The politics and policies of secondary suites in Calgary, AB

Prepared for the Neighbourhood Change Research Partnership Conference
Kylee van der Poorten
Department of Geography, University of Calgary
May 2016
Secondary suites

A Secondary Suite is a dwelling (kitchen, bathroom, and bedroom) that is contained within a larger house.


http://www.calgary.ca/citycouncil/ward-7/PublishingImages/Secondary%20Suite%20-%20%20305.png
Secondary suites & housing affordability

Figure 2: 2006 Calgary renter and owner households – total and overspending on housing (Statistics Canada, 2006)

The Secondary Suites Issue: Blanket Re-Zoning & Legal ‘Non-Conforming’

Legal secondary suites needed for safe, affordable Calgary housing, students say

Calgary council receives 'racist' letters to block a secondary suite application in Southwood

Illegal secondary suites advertised as income opportunities on Calgary real estate listings

City council rejects proposal to allow secondary suites for inner-city wards

Concerns:
- Safety
- Parking
- Neighbourhood Change
- New types of people
- Property Devaluation
Central Research Questions

Who are the key institutional actors mobilizing against the blanket re-zoning of secondary suites?

What motivates and empowers resistance to blanket re-zoning?

How does this resistance maintain power in urban politics and planning processes?
Illegal and legal structures, politics & trends in income

Townshend, Miller & Evans (forthcoming). Neighbourhood Change Analysis in Calgary
Methodology: comparative analysis

What is class monopoly rent?

GINIGCR: intra-census tract income inequality
Policy Review: historical conversations

- Land Use Bylaws (1980 and 2007): renders older structures ‘non-conforming’
- 2006 Provincial Review Committee on Secondary Suites: supporting locational restriction

- Council Meeting Minutes: the jurisdictional football
- Secondary Suite Studies: the ‘elephant in the room’
- Planning Reports
Non-participant Observation: Land Use Applications

Almost all applications come from R-C1 neighbourhoods (95%)

CA’s are amplifying or echoing the opposition of neighbours opposed

A fear of property devaluation (56%), discrimination against renters (59%), and a belief in unchanging land use (41%) frequently come up in the public hearing process (and in particular neighbourhoods, e.g. Southwood)

These concerns matter more than planning merit (out of the 18 cases that were lost or slimly won, significant neighbour opposition was present in 17 cases)
Mapping:

- Legal, illegal, and legal non-conforming suites
- Owner occupied vs. fully rented homes
- Property value transitions
- (Single-detached) Land Uses
- Neighbourhood Age
- Density
- Owner-occupation rates
- Voter geography

- Where are people overspending on housing?
Thank you!

Questions?