



RE: LETTER FROM MR. ELMER WHICH APPEARED ON THE AGENDA FOR THE  
JULY 25TH MEETING OF COUNCIL (ITEM 3 L)  
DEVELOPMENT DENSITY IN RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS

ACTING MUNICIPAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT the recommendation of the Director Planning & Building  
Inspection be adopted.

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TO: MUNICIPAL MANAGER 1988 AUGUST 03

FROM: DIRECTOR PLANNING &  
BUILDING INSPECTION

SUBJECT: DEVELOPMENT DENSITY IN RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS  
ITEM OF CORRESPONDENCE FROM MR. DAVE ELMER  
COUNCIL AGENDA - 1988 JULY 25

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RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT a copy of this report be sent to Mr. Dave Elmer,  
# 1107, 4165 Maywood Street, Burnaby, B.C., V5H 4E3

R E P O R T

Appearing on the 1988 July 25 Agenda was a letter from Mr. Elmer dealing with the subject of bulk regulations as they apply to the R5 Residential Districts, and in particular the inclusion of cellar areas in the calculation of "gross floor area" for purposes of regulating development density. Mr. Elmer's submission is essentially that cellar areas offend no one and do not add to the perceived bulk of a building above grade, and concludes that issues concerning over-development of cellar areas with respect to development density could be handled by the Board of Variance.

The purpose of this report is to provide background information on the bulk regulations as they relate to basement and cellar areas, and to comment on Mr. Elmer's submission.

Council will recall that a major review of the bulk regulations that apply to residential development in the single and two-family districts was completed in May 1987. This review culminated in the adoption of Zoning Bylaw Text Amendments designed to enhance the compatibility of new dwellings in their residential neighbourhood settings and to preclude instances of gross over-development of sites which had been experienced under the previously-prevailing regulations. Following a period of deliberation by the Council and the Housing Committee and including a Public Hearing at which considerable public feedback and input was received, Council adopted a Floor Area Ratio control representing all floor area within buildings on a site (other than certain specified crawl space, attic, open deck and parking areas) as a primary method of regulating bulk for single and two-family dwellings.

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The inclusion of basement and cellar areas in the computation of gross floor area reflects the fact that such areas do contribute to manifest building volume, although it is recognized that some of their volume may be below grade. It is noted that both basement and cellar areas by definition are at least partly below grade, although even a cellar may have almost one-half of its height above average finished grade. Moreover, on a sloping site, for a substantial portion of a building's perimeter, virtually all of the cellar's height may be above finished grade, and may contribute in a very real way to the building's apparent bulk when viewed from adjacent streets, lanes or neighbouring properties.

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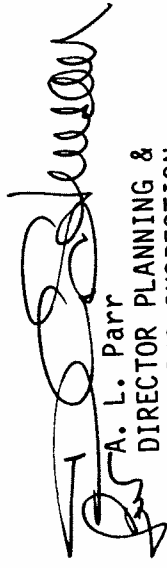
Further, it should be noted that the adopted maximum Floor Area Ratio of 0.60 reflects the inclusion of such areas in the calculations; if the decision had been made to exclude basements or cellars from consideration, a lower Floor Area Ratio figure would have been required to ensure that the objective of regulating overall building bulk would be achieved. (It may also be recalled that the idea of exclusion of basement and cellar areas from bulk measurement was severely criticized by many of the speakers at the Public Hearing, who argued that by excluding them while restricting other building volumes, the Municipality would be in effect "forcing" homeowners to develop space below grade, thereby promoting less satisfactory housing standards).

As Mr. Elmer has acknowledged in his letter, it is important that bylaws be reasonably simple and straight-forward for implementation purposes. While theoretically the ideal means of regulating building bulk would be one that relates actual building volume to lot area, the fact is that the calculation of volumes would be extremely difficult and time-consuming for staff and the public (applicants) alike, and could not be recommended as a practicable or reasonable solution.

Finally, with reference to the suggestion that the Board of Variance might be involved in issues related to cellars and development density, it must be noted that under the Municipal Act, Boards are not entitled to vary permitted uses and densities under the applicable bylaws, nor are they permitted to grant appeals to matters of interpretation, of same. Therefore, this avenue of relaxation is not possible.

It is hoped that the information in this report will be of assistance in understanding the intent of the adopted regulations and their implementation.

This is for the information of Council.



A. L. Parr  
DIRECTOR PLANNING &  
BUILDING INSPECTION

DGS:ap

cc: Chief Building Inspector