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Maple Ridge Council Looking at Ways to Improve Housing Affordability and Access

Maple Ridge, BC: On Tuesday, April 26, Maple Ridge Council reviewed a detailed report related to Secondary Suites and other housing forms with a goal of modernizing the City's housing choices and improving access to rental housing and the impacts that the 'mortgage helper' suite can have in allowing people to enter the housing market.

Background information provided to Council outlined new ways that families are approaching property ownership in this era and they are exploring ways to share properties so that they can pool equity and financial resources to create a sustainable long-term housing plan.

The report recognizes that there is a tight housing market in the region, and that this creates a challenge for people of all stages of life to find affordable and stable housing. Recent changes to the BC Building Code removed size restrictions for secondary suites and detached garden suites to make this form of housing more accessible across the spectrum of housing and throughout Maple Ridge.

Council reviewed a detailed matrix of possible changes to local bylaws that would make secondary suites possible in a wider range of property types, and create an environment where current 'illegal' suites can have a pathway to becoming legal.

After reviewing the list of recommendations, Council has signaled where they want additional background material and areas where changes can be made to the bylaws to increase the housing options in the community.

As part of the discussion, Council noted that while these changes are being reviewed that the Bylaws Department act with some latitude where there are complaints about non-compliant suites. City staff are obliged to act on complaints about non-complaint properties, and will

continue to work with property owners to bring properties into compliance and ensure the safety of citizens in rental properties.

The recommendations are expected to be back before Council before the summer reflecting the importance of ensuring that citizens have access to safe and affordable rental properties across the spectrum of housing.