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## MEMORANDUM

November 9, 2009

TO: Mayor and Council

CC: Penny Ballem, City Manager  
Sadhu Johnston, Deputy City Manager  
Marg Coulson, Acting City Clerk  
Robin Adair, General Manager, Intergovernmental Relations & Strategic Partnerships  
Wendy Stewart, Assistant Director, Communications - Media Services  
David McLellan, General Manager, Community Services Group  
Ronda Howard, Assistant Director of Planning - City-Wide & Regional Planning

FROM: Brent Toderian, Director of Planning  
Christine Warren, Director of Development Services

SUBJECT: Laneway Housing Update

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The purpose of this memo is to provide a brief update on the progress of Laneway Housing, as several members of Council have inquired on the subject. This memo will also be posted on the Laneway Housing website for public information and is in advance of the six month public report (as directed by Council on July 28, 2009).

- There have been approximately 300 phone inquiries to the Enquiry Centre regarding Laneway Housing, with some inquirers choosing not to proceed to the pre-application stage for reasons such as:
  - They are located on a lot that is not eligible due to zone, lot size, or lack of lane;
  - They are looking for a larger unit than is currently allowed;
  - They are looking to provide more indoor parking spaces than would be allowed;
  - They are deciding to wait for built examples.
  
- 50 to 60 proponents have been involved in the pre-application stage, which includes engineering, design and landscape meetings to obtain pre-clearance advice and directions helpful for a successful application.
  
- 11 applications have been submitted and are about to be approved and development and building permits issued. We expect many more pre-applications to move forward to formal applications with the following:
  - Applicants are becoming more familiar with the new regulations, guidelines and pre-application requirements;

- Built examples will start appearing to serve as precedents;
- Staff are continuing to streamline the process. Given the past year's timeline for regulation development, staff understood that the first several months of this new land use would be a time of observation, learning, and process improvement. Measures currently underway include:
  - The development of checklists to simplify requirements;
  - Establishing interpretations of guidelines and regulations as they apply to a variety of proposals and unusual sites;
  - The development of a user-friendly 'Laneway Housing How-To Guide', which will be available online, updated on a regular basis and will include:
    - answers to frequently asked questions;
    - clarifications on interpretation of regulations and guidelines ;
    - direction on navigating the process;
    - technical illustrative drawings;
  - Streamlining for complete pre-applications that meet requirements.
- Application rates should also increase with the recent resolution of several issues:
  - The Chief Building Official has established alternative Building By-law requirements for Laneway Housing on non-standard lots (in terms of depth and width) in collaboration with the Fire Department and these standards will be brought to Council in December as Building By-law amendments;
  - BC Hydro, in a meeting with City staff, has clarified that their policy and practice is not to require under-grounding for all lots. The same requirements apply to a new Laneway House as to a new single family house - i.e., generally there is no under-grounding requirement for lots that already have 200 amp service, or that are in proximity of a pole-mounted transformer. Several of the applicants now in the system have already told us that BC Hydro has confirmed that their requirements are minimal. Staff at the City and BC Hydro will continue to monitor.
- The 11 applications soon to be approved are:
  - Primarily located on 33' wide lots with some located on 50' wide lots and wider;
  - Located in both RS-1 and RS-5 zones and dispersed widely across the city (see attached map);
  - 55% on lots where new main house construction was already taking place and 45% on lots where the main house is retained;
  - Displaying a variety of architectural character;
  - Involving a variety of professionals, from architects to builder/contractors;
  - 64% are 1 ½ stories; 36% are 1 storey structures;
  - 82% are providing one parking space (as a permeable surface space or as an enclosed space); and 18% are providing two parking spaces (as enclosed spaces).

In conclusion, application rates are increasing with applicant familiarity and with streamlining measures currently being implemented by staff. It is relevant to note that staff had advised during Laneway Housing consultation that the take-up of Laneway Housing would likely be gradual and this is indeed what is being observed. For more information please contact Bob Adair in Development Services at 604-873-7457 or Katherine Isaac in Planning at 604-871-6423.

Brent Toderian  
Director of Planning

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Director of Development Services

# Laneway Housing Applications as of November 9th, 2009

