



FOR INFORMATION

Report Date: July 8, 2022

Contact: Megan Williams

Agenda Item Number: [Report Number]

Meeting Date: April 13, 2022

TO: Town Council

FROM: Development Service

SUBJECT: Garden and Garage Suite Information

RECOMMENDATION:

Information for Council.

REPORT SUMMARY

Staff were directed by Council to bring information forward on Garage and Garden Suites. Staff are providing a series of recommendations with the information included this report and are seeking Council's direction.

COUNCIL AUTHORITY/PREVIOUS DECISIONS

Council requested a presentation on Garage and Garden Suites in the fourth quarter of 2021.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER'S COMMENTS

REPORT

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

With a number of housing reports being released in recent years detailing the challenging forecast of housing affordability across the country, municipalities have taken up the mantle to find solutions. Staff have looked to other municipalities to learn what solutions have been tried or suggested and have come across the following suggestions:

- Increase housing choices

- Decrease red tape for developments
- Prevent abuse of the development appeals system.

DISCUSSION

Increasing density in existing neighbourhoods is one method for providing more affordable housing. The policies Staff have seen are a balancing act between respecting the existing neighbourhood's character while still allowing infill to occur without a large number of restrictions. Garage suites, secondary suites, and garden suites are types of infill that can provide effective gentle intensification to existing neighbourhoods.

There are many benefits to gentle intensification:

- Increasing housing choice
- Provide a source of income to the property owners
- Allow for families to age or grow in place
- Increase efficiency of existing municipal infrastructure (water, wastewater, stormwater)
- Increase rental opportunities for the Town
- Retain the character of the neighbourhood
- Diversify housing types throughout the Town

As with any change, there will be concerns from the residents. Typically concerns around gentle intensification include parking, traffic, property maintenance, overcrowding, and safety. These concerns can be mitigated through Land Use regulations or through existing enforcement bylaws, such as the Community Standards Bylaw.

A timely request came from Council for Staff to investigate garage/garden suites and to consider introducing them into our land use bylaw. Currently the Town of Strathmore has a definition for 'Garden Suite', below. The definition captures both what are traditionally considered 'garden suites' and 'garage suites'.

"Garden Suite means second Dwelling Unit on a parcel, to be used as a separate accommodation that is accessory to the primary dwelling and may be a standalone unit or may be located above a detached garage, with a minimum of one on-site parking stall and a minimum of 12m² private amenity space."

Though we have a definition and a section with special regulations within our Land Use Bylaw, the Garden Suite use is restricted to 13 lots along Strathmore Lakes Common. These properties were developed with Garden Suites from their conception and may not provide an accurate representation for how residents will feel about them in other neighbourhoods. The current Land Use Bylaw regulations for Garden Suites are attached to this report.

Generally, the current regulations are in line with what Staff have seen in other municipalities. The intent being to decrease the impact that garage/garden suites would have on adjacent properties. Common regulations include setting the building back from the property lines, restricting the height, and requiring it complement the existing primary dwelling; the intent is to ensure the new building fits in with the neighbourhood character. Prohibiting subdivision of the garden/garage

suite means ownership remains with the primary dwelling. Restricting the servicing connection per utility to one per lot increases the efficiency of the existing servicing and removes any service disruptions that would come from installing a second servicing connection to the main line.

The larger cities (Edmonton, Calgary, and Vancouver) put a lot of focus on the appearance of garage/garden suites, taking into consideration the impact such a development has on surrounding properties. If Council would like to open garage/garden suites to the rest of Strathmore, Staff will propose amendments to the current regulations that will take into consideration height, access, setbacks, privacy, and shadows.

Regardless of the regulations included in the Land Use Bylaw, garage/garden suites need to meet building and utility safety codes. Strathmore could make it easier to get Land Use Bylaw approval for a garage or garden suite, but National Building Code, Alberta Edition still applies. If a homeowner is looking to retrofit an existing garage or construct a new garage suite the costs incurred to meet code may be substantial.

If Council would like to open garage/garden suites to the to the rest of Strathmore, public consultation should be robust. The intent would be to address any concerns up-front, decreasing the likelihood of dissent from adjacent landowners when a development permit application is submitted.

Staff is recommending

- Adding a definition for Garage Suites (the key difference between garage suites and garden suites is garden suites can be a standalone structure versus garage suites must be within a detached garage).
- Amending the Garden Suite definition to exclude Garage Suites.
- Including more robust regulations around the placement of these suites, the aesthetics of them, and the requirements for servicing.
- Adding Garden Suites as a Discretionary Use to the following land use districts
 - o R1 – Single Detached Residential District
 - o R1S – Single Detached Residential (Small Lot), served by a rear lane
 - o R2 – Low Density Residential District
 - o CR – Country Residential District
- Adding Garage Suites as a Discretionary Use to the following land use districts
 - o R1 – Single Detached Residential District
 - o R1N – Single Detached Residential (Narrow Lot) District
 - o R1S – Single Detached Residential (Small Lot), served by a rear lane
 - o R2 – Low Density Residential District
 - o R2X – Medium Density Attached Housing District
 - o CR – Country Residential District

Based on the above proposed land use districts, Garden Suites would open up to approximately 3570 parcels, Garage Suites to approximately 3950, and the number of affected parcels that would have access to an alley would be approximately 1520.

IMPLICATIONS/RELATED ISSUES/RISK (IF APPLICABLE)

If the current Garden Suite regulations are expanded to the rest of Strathmore without engaging the residents, there is risk that the first application for a Garage or Garden Suite will meet significant push back. It is difficult to determine what the effects of not including Garage or Garden Suites as a use for the rest of the Town would be.

CONCLUSION

If direction is given to allow Garage/Garden Suites throughout the Town, Staff will start engagement with the Town's residents to better capture any concerns with expanding the Garden/Garage Suites use throughout Town. Once the engagement is complete Staff will bring a what we heard report before Council with proposed amendments to the Land Use Bylaw.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Attachment I: Current Garden Suite Land Use Bylaw Regulations

REVIEWED & APPROVED BY J. DUGDALE



Section 3.25 – Garden Suites

1. Only one Garden Suite shall be allowed per lot and must be detached from the primary residence.
2. The subdivision of Garden Suites is prohibited.
3. Garden suites shall be restricted to a single storey dwelling and may include an attached single car garage.
4. A Garden Suite requires a Development Permit and the Development Authority will take into consideration the potential effect of the development on the privacy of adjacent properties regarding such potential issues as window placement, landings for entrances, outdoor amenity space, parking and height.
5. The maximum site coverage for a Garden Suite shall not exceed 90m².
6. A Garden Suite shall provide a minimum of one (1) on-site parking stall.
7. A Garden Suite shall be designed to reasonably complement the existing primary dwelling on the site. The appearance and quality of the finishing materials of the garden suite shall reflect the fact that it is a dwelling unit.
8. Where a Garden Suite is attached to or developed above a garage the suite shall have an entrance separate from the entrance to the garage, either from a common indoor landing or directly from the exterior of the structure.
9. Garden Suites shall be separated from the principal dwelling unit by a minimum of 4.0 metres and a minimum of 1.5 metres from all other buildings.
10. The rear yard setback for a lot with a Garden Suite must be a minimum of 1.5 m.
11. On a lot where a Garden Suite is to be located, only one servicing connection per utility will be permitted. The Utilities must be first connected to the primary residence, and the fed to the Garden Suite.
12. Gardens Suites shall comply with all Alberta Safety Code standards, Building Codes, Albert Fire Codes and all provincial and municipal regulations.
13. Garden Suites shall not be constructed within the front yard setback of the primary residence.
14. All lots with a Garden Suite shall have a driveway that provides access to the Garden Suite.
15. Lots containing a Garden Suite shall only be allowed to have one mailing address.
16. A Garden Suite shall only be allowed where identified in the Land Use Bylaw Land Use Districts.
17. All Garden Suite are considered discretionary uses.
18. A Garden Suite shall be one (1) storey, having a height not to exceed 5m.