



July 13, 2026

Mayor Jeromy Farkas & Members of City Council
City of Calgary
Calgary, Alberta

Re: July 21, 2026 Public Hearing – Backyard Suites should be a Discretionary Use

Dear Mayor Farkas and Members of Council,

The Varsity Community Association is opposed to the proposal to change backyard suites from a discretionary to a permitted use. Secondary suites are invisible as they are located within an existing dwelling unit so their primary impact is on parking congestion. The impact from backyard suites is much greater on nearby homes.

Backyard suites have a much more severe impact on neighbours through massing, overshadowing, overlooking, architecture, and parking congestion. Note that the impact of a backyard suite on a laneless parcel is even more significant than on a laned parcel.

It is essential they remain a discretionary use to ensure affected neighbours and community associations are notified and to allow the right to appeal developments that create a negative impact.

We note Administration is proposing to increase the footprint of backyard suites which would increase the negative impact neighbouring properties experience. **We strongly oppose this increase.** If the square footage is increased, the requests for a 10% relaxation to this new maximum will increase accordingly.

We believe there should be parking requirements for backyard suites as there are for secondary suites. It is a fallacy to assume occupants of these suites do not have vehicles even if they are close to public transit.

We have three approved backyard suites in Varsity, two of which have been constructed. The locations for these suites were appropriate and not appealed by the neighbours but they still have a significant visual impact on the community. Please see the attached photographs. Context is crucially important to determine whether a backyard suite is appropriate. **Therefore, they should remain a discretionary use.**

Yours truly,

Jo Anne Atkins
Director of Civic Affairs
Varsity Community Association

Example of Backyard Suites

Above Garage Backyard Suite in Varsity Acres



Note that this backyard suite above a triple garage is quite a bit larger and more imposing than the main dwelling unit. The context of this area is low profile bungalows and split levels.

Above Garage Backyard Suite in Varsity Acres



Above Garage Backyard Suite in Varsity Acres



Above Garage Backyard Suite in Varsity Acres



What makes this backyard suite less impactful is the fact that this unusual property backs onto 2 different laneways. There is an adequate distance between this development and nearby properties. Neighbours still complain that it looks weird and out of context with the neighbourhood.

Standalone Backyard Suite in Varsity Village East



View from the front. This is on the bulb end of a culdesac with no back lane. You can see the backyard suite is very large in comparison to the main dwelling units. No parking is provided and due to the front driveways on the culdesac, there is very little on-street parking to accommodate tenants' vehicles.

Standalone Backyard Suite in Varsity Village East



Note that there is virtually no setback from either property line. This parcel backs onto 2 roadways. If it backed onto other properties or even a laneway, the impact on neighbouring properties would be significant.

Notice the large size compared to the next door dwelling unit to the left.

Standalone Backyard Suite in Varsity Village East



This backyard suite works only because it is a large pie-shaped lot backing onto 2 roadways. Notice the large size of the backyard suite in relation to the primary dwelling unit.

This illustrates the importance of context. There should not be an automatic right to build a backyard suite as it is not appropriate in every location. It must remain a discretionary use which ensures neighbours are notified and have the right to appeal.

There is no need to increase the maximum size for backyard suites. If anything, the size should be reduced.