

OPEN HOUSE
Detached
Secondary Suites
Municipal Hall
4pm - 7PM Wednesday, October 5th



THE

The Bowen Island Eco-Alliance is a non-profit organisation dedicated to community service and preservation of Bowen Island's natural environment.

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Seeking a balanced approach for detached suites

The Bowen Island Municipal Council is proposing to allow the building of detached secondary suites on most residential lots on the island. However, as directors of the Bowen Island Eco-Alliance who have studied the draft bylaws that would implement this plan, we believe that the council is not taking a sufficiently balanced approach to the issue.

In our view, detached secondary suites should be supported as an important component of housing diversity on the island, but the draft bylaws as currently written will have greater negative consequences than the problem they intent to fix. Council began in a positive direction when they launched the housing initiative earlier this year, but then they lost their way.

The draft bylaws were first presented to council by the municipal planner on July 25th and contained the provision that detached suites with a floor space of up to 90 square metres (963 sq. ft) be permitted on lots of .4 hectares (one acre) or larger. These provisions reflected the recommendations of various municipal advisory committees that had looked at this issue in the past. The draft bylaws also reflected instructions from the councillors to municipal staff

when council first considered the housing plan earlier, in January of this year. However, at the July 25th meeting, a majority of the councillors made significant changes to the draft bylaws: they increased the permitted floor space to 115 metres (1,230 sq. ft.), eliminated the one acre minimum lot size requirement, and reduced some of the wording intended to ensure the privacy of neighboring properties. The revised draft bylaws will now come to a municipality-sponsored Open House for public comment on October 5th (4:00 pm to 7:00 pm at council chambers).

The Bowen Island Eco-Alliance is concerned that if implemented as currently written, the bylaws could open the island to an increase in total housing density without actually addressing the real need for local housing affordability. The planner's report states there are 758 residential lots of one acre or larger. The report also says there are a total of 2,188 residential lots on the island, but even with no minimum lot size requirement, many of these would not be eligible to build a detached suite, for various reasons. However, we believe that increased drinking water shortages, greater vehicle and ferry congestion, and general

environmental deterioration would be the inevitable result of allowing such dwellings on small lots. Furthermore, without a clear minimum lot size requirement, the municipality's planning department would risk becoming overwhelmed with applications, variance requests and endless inquiries from small lot owners trying to get detached suite approval for their properties.

We are also concerned that with the high cost of construction on Bowen Island, detached secondary suites are not likely to translate into long-term low-cost rental accommodation, which is the island's core housing need.

There is a larger irony as well. Council's concentration on detached suites neglects the central policy direction contained in Bowen Island's Official Community Plan (OCP). The OCP outlines a system of density reallocation that transfers residential density from rural parts of the island into designated "walkable villages" such as Snug Cove and the future village of Seymour Bay, in order to facilitate affordable housing and reduced greenhouse gas emissions. A reasonable bylaw that permits a limited number of detached suites can help to normalize the current reality,

where caretaker cottages etc. have been a long-standing feature of island life. But it should be acknowledged that excessive entitlement of this housing form would undermine the OCP's planning intent.

Rather than lurching in an impulsive new policy direction that ignores the OCP, we believe that council should simply revise the draft bylaws now under consideration, and approve the creation of detached secondary suites, with the following conditions:

- Restore the minimum size to one acre for lots to be eligible for detached suites as proposed

by the municipal planner at the July 25th council meeting.

- Allow the revised maximum floor size allowance of 115 sq. metres (1,230 sq. ft.) on lots of one acre or larger.

- Include a covenant on title that guarantees that a detached secondary suite cannot be used for short-term vacation rental.

- Include a covenant on title to prohibit future subdivision where not currently allowed.

- Enhance the bylaw wording which is intended to protect the privacy of

neighboring properties.

- Ensure that the municipality's register of detached suites is forwarded to the BC Assessment Authority so that the increased demand on municipal services is reflected in the property taxes of lots with detached suites.

We urge our members and the public to attend the Open House on October 5th from 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm at council chambers or send your comments directly to the municipal planner at dmartin@bimbc.ca or to mayorandcouncil@bimbc.ca and become engaged with this issue. 🍁

Membership

Become involved with Bowen's oldest community group dedicated to the preservation and protection of Bowen's unique natural and social setting. Membership benefits include informative speakers, opportunities to meet and network with like-minded Bowen Islanders, and a chance to become informed of and active in Bowen's evolving community.

Name:

Email:

Phone:

Address:

Membership Fee: Single \$10
Family \$15

Please attach your cheque and return to:

Bowen Island Eco-Alliance,
c/o Silberman, 1600 Tunstall Blvd.
Bowen Island, BC V0N 1G2

1. Are you a new member of the Eco-Alliance?
YES NO

2. Are you renewing your membership with the Eco-Alliance?
YES NO

3. Would you like to help with specific projects?
Which issues?

4. Do you have any other comments or suggestions you would like to make regarding the Eco-Alliance?

**BOWEN ISLAND
ECO
ALLIANCE**

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**69
Years**

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