

# The politics and policies of secondary suites in Calgary, AB



Prepared for the Neighbourhood Change Research Partnership Conference  
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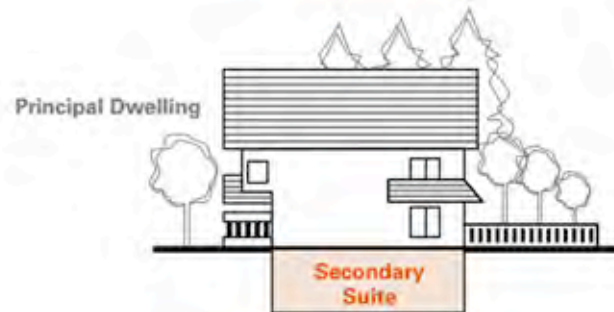
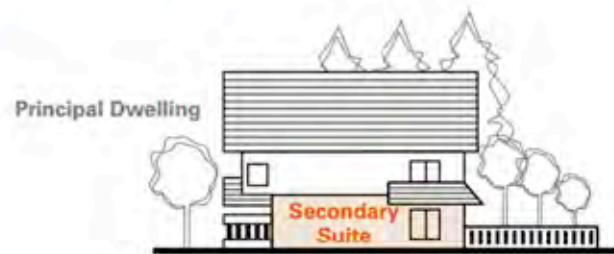




# Secondary suites

## SECONDARY SUITE

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

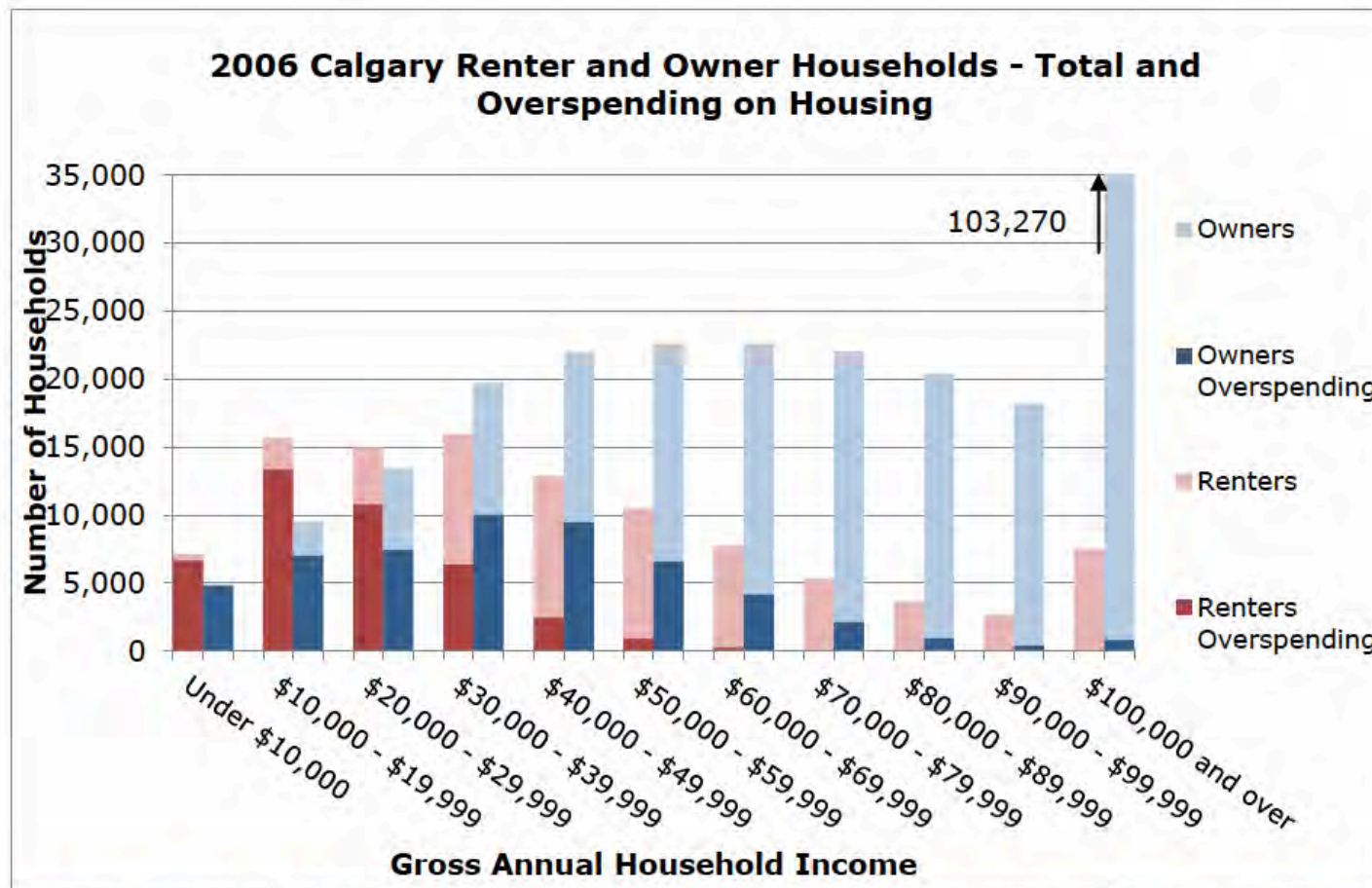


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<http://www.calgary.ca/citycouncil/ward-7/PublishingImages/Secondary%20Suite%20-%20305.png>



# Secondary suites & housing affordability



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

Noble & Selinger (2012). Housing Needs Assessment. Office of Land Supply and Housing, City of Calgary.

# *The Secondary Suites Issue: Blanket Re-Zoning & Legal 'Non-Conforming'*

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

Students travelling farther and paying more rent amid economic downturn

CBC News | Posted: Aug 26, 2015 10:47 AM MT | Last Updated: Aug 26, 2015 10:52 AM MT

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

BY BILL KAUFMANN, CALGARY SUN

FIRST POSTED: MONDAY, MARCH 07, 2016 12:39 PM MST | UPDATED: MONDAY, MARCH 07, 2016 12:44 PM MST

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

Online postings promote separate living spaces as selling features, despite being against city bylaws

CBC News | Posted: Nov 05, 2015 8:25 AM MT | Last Updated: Nov 05, 2015 8:25 AM MT

### Concerns:

- Safety
- Parking
- Neighbourhood Change
- New types of people
- **Property Devaluation**

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



TREVOR HOWELL, CALGARY HERALD

[More from Trevor Howell, Calgary Herald](#)



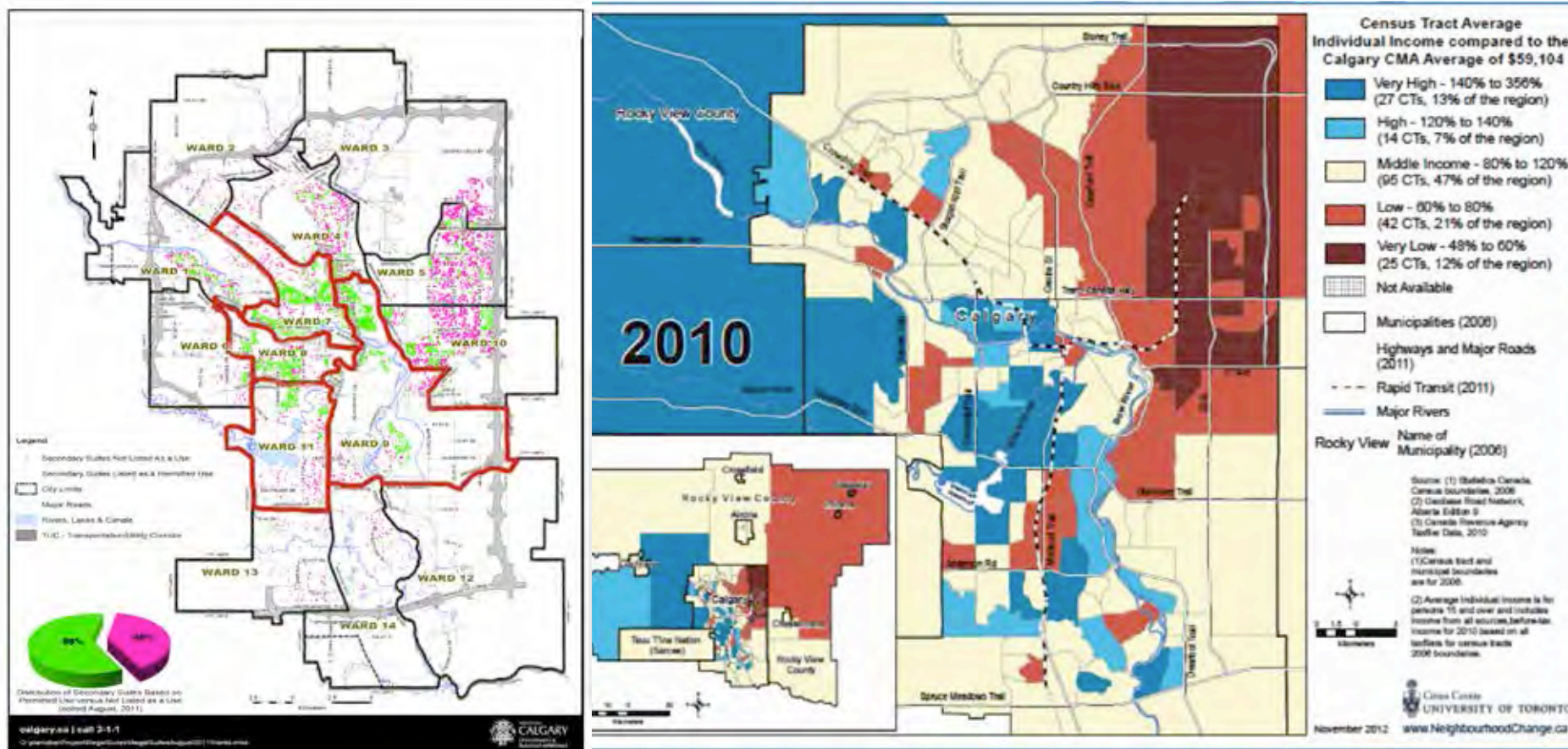
## Central Research Questions

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

Date: Community: Representative Councillor:	Voting Outcome of each Councillor (14) and any verbalized reasons/explanation for their vote.
Letter Submitted by CA? (Y/N) CA in support or opposed? (Support/Opposed) If opposed, which concerns cited: (others added as arise) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parking</li> <li>• Size/Setback requirement of the development</li> <li>• Neighbours' privacy</li> <li>• Safety of the Suite</li> <li>• Changing the nature of the community</li> <li>• Possible property devaluation</li> <li>• Possible deviance/crime associated with suite</li> </ul>	Any residents opposed? (Y/N) If yes, which concerns cited: (others added as they arise) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parking</li> <li>• Size/Setback requirement of the development</li> <li>• Neighbours' privacy</li> <li>• Safety of the Suite</li> <li>• Changing the nature of the community</li> <li>• Possible property devaluation</li> <li>• Possible deviance/crime associated with suite</li> <li>• Personal qualities of the applicant</li> </ul>

- 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?

