

My name is Jim Elliott.

I have two concerns about this report.

Rooming houses and housing in general have generated very strong concerns by the public for many years perhaps as soon as 2000 when the current Mayor at the time had a task force on housing. This concern has also generated enough concern that the public has begun to be vocal and very engaged. They want action by their Council and administration. They want leadership and are willing to be engaged and involved in the future of their city.

But the first time the public knew of this rooming house report is when the media reported it. This is troubling. And secondly and perhaps more troubling is that this report was seen by the Executive Committee in a private meeting tells me that this Council or its administration still does not want the public to be fully engaged in the discussion of the future of their city. And to have my councilor respond by saying it "will come to the public through council" at the end of the discussion period is equally troubling. These questions deserve an answer.

Tonight, my opposition to the recommendations of your administration is simply. By removing the definition of the Rooming House land use classification, you will lose any fundamental control over this type of illegal action in this city. If you remove the definition, this problem will not disappear. It will simply limit the abilities of this city to control rooming houses. By limiting your abilities, you will become less capable to respond to the calls of neighbours or other residents to the growing problem of illegal rooming houses. Perhaps this Council thinks it should be the private market that should solve this problem just like it has solved the housing crisis in Regina.

So instead of doing what your administration recommends, I would suggest the following:

a. Remove the complicating portions of the definition of Rooming Houses. I would suggest the following:

Rooming houses would be a building in which rooming units are provided by the owner, for permanent occupancy and compensation, to persons.

A rooming unit would be a room for only paid accommodation that is not a dwelling unit or other form of accommodation defined elsewhere in this Bylaw, and which:

(a) may or may not provide meals; and

(b) makes no provision for cooking in any of the rooms occupied by paying boarders.

If the problems are with the wording of the bylaw, i.e. "primary residences of the owner" then simply take out that provision. If "permanent occupancy" is not defined in the bylaw, then simply add it to the definitions in Chapter 2. Again, if there are limitations to the bylaw being enforced by including the words "to persons not related by blood, marriage or adoption to the owner" then simply take the restriction away.

b. Increase the current parking requirements for the Rooming House from 0.5 stalls per unit to the equivalent of other residential requirements, i.e. 1 parking stall per rooming unit.

As one of the significant problems with this type of housing in residential areas is the overflow of parking, then simply require the property to have enough parking. If it doesn't have a solution to this, then the problem will disappear by having it on a bigger lot with sufficient parking or not at all.

c. Increase the waste receptacles requirements up to 1 receptacle per rooming unit.

Similar to the last one, if there is problems with excessive waste accumulating at the back of the property, then have with each rooming unit a corresponding waste receptacle.

d. Make this type of dwelling unit discretionary in all residential zones, not just R4 and R4A.

I suspect the reason that the rooming houses showed up in zones that have no direction on acceptability is not by accident but by plan. Anyone other than the city would not be able to say that this type of housing is acceptable or not unless it was forced into the light as this issue now has. And if bylaw enforcement is not getting out into the residential areas without a complaint, then again that puts this type of action into the shadows or the gray area of the rules.

As with the response of the administration that there is ambiguity within the bylaw, a much clearer definition of where these are acceptable, the use of the discretionary zoning and the requirement for all residential zones means that these operations will be known to the community, they will be known to the city and this should place enough scrutiny on their operations that problems will be dealt with quickly and efficiently. This will also allow the city to be inside the building when it is established and know whether the building codes and other requirements are being followed.

Lastly, and probably more emphatically, please enforce the bylaws of this city. If it requires more staff, then hire more staff. Don't make excuses why you don't have enough staff and try to solve the problem by eliminating needed bylaws.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Elliott