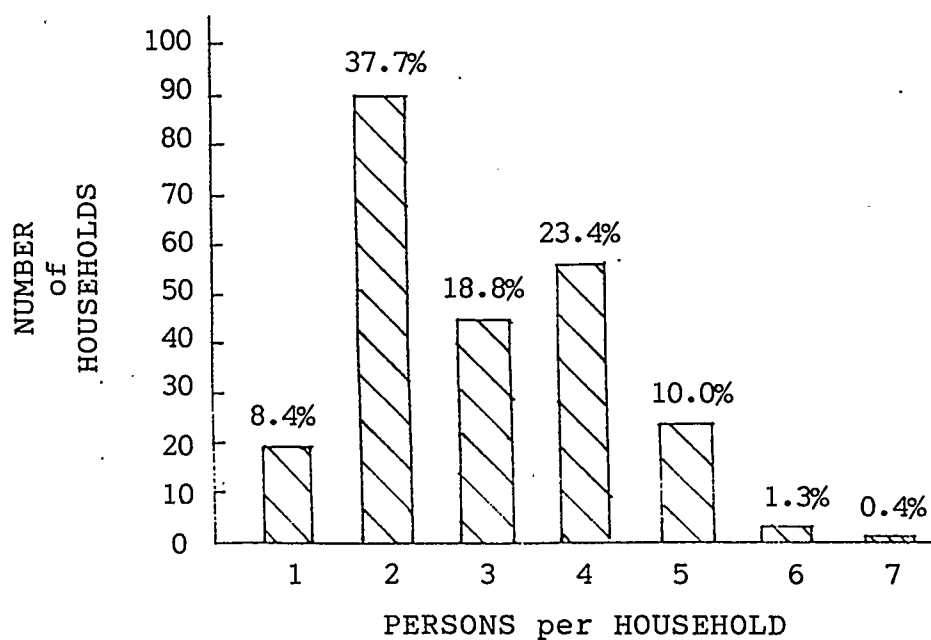


Figure 3

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLD RESIDENTS

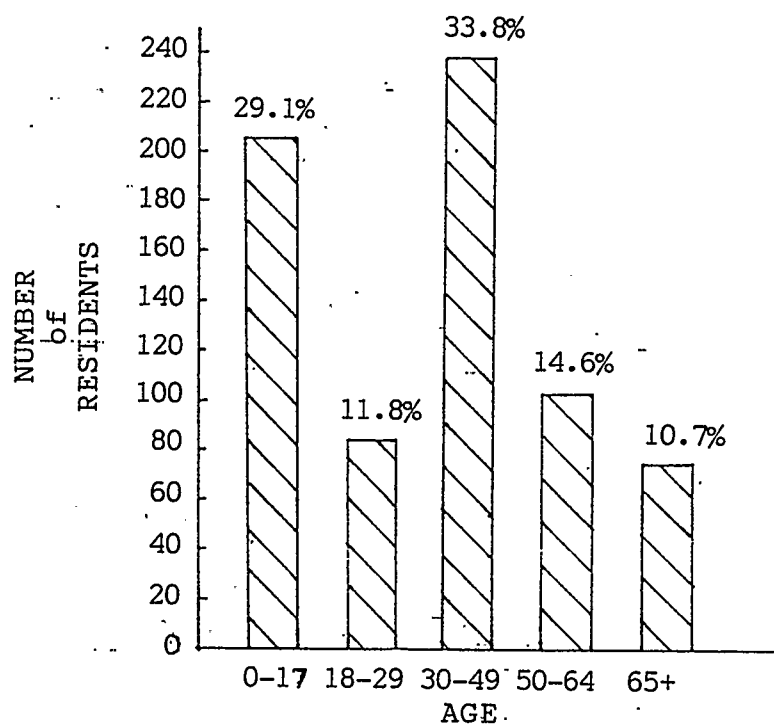


Figure 4

TOTAL ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME (000's)

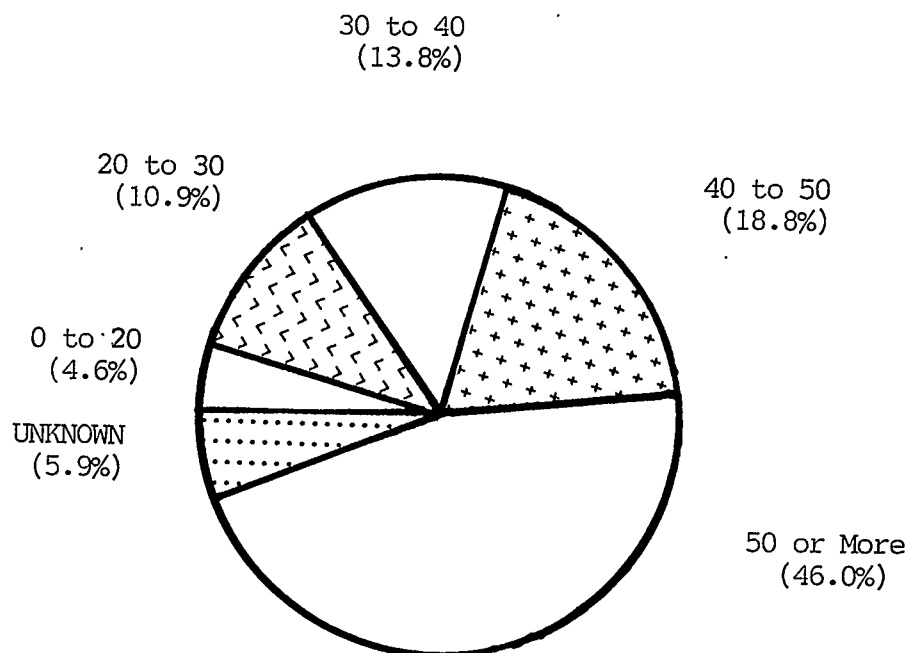


Figure 5

NUMBER of ROOMS per HOUSEHOLD

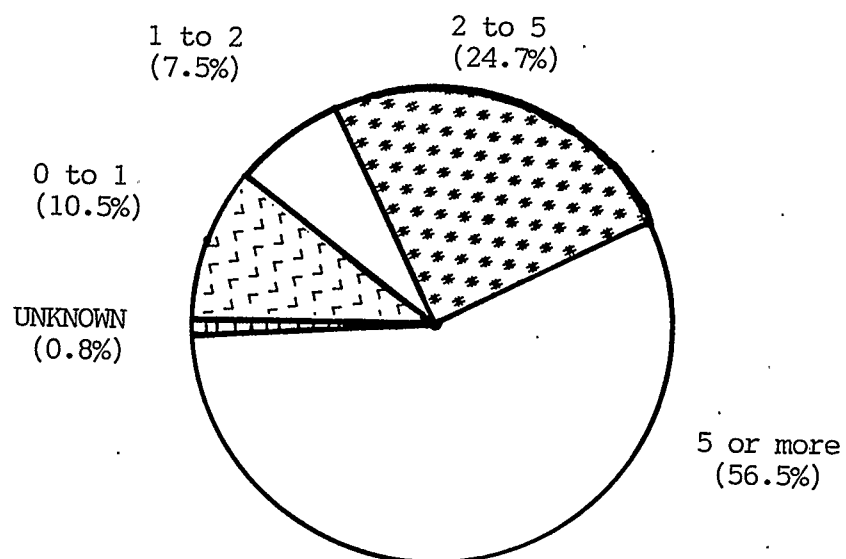


Figure 6

NUMBER of YEARS at PRESENT RESIDENCE

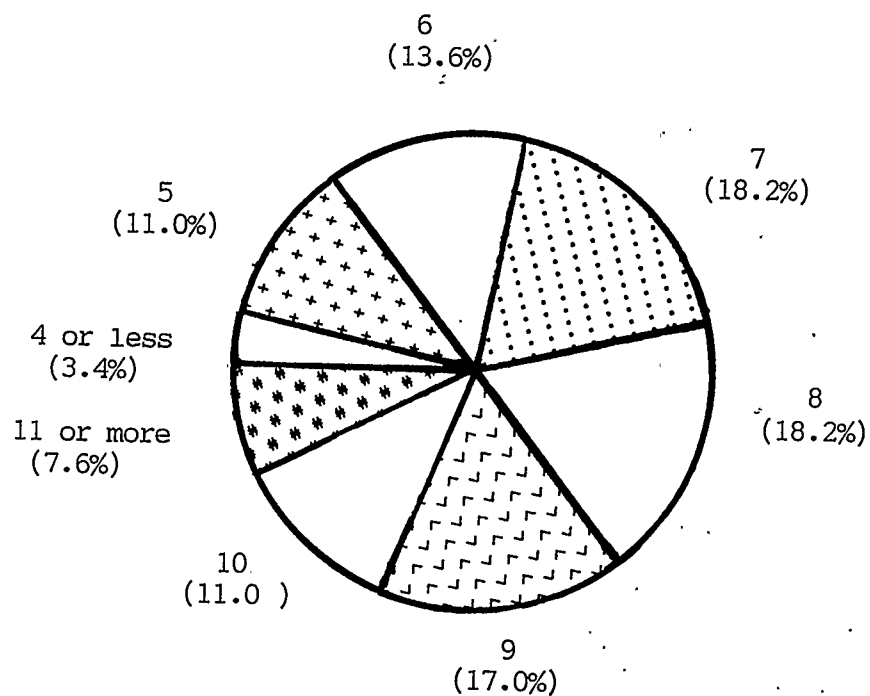


Figure 7

TYPES of HOUSING LIVED IN DURING PAST TEN YEARS

TYPE of HOUSING	PERCENTAGE of ALL RESPONDENTS

Single Detached Only	58.2
Duplex	10.9
Fourplex/Triplex	7.5
Townhouse/Rowhouse	8.8
Apartment	5.8
Basement/Accessory Suite	5.4
Mobile Home	1.3
Other	1.3

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