

Secondary Dwelling Units – Multi-Stakeholder Letter

To members of Hamilton Planning Committee,

We are writing to you as a group of key stakeholders involved in the City of Hamilton's development and approval of the new Secondary Dwelling Unit (SDU) By-laws approved by Council. Our organizations and collective membership were pleased to see Hamilton adopt a permissive framework for SDUs and to have seen positive uptake in building these units. With the policy in place for one year, now is the time for evaluation and recalibration of the policy. We suggest there is some urgency for greater education on the benefits SDUs have for our City, and we are very supportive of the policy changes put forward today by the Policy Planning & Zoning By-law Reform team to facilitate easier uptake of this small scale intensification option City-wide.

Education

SDUs are new to Hamilton. We believe there is room for education for both City committees tasked with policy implementation and members of the public, in terms of how they support the City's intensification objectives. The City's initial education materials used during the policy development phase were excellent. They helped to clearly identify what is permitted, and how implementing a secondary dwelling unit could work. Our organizations recommend the City of Hamilton produce an update to the consultation materials that outline the policies and zoning requirements in a user and public friendly way. Building on this, we also believe there to be a key opportunity to educate Committee of Adjustment members so that they have the tools to make decisions on minor variances for SDUs in a way that is guided by the provincial and local framework that encourages them.

Policy Recommendations

We wish to share a further recommendation with the City of Hamilton. Based on our collective organizational experience working with these policies, we believe unit size and setback requirements will benefit from refinement. We recommend the City consider increasing the unit size permissions for detached SDUs where they may be needed for accessibility purposes, building to higher standards of energy efficiency, or on larger lots where an increased size of the unit would not cause adverse impacts. Furthermore, existing setback requirements have been identified as a challenge especially on the Hamilton Mountain. We recognize that making alterations to these requirements would require further discussion, especially as it relates to site permeability and stormwater management. Our organizations would be pleased to participate in such a discussion with City Staff.

Conclusion

The West End Home Builders' Association, the Hamilton Burlington Society of Architects, Environment Hamilton, and the Laneway Suites & Secondary Dwelling Units in Hamilton Group all believe this is an important opportunity to refine the Secondary Dwelling Unit requirements to facilitate greater uptake of this important policy initiative. We wish to reiterate our collective organizations' support for the policy changes put forward today, and we look forward to continued collaboration with the City on these policies in the years to come.

Kind Regards,



CC:

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