Home Suite Home:
Establishing Secondary Dwellings as a Permitted Use in the Fraser Valley Regional District Electoral Areas

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Abstract

Secondary dwellings have been adopted by local governments as a diverse form of rental housing that provides benefits to both tenants and homeowners. The most frequently cited benefits to this form of housing include enhancing diverse and affordable housing options, supporting seniors’ aging in place, and supplementing homeowner’s incomes. Those opposed to secondary dwellings are concerned with the impacts on neighbourhood parking and traffic, decreasing land values, inappropriate use of agricultural land, and threatening community character.

Local governments implement this form of housing through official community plans and zoning bylaws. Currently, the Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) does not allow secondary dwellings as a permitted use, but with increasing interest from residents, a “hot” housing market, and an aging population, the Planning Department has undergone a study to make changes to its bylaws. Through a review of academic and government literature, and a review of other local government policies, this research determines that the FVRD’s policies are outdated, and in need of a change. To gain community acceptance, the research identifies common resident concerns and provides solutions to address those concerns. The research proposes that the FVRD uses other local governments as guidance in its policy development. This paper concludes that it is timely for the FVRD to adopt secondary dwellings as a permitted use, and offers a recommendation of how best to do so.
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1.0 Introduction

Secondary dwellings have been established as an alternative form of housing to traditional single-family residences and purpose-built rental units. They have become increasingly popular in regions such as Metro Vancouver, where housing prices have dramatically increased and vacancy rates have decreased. Secondary dwellings have been identified as offering affordable and diverse ground-oriented housing options for families, seniors, and renters of all ages (City of Vancouver, 2016). Additionally, secondary dwellings provide homeowners with rental income that helps to offset the expense of homeownership (Fraser Valley Regional District [FVRD], 2015a).

While all municipalities within Metro Vancouver have adopted policies that permit some form of secondary dwelling in their jurisdiction, their neighbour to the east, the Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD), has not. Responsible for providing planning services to the unincorporated areas of the FVRD, the Electoral Area Planning Department proposed exploring changes to its policies in 2014. In this proposal, planning staff indicated they were consistently receiving inquiries from local residents and landowners regarding secondary dwellings and whether they were permitted on lots (FVRD, 2015a). As well, planning staff conveyed their interest in procuring affordable housing and aging in place options for their rural communities.

With the support of the Electoral Area Services Committee (EASC), the Electoral Area (EA) Planning Department commenced their Secondary Dwellings study in 2015. The study is currently underway. To address resident concerns and gauge level of interest, EA planning staff has implemented a public consultation process. To date, this has included an online public survey and several open houses. The next step in the decision-making process will be to decide whether
to make changes to the FVRD’s policies and regulations and permit secondary dwellings within the EAs, or to maintain the “status quo” of not permitting them (FVRD, 2015a).

While secondary dwellings are not a permitted use within EA zoning bylaws, illegal suites do exist. It is difficult to know how widespread illegal suites are especially in rural areas. What is important to highlight is that the very existence of illegal suites reflect a demand and need for them. What is more, neighbouring municipalities and regional districts all have policies in place that permit secondary dwellings. Considering these two facts, along with increasing housing prices, growth pressure, and an aging population, it seems timely that the FVRD make changes to its policies.

This research examines the benefits and challenges to secondary dwellings. Through a document review of other local government policies, it identifies how other local governments have addressed these challenges. As well, this research explores a variety of approaches that other local governments have utilized to permit secondary dwellings. The information gathered from other local governments will assist the FVRD in policy development within its Electoral Areas. This research concludes that the FVRD requires a change to its policy and should permit secondary dwellings as a housing option for its residents.

1.1 Goal of the Research

This research has been conducted to assist the FVRD Electoral Area Planning Department in its Secondary Dwellings study. There is both support for and against the establishment of policies that permit secondary dwellings within the EAs. Both the benefits and concerns related to secondary dwellings will be examined. To gain community acceptance, it is integral that benefits are emphasized and concerns are addressed in an effective manner. It is the goal of this research
to provide policy recommendations that permit secondary dwellings within the FVRD’s EAs. This research will reflect on the most common policy options utilized by other local governments in allowing secondary dwellings as a permitted use.

1.2 Research Objectives

The four (4) objectives of this research are to:

1. Determine whether policies should be amended to allow secondary dwellings as a permitted use in the Fraser Valley Regional District Electoral Areas;
2. Identify the benefits and challenges that are often connected to secondary dwellings, and explore solutions that can be used to address those challenges;
3. Consider the policies and regulations of other local government to establish secondary dwellings as a permitted use;
4. Provide policy development recommendations to the Fraser Valley Regional District and other local governments in establishing secondary dwellings as a permitted use.
2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This section provides a review of the literature on secondary dwellings. The research has found that literature related to secondary dwellings often is associated with two topics: affordable housing and aging in place. Much of the literature that speaks directly on the topic of secondary dwellings focuses on their contribution to local rental housing options and on their income potential. The focus is generally on urban areas in the literature.

Secondary dwellings have been identified as a useful tool in providing housing options for residents of all ages, income levels, and family status (Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women’s Services [MCAWS], 2005). Despite serving many purposes, introducing them to some areas has proven to be a challenge, even more so in areas where residents are weary of local government-induced change. To gain support from rural residents, it may be useful to highlight the ways in which secondary dwellings can meet their specific community needs.

The first section of the literature review provides a brief description of what the FVRD means when they use the term ‘secondary dwellings’. The second section will consider the benefits and challenges of introducing secondary dwellings as a housing option found in the literature. This will be followed by a general overview of affordable housing in the third section. The final section explores seniors’ housing and aging in place, a relevant discussion in relation to the aging population of the FVRD Electoral Areas.
2.2 Defining Secondary Dwellings

For the purpose of the research, a secondary dwelling is a second residence that is accessory to the primary or single-family dwelling on a lot. The research is directed towards residential zones such as single- and multi-family residential, rural, and agricultural zones. It does not include commercial, industrial, or any other non-residential zones. In this research, secondary dwellings are considered to be accessory to the primary dwelling on a lot, and are intended to become part of the local rental housing stock. They can be contained within or attached to a primary dwelling, detached as its own separate building, or located above an accessory building (i.e. garage).

Secondary dwellings are a private, self-contained form of housing that has its own separate living space, including a bathroom, kitchen, and sleeping area.

Figure 1: Examples of Secondary Dwellings

Common terms associated with secondary dwellings include accessory dwelling unit, ancillary dwelling unit, second dwelling unit, secondary suites, second units, and accessory apartment. Additional terms for secondary dwellings include the following: carriage house, coach house, garden suite, garden cottage, granny flat, garage suite, nanny suite, in-law suite, backyard cottage, basement suite, basement apartment, and laneway house. For the purpose of this research, secondary dwellings include all of those listed.

Buholzer offers a detailed account of the Local Government Act regulations related to accessory buildings and uses, and secondary suites. Accessory buildings and uses are “naturally associated with the principal use”, and must be “incidental, subordinate, and exclusively devoted to a principal use” (2014, p. 7-33). Buholzer explains that an accessory use must exist for no other purpose than to serve the principal use. In contrast, Buholzer describes a secondary suite as self-contained with its own kitchen, bathroom, and entrance, and emphasizes the revenue-generating opportunities that they provide (Buholzer, 2014, p. 7-39). Buholzer reflects on the difficulty in defining a one-family residence when cultural preferences for two kitchens blur the conventional definition. It is important to differentiate between accessory dwellings and secondary dwellings for this research. To be clear, in the case of the FVRD, secondary dwellings do not include accessory dwellings that are already defined and permitted within the FVRD zoning bylaws. These include farm and campground employee residences, and dwellings for personal care of a family member.

According to Pfeiffer (2015), secondary dwellings were once popular in the early 20th century when multigenerational households were common. Changes to housing preferences led to the Euclidian ideal that promoted single-family dwellings and exclusionary planning.
principles through zoning (Antoninetti, 2008; Pfeiffer, 2015). The result was a rise in popularity of the suburban lifestyle, where people valued their space and privacy outside of city centres. Over time there has been a shift in housing trends that has resulted for the following reasons: household sizes decreasing, families having children later in life, more people living alone and living longer, and an overall increased need for more affordable housing options (Infranca, 2013). Along with this, an increased interest in reducing sprawl through densification and smart growth principles, secondary dwellings have made a comeback (Pfeiffer, 2015). Several local governments in B.C., particularly those in more heavily populated and rapidly growing regions, have researched secondary dwellings and developed policies to support them (these include Langley, Maple Ridge, and Surrey). Secondary dwellings have become increasingly popular to address housing challenges, and local governments in B.C. have adopted them within land use policies in a variety of ways. Further details on other local government policies and regulations will be provided in Chapter 5.

### 2.2.1 The Benefits of Secondary Dwellings

As noted, secondary dwellings are a useful tool in providing housing options for residents of all ages, income levels, and family status (MCAWS, 2005). The Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women’s Services (MCAWS) maintains that secondary suites offer benefits to homeowners, tenants, and communities (2005). These benefits are repeated throughout the literature on secondary dwellings.

Secondary dwellings are appropriate for aging parents, single-parent families, single-person households, those in need of care or with physical disabilities, and so on (Pfeiffer, 2015). They allow families to live near each other and provide informal care and support, especially as
family members grow older (MCAWS, 2005; Brown & Watkins, 2012). Another important aspect that has been noted is that secondary dwellings enable low- and moderate-income residents to live in ground-oriented housing in family-residential areas, rather than being limited to apartments and downtown cores (MCAWS, 2005; Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation [CMHC], 2016a).

Secondary dwellings also play a role in providing affordable housing options for those who cannot “get into” the homeownership market (Mendez & Quastel, 2015). In fact, they make up a significant portion of the rental market in most urban areas, and are often rented for lower prices compared to purpose-built rentals. Due to the housing shortage in Metro Vancouver, secondary dwellings are viewed as an essential component of its rental stock (Mendez & Quastel, 2015). In the City of Vancouver, secondary dwellings make up 17-20 percent of the rental market, while in the City of Surrey they make up 56 percent (Metro Vancouver, 2016, p. 4.3). It is likely that these numbers are higher, since illegal suites often go undetected. The rental market is typically smaller in rural areas, and purpose-built rental buildings are often not available or are limited. Therefore it is safe to say that secondary dwellings can become a significant portion of the rental market in rural areas too. Along with providing affordable rentals, secondary dwellings support affordable homeownership by supplying additional income for homeowners (Groc, 2008; Metro Vancouver, 2016).

Finally, secondary dwellings are considered a form of infill development (Brown & Watkins, 2012; Pfeiffer, 2015). Proper infill development makes use of existing infrastructure, which would be useful for rural areas with limited servicing, such as the FVRD EAs. While secondary dwellings increase density and reduce sprawl, they are thought to do so without changing neighbourhood character (Brown & Watkins, 2012; Infranca, 2013). Similarly, Mendez
and Quastel emphasize that secondary suites “allow neighbourhoods to retain the appearance of a single-family housing landscape while increasing residential density and providing additional low-cost rental housing” (2015, p. 1156). In the City of Vancouver, Rao refers to basement suites as “the most invisible form of increased density”, and to laneway houses as having no impact on curb appeal while increasing density of its neighbourhoods (2011).

In summary, secondary dwellings provide rental housing in neighbourhoods where purpose built rental housing is not available, expand affordable housing options, help make homeownership more sustainable, maximize densification goals, make better use of existing infrastructure, and accommodate renters of all ages, incomes, and abilities. While much of the literature on secondary dwellings is associated with urban areas, the benefits can cross over to rural areas, as well.

### 2.2.2 The Challenges of Secondary Dwellings

Despite all of the benefits that have been identified, secondary dwellings continue to meet challenges. Community acceptance is the foremost challenge in communities that have previously prohibited secondary dwellings (MCAWS, 2005). In general, local governments support secondary dwellings, while resident “NIMBYism” reduces political feasibility, particularly in high-income, single-family, suburban neighbourhoods (Pfeiffer, 2015). Additional challenges or issues in relation to secondary dwellings highlighted by the MCAWS include fairness of utility billings, fairness of property taxes, parking and increased traffic, registration, security of tenure, local government liability, and health and safety (2005, p. 10-12). For the most part, these concerns are associated with unregulated or illegal suites, and strengthen the argument for the formalization of secondary dwellings.
While local governments may support secondary dwellings, there are challenges to regulating them (Infranca, 2013). First, critics stipulate that zoning and other regulations may actually get in the way of affordable housing options – as the formalization process typically leads to increasing the cost of rent. This is evidenced by the cost of renting carriage houses in the City of Kelowna, where it has been documented that carriage houses sometimes rent for more than the main dwelling (MCAWS, 2005). Second, critics opine that secondary dwellings do in fact change neighbourhood character (Infranca, 2013). Communities may feel that secondary dwellings threaten their safety and way of living, and there is often fear that this form of housing will introduce low-income, transient populations to the area (Infranca, 2013; Pfeiffer, 2015). While there is evidence that this may be true for illegal suites, there is little to no evidence to support or prove this in regard to legalized suites (Pfeiffer, 2015). Infranca maintains while research on this topic is sparse, “accessory dwelling units have less of an effect on neighbourhoods than critics expect” (2013, p. 66). Finally, it is often difficult for local governments to address existing suites, as budgets limit the ability of bylaw enforcement and many operate on a complaint basis only. Antoninetti (2008) has found that most illegal suites are hidden within the primary dwelling and are difficult to identify. The biggest issue around illegal suites is that they are likely not built to meet Building Code and may be unsafe or unhealthy for residents. This final challenge is one that continues to be difficult to address.

While there is a demonstrated need for additional housing options in growing urban areas such as Metro Vancouver, residents may find it unnecessary in low-density suburban areas (Pfeiffer, 2015). Pfeiffer suggests framing secondary dwellings as a means to housing aging populations or for accommodating multigenerational housing, which may have “more traction” in suburban areas (2015). It may be even harder to justify the addition of secondary dwellings to
house additional residents in rural areas, where residents prefer the ideals of a rural lifestyle, small communities, and plenty of space. Research on how best to address this challenge from a rural context is missing in the literature, and warrants further exploration. A discussion on how the FVRD can take steps to address these challenges is an integral part of the Secondary Dwellings study.

### 2.3 Affordable Housing

Housing is considered affordable when a household pays no more than 30 percent of its annual income on its housing (Islands Trust, 2016; Carpenter-Song, Ferron & Kobylenski, 2016). Those that are paying above this amount are considered at risk of homelessness. Carter (1997) refers to affordable housing as either modestly priced rental housing or starter-priced dwellings that low- and moderate-income households can secure. The topic of affordable housing is often associated with homelessness because of its urgency (Van Wyk et al., 2009). But, the importance of affordable housing applies to everyone, including working families, single parent families, young families, seniors, singles, and students (Van Wyk et al., 2009).

Previously, addressing affordable housing was the responsibility of senior levels of government. As federal and provincial funding has decreased on housing, local governments have either chosen to take on this responsibility, or been forced into it. Carter categorizes local government’s role in housing in three ways:

1. Passive role: allowing senior government to take the lead.
2. Facilitator role: facilitating development of affordable housing by senior government.
3. Initiator role: when a local government takes initiative to develop (or enable) projects (1997, p. 622).
Carter sees this ‘initiator role’ being accomplished through local regulations, including zoning, land use designations, taxation, land development, and subdivision (1997). This is especially useful where local governments, such as the FVRD, have limited resources and smaller tax bases to directly provide housing for residents.

Metro Vancouver is an example of a local government in the ‘initiator role’. As the construction of purpose-built rental housing has decreased, and existing rental units have been torn down and replaced, Metro Vancouver has had to respond (Eberle, 2010). Outside of building low-income and subsidized housing, almost every municipality in Metro Vancouver has developed provisions that legalize secondary suites, coach houses, and laneway houses, to increase housing options (Eberle, 2010). This has by no means ended homelessness and the housing crisis in Metro Vancouver, but it has added to the rental stock of the region.

The literature on affordable housing often focuses on renters, because renters typically face more affordability and security challenges than homeowners (Van Wyk et al., 2009). Homeownership is equated with stability, while renting is not (Rollwagen, 2015). However, homeowners also require ways to secure affordable housing, especially with the rise in housing costs. Local governments can alleviate costs on homeowners by permitting secondary dwellings where appropriate, to supplement incomes. Labeled “mortgage helpers”, secondary dwellings provide homeowners with financial stability, making homeownership more sustainable (MCAWS, 2005; Pfeiffer, 2015). In areas where housing prices are rapidly increasing, this is particularly important in assisting middle-class homeownership for those who may be priced out of the housing market (Eberle, 2010; Mendez & Quastel, 2015). In addition to providing income to homeowners, there are strong indications that on average, properties with secondary units have a higher value than those that do not (Brown & Watkins, 2012). Through their income-
based approach to valuation of properties with accessory dwelling units, they found that property values actually increase 7.2 to 9.8 percent (2012, p. 297). As well, for properties with an additional dwelling unit on site, real estate listings will often include the income potential of the suite, regardless of whether it is legal or not (Mendez & Quastel, 2015). For these reasons, Pfeiffer (2015) deems planners as having a role in being proactive and protecting homeowners from future recessions by accommodating secondary dwelling in residential areas.

An urban focus on homelessness dominates the literature and little is known of homelessness in rural areas (Carpenter-Song et al., 2016). What is known is that it is often difficult to comprehend the level of housing insecurity in rural areas, since homeless populations are often invisible. Coping mechanisms such as “doubling up”, where people turn to their friends or family for temporary, informal housing, are often used, masking the extent of the problem (Carpenter-Song et al., 2016). The rural homeless may be compelled to leave their communities when temporary situations end, or if they feel ostracized as a result of the lack of anonymity in rural communities (Carpenter-Song et al., 2016). That there is no clear understanding of the level of homelessness in the FVRD’s EAs demonstrates this gap.

Recently, Van Wyk et al. (2009) reported on affordable housing and homelessness in the Fraser Valley with a focus on the FVRD’s six member municipalities. Their purpose was to determine the need for affordable housing in the Fraser Valley, and to assess the strategies used to facilitate the development of affordable housing in these municipalities. Van Wyk et al. found that despite very low vacancy rates and unaffordable rents, approximately 25 percent of households in the Fraser Valley are rentals (2009, p. 15). Their research reaffirms that municipalities in the Fraser Valley have limitations on their abilities to provide housing directly, but they can enable the development of more affordable housing options. For example, the
municipalities used a variety of mechanisms to support secondary dwellings. These included implementing policies that allow secondary suites in most areas of the city, adopting a zoning bylaw that allows coach houses and garden cottages, introducing and supporting rental suites through zoning amendment, and creating a bylaw that allows suites in new homes (Van Wyk et al., 2009). Their recommendation was for the municipalities to “synchronize” their policies, regulations and bylaws so as to address affordable housing and homelessness at a regional level. As it stands, these municipalities continue to differ in their approaches.

2.4 Aging in Place

The Canadian population as a whole is aging. While plenty of research has been done on this phenomenon, according to Hodge (2008) there is limited research on what this means to communities and regions that are experiencing it. How this will be addressed will likely differ for urban versus rural populations, since rural seniors are more likely to have lower incomes, lower education levels, limited housing options, limited transportation, geographical barriers, and poor access to health care and other services (Hodge, 2008; Bascu et al., 2014).

According to Hodge, in 2001, 44 percent of Canadian seniors lived in cities with populations over 100,000, while 25 percent lived in communities with populations less than 10,000 (2008, p. 23). These statistics have likely increased over the last 15 years, as a significant proportion of Baby Boomers became seniors in 2011. Hodge expects that many rural communities will see seniors’ populations double, as “the profound tendency of seniors to age in place, in their own communities, will be the main source of this growth” (2008, p. 23). This increase is further offset by the out-migration of younger generations, as they leave for employment opportunities elsewhere (Hodge, 2008; Erickson, Call & Brown, 2012). Local
governments will need to find ways to address this demographic shift and plan for successful aging in place at the community level. Aging in place has been defined as “the ability to live in one’s own home and community safely, independently, and comfortably, regardless of age, income, or ability level” (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2013).

In Canada, housing for seniors’ has been categorized three ways. These include: 1) The construction of institutions and purpose-built housing; 2) The promotion of housing alternatives and maximization of housing choice; and, 3) Aging in place (Wister & Gutman, 1997, p. 20). While institutionalization in the form of nursing or care homes is still an option for older adults, this form of housing was most popular in the 1960s and 1970s (Wister & Gutman, 1997). Along with the cost of institutions, and improved health care and corresponding longer life expectancy, presently this form of housing is reserved for those in poorer health or for persons with disabilities. For seniors’ in good health, the preference is to live independently or semi-independently as long as they are capable. Departing from institutionalization, purpose-built housing was initially established for lower-income individuals (Wister & Gutman, 1997). It has become more popular and is widely available today in the form of retirement homes, seniors’ villages, or mobile home parks. Housing alternatives stray from the “traditional” single-family home, and offer individuals a “choice” to decide where, and how they will live out the rest of their lives. Beyond this, preference is to live independently and in the privacy of one’s own home. Aging in place is supported through live-in care, home adaptations or the addition of secondary dwellings that either house family members, or seniors’ themselves. This gradual shift from institutionalization to aging in place also mirrors decreased federal and provincial involvement in seniors’ housing (Wister & Gutman, 1997). As a result, local governments have
more responsibility to find ways to support seniors, including adopting programs and policies that allow for more flexible housing options.

Although there is an over-arching definition for aging in place in the literature, it is necessary to understand what it means and why it is important to seniors themselves. Bascu et al. (2014) explored the meanings, experiences, and perceptions of healthy aging in place among rural seniors. They found that compared to their urban counterparts, rural seniors have more barriers to aging in place as access and proximity to essential services is limited. Regardless, rural seniors emphasized the importance of their independence, specifically in having the ability to make their own decisions, living self-sufficiently, and having freedom over their lives (Bascu et al., 2014). To support the importance of independent living, Brinig (2015) found that while being close to family is important, grandparents that lived with their adult children often had declining health, while grandparents that lived close to their families, had improved health. Kulcsar and Bolender (2006) also found that rural seniors in Kansas preferred to live as independently as possible to maintain their quality of life. Of course, this independence relies on family support, social networks, accessible housing, transportation, and local services (Kulcsar & Bolender, 2006). In similar research, Cook et al. (2005) were told by rural seniors that their current home was where they would “always live”. This desire to age in place comes from “strong psychological attachment and a sense of familiarity that develops after years of living in a particular setting” (Ewen et al., 2014, p. 306). Staying in familiar social and physical environments is thought to be a “successful coping” mechanism that maintains “continuity” for seniors (Cook et al., 2005, p. 89). Accordingly, seniors seek internal and external continuity, and aging in place is the strategy that they use to maintain it.
The question is, how best to support this continuity? Many seniors own their homes, and these homes tend to be older, often requiring maintenance (Planit Solutions, 2010). This poses a problem for rural seniors, who often do not have the financial means to undertake maintenance or renovation costs. As well, there is a general lack of long-term or rental housing in rural areas for seniors (Cook et al., 2005). This makes it difficult for those who can no longer afford their homes, or who have difficulty with accessibility. These issues, along with the increasing seniors’ population in rural areas, amount to a growing need for housing alternatives (Ewen et al., 2014). Secondary dwellings have been identified as one tool to provide seniors with affordable, accessible, and adequate housing. They also contribute to independent living, while improving family connections between seniors (grandparents) and their families (Brinig, 2015). There is a need for policies that support seniors’ and aging in place, and local government are the authority in which these policies can be created.
3.0 Planning Policy in British Columbia

3.1 Regional Growth Strategy

The purpose of a regional growth strategy (RGS) is to establish broad, long-range planning direction for local governments that meet provincial land use objectives. In consultation with their member municipalities, regional districts may adopt an RGS that will “promote human settlement that is socially, economically and environmentally healthy and that makes efficient use of public facilities and services, land and other resources” (Local Government Act [LGA], S. 428.1). Section 428.2 of the Local Government Act (LGA) further outlines the content that must be included within an RGS. Integral to this research paper, an RGS must include strategies that work towards:

- Avoiding urban sprawl and ensuring development is located where it can make efficient use of facilities;
- Providing adequate, affordable and appropriate housing (LGA, S. 428.2.a & h).

Additionally, an RGS must be written to address at least 20 years moving forward from its origin and include regional strategies in relation to housing, transportation, services, parks and natural areas, and economic development (LGA, S. 429.2.c.i-v).

3.2 Official Community Plans

In British Columbia, the LGA sets out provisions for local governments to develop and adopt official community plans (OCP). Under Section 473 of the LGA, an OCP is a “statement of objectives and policies to guide decisions on planning and land use management within the area covered by the plan…” (Buholzer, 2014, p. 6-3). OCPs establish over-arching goals and
objectives for current and future growth and land use development, and establish policies for those land uses. Land use policies include those related to residential development and housing, natural resources, agriculture, infrastructure, public services, heritage, and development permit areas (Bish & Clemens, 2008). Zoning bylaws implement OCP policies through zoning and regulations.

The LGA identifies mandatory content of an OCP; several of which relate to the secondary dwellings. These include:

- **Land Use and Infrastructure Policies** – including the location, amount, type, and density of residential neighbourhoods in order to meet housing needs over a minimum 5-year period;

- **Housing Policies** – related to affordable housing, rental housing, and special needs housing (Buholzer, 2014, p. 6-5).

Although the LGA requires that OCPs include housing policies, it does not define these terms, thus leaving interpretation up to the local government. Since discretion for these terms falls into the hands of local governments, they can determine what characterizes “affordable” housing or who has “special needs” within their jurisdiction (Buholzer, 2014, p. 6-5).

### 3.3 Zoning Bylaws

While OCPs establish broad policies for land use and development, zoning bylaws regulate and determine the specific details related to those uses. The relationship between OCPs and zoning bylaws can be described as the vision (the OCP) and the implementation tool (zoning bylaw). OCPs are not actionable and are meant to be broad, while zoning bylaws are implementable and
detailed (Buholzer, 2014, p. 6-1). It goes without saying that zoning bylaws must be consistent with OCPs.

The LGA grants the authority to local governments to divide its land into zones and regulate the uses within those zones (Buholzer, 2014, p. 7-4). More specifically, through zoning bylaws local governments may identify which *uses* are permitted in a zone (i.e. single family residential use) and which *buildings* are permitted (i.e. single family dwelling) (Buholzer, 2014, p. 7-16). According to the LGA, local governments may also regulate density; the siting, size and dimensions of buildings and structures; and the locations of uses on the land within buildings (LGA, S. 479.1.c).
4.0 Case Study Methodology

This research focused on the Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) and its ongoing Secondary Dwellings study. A review of the following data and literature were used: academic and professional literature, local government reports and policies (including zoning bylaws and official community plans), housing data, and preliminary results from a public survey conducted by the FVRD. The goal of the research is to provide recommendations to the FVRD in developing policies to establish secondary dwellings as a permitted use within its EA boundaries. The case study includes the following: 1) a background on the FVRD EAs, and a description of the FVRD’s population and age demographics; 2) a comprehensive review of current FVRD policies; 3) a review of the policies and regulations of other regional districts in B.C.; 4) a review of the FVRD’s member municipalities policies and regulations; and 5) an analysis of the key challenges that FVRD planning staff will need to address during policy development.

4.1 About the Fraser Valley Regional District

The Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) was created in 1995, following the amalgamation of the Central Fraser Valley, Dewdney-Alouette, and Fraser-Cheam regional districts (Bish & Clemens, 2008). It is located an hour and a half from the City of Vancouver, along the eastern border of Metro Vancouver (formerly the Greater Vancouver Regional District or GVRD). To the south it adjoins the USA border, to the north it reaches up the Fraser River Canyon past Boston Bar to meet the Thompson-Nicola Regional District, and to the west it flanks the Okanagan-Similkameen Regional District. The FVRD’s land base is 13,361 km² (FVRD, 2014, p. 5). A map of the FVRD can be seen in Map 1.
The FVRD is comprised of eight Electoral Areas (“A” through “H”), and six member municipalities: City of Abbotsford, City of Chilliwack, District of Mission, District of Hope, District of Kent (Agassiz), and Village of Harrison Hot Springs. The Electoral Areas (EA) are comprised of the unincorporated areas and rural communities outside of the member municipalities. The EAs encompass large land areas with small populations, diverse environmental conditions, and varied needs. Lots in the EAs include large rural parcels, agricultural land, seasonal resorts, suburban development, and remote villages (FVRD, 2015b, p. 4). Despite being one of the larger regional districts in BC, developable land is limited due to environmental and topographical constraints, including mountains, river valleys, hazardous areas, and the Agricultural Land Reserve (FVRD, 2011, p. 3).

Map 1: Map of the Fraser Valley Regional District

Source: http://www.fvrd.ca/EN/main/about-the-fvrd/electoral-areas.html
4.1.1 Local Government Role

Regional districts in BC have two general responsibilities. They provide regional governance and services to the entire region, and operate in an administrative and local government role for their unincorporated areas (British Columbia Ministry of Community Services [MCS], 2006, p. 6). As the local government for its rural areas, the FVRD provides the following services: land use planning and regulation, building inspection, bylaw enforcement, water and sewer servicing, and solid waste management (MCS, 2006, p. 5). The FVRD Planning Department balances planning for sparsely populated rural areas, agricultural areas, and medium-density suburban communities.

4.1.2 Population

Based on the 2011 Census, the FVRD has a total population of 296,414 (FVRD, 2015b, p. 4). The EA population makes up close to 3.5 percent of this population at 9,905 (FVRD, 2015b, p. 13). Due to its close proximity to the rapidly expanding region of Metro Vancouver, the FVRD’s population is expected to increase to 444,000 by 2041 (FVRD, 2014, p. 5). Ninety (90) percent of this growth is expected to occur within the Regional Growth Boundaries, while 10 percent is expected within the surrounding rural areas of the FVRD (FVRD, 2014, p. 24). Currently, population growth is unequally distributed between the EAs, and it is likely this trend will continue into the future. This is a result of a lack of economic opportunities and services in some areas, and growth in others because of their closer proximity to urban areas.
4.1.3 Age Demographics

Similar to trends seen across Canada and British Columbia, the FVRD’s population is aging. This trend is even more evident in its EAs. While the median age of the entire FVRD was under 40 in 2011, the EA population as a whole was over 40 – with half having a median age over 50 (seen in Table 1) (FVRD, 2015b, p. 13). There are several reasons for this – a decline in employment opportunities motivates younger generations to move to more urban areas, those that chose to stay behind are typically older, and in some cases, rural areas attract aging residents looking for a quieter setting to grow old.

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*E and H split in 2014

Source: FVRD (2015b)

To understand the implications of this trend, the FVRD conducted an in-depth analysis of its EA population in 2015. The analysis revealed that 37 percent of the residents in the EAs are over the
age of 55, and the age group between 55 and 64 has increased by 49 percent from 2001 to 2011 (FVRD, 2015b, p. 8). Table 1 summarizes the information provided in the FVRD’s analysis. This information is useful to FVRD planning staff in developing policies for its EAs as it clearly shows that planning for aging populations now and into the future is essential.

As the EA populations continue to age, this will have implications on community requirements, such as housing, and on the services the FVRD offers (FVRD, 2015b). First, housing needs of rural seniors are a challenge, since most have older homes that require maintenance, accessibility is often not suitable for persons with disabilities, and upgrading can be expensive (FVRD, 2015b). This puts undue stress on aging populations. Second, the FVRD charges community water and sewer servicing in some of its communities based on usage. Generally, the EAs have lower income levels than the regional average (FVRD, 2015b). As younger generations relocate to urban areas, the cost of servicing falls into the hands of lower income seniors, which is simply not sustainable.

4.2 Housing

Housing in Metro Vancouver is one of the most expensive in Canada, if not the most expensive (FVRD, 2011). As its direct neighbour to the east, the FVRD has maintained more affordable housing prices when compared to Metro Vancouver, but it is still experiencing an increase – both for homeowners and renters (FVRD, 2011). Spillover from Metro Vancouver should not come as a surprise. According to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the average price of a single-family dwelling in Abbotsford-Mission has gone up 26 percent over the last year (October 2015 to October 2016), from $377,636 to $475,844 (CMHC, 2016b, p. 8). Comparatively, the provincial average over the last year increased 13.8 percent (CMHC, 2016b, p. 8). In that same
time period, rental prices for one- and two-bedroom rentals in Abbotsford-Mission have increased 1 percent. What is more, the 0.9 percent vacancy rate may be a telling statistic on the current rental market (CMHC, 2016b, p. 11). Vacancy rates that are below 2 percent make it difficult for low-income renters to find housing (FVRD, 2011). Although these statistics are for Abbotsford-Mission, they reflect the pressures that FVRD residents are experiencing, and are likely to continue to experience. Continual demand for land and housing in the Lower Mainland as the population grows will continue to put pressure on housing affordability (Van Wyk et al., 2009). Since there are physical barriers in the EAs (such as mountains and geotechnical hazards), it is increasingly important that the FVRD develop a policy framework that supports affordable and diverse housing options for its residents, especially as local populations grow.
5.0 Case Study Results and Discussion

5.1 Regional District Policy Review

Regional districts in B.C. govern large land masses with diverse natural environments and communities. While their governance roles are the same across the province, they apply their authority in a variety of ways to meet the needs of their residents (Bish & Clemens, 2008). This can be demonstrated by the ways in which regional districts address secondary dwellings. In total, there are twenty-eight (28) regional districts in British Columbia, including the FVRD. An analysis of each regional district’s zoning bylaw was conducted to determine the following: 1) if they permit secondary dwellings within their jurisdiction, 2) the implementation method, and 3) which form of secondary dwelling they allow. Appendix A provides the complete results of the regional district zoning bylaw review.

The analysis determined that twenty-three (23) regional districts have adopted policies that permit secondary dwellings as a use. These results illustrate that the FVRD should consider changing its current policies. Other than the FVRD, there are four other regional districts that do not permit secondary dwellings: Kitimat-Stikine, Skeena-Queen Charlotte, Mt. Waddington, and Powell River. It is noted that the Powell River Regional District does have policies within its OCP that support secondary suites.

The analysis also determined there are a variety of implementation methods used by other regional districts to accommodate secondary dwellings. These include:

1) *Official community plan amendment*
Many regional districts have policies or objectives that support affordable housing and infill development. Secondary dwellings are routinely associated with these objectives. This option identifies the need for secondary dwellings and supports them, but does not implement them on the land.

2) Site specific rezoning

There are two ways for a rezoning to be accomplished: through a map amendment and through a text amendment. A map amendment applies to a single property. In this scenario, an individual property owner would apply for a rezoning of their individual property, and consideration is made for that property and its neighbours. A text amendment involves re-writing a bylaw so that a change is made to an entire zone. In both options, a rezoning would prompt a public hearing.

a. Rezoned to become its own zone

An alternative to the above option, this option requires a homeowner to apply to have their property rezoned to an “s” or “secondary dwelling” version of the current zone. All other regulations remain the same in the zone, except that a secondary dwelling would now be permitted on the property. This method also includes a public hearing process.

3) Outright permitted use

This option creates a simple and consistent approach that reduces the workload of planning staff. It is also a more straightforward approach for residents, who would need only to apply for a building permit for a secondary dwelling on their property. This is a method that is used successfully by Comox Valley Regional District. What is integral to this option is that it does not limit anyone. There are two alternatives to permitting secondary dwellings outright, including:
a. **Outright permitted use in specific areas**

This method identifies the most suitable areas (or neighbourhoods) to accommodate an additional residence based on specific requirements. For example, this has been accomplished on Salt Spring Island where secondary dwellings are permitted based on their accessibility to public transit routes and to avoid environmentally-sensitive areas (Islands Trust, 2016). Other requirements could include permitting secondary dwellings in areas where lot sizes are large enough to accommodate a detached suite or where community water and sewer systems have the capacity to provide adequate servicing to additional residences.

b. **Outright permitted use in specific zones**

This is the most common implementation method favoured by other regional districts. This demonstrates that it may be the most appropriate process as it reduces the burden on staff and is a more straightforward and equitable process for landowners. The zones that most often include secondary dwellings as permitted uses are rural, agricultural, and residential zones.

4) **Temporary Use Permit or Variance**

The Columbia-Shuswap Regional District encourages homeowners to apply for a temporary use permit, in place of rezoning. This method may not be preferable since it would require revisiting once the permit expires. In Thompson-Nicola Regional District, a homeowner can apply for a use variance in order to accommodate a secondary dwelling. This increases staff time, as well.

Additionally, the policy review determined there are three common forms of secondary dwellings permitted by regional districts:

- Secondary suites - contained within, or attached to the primary building;
- Carriage or coach houses – located above an accessory building such as a garage; and,
- Detached, stand-alone garden suites also referred to as a granny flat or guest cottage.

Of the 23 regional districts that permit secondary dwellings, five (5) permit all three forms with no preference. Six (6) of the regional districts permit a secondary suite contained within the primary residence or a secondary dwelling above an accessory building. Eleven (11) regional districts limit secondary dwellings to secondary suites that must be contained or attached to the primary dwelling. One (1) regional district permits guest cottages only, and does not permit suites. Beyond the scope of this research, it may be useful for the FVRD to explore why specific forms are permitted in some regional districts, and why some are not. For example, in areas prone to flood or erosion hazards, it may not be suitable to permit a basement suite.

These results clearly show that most regional districts have determined there is a need for housing forms that differ from traditional single-family dwellings, and support secondary dwellings in their policies. Regional districts in B.C. share commonalities in the services they provide to their urban, suburban, and rural communities; because of this they can offer guidance to each other in decision-making and policy development. The results of the analysis are relevant to the FVRD as it continues its Secondary Dwellings study. Frankly, they have the opportunity to update their policies to reflect demand, or to not make changes and maintain the ‘status quo’. While other regional districts have established policies that reflect the demand for affordable and alternative housing options, it would appear to be timely for the FVRD to make changes to its policies as well.
5.2 Member Municipality Policy Review

All of the member municipalities in the FVRD include policies that permit secondary dwellings within their boundaries. However, they differ in the ways they define secondary dwellings, in the forms they permit, and by the processes they use to establish them. A review of each member municipality’s policies can better inform FVRD planning staff and offer guidance on how best to establish secondary dwellings as a permitted use. Additionally, since the member municipalities share commonalities with the EAs, borrowing from them might be useful in policy development.

City of Abbotsford

The FVRD’s largest municipality, the City of Abbotsford, includes policies related to secondary dwellings in both its OCP and zoning bylaw. As part of its goals to increase density using “gentle” infill development, the OCP has policies that support the development of accessory units (Bylaw No. 2600, 2016, Part II). Within its zoning bylaw, secondary suites (within a principal dwelling) are permitted in seven of the eleven residential zones, and most of the agricultural and rural zones; coach houses (located on the second storey of an accessory building) are limited to the Rural, Country, and Suburban Residential zones, and the Compact Lot Coach House Residential Zone (Bylaw No. 2400, 2014). Interested homeowners must apply for a building permit within zones that permit secondary dwellings, or apply for rezoning where they are not. Additionally, Abbotsford’s OCP has provisions that support granny flats, but currently their zoning bylaw does not.

Within Section 140.5 of the zoning bylaw, both secondary suites and coach houses are exempt from the density calculation of the lot. This is noteworthy since increasing densification through infill development is identified as one of the motivating factors for implementing
policies that support secondary dwellings in Abbotsford. In a sense, this may be a good thing, because Abbotsford is increasing its population density within its built environment.

**City of Chilliwack**

The FVRD’s second largest municipality, the City of Chilliwack encourages accessory dwelling units within its OCP to provide affordable housing options to a variety of residents and to increase density (Bylaw No. 4025, 2014, p. 65). Within its zoning bylaw, Chilliwack permits accessory dwelling units in the form of secondary suites, garden suites, and coach houses. Secondary suites are permitted in the Agriculture Residential, Rural Hillside, Rural, Rural Residential and One Family Residential zones, while garden suites and coach houses are limited to the One Family Residential zone (Bylaw No. 2800, 2001). These uses are subject to zoning, and landowners wishing to rent must apply for a business license. Additionally, Chilliwack permits temporary accessory dwellings that are restricted to the following user groups: farm employees or partners, relatives, or for personal care use (S. 6.02).

**District of Mission**

The District of Mission uses the most direct language of all of the member municipalities in its OCP to support secondary dwelling units (SDU). In its OCP, Mission supports SDUs in policies directed at affordability, accessibility, rentals, seniors, and special needs housing (Bylaw No. 4052, 2008, Policy 2.5, p. 54). The OCP also includes consideration of site specific rezoning for an SDU on Rural or Rural Residential-designated properties (Policy 2.3.3, p. 50); consideration of development proposals for single-family residences with SDUs on a site-specific basis (Policy 2.3.7, p. 50-51); and, encourages “secondary dwelling units as a form of infill housing” (Policy 2.4.4, p. 53). The District of Mission permits SDUs through a rezoning process. Secondary
suites, coach houses, and garden cottages are all considered SDUs within the zoning bylaw, and are permitted within some of the rural zones, and most of the rural, suburban, and urban residential zones. To permit the SDU, the rezoning process changes the zone into an “s” version of itself.

**District of Hope**

The District of Hope’s OCP includes language that supports the appropriateness of secondary suites, granny flats and “similar housing forms” to provide affordable housing options (Bylaw No. 1147, 2014, S. 6.2, p. 7). Within its zoning bylaw, secondary dwellings include, but are not limited to the following: coach house, carriage house, garden cottage, granny flat, mother-in-law house or pool house (Bylaw No. 1324, 2012). Like Mission, Hope requires rezoning to the “secondary dwelling” version of the residential zone. Correspondingly, Hope permits secondary suites (contained within the single-family residence) through a rezoning to a “secondary suite” version of the residential zone.

**District of Kent (Agassiz)**

The District of Kent supports the development of secondary suites within its affordable housing policies in its OCP (Bylaw No. 1508, 2014) and zoning bylaw. Secondary suites are permitted as an auxiliary use in the Agricultural, Small Lot Agricultural, Rural Residential, Lake Area Residential, and Single-Family Residential zones (Bylaw No. 1219, 2001). In 2014, Kent amended its bylaw (No. 1509, 2014) to permit secondary dwellings (separate from the principal dwelling), as an alternative to secondary suites, in the Single-Dwelling and Secondary Dwelling Residential zone.
**Village of Harrison Hot Springs**

The smallest member municipality in the FVRD, Harrison Hot Springs encourages infill development within its urban lands, density bonusing, and the provision of affordable, rental and special needs housing within its OCP (Bylaw No. 864, 2007, S. 6.3.3). Its zoning bylaw permits secondary suites within the single detached dwelling as an accessory use in the Low Density Residential (Duplex) zone only (Bylaw No. 1020, 2013, S. VI.3).

**5.3 Fraser Valley Regional District Policy Review**

It has been noted that existing planning policies and regulations for the FVRD’s EAs do not allow secondary dwellings as a permitted use, except under specific circumstances (FVRD, 2015a). Compared to neighbouring regional districts and the FVRD’s member municipalities, this has been identified as a gap in its policies. Planning staff has proposed making changes to these policies and regulations in order to provide more affordable housing options and to facilitate successful aging in place (FVRD, 2015a). A review of all relevant policies and regulations will provide a clear understanding of what is currently permitted, and identify where revisions may need to occur.

**5.3.1 Fraser Valley Future 2014 – 2041**

The FVRD’s Regional Growth Strategy (RGS), titled “Fraser Valley Future 2014-2041”, is currently in draft form. The RGS includes broad objectives that focus mostly on the urban areas of the FVRD. The RGS considers “transit, housing, parks, economic development, and environmental issues from a regional perspective with the goal of creating healthy, sustainable communities” (FVRD, 2014, p. 4). In keeping with smart growth principles to avoid urban sprawl, the RGS promotes concentrated growth to its urban centres. It encourages infill
development, redevelopment, densification, and mixed uses to create compact and complete communities (2014, S. 3.1.b). In respect to its rural communities, the RGS promotes concentrated growth in existing rural areas to “encourage compact, energy efficient development that minimizes infrastructure and development costs” (2014, S. 3.2.a). From a rural perspective, directing growth to urban centres does not accommodate rural communities and their needs. Rural communities require more population to justify servicing and transit, for schools to stay open, and for businesses to succeed. The question then arises – how do they balance smart growth principles and the concept of compact, complete communities with rural populations and their needs? It is likely the addition of secondary dwellings to rural areas will contribute only slightly to population growth. But, they can make use of existing infrastructure more efficiently, even warrant expansion of servicing, and offer previously unavailable housing choices to residents wishing to stay in their rural communities. While directing growth to urban areas is a good practice in protecting natural environment and agricultural areas, policies should also accommodate current residents and encourage minor growth in rural communities.

To address Section 428.2.h of the Local Government Act, the RGS states that it will “ensure housing choice for residents of all ages, ability, and incomes by promoting diversity and adaptability of new housing developments” (2014, S. 3.4.b). By planning for diverse forms of housing, the FVRD can ensure that “demand for accessible, affordable, and adaptable housing is met in the future” (FVRD, 2014, p. 24). Secondary dwellings surely fit this strategic plan’s purpose, as they have shown to offer not only affordable housing options, but also accessibility to all ages, physical abilities, and income levels.
5.3.2 Electoral Area Official Community Plans

To gain an understanding of the current policies related to secondary dwellings, a review of the FVRD’s Official Community Plans (OCP) was conducted. To date, the FVRD has nine OCPs, with a tenth plan in progress (FVRD, 2016a). The OCPs are separated by EA, with a few exceptions. Map 2 provides an overview of the boundaries for each OCP.

Map 2: Fraser Valley Regional District OCP Bylaw Boundaries

Source: FVRD GIS Department
It is noted that several of the OCP’s include general policies that permit accessory dwellings. Accessory dwellings are permitted in two ways:

1. For farm and campground employees, or for the care of a relative;
2. On parcels larger than the minimum parcel size for subdivisions (typically in Limited Use and Rural land use designations).

Almost all of the FVRD’s OCPs, except two, include the aforementioned second dwellings in the Plan’s general policies. The complete results of the OCP review can be found in Appendix B.

Home to the smallest population in the FVRD, one of the Area “A” Plan’s objectives is to encourage permanent residency by increasing affordable housing and home ownership opportunities within its communities (Bylaw No. 804, S. 3.0). The objective is more clearly addressed in Section 9.5, Affordable Housing. This policy states that, “Pursuant to Section 945 (2.1) of the Municipal Act, the Board intends, with community cooperation, to undertake a pro-active program to insure an adequate supply of affordable and rental housing in the Plan area” (S. 9.5, p. 1). This Plan clearly supports the addition of affordable and/or alternative housing forms, which may include secondary dwellings.

The Area “B” Bylaw No. 150 includes language that supports in-fill development by using the vacant lots within the community of Yale (S. 4.1). For the most part, these lots are small (less than 700m²); therefore careful consideration of on-site sewage disposal is integral to development. Although this policy supports in-fill development, and secondary dwellings are often used as a form of in-fill development, these lands may not be suitable due to the servicing concerns of the smaller lots. This would need to be addressed further.
Encompassing one of the more unique areas of the FVRD, Bylaw No. 30 includes Hemlock Valley, a local ski resort and community. The Plan currently supports “accessory employee residential use” within its Cottage Residential designation (S. 3.4.1.A). As well, within the Cottage Residential designation, a broader policy exists that includes meeting housing demand for permanent, semi-permanent, and seasonal residents through a “variety of housing types and innovative housing approaches” (S. 4.1.3, p. 45). This OCP is currently undergoing review, as the ski resort expansion plan proceeds. The expectation is that Hemlock Valley will become a year-round resort, increasing its permanent and semi-permanent population (including resort employees) and seasonal visitors. In some cases, secondary dwellings could be suitable to meet the needs of the expanding resort.

While population is increasing in Area “D”, it has one of the smaller total land areas in the FVRD. As a result, its Plan focuses on the ability of its land to accommodate additional housing (Bylaw No. 200, S. 4.3.1). Two policies stand out in relation to secondary dwellings. First, the Agricultural designation permits additional dwellings for farm employees, pursuant to Section 18(1) of the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) Act (S. 3.5). Second, the Suburban Residential designation encourages high-density development due to the limited supply of suitable land (S. 4.3.1). The emphasis in this policy is to support a broad range of residential development to develop the area’s potential, which could include secondary dwellings.

Revised in 2011, the Area “E” Bylaw No. 1115 has the most direct language related to secondary dwellings. To meet demand as this Area continues to grow, the Plan anticipates that additional housing will be necessary, and includes policies that support this. Secondary dwellings are supported by the following policies:
• Meeting housing needs through infill development of existing hamlets (S. 4.2.1),
• Permitting second dwellings in areas designated as Agricultural, Limited Use, Rural, and Suburban Residential (S. 4.2.2),
• Making changes to zoning provisions for ‘Accessory Family Residential Use’ that allow the caregiver to live in the accessory residence (rather than the primary residence) (S. 4.2.3),
• Exploring opportunities for alternative housing forms including garden suites, carriage houses, secondary suites, and second residences (S. 4.2.5),
• Exploring the feasibility of alternative housing forms by assessing land use and zoning regulations, servicing requirements, location of secondary housing, and siting considerations (S. 4.2.6).

The Area “F” Bylaw No. 999 includes general policies related to addressing housing needs through infill development (S. 4.2.1). This includes the development of new dwellings on existing vacant lots and subdivision of land that meet density requirements. There is potential for secondary dwellings to be included in this section of the Plan, where suitable.

The oldest OCP, the Area “B” and “C” Bylaw No. 800 underwent a review in 2014. The emphasis in this Plan is to support rural lifestyles, particularly in its agricultural areas. Other than the general policy permitting second dwellings, this Plan does not use language related to secondary dwellings. Similarly, Area “G” Bylaw No. 866 and Area “C” Bylaw No. 20 do not include further language related to secondary dwellings or affordable housing.

Although several of the OCPs have policies that address topics related to secondary dwellings – affordable housing, second dwellings, and the like, currently only one OCP (Bylaw No. 1115) has language that encourages the use of secondary dwellings that align with the research purpose. In proceeding with its Secondary Dwellings study, the FVRD has the opportunity to include objectives within its OCPs that address housing needs. Amendments to
the OCP in support of secondary dwellings would provide a pathway for its zoning bylaws to establish the use on the land.

5.3.3 Electoral Area Zoning Bylaws

As discussed, the purpose of the Secondary Dwellings study is to determine whether a change to FVRD policies and regulations to permit secondary dwellings is needed. Currently, the EA zoning bylaws do not permit secondary dwellings, except under specific circumstances. To understand what is currently permitted, an analysis of the FVRD’s nine zoning bylaws was conducted. Map 3 shows the boundary for each of the zoning bylaw.

Map 3: Fraser Valley Regional District Zoning Bylaw Boundaries

Source: FVRD GIS Department
For the most part, the zoning bylaws share similar definitions, but some may vary slightly. Found in the Definition section of the zoning bylaws, the uses permitted in the FVRD are:

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<th><strong>Accessory Caretaker Residence Use:</strong> means the use of a dwelling unit for the accommodation of an employee or employees employed on the same parcel as the principal dwelling (Bylaw No. 100, p. 1-1).</th>
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<td><strong>Accessory Employee Residential Use:</strong> means a use accessory to a FARM USE, CAMPGROUND USE, or HOLIDAY PARK USE where a building is used for one dwelling unit for the accommodation of an employee or employees employed on the same lot as that on which the use occurs (Bylaw No. 66, p. 1). (*alternatively): means the use of a residence as an accessory use to a General Agricultural Use or an Intensive Agricultural Use and where the residence is occupied by a person employed in the agricultural activity taking place on that parcel (Bylaw. 559, p. 1)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Accessory Family Residential Use:</strong> means the use of a single-width manufactured home as a dwelling unit for the accommodation of the father, mother, father-in-law, mother-in-law or grandparent of an owner of the parcel (Bylaw No. 559, p. 1).</td>
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<td><strong>Personal Care Use:</strong> means a use involving the provision of care or assistance, for reasons of age or infirmity, of a person who resides on the same lot (Bylaw No. 823, p. 9).</td>
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<td><strong>Second Residence Use:</strong> means a residential use located in an approved mobile home which is accessory to a principal campground or farm use, or which is a personal care use (Bylaw No. 823, p. 11).</td>
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<td><strong>Two-Family Residential Use:</strong> means a Residential Use where the building on a lot is used only for two dwelling units, each of which is occupied or intended to be occupied as the home or residence of one family (Bylaw No. 85, p. 1-13).</td>
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</table>

As demonstrated by the definitions above, the FVRD allows second residences on lots, with conditions. There may be conditions on who can reside within the second (or accessory) dwelling, the duration of stay, the building type, and minimum parcel size. For example, for personal care use, the following restrictions apply: the residence is to be a mobile home (often on a temporary foundation), the occupant of the mobile home must be the person who requires care, and the owner must provide annual certification from a physician stating that the care is
necessary (Bylaw No. 66, S. 3.1.2.c). Additionally, for an accessory employee residential use, the resident must be directly involved in the operation of the farm, and the lot must be classified as a “Farm” by the B.C. Assessment Authority (Bylaw No. 75, S. 3.d). Accessory employee residential uses related to campgrounds or holiday parks typically have a minimum campsite count to support an employee residence on the property. These uses are not permitted uniformly between the EAs. Table 2 displays where these uses are permitted within each of the FVRD’s EA zoning bylaws. As shown on Table 2, all of the EAs, excluding one (Area G, Bylaw No. 500), permit accessory dwellings within their boundaries.

Table 2: Permitted Uses in the FVRD Electoral Area Zoning Bylaws

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zoning Bylaw</th>
<th>Accessory Caretaker Residence</th>
<th>Accessory Employee Residence</th>
<th>Accessory Family Residence</th>
<th>Personal Care</th>
<th>Second Residence</th>
<th>Two-Family Residential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area A, Bylaw 823</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area B, Bylaw 85</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Area B, Bylaw 90</td>
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<tr>
<td>Area B, Bylaw 801</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area C, Bylaw 100</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>Area D, Bylaw 75</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area E, Bylaw 66</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area G, Bylaw 500</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Area CFG, Bylaw 559</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

x = permitted, - = not permitted
5.4 Common Concerns

As part of its public consultation strategy for its Secondary Dwellings study, the FVRD conducted a public survey from August to October 2016. The survey was used to determine resident interest and to identify the most pressing concerns residents may have in relation to secondary dwellings. Preliminary results were presented to the Electoral Areas Services Committee (EASC) in a report in November 2016 (FVRD, 2016b). Elsewhere, local governments have encountered these concerns during similar public consultation processes. As well, local government reports provide recommendations on how best to address these concerns. The FVRD may find these useful in addressing these concerns moving forward.

**Parking**

One of the most frequently cited concerns in the survey was parking (FVRD, 2016b). Resident concerns over how secondary dwellings will impact neighbourhood parking was also cited by other local governments (MCAWS, 2005). Understandably, parking is more of a concern in higher density areas with small lots and limited on-street parking.

To address this concern, other local governments include provisions in their bylaws that require at least one additional off-street parking space on properties with a secondary dwelling (MCAWS, 2005). Wishing to reduce resident concerns and bylaw enforcement files, the Regional District of Nanaimo requires that **two** additional off-street parking spaces be required on lots with secondary dwellings (Bylaw No. 500, 2014). In the City of Maple Ridge a parking covenant is required by the homeowner who must provide one off-street parking space (Bylaw No. 3510, 1985, S. 402.11.f).
There are three considerations on this topic. First, local governments do not have the authority to limit the amount of vehicles homeowners can own. This is not something that can be regulated. Including a requirement for an additional off-street space does not address situations where a homeowner has multiple vehicles. Second, residents who live in secondary dwellings on average have fewer cars than those living in single-family dwellings (CMHC, 2016a). This is particularly true for senior residents who no longer drive, or where public transit has expanded. Third, for the most part complaints over parking are associated with unauthorized suites, where landowners have not entered into an agreement to provide off-street parking spaces (FVRD, 2015a). There will continue to be ongoing issues with parking as long as illegal suites exist. In most municipalities where a secondary dwelling has been registered, the landowner is required to provide that space for their tenant.

**Traffic**

A separate but related concern is over an increase in local traffic (FVRD, 2016b). This is far more of a concern for more heavily populated suburban neighbourhoods in the EAs, such as Popkum, Rosedale, and Cultus Lake Park. No doubt that adding residents to an area will add to the local vehicle traffic. But, as mentioned earlier, uptake for secondary dwellings in the EAs will likely be minimal, and there is no way to predict how much traffic will result. What is known is that residents in the EAs rely primarily on vehicle transportation because of the location and distance from services. Without the general population numbers to support businesses, services, and public transportation, it is difficult to decrease vehicle transportation. Also, roads in the EAs are owned and managed by the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI). Any major improvements to roads are the responsibility of MOTI, and to justify improvements, a traffic study will need to be undertaken. FVRD staff made note of this
issue in an earlier report to EASC regarding secondary dwellings. The conclusion in this report was that additional traffic was “not necessarily specific to secondary dwellings”, and was in fact a “growth-related concern” in general (FVRD, 2015a).

**Servicing**

Most properties in the EAs have on-site sewage and water systems (FVRD, 2015a). An important concern for residents in these areas is whether on-site servicing can accommodate an additional dwelling (FVRD, 2016b). This will be a difficult concern to address, and one that the FVRD will certainly need to give considerable attention to. Other regional districts with similar (rural) properties address this concern in several ways. For lots that have onsite water and sewer systems, it is the duty of the homeowner to ensure the existing system has the capacity to service additional residents (Comox Valley Regional District, 2005). They may require proof from a wastewater practitioner or licensed professional to ensure the system is safe and sufficient (North Okanagan Regional District, 2003), while others rely solely on the servicing requirements set by their local Health Authority (Thompson-Nicola Regional District, 2012). Health Authorities in B.C. set strict minimum lot sizes for additional dwellings, and this may make it difficult for some properties to accommodate a secondary dwelling in this respect.

For lots connected to community servicing systems, the concern is whether it will have the capacity for increased demand when adding more residents. The CMHC (2016a) has found that secondary dwellings do not generally place an extra burden on existing municipal services. It is anticipated that secondary dwellings in the FVRD EAs would only contribute a small amount to the population growth. As shown in Table 1, some of the EAs are experiencing population decline and growth is not overly rapid. The addition of secondary dwellings and,
consequently the addition of residents, would be a better use of existing servicing and infrastructure in these locations.

Another concern for servicing includes the fairness of costing for additional residents on properties. This would only apply to properties connected to community water and sewer systems. The most common and straightforward solution to this concern is to charge for additional usage, something already carried out in the FVRD. Elsewhere, servicing is levied per residential unit, and costs would simply double with an additional residential unit (Town of Comox, 2015). Concerning on-site servicing, the cost of constructing a new system or expanding an existing system is the responsibility of the homeowner and may actually be a deterrent.

**Impact on Neighbourhood Character**

Concerns over how secondary dwellings will impact neighbourhood character were cited by both survey respondents (FVRD, 2016b) and by other local governments (MCAWS, 2005). Particularly, residents expressed concern over the introduction of low-income or transient renters to their neighbourhoods as a result. This concern will be difficult to address, and it is not the local government’s role to change its residents’ opinions. It is useful to remember that residents do not have control over who buys a property or who rents next to them. This is out of anyone’s control. But, these concerns often stem from unregulated and illegal suites, and local governments can contribute in this regard through enforcement measures. Unfortunately, this issue will continue to exist since most local governments have limited enforcement staffing.

Rollwagen (2015) examined the stigma surrounding renters and rental housing. While renters are considered to be disorderly and unstable; homeowners are perceived to be responsible and to positively contribute to their neighbourhoods. Rollwagen found that in purchasing a
property, “homeowners are thought to be making a more significant financial investment into a
eighbourhood: whereas renters are only required to invest in a property for the duration of a
lease agreement…” (2015, p. 5). Considered to be in the neighbourhood on a temporary basis,
general acceptance is often difficult, and social interactions between renters and homeowners are
limited. Ultimately, this reinforces a general

In Rollwagen’s research, neighbours
did not consider the landlord’s responsibility
in choosing renters or in maintaining the
property. To address these concerns, some
local governments require “owner
occupancy”, in either the primary dwelling or
the secondary dwelling. The expectation is
that by having the owner living on the
property, maintenance will be current and
that renters will be less inclined to create a
nuisance. The City of Maple Ridge currently
requires that the homeowner enter into an
agreement to reside on the property (Bylaw
3510, 1985, S. 402.8.e). Owner occupancy
has become less popular as it is difficult to
enforce, and has proven to be legally

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**“People Zoning”**
Under the Local Government Act, governments have the authority to regulate the
use within a zone, but not the user. Despite this, many local governments include
regulations that may be considered people zoning. There are several court cases to
demonstrate that this form of regulation is
difficult to enforce, and can be challenged. In R. v. Bell (1979), the Court ruled that the
municipality in question could not restrict the
use of a dwelling to ‘family’ only, because of
the “unreasonable consequences of the
restriction on who could properly constitute a
“family”” (Buholzer, 2014, p. 7-80). In
Faminow v. North Vancouver (1988), the court
found that permitting only in-laws, parents, or
children to use a secondary suite, was not
acceptable. Rather than regulating the use of
the building, the municipality was regulating
who could use the building, a restriction that is
considered *ultra vires* by the Court (Buholzer,
2014, p. 7-81). Finally, in the case of the
Tenants’ Rights Action Coalition v. Delta
(1997), the Court ruled that prohibiting renters
on a property unless they are related to the
owner was discriminatory and that the
Legislation would surely not have intended to
exercise such power (Buholzer, 2014, p. 7-83).
Including ‘owner occupancy’ as a requirement
could be perceived as a form of people zoning,
and under the right circumstances someone
could argue that the policy is unreasonable or
discriminatory. It would be fair to say that the
FVRD and any other local government would
likely not want to create policies that were
subject to similar judgment.
challengeable, as it constitutes “people zoning” (Buholzer, 2014).

In regard to concerns for the visible character of a neighbourhood, and to an extent the impact on property values, local governments have addressed this in several ways. The City of Kelowna does not allow any structural alterations or additions (MCAWS, 2005). The City of New Westminster has requirements for legal suites to conform to their “Design Standards and Guidelines” (MCAWS, 2005). Elsewhere, municipalities have utilized regulations related to preserving form and character. Under the Local Government Act, local governments have the authority to designate areas as development permit areas (DPA) for a number of reasons, including to establish objectives for form and character of residential development (Buholzer, 2014, S. 11.28). Requirements in form and character DPAs can include landscaping, exterior design, and the finish of buildings and structures. For detached secondary dwellings, municipalities typically require that the building be in the rear of the lot. Any concern over whether secondary dwellings impact property values has been discredited and in fact, they have proven to add to property value (MCAWS, 2005; Brown & Watkins, 2012).

Privacy

Residents expressed concern over their privacy in the preliminary survey results (FVRD, 2016b). Without knowing more information from respondents (i.e. lot size, lot configuration, or proximity to neighbours), a fair guess would be that this is more of a concern in communities where lots are smaller and when detached suites are backed on to a neighbours lot. Solutions to this concern would vary depending on individual lot configuration. The City of Maple Ridge recommends that local government’s factor in neighbor privacy and private space for both primary and secondary dwelling when developing policies (City of Maple Ridge, 2007).
Appropriate setbacks from side and rear lot lines need to be established to address privacy concerns (City of Maple Ridge, 2007). As well, appropriate setbacks from the primary dwelling would ensure privacy and create open space between both dwelling units. Limiting the height of a detached secondary dwelling, or only permitting ground-oriented buildings such as garden cottages would also contribute to privacy (City of Maple Ridge, 2007). To improve neighbor privacy where detached secondary dwellings are located above accessory buildings, local governments can restrict second storey balconies. This was something that was not acknowledged by the City of Kelowna and became an issue, as balconies on a second floor create direct sightlines into neighbours' yards (City of Maple Ridge, 2007).

The Town of Comox stipulates that coach houses must be located to the rear of a lot, or be visually screened if they are located to the front or side of the lot (2014). In reviewing development standards for its garden suite program, the City of Maple Ridge identified natural screening and landscaping as an important tool to providing privacy for neighbouring properties (City of Maple Ridge, 2007). Proper screening and landscaping is useful in creating enjoyable green space and separation between the primary and secondary dwelling on a lot. Generally, landscaping would add to neighbourhood green space as well.

5.4.1 Additional Concerns

Along with those identified in the public survey, the following are concerns that frequently arise in opposition to secondary dwellings. These may also be relevant to the FVRD and warrant consideration in their decision-making process.
**Health & Safety**

Typically, when a resident applies for a building permit to construct a secondary dwelling they are required to have a building inspection completed. Health and safety is primarily related to illegal suites. A secondary dwelling must meet BC Building Code requirements prior to the issuance of an occupancy permit. A building inspector would ensure that there is an uncompromised emergency exit, that the suite meets fire safety regulations, and proper ceiling height and sound control measures are met (MCAWS, 2005). Unfortunately the BC Building Code does not apply to previously constructed suites, unless a resident applies to renovate or upgrade. To encourage compliance on a volunteer basis, some municipalities have introduced ‘equivalency’ standards for existing suites to encourage the landowner to undergo minimal upgrades (MCAWS, 2005). Finding ways to encourage formalizing existing secondary dwellings can address tenant health and safety concerns. Unfortunately, as stated earlier, most local governments have limited bylaw enforcement staffing and budgeting, and operate on a complaint basis only, making it difficult to address illegal suites.

**Impact on Agricultural Areas**

Due to its flat lands, fertile soils, and moderate climate, agriculture contributes greatly to the Fraser Valley’s economy (Ministry of Agriculture, 2016). Much of this farmland is located within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). The importance of preserving farmland is integral to the FVRD’s agriculture-based economy, and to future food security. Those that oppose secondary dwellings consider building them on farmland to be a conflict of interest to farming operations, and inappropriate use of ALR land (FVRD, 2015a). Despite this, the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC), whose mandate is to protect agricultural land and encourage farming,
permits secondary dwellings on ALR land (Agricultural Land Commission [ALC], 2016). The ALC policy regarding secondary dwellings states the following non-farm uses are permitted in the ALR unless otherwise prohibited by a local government bylaw: (i) secondary suites, and, (ii) either, a manufactured home for immediate family, or, a dwelling unit above an existing building (ALC, S. 3(1), 2016). Although protecting farmland is a real concern, according to Section 3(1) of the ALC Act, secondary dwellings are permitted on ALR land, and therefore local governments have guidance on how best to address this concern. This will likely need to be monitored, as increasing pressure on ALR land continues in the Lower Mainland.

**Subdivision Pressure**

Subdivision or stratification pressure on lots with secondary dwellings has also been identified as a concern. The issue here is that future owners may be tempted to subdivide a lot, particularly where a detached, separately serviced secondary dwelling exists. In writing policies that permit secondary dwellings, the FVRD will need to keep in mind that separating the secondary dwelling from the primary dwelling may lead to temptation of subdivision on a lot. This is not what is intended for secondary dwellings. This concern is closely aligned with servicing requirements. If the secondary dwelling remains connected to the primary dwelling for water and/or sewer, this limits the “temptation” to subdivide. Other local governments have policies that no strata titling or subdivision can occur on lots with secondary dwellings (MCAWS, 2005). To limit subdivision or strata plans the Cowichan Valley Regional District requires that homeowners register a covenant to this effect on the property’s title (Bylaw No. 2465, 2004, S. 3.18).
6.0 Recommendations

Based on the literature and a policy review of its member municipalities and other regional districts in BC, the FVRD’s EA policies and regulations regarding secondary dwellings warrant a change. Residents continue to express interest in building secondary dwellings on their properties, either to provide housing for aging family members or to rent out as “mortgage helpers” (FVRD, 2015a). With rising housing prices and an increasingly aging population, maintaining the “status quo” appears to no longer be an option. It is the recommendation of this research that the FVRD Planning Department amend its current policies, and adopt policies that establish secondary dwellings as a permitted use within the EAs.

Policy Option

Using the information gathered from the policy review of other local governments, several options have been identified as possible implementation methods for the FVRD to adopt. These include:

1) Official community plan policy amendment,
2) Site specific rezoning,
   a. Rezoned to its own zone,
3) Outright permitted use,
   a. Within specific areas,
   b. Within specific zones,
4) Temporary Use Permit or Variance.

In considering all of these options, it is the recommendation of this research that the FVRD adopt policies that would permit secondary dwellings outright in specific zones – specifically in its residential, rural, and agricultural zones. This implementation method has many advantages. For
the homeowner it eliminates “red tape”, making the process simple and straightforward. A homeowner would simply need to apply for a building permit, meet lot requirements, and any other regulation necessary (such as setbacks from waterbodies or streams). As well, an application for a secondary dwelling would not be required to have a public hearing. In comparison, if the FVRD were to adopt a rezoning process, the length and cost of such a process could “put off” residents, since they would be required to have a public hearing. Making the process more approachable encourages homeowners to register suites, go through a building inspection, resulting in safer rental units. This implementation method allows homeowners to build additional housing for family members, or to supplement their income by renting out as “mortgage helpers”, if they so choose. This method also benefits renters, as the reduced cost and difficulty of constructing secondary dwellings translates to increased affordable and alternative housing options. For the FVRD, there would be minimal work. Initially, there would be extra work in amending the bylaws and establishing regulations for the use, but once the policies were adopted, it would be a straightforward development approval process, not unlike applications for single-family dwelling units.

Other Considerations

Within its regulations, the FVRD will need to specify which forms of secondary dwellings they will permit. The options are: secondary suites contained within the primary dwelling, carriage houses located above an accessory building, or detached backyard cottages. There has not been any noted preference within the literature or during discussions with staff. It is the recommendation of this research that the FVRD only allow secondary dwellings contained within the primary dwelling or located above an accessory building on smaller lots within residential zones. Additionally, it is recommended that the FVRD create policies that do not
permit basement suites in floodplain areas, for the safety of residents. For larger lots in rural or agricultural zones, the FVRD could permit free-standing detached secondary dwellings or cottages, since there would be an adequate amount of space between the primary residence, the neighbours, and the secondary residence. To determine the exact lot size that would be suitable for each form, it may be useful to the FVRD to review other regional districts provisions, rather than its member municipality’s provisions. For example, the City of Abbotsford has determined 400m$^2$ to be its minimum lot size to accommodate a secondary suite. Since Abbotsford has higher density goals and growth rates, this may not translate to the EAs. It may be more useful to seek guidance from other regional districts with similarities.

Servicing is one topic that will need to be carefully addressed by the FVRD. This may need to be addressed alongside the creation of minimum lot sizes; particularly for areas with onsite servicing since minimum levels of service is typically based on lot size. For community systems, continuing to charge for usage is the best option. This is a fair method already implemented by the FVRD and there is no need for changes. It is recommended that any additional costs to upgrade or expand the system on the property will be the cost of the homeowner. For private wells, the FVRD currently requires the landowner to manage the system. Elsewhere, other regional districts require the landowner to hire a professional to ensure the well has the capacity to meet the needs of two residences. This is an option the FVRD can consider. For onsite sewage systems, typically the FVRD requires that a homeowner hires an authorized professional engineer or registered onsite wastewater practitioner to ensure the system can meet the needs of a new dwelling. There is also no reason to change this. It is recommended that the FVRD consider whether secondary dwellings, particularly for detached suites, hook up
to the current system or have its own separate system. The cost of adding a separate system may turn some homeowners away, therefore the FVRD will need to take cost into consideration.

In developing criteria for the construction of secondary dwellings, it is recommended that the FVRD follow the BC Building Code’s requirements for secondary suites. The BC Building Code provides requirements for secondary suites that include means of egress, fire safety, and sound control (Province of British Columbia, 2012). It also specifies that suites must not exceed 90m$^2$ of finished living area. The limitation on size strengthens the purpose of a secondary dwelling – as being accessory to the primary dwelling. Another important requirement of the BC Building Code is that a secondary suite cannot be subdivided from the building it is part of. Of course, these restrictions only apply to “secondary suites”, which are either contained within or attached to the primary dwelling. There is no reason to not follow the BC Building Code for detached suites as well, since it is written to ensure the health and safety of residents. Therefore, it is the recommendation of this research that the FVRD write its regulations in such a way that follows what the BC Building Code deems as appropriate.

Finally, other specific regulations will need to be identified within the zoning bylaw. It is the recommendation of this research that the FVRD not include regulations that one of the dwelling units be ‘owner occupied’, as this has proven to be a form of ‘people zoning’, and may be challengeable in court. For parking, it is recommended that the FVRD provide a restriction that the homeowner provide at least one off-street parking space for residents in the second residence. If the FVRD feels it is necessary, they have the option to require that a homeowner register a parking covenant on the property’s title. In creating lot requirements within its bylaws, it is recommended that the FVRD borrow from neighbouring regional districts who share common geographies, lot sizes, and other planning concerns.
In striving to gain community acceptance, it is recommended that the FVRD address all concerns raised during the public consultation process. There will continue to be skeptics towards secondary dwellings therefore the FVRD should highlight how secondary dwellings will contribute specifically to the context of the communities in the EAs. For example, promoting secondary dwellings as a way for residents to remain in their communities as they age would be appropriate for many of the EAs. Finally, the FVRD borders other local governments who share similarities – pressures of urban growth, increasing housing prices, homelessness, aging populations, and so on. It is appropriate for the FVRD to seek out guidance from its neighbours, learn from their experiences, and duplicate what they have achieved while adopting policies that fit with the uniqueness of the EAs and its residents.
7.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, secondary dwellings have been introduced by other local governments in British Columbia to provide additional housing options for a variety of reasons: adding to the local rental stock, offering affordable housing options, supporting aging in place, and creating more ground-oriented housing in residential neighbourhoods. The research shows that secondary dwellings offer multiple benefits: to tenants by offering diverse housing options; providing homeowners with mortgage help and in housing relatives; and, to local governments by expanding the tax base and using community services more efficiently. Secondary dwellings are often identified in OCPs as a means to achieve affordable housing, infill development, and population density objectives. While they are included in long-term community objectives, they also meet immediate demands for affordable and diverse housing.

This research determined that there are many benefits to secondary dwellings. Most notably they provide affordable housing options to residents of all ages and incomes, and they support aging in place, identified as the preferred housing option for aging populations. From preliminary results of a public survey completed by EA residents, the most frequently cited challenges to secondary dwellings were identified. The results of the survey show that the biggest challenge to secondary dwellings is in gaining community acceptance. Addressing resident concerns head on, may be the best way to gain community acceptance. Using the experience of other local governments who have gone through similar processes, the research explored options to address these challenges. These can be used to guide the FVRD EA Planning Department in its policy development.
It was demonstrated that the EAs, like most rural areas in Canada, have an aging population. It would be timely for the FVRD to adopt policies that address specific housing requirements for its aging population. Additionally, due to its close proximity to Metro Vancouver, the FVRD faces moderate population pressure and rising housing prices. While all of its member municipalities and neighbouring regional districts allow secondary dwellings as a permitted use, the FVRD EAs currently do not. The research shows that the FVRD is outdated in this regard therefore changes are necessary. It is recommended that the FVRD implement policies that permit secondary dwellings outright within specific zones. This implementation method has been successful in other jurisdictions that have undergone similar processes as the FVRD. Permitting secondary dwellings within specific zones does not limit homeowners, and creates a simple and equitable process while not creating additional work for planning staff. By creating a policy framework that permits a range of housing types, the FVRD will be contributing to complete communities that include people of all ages, incomes, and abilities.
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1987/full_bylaw_500_consolidated_version.pdf

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http://comox.ca/modx/assets/pdfs/planning%20and%20building/Comox_Coach%20House_Broc 
hure.pdf

Momentum: Affordable Housing in the Fraser Valley.

https://harrisonhotsprings.civicweb.net/filepro/documents/1551?preview=1597#


## Appendix A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regional District</th>
<th>Permit Secondary Dwellings?</th>
<th>Process Used to Establish</th>
<th>Name of Secondary Dwelling</th>
<th>Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Alberni-Clayoquot</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Within specific zones</td>
<td>Accessory Dwelling Unit</td>
<td>Secondary suite (within principal dwelling); Carriage house (attached to accessory building); Cottage, garden suite (detached)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulkley-Nechako</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Within specific zones</td>
<td>Secondary Suite</td>
<td>Within single family dwelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Within specific zones</td>
<td>Detached Accessory Suite</td>
<td>Within accessory building or free-standing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Within specific zones</td>
<td>Secondary Suite</td>
<td>Within principle dwelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cariboo</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Within specific zones</td>
<td>Two-Family Residential Dwelling</td>
<td>Within/attached to principle dwelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Coast</td>
<td>Y (with provisions)</td>
<td>Specific zones (districts), lots 4+ ha in size</td>
<td>Two-Family Dwelling</td>
<td>Attached</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Kootenay</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Within specific zones</td>
<td>Secondary Suite; Carriage House</td>
<td>Within principle dwelling; Above garage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Okanagan</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Within specific zones</td>
<td>Secondary Suite</td>
<td>Within single detached dwelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Status</td>
<td>Zoning Conditions</td>
<td>Use Type</td>
<td>Location Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia-Shuswap</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Within specific zones; For detached building – parcel must be 2+ ha (Temporary Use Permit)</td>
<td>Secondary Dwelling Unit</td>
<td>Within single family dwelling, or accessory building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comox Valley</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Outright permitted use</td>
<td>Secondary Residential Use</td>
<td>Secondary Suite (within residential building); Carriage House (2nd storey of accessory building)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cowichan Valley</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Within specific zones</td>
<td>Small suite (&lt;85m²) or Secondary suite (&gt;85m²)</td>
<td>Within/attached to principle dwelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Within specific zones</td>
<td>Secondary Dwelling Unit</td>
<td>Above accessory building or Free-standing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Kootenay</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Within specific zones</td>
<td>Secondary Suite</td>
<td>Within single family dwelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraser-Fort George</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Within specific zones</td>
<td>Secondary Suite</td>
<td>Within single family use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro Vancouver</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Within specific zones</td>
<td>Accessory Suite</td>
<td>Within single residential dwelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitimat Stikine</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kootenay Boundary</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Within specific zones, permitted as a secondary use</td>
<td>Secondary Suite</td>
<td>Within single family or accessory building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mount Waddington</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Secondary Suite</td>
<td>Within primary dwelling unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanaimo</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Outright permitted use in specific zones</td>
<td>Secondary Suite</td>
<td>All forms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Allowance</td>
<td>Within Specific Zone(s)</td>
<td>Secondary Suite Type</td>
<td>Additional Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Okanagan</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Within specific zones</td>
<td>Secondary Suite</td>
<td>Within single family dwelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Rockies</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Accessory use in specific zones</td>
<td>Secondary Dwelling Unit</td>
<td>Secondary suite (within single family dwelling); Coach House (above detached garage); Granny Flat (detached)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okanagan Similkameen</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Within specific zones, as secondary use; Carriage houses in specific areas</td>
<td>Secondary Suite</td>
<td>Within accessory building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace River</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Where single family dwellings are permitted</td>
<td>Secondary Suite</td>
<td>Within single family dwelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powell River</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>OCP amendment</td>
<td>Secondary Suite</td>
<td>Within single family dwelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skeena-Queen Charlotte</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Squamish-Lillooet</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Within specific zones; Cottages within specific areas</td>
<td>Secondary Suite</td>
<td>Within single family dwelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strathcona</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Within specific zones of one area</td>
<td>Secondary Suite, or Cottage</td>
<td>Within single family dwelling; Detached</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunshine Coast</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Within specific zones, rezoning otherwise</td>
<td>Auxiliary Dwelling Unit</td>
<td>Cottage or suite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thompson Nicola</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Farm worker (detached); Variance</td>
<td>Secondary Suite</td>
<td>Within single family unit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Electoral Area</th>
<th>Official Community Plan</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Bylaw No. 804</td>
<td>3.0 Plan Objectives</td>
<td>The Plan should provide increased opportunities for housing and affordable home ownership so as to encourage more permanent residency in the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9.5 Affordable Housing</td>
<td>Pursuant to section 945 (2.1) of the Municipal Act, the Board intends, with community co-operation, to undertake a pro-active program to insure an adequate supply of affordable and rental housing in the Plan area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Bylaw No. 150</td>
<td>3.2.3 Permitted Uses</td>
<td>Second dwellings shall be permitted for agricultural and campground assistants and for care of a relative. Zoning regulations may also be established to permit second dwellings, under certain conditions, on large parcels greater than the minimum parcel size for subdivision, in areas designated Rural and Limited Use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.1 Village Centre</td>
<td>The VILLAGE CENTRE area in Yale has considerable scope for in-fill development of vacant lots.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B, C</td>
<td>Bylaw No. 800</td>
<td>3.02.03 Permitted Uses</td>
<td>Second dwellings shall be permitted for agricultural and campground assistants and for care of a relative. Zoning regulations will also be established to permit second dwellings, under certain conditions, on large parcels greater than the minimum parcel size for subdivision, in areas designated Highway Commercial, Country Residential, Rural and Limited Use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Bylaw No. 20</td>
<td>3.2.3 Permitted Uses</td>
<td>Zoning regulations may also be established to permit second dwellings under certain conditions, on parcels greater than the minimum parcel size for subdivision, in areas designated Rural and Limited Use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bylaw No. 30</td>
<td>3.4.C. Permitted Uses</td>
<td>A second dwelling is only permitted accessory to a campground, industrial or commercial use for the accommodation of the owner, operator or manager in the VILLAGE CENTRE COMMERCIAL, FUTURE SETTLEMENT, COMMERCIAL, OUTDOOR RECREATION, COMMUNITY SERVICE and OUTDOOR RESOURCE designation area.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>---</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bylaw No. 200</td>
<td>3.2.3 Permitted Uses</td>
<td>Second dwellings shall be permitted for full time farm workers and campground assistants and for care of a relative. Zoning regulations may also be established to permit second dwellings, under certain conditions, on large parcels greater than the minimum parcel size for subdivision, in areas designated Rural and Limited Use.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bylaw No. 1115</td>
<td>4.2.1 Housing Needs &amp; Residential Uses</td>
<td>It is anticipated that housing needs in Electoral Area “E” will primarily be addressed through infill development in existing hamlets.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bylaw No. 1115</td>
<td>4.2.5 Housing Needs &amp; Residential Uses</td>
<td>Opportunities for alternative housing forms will be explored which may include garden suites, carriage houses, secondary suites, and second residences.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bylaw No. 999</td>
<td>4.2.1 Residential Uses</td>
<td>It is anticipated that housing needs in Hatzic Valley will primarily be addressed through infill development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.2.3 Residential Uses</td>
<td>Under certain conditions, the Regional Board may establish zoning in areas designated AGRICULTURAL, LIMITED USE, RURAL, and SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL to permit second dwellings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.2.4 Residential Uses</td>
<td>The Regional District should review zoning provisions regarding Accessory Family Residential Use and, in particular, consider changes to allow the caregiver to reside in the accessory residence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Bylaw No. 866</td>
<td>5.2.2 Residential Uses</td>
<td>Under certain conditions zoning regulations may be established in areas designated LIMITED USE, RURAL, and SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL to permit second detached dwellings: a) on parcels that are larger than the minimum parcel size for subdivision in the applicable area designation; or, b) where a local area plan is in place which permits second detached dwellings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>