

VanRIMS No.: 08-2000-20

MEMORANDUM

February 12, 2009

TO: Mayor and Council

COPIES TO Penny Ballem, City Manager
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Jennifer Young, Assistant Director of Corporate Communications
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Cameron Gray, Managing Director, Social Development
Jill Davidson, Acting Assistant Director, Housing Policy
Mary Clare Zak, Director, Social Policy

FROM: Ronda Howard, Assistant Director of Planning - City-Wide and Regional Planning

SUBJECT: Implementation Timing for Laneway Housing

On October 30, Council unanimously approved directions for the development of regulations and policies to implement Laneway Housing, and instructed staff to prepare and report back with amendments to the various by-laws and policies. Council included a direction to "further consult with the public, neighbourhoods, and stakeholder groups, including Visioning Committees, on the height, type, and parking options, prior to by-law preparation." (The full list of approved directions is attached.) At the October 30 meeting, Council also requested this memo on timing.

Staff have been working on defining the detailed regulatory changes. We anticipate completing the regulations and policies this summer and providing a report to Council in July before Council's summer break. The report will include recommendation for referral of zoning amendments to a Public Hearing. Based on statutory requirements for notification, the Public Hearing would occur in September. Council may then approve zoning amendments, following which the public could submit development applications to build Laneway Housing.

The regulatory work includes changes to the Zoning and Development By-law (several individual single family zones), the Vancouver Building By-law (e.g., with regard to fire access), the Parking by-law, and related policies.

When Council approved the directions on October 30, Laneway Housing moved from a general concept to a much more defined set of parameters on which regulations can be based. Many of the approved directions are very specific - e.g., no strata-titling; no encroachment into required single family backyard open space.

For other directions, Council ruled some options off the table, but left some on the table for further refinement and determination - i.e., the interrelated aspects of 1 ½ storey maximum height and roofline, parking requirements, and unit type and size maximum. These aspects affect scale, neighbourliness, shadowing, livability, economic feasibility, and land value impacts. This work will include the public consultation directed by Council, and consist of a meeting with Vision Implementation Committee members (a 'Pan Visions' meeting); two open houses (to cover different areas of the city); and meetings with the individual stakeholder groups who have consistently expressed interest on this topic (VCPC, Heritage Commission, Food Policy Council, and Homebuilders Association).

On a related topic, staff have also prioritized work relating to rental suites from Council-approved EcoDensity Action C-6: functional basements, suite-ready, and suites-within-suites. Council will be updated more on these work items shortly, as the work progresses.

If you have any questions, please call or e-mail me.

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RH/

Attachment: Approved Laneway Housing Recommendations

Laneway Housing (LWH) in Single Family Areas Approved Recommendations

Approved on October 30, 2008:

THAT Council approve the recommendations [as listed below], as directions to staff in the development of regulations and policies to implement Laneway Housing; and instruct staff to prepare and report back with amendments to the Zoning and Development By-law, the Parking By-law, the Vancouver Building By-law, and related by-laws and policies.

Affordability

- 1) Require laneway housing to be family or rental, using the same mechanisms as for secondary suites in single family areas. Do not allow strata titling of the property when LWH is built.

Retention of Existing Houses with Opportunity for Homeowners to Add LWH

- 2) Require LWH to be family or rental - do not allow strata titling of the property when a LWH is added (as in Recommendation 1 above) - this means upgrades would not be required to the main house when a LWH is added.
- 3) Prepare amendments to the Vancouver Building By-law regarding fire access and safety requirements, as described in the issues and options paper in Appendix B.
- 4) Develop a homeowner manual.
- 5) Set a maximum unit size for LWH to balance achieving livable and diverse housing, while minimizing any land value and redevelopment impacts.
- 6) Monitor the pace of retention and redevelopment related to LWH, to see if there is any increase in the rate of demolition beyond the normal single family rate, and if so, report to Council (See also Recommendation 21 below).

Livable and Neighbourly Units

- 7) Backyard open space: Develop regulations for LWH within the garage area, thereby retaining currently required backyard open space.
- 8) Height and Unit Type: Develop regulations for 1 and 1 ½ storey LWH to allow for a variety of unit sizes and types (including exploring maximum height for 1 ½ storey, roof design, orientation, upper storey windows, etc.).
- 9) Parking: Develop regulations that would work with 1 and 2 parking space configurations on 33 foot wide lots and 1, 2 and 3 parking space configurations on wider lots. Do not explore further the following: 0 spaces; 3 spaces on 33 foot lots; or tandem configuration, as parking space would encroach into backyard space.
- 10) Universal Design: Develop regulations for universal design where possible (Vancouver Building By-law), e.g., height of electrical outlets, etc.
- 11) Process: Develop approval process with a view to balancing flexibility, quality of design, and a user-friendly permit process for the homeowner.

Green Building and Site

The yard (site)

- 12) Retain permeable backyard open space, as per existing single family regulations (as above in Recommendation 7).
- 13) Require permeable surface treatment where surface parking and driveway is permitted (as opposed to a garage or carport).
- 14) Investigate ways to deal with roof runoff other than piping into stormwater/sewer system, e.g., rock infiltration pits; collection in rain barrels.
- 15) Encourage use of waterwise landscaping guidelines.

The building

- 16) Require laneway housing to meet the high standards for all single family homes set by the City's new Green Homes Program, with some adaptations where appropriate in relation to the size of building, as described in the issues and options paper.
- 17) Require separated storm and sanitary sewage connections for the laneway house, as would be required for any new housing.
- 18) Develop zoning regulations that would not preclude the future addition of other green features, such as solar panels, and encourage passive design where possible.

Where Should LWH Be Allowed

- 19) Permit LWH in all single family areas (i.e., RS-1- RS-3, RS-3A, RS-5, and RS-6).
- 20) Test regulations with design professionals and builders for possible unintended consequences before finalizing regulations.
- 21) Require tracking and monitoring - with a report back to Council after 3 years or 100 projects, whichever is first.

Lanes

Private property

- 22) Require and/or enable the LWH structure to contribute to the lane - e.g. exterior motion sensor lane lighting for safety; doorways onto lane, etc.
- 23) Require and/or enable planting between lane and LWH - e.g., an unpaved setback between lane and LWH (see Recommendation 13 for permeable driveway surfacing).

City lane right-of-way

- 24) Improve green performance and maintain usability of lane ROW -- see Engineering Services Report on 'Enhanced Centre Strip'. In addition, explore in further work the possibility of other features such as alternative paving materials (more permeable and that also meet Engineering standards) for the connection between the 'centre strip' lane paving and private parking areas.

Further Consultation

- 25) Further consult with the public, neighbourhoods and stakeholder groups including Visioning Committees, on the height, type and parking options referred to in Recommendations 8 and 9 above, prior to by-law preparation.