

REPORT  
1996 May 06

CITY OF BURNABY

HOUSING COMMITTEE

*HIS WORSHIP, THE MAYOR  
AND COUNCILLORS*

RE: REGULATIONS AFFECTING THE SIZE AND SHAPE OF SEMI - DETACHED  
UNITS IN THE R4, R5 AND R12 DISTRICTS

RECOMMENDATION:

1. *THAT* Council direct the City Solicitor to prepare a text amendment to the Zoning Bylaw as outlined in this report.

REPORT

The Housing Committee, at its meeting held on 1996 April 23, adopted the *attached* staff report proposing minor amendments to the regulations affecting the development of semi-detached units in the R4, R5 and R12 Districts. The objective of the amendments is to help create semi-detached dwelling units that better fit in existing neighbourhoods and meet today's housing needs.

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor L.A. Rankin  
Chairman

Councillor C. Redman  
Member

Councillor J. Young  
Member

:COPY - CITY MANAGER  
- CITY SOLICITOR  
- CHIEF BUILDING INSP.  
- DIR. PLNG. & BLDG.

TO: CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS  
HOUSING COMMITTEE

1996 APRIL 18

FROM: DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING

OUR FILE: 16.301

SUBJECT: REGULATIONS AFFECTING THE SIZE AND SHAPE  
OF SEMI-DETACHED UNITS IN THE R4, R5 AND R12 DISTRICTS

PURPOSE: To propose minor amendments to the regulations affecting the development of semi-detached units in the R4, R5 and R12 Districts.

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#### RECOMMENDATION:

1. **THAT** the Housing Committee recommend that City Council direct the City Solicitor to prepare a text amendment to the Zoning Bylaw as outlined in this report.

### REPORT

#### 1.0 BACKGROUND

At its meeting of April 15, 1996 City Council gave final approval to a text amendment that provided a new contemporary standard of development for semi-detached (side-by-side duplexes) houses in the R4 and R5 District. Among other things, the text changes allow the development of two storey semi-detached units rather than the previous standard of one storey.

Staff have now had an opportunity to deal with preliminary plans for building the new semi-detached units. In discussions with builders and staff observations of the plans it is apparent that some finetuning adjustments to the regulations would be beneficial to ensure that the new buildings meet the intention of fitting well in the context of existing neighbourhoods.

This report outlines three proposed amendments and recommends that the Solicitor be directed to prepare the requisite bylaw and then forward it to Council for First Reading and referral to a Public Hearing.

#### 2.0 PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

The suggested amendments fall into three categories:

- ▶ those affecting buildings with attached parking in front of the principal building;
- ▶ those affecting accessory buildings;
- ▶ those affecting all semi-detached buildings.

## 2.1 Attached Parking in Front of a Principal Building

Under the new regulations, parking must be provided in a detached garage off a lane, except where a lane does not exist or due to grades is not usable. In these cases, off-street parking is provided in an attached garage off the street. There are two aspects of the regulations regarding the provision of an attached parking garage off a street that need minor refinements; regulations affecting maximum building depth, and those affecting the size of the attached garage.

### 2.1.1 Maximum Building Depth for Principal Buildings with Attached Garages

The new regulations for semi-detached buildings in the R4 and R5 and R12 District were intended to ensure that new buildings would fit well into existing single and two family neighbourhoods. The two storey semi-detached buildings are given a more generous above-grade floor area as compared to single family dwellings in the same zoning category, but with a lower height and no provision for a cellar. A smaller second floor should ensure that the units do not contain illegal occupation and that they contain a more interesting roof line.

One of the results of the smaller second storey is the need to place a larger percentage of the total permitted floor space in the first storey. This means that the first storey occupies a larger building footprint as compared to a two storey building where floor space is equally divided amongst two floors. In cases where off-street parking is provided in an attached garage off the street, it is found that on the narrowest lots in each category (ie. less than 65 feet in the R5 zone and less than 70 feet in the R4 District) that are also deep (longer than 136 feet) that the footprint created by the first floor and parking garage filled out most and some cases, all of the permitted building envelope. This means that the garage must be almost totally recessed in the building and leaves little room for architectural features in the design of the building.

It is recommended therefore, that in order to increase design flexibility, for semi-detached dwellings with attached garages, the maximum building depth be increased to the lesser of 50% of the lot depth or 65 feet, an increase of 5 feet over the current regulation.

### 2.1.2 Size of Attached Garages

Currently there is no maximum size for attached garages. While 452 square feet of floor area is exempted from the maximum floor area allowable, a bigger attached garage can be built by taking floor area away from the principal building. Generally, few people would trade off livable floor area for parking area especially in dwelling units when living space is smaller as in the case with a semi-detached unit.

However, staff has received an enquiry from a builder wishing to construct a 4 car garage on the front of a semi-detached dwelling on a 60 foot wide lot with no lane access. This would mean that most of the front yard would be paved to provide driveway area to the garage. Consequently, the front facade would comprise almost completely of garage doors visible from the street front. This type of streetscape is in opposition to the goal of the amendment to create buildings that fit in with existing neighbourhoods.

Indeed, one of the main concerns raised about semi-detached dwellings was the prevalence of front yard paving and parking that was common with the construction of two-storey semi-detached dwellings in the early 1970's.

While staff recognize the concern of the builder that people want to secure their automobiles from theft or vandalism by storing them in garages, staff believe that the need to provide an attractive streetscape and neighbourly development is the paramount objective when introducing more intense uses such as semi-detached dwellings into existing neighbourhoods. It is recommended therefore, that the maximum size for an attached garage in a semi-detached building be limited to 452 square feet. This relates to a well-sized two car garage (one space for each unit) and means that the total exemption from floor area for parking can be taken advantage of.

## **2.2 Regulations Affecting Accessory Buildings**

Currently, in all R Districts, accessory buildings are restricted to 602.8 square feet. Generally, 452 square feet of floor area used for vehicle parking is exempted from maximum floor area calculations and the balance is taken from the allowable gross floor area. Garages that are built to the maximum floor area must use space that would have gone into the principal building as floor area. This restriction is in the Zoning Bylaw to prevent the construction of very large accessory dwellings that may be used as living quarters.

While large garages located in front yards can have a strong negative effect on the streetscape, the impact of detached garages off lanes are much less intrusive. Detaching the garage reduces the building depth and can reduce the driveway length which usually results in usable landscaped open space in the backyard. Storage space in detached accessory buildings is also useful for storing household items such as lawnmowers especially in cases with more compact living spaces such as semi-detached units. In larger lot situations, detached garages in the rear of the dwelling can be accessed by a driveway from the street that runs beside the house, although this results in increased paved surface coverage.

Larger accessory buildings will be attractive in the R4 District where, due to maximum unit size regulations for semi-detached buildings, the balance of the permitted gross floor area could be made up in the detached garage or accessory building. This would increase the attractiveness of this building form to both builders and potential buyers.

It is recommended that the maximum size for accessory buildings for semi-detached dwellings be increased from 602.8 square feet to 800 square feet, which corresponds to a 4 car garage. It is important to note that this size can only be approached where there is unused gross floor area in the principal building. In addition, not more than 66% of the width of the rear yard can be occupied by an accessory building, and the detached garage shall be a minimum of 15 feet from the principal residence. Together, these regulations should ensure that the accessory buildings are related to the size of the lot in an appropriate manner.

### 2.3 Regulation Affecting Principal Buildings

Currently, the zoning bylaw exempts up to a maximum area of 40 square feet for covered porches related to a door at the main level. The purpose of this exemption is to encourage architectural detailing and weather protection by the main door. It is recommended that this exemption be provided on a per unit basis recognizing that semi-detached units have two front doors.

### 3.0 CONCLUSION

The objective of the amendments described in this report is to help create semi-detached dwelling units that better fit in existing neighbourhoods and meet today's housing needs. It is recommended that the Housing Committee request City Council to direct the City Solicitor to prepare amendments to the text of the Zoning Bylaw that would:

- ▶ for semi-detached buildings with an attached garage, increase the maximum building depth to the lesser of 50% of the lot depth or 65 feet, an increase of 5 feet over the current regulation.
- ▶ limit the maximum size for a garage attached to a semi-detached units to a total of 452 square feet for both units.
- ▶ increase the maximum size for detached accessory buildings for semi-detached dwellings from 602.8 square feet to 800 square feet,
- ▶ apply the floor area exemption for covered porches on a per unit basis recognizing that semi-detached units have two front doors.



D.G. Stenson, Director  
PLANNING AND BUILDING

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cc: Chief Building Inspector  
Plan Checking Supervisor  
City Solicitor  
City Manager

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