

Dear Members of Council,

We are writing to express our deep disagreement with your proposal to allow secondary suites (which can be occupied by anyone) in West Vancouver.

My wife and I own a home in British Properties and it's not clear to us whether your proposed permissive bylaw would apply in our case, since we purchased the home subject to a restrictive covenant that only one family occupy the premises. I assume that this restrictive covenant is still legally binding in British Properties, since it does not contravene any known higher public policy (and if your permissive bylaw took effect, we would seek to enforce this restrictive covenant with respect to neighboring properties that may affect us).

In any event, we consider your proposed bylaw to be both naive and harmful to the community. We realize that it is popular these days to mouth a mantra that housing should be affordable, but rational persons seek affordable housing by changing the location where they seek to live. There will always be communities that are not affordable to someone! Generally, the most desirable locations (of which West Vancouver is an example) will be in greater demand and hence more expensive and thus accessible to persons with higher incomes / wealth. Greater Vancouver is no different from any other metropolitan area in the world in having some more desirable, hence more expensive locations and less desirable, hence less expensive locations. This is reality!

Your proposal naively states that allowing secondary suites will make purchasing a home more affordable to first time buyers. This is certainly not true, as the value of the new legal right to put a secondary suite on a property will be immediately capitalized in the market value of the property. This is no different than what takes place if you allow someone to build more units on a site, or subdivide a building lot - the value of the property increases. This increased market value is a financial windfall to existing owners, but will not help a purchaser. Rather, the purchaser will face a higher price that must now be partially financed by allowing another family to live in the house. The purchaser occupies a smaller space, has more unrelated persons nearby, has more noise to deal with etc. etc. Of course the seller walked away from the home with a financial windfall. Is this the purpose of your bylaw?

Besides the affordable housing fallacy, enforcement of the owner occupation requirement is difficult. We formerly owned a home in North Vancouver District which we sold in 2005. This

was a larger, relatively new single family home (with no suite). Among the prospective purchasers was a realtor (who we will remain nameless) who wanted to subdivide the existing house into three rental apartments! This person offered us a high price, but we turned down his offer because we, frankly, didn't want to see the neighborhood, or our house, destroyed in this way. I am a professor at UBC, and I have seen many, many instances of single family homes in Point Grey trashed and turned into virtual apartment buildings with no owner nearby. Given the high degree of offshore ownership in West Vancouver, your bylaw will invite people to purchase a home in West Van as a place to "park one's money" and turn it into an apartment building - with all the negative consequences that entails.

We ask you to think hard before you pass this bylaw. We moved to West Vancouver to escape the crowding and decay of single family neighborhoods we saw in North Vancouver District. Don't follow North Vancouver's foolish example!!

Sincerely,

Dan & Sharon Simunic
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