



# Regional Board Report

For the Public Hearing January 27, 2020

**TO:** Regional Board

**FROM:** Todd Cashin  
Director of Community Services

**DATE:** January 27, 2020

**SUBJECT:** Text Amendments to Zoning Bylaw No. 871, 2000  
Zoning Amendment Bylaw No. 871-257 (Z17/05)

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**Purpose:** To amend secondary suite regulations in Zoning Bylaw No. 871.

## Executive Summary:

In 2017, staff began a policy review of secondary suite regulations in the Central Okanagan Electoral Areas. During the review process, it was identified that increasing density by permitting secondary suites in all residential zones may cause drainage and slope stability challenges, particularly in areas without access to community sewer and without proper drainage plans.

Following extensive analysis and review, Planning Services staff is recommending the current process of requiring a rezoning application remain in place which will have the Regional Board making informed decisions on a site-specific, case by case basis. Furthermore, several recommended changes to Zoning Bylaw No. 871 will reflect recent updates to the B.C. Building Code with respect to design and construction requirements for secondary suites.

Respectfully Submitted:

Todd Cashin  
Director of Community Services

Approved for Board's Consideration

Brian Reardon, CAO

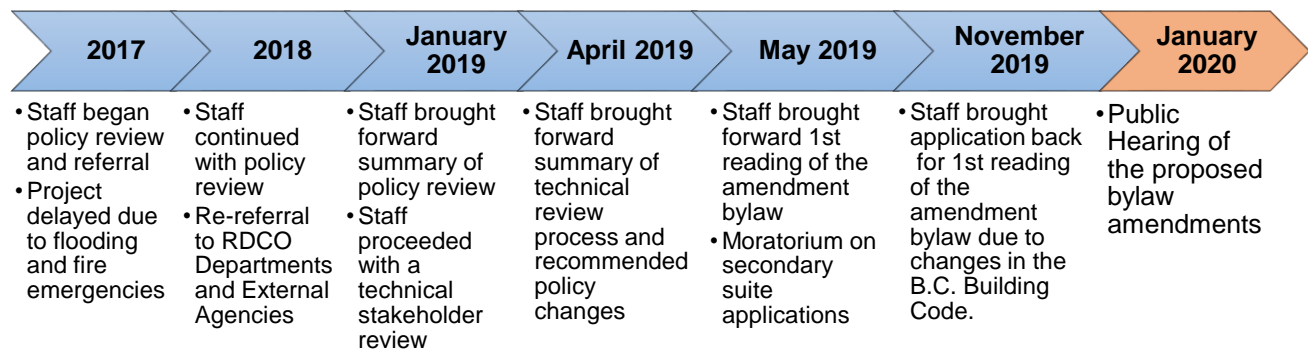
### Background:

In 2016, the Regional Board directed staff to review secondary suite regulations to consider allowing secondary suites by policy rather than through bylaw amendments. As such, in 2017 Planning staff embarked on a policy review of secondary suites in the Central Okanagan Electoral Areas. Subsequently, staff engaged with the public by attending community events, conducting an online survey, and making information available at the Planning Services front counter to gauge the public's opinion on proposed regulatory changes.

Upon review of the information received during this process, issues were raised regarding drainage and servicing, most notably with the number of small, undeveloped lots in the Electoral Areas. Secondary suites, which are self-contained and located within an existing single family dwelling, have always been considered acceptable to tie into the primary septic field assuming that the field is sized appropriately, and with proper maintenance and treatment. However, recognizing the rural nature of the Electoral Areas and minimal servicing, increasing density in all residential zones may not be appropriate and may cause a significant strain on servicing and the environment.

On November 25, 2019, the Regional Board granted first reading of the amendment bylaws for secondary suites and recommended that staff move forward with a public hearing.

### Timeline



### Zoning Bylaw Amendment Proposals

Following extensive analysis, research, and careful consideration of the comments received to date, staff is recommending the following key changes to secondary suite regulations:

**Item 1:** To continue to require a rezoning application under Zoning Bylaw No. 871 for A1, RU1, RU2, RU3, RU4, RU5, RU6, and R1 zones to permit a secondary suite and add the 's' designation.

- Rationale: The rezoning process allows the Regional District to consider secondary suites on a site specific, case by case basis.

**Item 2:** Removing any limit to total floor area or percentage distribution of the secondary suite to the principal building.

- Rationale: The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has adopted changes to the current B.C. Building Code that will impact land use planning decisions (See Appendix 'A'). To align with the provincially legislated changes, Planning staff recommends removing limits to the size of a secondary suite.

**Item 3:** Define '*breezeway*', '*carport*', '*private water source*', and '*on-site sewerage system*'.

- Rationale: Connecting a secondary suite to a principal dwelling via an open, unenclosed space is seen as a form of subdivision and is not consistent with the Okanagan Basin Water Board's 1.0 hectare policy, or the B.C. Building Code. To avoid ambiguity going forward, *breezeway* and *carport* will be defined to clarify what 'located within a single detached house' means and ensure secondary suites constitute a single real estate entity.
- In addition, '*private water source*' and '*on-site sewerage system*' are defined to ensure consistency with the RDCO Subdivision Servicing Bylaw No. 1397 and the Provincial *Sewerage System Regulation*.

**Item 4:** To allow only one secondary suite or one accessory home per parcel, where zoning permits.

- Rationale: Currently, a single parcel of land that is over 9.88 acres in size is permitted to have one single detached house with a secondary suite (rezoned to the 's' designation) as well as one accessory home subject to further regulations under Part 3 – Section 3.18 of Bylaw No. 871. To be consistent with surrounding jurisdictions and to minimize environmental impacts, staff is proposing that only one suite or one accessory home be permitted where land use and parcel size permit.

**Item 5:** To require that new and existing on-site sewerage systems demonstrate compliance with today's standards and include a primary reserve area for a back-up Type I trench system.

- Rationale: Technical stakeholders, including Interior Health Authority, local hydrogeologists, groundwater technicians, and onsite wastewater practitioners all agreed that stronger regulations are needed regarding on-site sewerage systems. Given this, it was recommended that new and existing septic systems are reviewed to ensure compliance with today's standards and can sufficiently accommodate the increased density prior to the addition of a secondary dwelling.

Furthermore, several of the existing secondary suite regulations will remain in force, such as continuing to prohibit the use of secondary suites as short-term rentals and continue to recognize parcels with the 's' designation.

**Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB)**

The OBWB Sewage Facilities Assistance grant program was established to subsidize construction of tertiary sewage treatment plants for local governments. The intention of the policy and program is to decrease water pollution coming from development on small lots and failing or over-capacity septic systems, and reduce the amount of phosphorus entering the lakes from municipal effluent. To be eligible for the grant, local governments are required to have zoning policies or bylaws prohibiting new development on lots less than one hectare that are not serviced by community sewer. As per the grant program terms of reference:

- Secondary suites are permitted so long as they tie into the sewage disposal system of the existing dwelling; and,
- Carriage houses / accessory dwellings are prohibited on properties less than 1.0 hectare and not connected to community sewer.

The proposed amendments to secondary suite regulations will remain in compliance with the OBWB Sewage Facilities Assistance grant program terms of reference.

**Regional Board Strategic Priorities 2019-2022**

Granting first reading to the amendment bylaw complies with the following policies of the Regional Board Strategic Priorities:

Transportation and Mobility

- Promote transportation and land use approaches that reduce our collective reliance on cars.

Sustainable Communities

- Develop best practices to encourage housing innovation and the adoption of sustainable building standards.

Environment

- Support efforts to reduce our environmental footprint and adapt to climate change.

**Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 1336**

Granting first reading to the amendment bylaw complies with the following policies of the RGS:

Our Water

- Consider water resources in land use planning decisions.

Our Housing

- Preserve and enhance existing neighbourhoods through encouragement of a variety of housing types, densities and affordability.

Our Health

- Support Interior Health in efforts to explore opportunities to develop healthy community strategies.

Our Land

- Support logical and sequential growth patterns that minimize urban encroachment into rural areas.
- Proposals for new growth areas should consider the impacts on existing services and facilities in the community.

Our Economy

- Support effectively managing and protecting the integrity of the Region's critical assets such as the lakes, natural environment and agricultural lands that promote attraction of employment and investment.

Our Ecosystems

- Manage growth to minimize disturbance to habitat, watershed and natural drainage areas and systems.

**Ellison Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 1124**

Granting first reading to the amendment bylaw complies with the following policies of the Ellison OCP:

- Require that properties served by individual wells or water licenses meet Regional District bylaw requirements with regard to water quality and quantity; and,
- Support the Province of British Columbia policy with respect to ensuring that all new development one hectare or smaller in parcel size is served by community sewer (including satellite community sewage systems) rather than on-site (septic) disposal.

**South Slopes Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 1304**

Granting first reading to the amendment bylaw complies with the following policies of the South Slopes OCP:

- Continue to protect Environmentally Sensitive Areas on private land through the Development Permit, rezoning and subdivision processes; and,
- Housing is encouraged in adjacent municipal areas where there are services and infrastructure to support growth.

**Brent Road / Trepanier Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 1303**

Granting first reading to the amendment bylaw complies with the following policies of the Brent Road / Trepanier OCP:

- Continue to review the bylaws and activities of the Regional District so that environmentally responsible practices are being utilized;
- Limited growth is anticipated in the foreseeable future due to constraints of potable water and servicing; and,
- Evaluate land use decisions and development applications on the implications and impacts on the natural environment.

**Rural Westside Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 1274**

Granting first reading to the amendment bylaw complies with the following policies of the Rural Westside OCP:

- Assess future residential developments and concept development plans on the following development criteria:
  - a) capability of handling on-site domestic water and sewage disposal, or availability of community water or sewer;
  - b) availability of community water or sewer systems to be extended to existing neighbouring subdivisions which are presently unserved;
  - c) capability of the natural environment and topography to accommodate additional development;
  - d) impact on adjacent land uses and character of the existing area;
  - e) location relative to existing roads and other community and essential services;
  - f) susceptibility to natural hazards including, but not limited to, flooding, soil stability, land slide, rockfall, moderate or higher forest fire risk;
  - g) demonstration of housing need, and provision for a variety of housing types;
  - h) timing and staging of development;
  - i) an environmental impact assessment where the parcel contains watercourses;
  - j) a visual quality assessment where development is proposed on hillsides and other visually sensitive areas; and,
- Review opportunities to implement long-term sustainable sewage collection and disposal methods for existing developments where appropriate.

**RDCO TECHNICAL COMMENTS (Presented at First Reading):**

**Planning Services** staff acknowledges that secondary suites are recognized as an appropriate form of infill housing that provides affordable rental/housing options without a significant impact on the character of a neighbourhood.

In the past, the Regional Board has generally supported secondary suites where a landowner demonstrates that all technical issues will be addressed, and where there are no significant objections from neighbouring landowners. However, Planning staff strongly encourages settlement and housing in areas with existing services and infrastructure in order to support logical and sequential growth patterns and limit impacts to infrastructure and the environment.

Planning staff note that local government plays an important role in the creation of affordable housing through policy, zoning, partnerships, and staff support. While secondary suites are intended to be used as living accommodation based on rental periods of one month or greater and are one significant example of private rental housing, they are also prime candidates for AirBNB and short-term rentals which do not contribute to the need to secure long-term rental housing<sup>1</sup>.

Furthermore, Planning staff continues to promote long-term sustainability within the region. It is important that land use planning and development activities avoid sensitive areas and be designed to retain important ecosystem features, functions, and connectivity as well as protect hillsides and minimize damage to surrounding parcels. Prior to the issuance of a Building Permit, development proposals must ensure that drainage, topography, and natural features are considered as this may require Development Permit approval. Proposals should be assessed on a site-by-site basis to ensure that existing and future servicing as well as development suitability of land is adequately addressed.

**Inspections Services** staff note that recent changes to secondary suite requirements in the B.C. Building Code will provide a higher level of health and safety as well as make it easier for residents wishing to construct a secondary suite. Furthermore, defining 'breezeway' and 'carport' will provide additional clarification to homeowners wishing to construct or legalize a secondary suite.

**Corporate Services** staff advises that the number of complaints from residents related to illegal/legal secondary suites is minimal and that there are no foreseeable issues with the proposed bylaw amendments.

**Environmental Services** staff advise that all secondary suites should meet minimum servicing requirements with respect to water and community sewer or on-site sewerage disposal. As such, adequate water and wastewater servicing must be in place to accommodate a secondary suite. Furthermore, onsite parking, access, and additional traffic loading within the community should be reviewed and addressed.

**Fire Services** staff support the amendment bylaw. The recent changes to secondary suite requirements in the B.C. Building Code will provide a higher level of fire safety and are intended to moderate risks attributed to fire load and occupant load.

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<sup>1</sup> RDCO Regional Housing Needs Assessment, 2019

**RDCO TECHNICAL COMMENTS (Subsequent to First Reading):**

**Environmental Advisory Commission** members support Zoning Amendment Bylaw No. 871-257 (Z17/05).

Anecdotal Comments:

- Requiring sufficient room on the property for a back-up type 1 trench system will influence the minimum parcel size required to accommodate a suite.

**AGENCY REFERRAL COMMENTS:**

**Interior Health Authority (IHA)** staff has been involved extensively throughout the RDCO secondary suite policy review process, and provide the following comments:

- IHA staff are aware of failing septic systems throughout the region on parcels with secondary suites;
- IHA staff acknowledge that many neighbourhoods, when not serviced by sanitary sewer, have old septic systems that were designed originally for a single family dwelling (i.e. not multiple families in one dwelling) and many systems are approaching the end of their lifespan;
- IHA staff recommend that new and existing on-site sewerage systems demonstrate compliance with today's standards and include a primary reserve area on the parcel for a back-up Type I trench system; and,
- Recommend establishing a requirement test for radon gas prior to tenant occupancy to protect the secondary suite tenants and primary residents.

**Okanagan Basin Water Board** staff approve of the recommended bylaw amendments as it is consistent with their Sewage Facilities Assistance Grants Program.

**Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing** staff had no objections to the proposal and commended RDCO staff for the extensive referral and consultation process to date. The Ministry further recommends continuing with an open and transparent dialogue with all stakeholders regarding the proposed zoning amendment bylaws.

**Ministry of Agriculture** staff indicated that accumulative residential uses on the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) and other farmland may potentially restrict agricultural activity or impact farm practices. Minimising the impact of residential uses plays a critical role in supporting agriculture. As such, permitting secondary suites on the ALR and local government agricultural zones may increase the principal dwelling's total floor area or its farm residential footprint.

Further to the recent changes to the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* under Bill 52, the RDCO may wish to consider regulatory options that limit the impact of residential uses on the ALR such as limiting footprint sizes and siting requirements. It was also noted that secondary suites in the ALR comply with the Agricultural Land Commission's Policy L-08.

**Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure** staff granted Preliminary Approval for the bylaw amendments for one (1) year, and advise that the bylaws must be forwarded to the Ministry for signature after they have achieved 3<sup>rd</sup> reading.

**Westbank First Nation** Chief and Council provided consent to the proposed bylaw amendment.

**Glenmore Ellison Improvement District** staff advise that water rates in the Ellison area are subject to change and it is recommended that property owners coordinate the installation of a water meter during the construction of a secondary dwelling unit to allow for possible reductions in water billings in the future.

**Fortis B.C.** staff advise that primary distribution lines within and along public roads and lands servicing the Central Okanagan Electoral Areas. Future applicants seeking land use changes stemming from the proposed bylaw amendments are responsible for the costs associated with any change to the existing service, if any, as well as provision of appropriate land rights where required.

**Unaffected RDCO Departments** include Parks Services.

**Unaffected Agencies** include the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations, and Rural Development, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, District of Lake Country, B.C. Hydro, Shaw Cable, Telus, Agricultural Land Commission, City of Kelowna, City of West Kelowna, District of Peachland, Black Mountain Irrigation District, and Okanagan Indian Band.

**External Implications:**

Newspaper notices advertising the Public Hearing and proposed amendments were printed in the Kelowna Capital News (two consecutive days), the Peachland View and the Vernon Morning Star. In accordance with the *Local Government Act*, since more than 10 properties owned by 10 different people is involved with the proposed bylaw amendments the 100 metre notification to surrounding property owners is not required.

At time of writing this report, no letters of opposition have been received.

**Conclusion:**

Should the Regional Board close the Public Hearing, the application will come forward with a separate report for Board consideration of further readings to the bylaw amendments.

Attachment(s):

- Zoning Amendment Bylaw No. 871-257
- Appendix 'A' - Bulletin No. B19-05