

To: Mayor Guthrie & Council Members  
Re: Secondary Dwelling By-law Amendment

I am writing to express my opposition & concern re: the by-law amendment Item on 13 July Council Meeting agenda. My issues/objections are threefold: 1) the timing of a complex & important amendment on an agenda during a pandemic, 2) the lack of a proper public information & input process, & 3) lack of transparency/misrepresentation of what this entails for the city of Guelph.

1) Pandemic Timing—Something like this that can affect people's lives in fundamental ways should not be on any agenda during a State of Emergency, or even before we're well along into the latter "new normal" of late Phase 3. This is also an issue with many, many facets to it. People are struggling; this will not be on their radar during an exceptional time, yet is something many people would address otherwise. An issue that is a real collective decision (because this will affect all of the city, & major things like property values, quality of life, safety, etc.) should be made when we can come together to consider & focus on it—not during an unprecedented world medical emergency.

2) No Proper Public Info/Input—This issue should have a public information & input framework that includes Q&A from relevant City employees, clear city website FAQs, and virtual town halls \*before\* it's listed on any meeting agenda. Council & the City should provide a clear overview & explanation of all possible scenarios under any proposed amendment, & even whether or not it needs to be adopted by Guelph at all, if it's deemed against public interest. Just because the province allows it, doesn't mean it's good for Guelph. A similar example would be ride sharing (Uber, Lyft, etc.) which has been rejected by some cities, & adopted by others.

Throwing up a thicket of detailed documents & a perfunctory on-line survey (you need to register to complete) is the digital equivalent of "lip service" to real transparency & public information & input. It's not right for something this important & far-reaching.

3) Lack of Transparency re: outcomes—Both the City's site postings & Cllr Downer's remarks in media (Guelph Today) are a gross misrepresentation of what this allows. This is more than just a technical alignment of policy between province and city, as per Guelph's website. It is also not about student housing issues alone. You can't "people zone" so once this is allowed, neighbourhood backyards can turn into potential party houses (AirBnB) and/or zero barrier housing (temporary or permanent) for homeless substance abusers, all within 0.6m from adjoining property lines.

Councillor Gibson mentioned a project exactly like that when I met him several months ago, including the by-law issue. Yet, I've never heard a word about it since, re: bylaws or anything else. I'd also note Councillor Downer is on the homeless/harm reduction ETF, yet she made no mention, to my knowledge, of this usage in any public comment. This is exactly like the container homes, developed behind the scenes, & forced through Council. This by-law amendment should be considered as part of this project, & not move forward without transparent info & public input.

I feel any one of these objections/concerns is reasonable grounds to defer this right now; all three are overwhelming.

Thank you for your consideration  
Regards  
jj salmon