

Legalizing Secondary Suites

The Issue

Greater Victoria has one of the lowest rental accommodation vacancy rates in Canada which produces significant challenges for people seeking affordable accommodation. Secondary suites, although illegal in many communities, are felt to offer one option to increase the supply of affordable housing.

VREB Position

The VREB Board of Directors in May, 2006 voted *“to support local governments that are looking for ways to create additional housing opportunities, such as legalizing secondary suites”*.

The stated position by both the Canadian Real Estate Association and the British Columbia Real Estate Association is that suites benefit communities by:

- Enabling first-time buyers to more easily afford mortgage payments by providing another source of revenue;
- Allowing seniors to age in place;
- Assisting low income renters;
- Providing housing that is respectful of various cultures and household compositions;
- Making better use of existing housing stock, while providing an alternative to the development of farmland and green space.

Update

With the decision taken by City of Victoria on June 14, 2007 to legalize secondary suites in R1-A & R1-B zones throughout the City, eight of 13 municipalities throughout Greater Victoria now allow secondary suites within their jurisdictions (subject to certain restrictions imposed by individual municipalities). These include Victoria, View Royal, Central Saanich, Sidney, Langford, Metchosin, Colwood and Sooke. It is expected that the District of Saanich will be the next jurisdiction to enter into a public debate about the wisdom of legalizing suites. This debate will likely take place as part of their review of their Official Community Plan.

Ratification

Position ratified by the VREB Directors, September 2007.