

MEDIA RELEASE

CREB[®] joins business coalition in support of secondary suites

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Calgary, February 15, 2011 - CREB[®] (Calgary Real Estate Board) joins the Calgary Chamber of Commerce and other leading business organizations; the Canadian Home Builders Association - Calgary Region (CHBA), Merit Contractors Association, the National Association of Industrial and Office Properties (NAIOP), and the Urban Development Institute (UDI), to urge Calgary's city council to make secondary suites permitted in all residential neighbourhoods, provided certain conditions are met.

"Housing affordability and choice will be big contributors to Calgarians' quality of life in the years to come and secondary suites have a role to play in this," says Sano Stante, President of CREB[®].

"During the boom we were not able to offer enough affordable rental units, particularly for people looking to relocate to Calgary. The City of Calgary and our current city council has the opportunity to cost-effectively provide more affordable rental housing by allowing secondary suites in all residential neighbourhoods," says Stante.

Currently, in the city of Calgary, secondary suites are only permitted in select land use districts and only as a discretionary use in the R-2 district in both developed and developing areas. The current land use bylaw will not allow secondary suites to be developed on parcels that are currently designated R-1, without a formal land use redesignation. As a result, it is estimated that there are thousands of secondary suites in Calgary that are in non-compliance.

The City of Calgary did launch the Secondary Suite Grant Program in April 2009 which offers a grant of up to \$25,000 to cover up to 70 per cent of the costs of developing or upgrading a legal secondary suite.

"This is a move in the right direction, but a number of barriers still remain. There is not enough incentive for homeowners to take on the redesignation process. We agree that safety and code issues are critical when it comes to secondary suites, but we need to streamline the process and relax non-essential requirements that make compliance too onerous," says Stante.

Key considerations for city-wide allowance of secondary suites put forward by the coalition include:

- Owner-occupancy requirements in single family neighbourhoods;
- Adequate parking is available or waived near transit;
- Maximum occupancy limit (2 bedroom, 5 people); and
- Building codes and health and safety standards are met.

Stante believes there are many suites that remain empty because of arduous requirements and these units can offer a plentiful supply of affordable housing without the need to develop new product or subsidize its development.

“Not only do secondary suites provide more affordable rental units, but they also offer key social and economic benefits to communities,” says Stante.

“We have seen this approach work in almost every major city across Canada, including Edmonton. Secondary suites can help seniors stay in their homes longer and can provide important accommodation for live-in care takers and nursing aids. Secondary suites can also help young families realize homeownership sooner through the support of additional rental income.”

“And at a time when we are looking for greener, more sustainable housing options, secondary suites can help increase density and reduce our ecological footprint,” he adds.

CREB® believes homes with secondary suites offer features and flexibility that many buyers are looking for. At a recent information session REALTORS® reported that they have more clients interested in homes with secondary suites than there is supply.

The City's administration will submit a report on secondary suites to a standing policy committee on land use, planning and transportation on February 16th. The report will make recommendations and will provide options for council to consider. The issue is expected to go to council in March.

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