

**TO:** CITY MANAGER 2003 September 22

**FROM:** DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING OUR FILE: 17.902.1

**SUBJECT:** ZONING BYLAW AMENDMENT REGULATING SUPPORTIVE HOUSING FOR SENIORS

**PURPOSE:** To provide a response to Council's request for a report that analyses raising the maximum percentage of small units in a supportive housing development to 50% of all units.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. **THAT** resulting from a submission at the Public Hearing of 2003 August 26, the text of proposed Bylaw #11591 be amended by increasing the maximum percentage of small units (studio and junior one-bedroom) from 40% to 50% of the total units in Category "B" supportive housing developments.

**REPORT**

**1.0 BACKGROUND**

At a Public Hearing held on 2003 August 26, Council received submissions regarding Bylaw #11591, the purpose of which is to change regulations pertaining to Category "B" supportive housing for seniors. One of the proposed elements of the text amendments included provision for a new category of unit, known as a "junior one-bedroom" with a maximum percentage of small units (studio and junior one-bedroom) to 40% of the total units, with no more than 25% of the units being studios.

At the Public Hearing, two submissions were presented that requested that the maximum percentage of studio and junior one-bedroom suites be increased from the proposed 40% of total units to 50% of the total units. The submissions that were presented by proponents of supportive housing noted that experience has shown that the junior one-bedroom suites are popular with seniors who desire both the privacy of a small bedroom and the affordability of a smaller unit. As such, the 40% maximum as proposed was considered to be too restrictive.

As directed by Council, this report provides an assessment and recommendations regarding the submissions.

## 2.0 UNIT MIX IN CATEGORY “B” SUPPORTIVE HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS

The following outlines the current and proposed unit size and unit mix for supportive seniors housing units:

Unit Type	Minimum Unit Size		Maximum Percentage of Units in Development	
	Current	Proposed	Current	Proposed
Studio	398.28 sq. ft.	355.2 sq. ft.	25%	25%
Junior one-bedroom	not permitted	441 sq. ft.	Not applicable	40% (studio and jr. one-bedroom combined)
One-bedroom	602.8 sq. ft.	495.16 sq. ft.	none	none

As indicated above, the text amendment bylaw proposed a reduction in current minimum unit size for Category “B” supportive housing developments, and the introduction of a new category of small one-bedroom suites known as “junior one-bedroom” suites. The proposed text amendment limited that number of smaller units (studio and junior one-bedroom) to 40% of the total units in development, with not more than 25% of the total units being studio units.

Key factors in determining appropriate minimum unit size and mix for supportive housing developments are:

- a) that the units should be large enough to promote independence for seniors;
- b) the design of units should allow use of mobility aids such as walkers and wheelchairs; and
- c) sufficient space should be available for personal assistance, as needed.

As unit size is reduced, the ability to provide the necessary space for easy movement within the unit is diminished. Staff considered the foregoing factors in determining the appropriate minimum unit sizes and unit mix, as contained in the original supportive housing Category “B” regulations.

After a review of existing supportive housing projects in the Greater Vancouver area, the junior one-bedroom suite was added as a new category, as such suites provided the privacy to residents offered by a separate bedroom as well as affordability provided by a smaller unit. The junior one-bedroom units, when carefully designed, could offer full accessibility in the kitchen and bathroom areas, which is a key advantage for prospective supportive housing residents, who tend to be older and frailer seniors.

The number of smaller units (studio and junior one-bedrooms) was limited to 40% of the total units to ensure that the developments would contain a mix of smaller and conventional size units. The 40% maximum figure was recommended as it reflected a typical distribution of unit sizes in recently developed supportive housing projects.


The submission at the Public Hearing put forward the notion that raising the proportion of small units (studio and junior-one bedroom) to 50% would provide a more desirable mix of affordable smaller units and larger units. In particular, the proponent contended that the change would increase the number of relatively affordable units that would be available.

It should be noted that the concept of supportive housing is currently in the midst of evolution. For example, staff from the Fraser Health Authority are reporting suites that are categorized under their "assisted living" category (i.e., supportive living units where a wider array of personal services are provided and are registered under the Community Care and Assisted Living Act) may tend to be less than 300 square feet in area, since residents would receive all meals, and most personal services in a common area setting. The regulations that will establish the standards for assisted living are in the early stages of drafting by the Ministry of Health Services. It is conceivable that future text amendments may be suggested as the regulations regarding assisted living are developed, and as more experience is gained with supportive housing overall.

### 3.0 CONCLUSION

An important objective of the proposed supportive housing bylaw amendments that was the subject of the 2003 August 26 Public Hearing was to ensure that supportive housing developments would contain an appropriate mix of smaller, affordable units and larger, conventional units.

It has been concluded that increasing the maximum number of smaller units (studio and junior-one bedroom) from 40% to 50% of the total units would continue to meet this aim. As such, it is recommended that the text of proposed Bylaw #11591 be amended by increasing the maximum percentage of small units (studio and junior one-bedroom) from 40% to 50% of the total units in Category "B" supportive housing developments, with not more than 25% of the total units being studio units.



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cc: City Clerk  
City Solicitor  
Chief Building Inspector

