

Submission to the Public Meeting of the Planning Committee about Secondary Dwelling Units

We would like to begin by thanking the members of Hamilton Council as well as the Planning Committee for the work you do for its citizens. Especially under these current circumstances, we can appreciate that your work must be more complicated and intensive than ever before. Thank you for taking the time to consider this important topic.

Gray Court Drive in Ancaster, west of Southcote Road, is part of an older neighbourhood. All around us big homes are being constructed, often by tearing down older bungalows and replacing them with larger homes on these beautiful lots. We are sensitive to the controversy around changes in old neighbourhoods in Ancaster, and we are sympathetic to the idea of maintaining the character of these areas.

We would like to make a small addition to our home in order to facilitate the care of our elderly parents. At the moment they live in a retirement area, but, being in their mid-eighties, they are now contemplating their next move. Long-term care facilities have been the subject of considerable negative press already well before the start of the pandemic. Of course, now the pandemic has revealed even more serious shortcomings in these homes. This certainly will not be an attractive alternative for our parents in the foreseeable future, quite apart from the long waiting list we understand to exist currently.

Our parents have been encouraged by some acquaintances in surrounding communities who had successfully obtained the necessary permits and were able to build units commonly referred to as “granny suites”. All of us were very disappointed to discover that Hamilton/Ancaster does not presently allow for such units.

Recently, we have been following with interest the progress made by the Planning Committee as it relates to Second Dwelling Units (SDUs) and the pressure the City has felt for some time to curb urban sprawl and to focus more on intensifying existing living spaces. As well, current real estate prices are having a negative impact on the situations of those who are looking for affordable housing, and SDUs would be a welcome benefit.

Last summer we hired an architect to design a plan for such a SDU. Understandably, obtaining a permit for a basement renovation or a second floor would not be suitable for the needs of our elderly parents. Instead, our plan incorporates the “granny suite” seamlessly into our main home by renovating and extending the garage, and thus creating a separate, but attached, home for our parents. It would be easily accessible as it would be close to grade level, and it would increase the street appeal by enhancing the front profile yet without overpowering our oversized lot. This professionally-designed plan fits in well with the neighbouring homes, several of which have had an extension added to the original dwelling, while others have been completely replaced by more spacious houses.

We view the proposed amendment to our zoning by-laws to include SDUs to be a positive step for the City, which stands to gain additional living space without added infrastructure costs, and for families such as ours who prefer to be personally involved in the care of their aging parents or even other family members. Moreover, being near-seniors ourselves, this would open up the possibility of moving into the unit later, when we may require assistance. We encourage you to

make SDUs available to the citizens of Hamilton and create some room for us to facilitate a separate, but attached, home for our parents.

Thank you.

Peter and Eleanor Boeringa
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