WHAT WE HEARD REPORT

Accessory Suite and Garden Suite Survey

Monday, April 8, 2019



ABOUT THE PROJECT

Town Administration is currently in the process of updating the regulations for accessory suites and garden suites. Accessory suites (also known as secondary suites) are located within the home and are typically built in the basement. Garden suites are located in a separate building on-site; for example, above the detached garage.

The project started in the spring of 2018 when the Town posted a survey on the Let's Talk webpage to gather public input regarding: where suites should be allowed, the number of suites that should be allowed, the number of require parking stalls, and their concerns related to suites. Based on the comments received Administration prepared possible changes to the regulations.

Prior to finalizing the changes Administration asked the public for feedback through a survey that was posted to the Let's Talk webpage from Monday, March 11, 2019 to Friday, April 5, 2019.

The results from the 2019 survey are summarized in this report and will be taken into consideration when finalizing the proposed changes to the accessory suite and garden suite regulations.

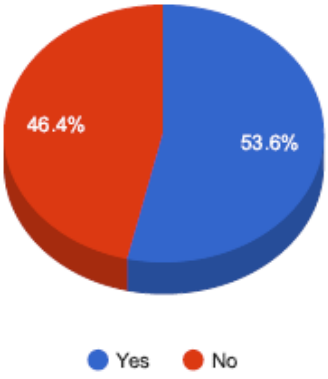
Please note that the survey allowed the public to comment when they did not agree with the proposed change.

Survey Overview:

The survey received a total of 56 responses.

Question 1: Do you think accessory suites and garden suites should be allowed in semi-detached dwellings?

- 30 responded yes; and
- 26 responded no.

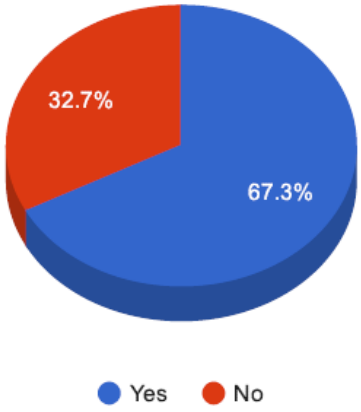


Below is a summary of the comments received from the people who responded no.

- The density is already increased with duplex/semi-detached homes
- Adding an accessory suite to these homes will increase problems with traffic
- Would like to restrict suites to the wider lots with lane access for the additional parking
- Too many people too close together; creates a parking problem regardless of the minimum lot width

- Semi-detached homes are crowded enough already
- There is simply no room on the lots and parking is insufficient
- Has potential to dramatically increase volumes of residents in an area not designed for this
- Don't agree in any circumstance
- Not enough parking on these lots
- On-street parking will be an issue, especially if there are more than two cars per residence and an accessory suite
- Should not be allowed if they don't have room for a designated spot for the suite
- Turning a neighbourhood into a rental area will decrease property values, increase already limited parking, increase noise and invite low-income renters which decrease the socio-economic status of a community with negative impacts

Question 2: Currently, the minimum lot width for semi-detached homes is 6.0m. It is proposed that the minimum lot width for a semi-detached home with a suite be increased to 9m to accommodate additional parking. Do you agree with the proposed increase?



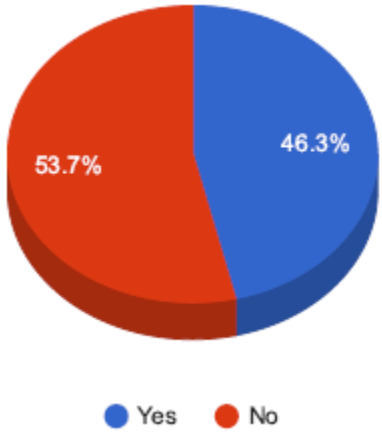
- 37 responded yes; and
- 18 responded no.

Below is a summary of the comments received from people who disagreed with the proposed change.

- Will greatly reduce the number of eligible properties
- There are already off-street parking requirements. The width of the lot shouldn't matter
- Prefer to see solutions that relax regulations for off-street parking options and encourage parking on the property rather than limiting street parking
- Not widen enough
- Doesn't seem necessary
- If you want to regulate parking it makes more sense to specify the number of parking spaces than the width of the lot

- This would prevent existing home owners from the possibility of developing a suite
- Stop the development and start working on green space, parks, sport fields and things we need
- Not all people drive or are capable of driving
- Some vehicles are smaller and would not need wider parking accommodations
- Existing lots should be grandfathered in as this would prevent a lot of homeowners from the possibility of developing a suite

Question 3: Currently, the bylaw allows a maximum of 10% of lots within a neighbourhood to have an accessory or garden suite. To help avoid the clustering of suites within each neighbourhood it is proposed that the maximum number of suites allowed be 10% per block face. Please note that a block face is a stretch of adjoining properties on one side of a street not separated by streets, lanes, pathways, parks etc. Do you agree with the maximum of 10% per block face?



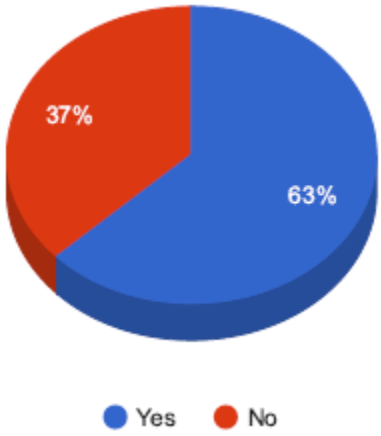
- 25 responded yes; and
- 29 responded no.

Below is a summary of the comments received from people who disagreed with the proposed change.

- Will greatly reduce the number of suites that can be built-in well-suited blocks/areas
- Non-legal suites will continue to be rented because people won't have an option to make them legal
- It will create more illegal suites
- Could result in very few legal suites and our communities would not be able to provide sufficient/enough affordable housing
- Not necessary, leave the bylaw as it is
- Limiting opportunity and providing unfair resale advantage to those who capitalize on limited suite permits
- Should be 0%
- It penalizes residents who want a suite if a neighbour already has one

- Would result in less housing options, leave it at 10% per neighbourhood
- What applies to one should apply to all not whoever gets their first
- Too restrictive and overly regulatory
- Should be reviewed depending on lot size. One a lot with a double car garage and driveway, there should be an allowance for every home to have a suite.
- There is room to have more density
- If people can't afford to pay the mortgage they shouldn't buy the house
- People shouldn't be restricted just because other people are doing the same thing
- Streets are already full of vehicles
- Block face approached doesn't seem like a practical way to address clustering; maybe a setback should be required between suites
- Would prefer to age in place and stay in our home as long as possible. If someone already had a suite, this regulation would force us to move as we wouldn't be able to build a suite for a caregiver.
- This limitation will be a challenge to enforce and will put Cochrane at a competitive and affordability disadvantage in the region (in particular as a competing housing choice to Calgary).

Question 4: There are no proposed changes to the required number of parking stalls for an accessory or garden suite. Do you agree with not changing the required number of parking stalls?



- 34 responded yes; and
- 20 responded no.

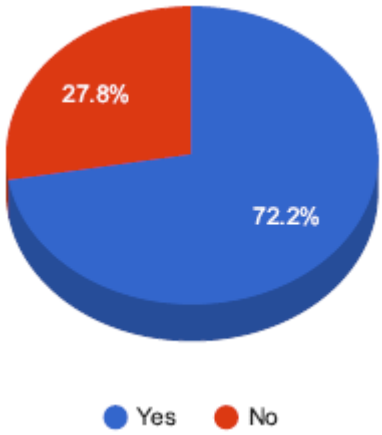
Below is a summary of the comments received from people who disagreed with the proposed change.

- People will park on the street whether they have on-site parking or not
- People aren't using their garages for parking. Would prefer that suites be located on lots with a lane, so more parking can be provided
- Should be increased to one stall per bedroom
- Should require a minimum of two additional parking stalls even for a one-bedroom suite
- Street parking should not be considered for suites

- Garages aren't built big enough to accommodate two vehicles
- It is unrealistic to think that people parked in the driveway will always be able to move out of the way of the vehicle in the garage
- More parking must be available
- Street parking is very limited without additional residents in suites
- Why can't tenants park on the street? Homeowners park on the street all the time
- People are owning more than two vehicles now; need to mandate how many vehicles can be registered per address
- There is no room in cul-de-sacs
- Many people aren't providing on-site parking stalls; they are counting on using the street. Snow clearing is an issue
- There will be situations where the number of required parking stalls is excessive and a waste of lot footprint space

Question 5: Do you think that a walkway should be required from the parking area to the entrance of the suite?

- 39 responded yes; and
- 15 responded no.



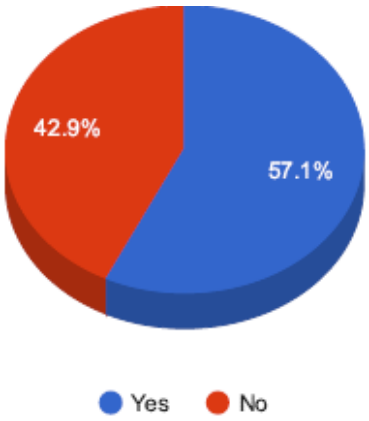
Below is a summary of the comments received from people who responded no.

- Impractical and not necessary
- Should be left to the preference of the tenants and landlord
- If the entrance is the same as the house there is no need but if it's a walkout and the entrance is in the backyard then yes
- What is the purpose?
- May be cost prohibitive to owners on a budget. Extra regulations and costs hurt the people that need help the most
- It doesn't have to be required, the homeowner can determine whether there should be a walkway or not
- How people enter their space/home should be left to them

- Able bodied people do not need a formal walkway but people with mobility issued will need one

Question 6: It is proposed that tandem parking will no longer be allowed in the rear yard of a lot to accommodate parking for an accessory or garden suite. Do you agree with this proposed change?

- 32 responded yes; and
- 24 responded no.

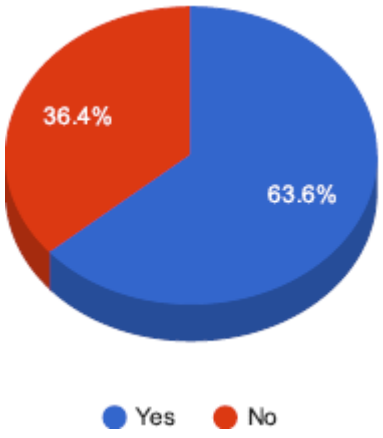


Below is a summary of the comments received from people who disagreed with the proposed change.

- It's less convenient for the users, but that's their decision to make
- Homeowners park in tandem all the time, why would it be a problem for rental properties?
- If the owner wants to have reduced outdoor space, that is their decision
- Nothing wrong with tandem parking
- If there is room, then let it happen
- This is one of the best methods to keep parking off the street
- Allows more room on the street and eliminates the crowded neighbourhoods that are existing now
- It's the same as a double car garage and driveway in the front yard
- Tandem parking makes the best use of the lot footprint in some instances
- How people use their backyard should not be regulated
- Tandem parking issues are likely arising from narrow lots and people not using their garages for the intended purpose

Question 7: It is proposed that a maximum of two (2) tandem parking stalls be allowed for front and side accessed properties to accommodate an accessory or garden suite. This would allow parking in a garage and driveway. Do you agree with this proposed change?

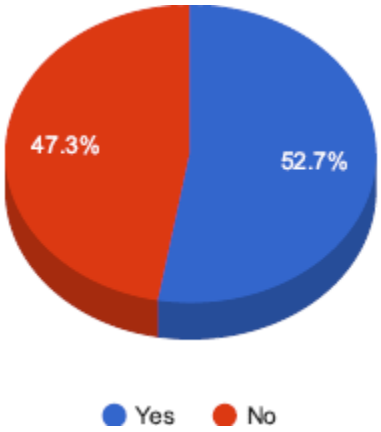
- 35 responded yes; and
- 20 responded no.



Below is a summary of the comments received from the people who disagreed with the proposed change.

- Tandem parking stalls are never used as intended
- Don't limit on-site parking especially on lots large enough to accommodate it
- None should be allowed
- Why do you want to limit the parking provided?
- It will lead to street parking and guest spaces for surrounding neighbours will be continually taken
- Renters and owners would never get together enough to do the car shuffle
- Both stalls would have to be used by the same 'unit' to work
- Unappealing for neighbours
- No one parks in the garages, so people will park on the street
- If a landowner wants a suite then they should have enough on-site driveway space which does not include a garage
- Would need to specify the minimum length required or you'd end up with yards looking like car sales lots

Question 8: It is proposed that a parking pad in the front or side yard should not be widened to accommodate parking for an accessory or garden suite. Do you agree with this proposed change? NOTE: a parking pad is a parking area on-site that does not lead to a garage.



- 29 responded yes; and
- 26 responded no.

Below is a summary of the comments received from the people who disagreed with the proposed change.

- Allowing the widening of a parking pad would keep vehicles off the street
- Agree with the regulation but within reason. If it ends up looking like Calgary it will make Cochrane less desirable and will bring property values down.
- Have seen a few that look good and serve the purpose for what they were meant for without changing the look of the property.
- I should be about to use my property how I want as long as it is not an eye sore
- Maximize on-site parking rather than limit it
- Should be able to widen a parking pad but not for the purpose of a suite

- Not all vehicles are the same size and some will need wider pads especially if they are equipped with a wheelchair lift
- If the landowner wants to widen their parking pad they should be able to
- Agree with the proposed change but don't agree that the tenants need an off-street parking stall
- Should be preventing the widening of front driveways in general as it eats up the very limited street parking