

## Decision Note

<b>Title:</b>	Accessory Buildings and Backyard Suites in Rural Zones
<b>Date Prepared:</b>	April 6, 2026
<b>Report To:</b>	Committee of the Whole
<b>Councillor and Role:</b>	Councillor Tom Davis, Planning
<b>Ward:</b>	N/A

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### **Decision/Direction Required:**

To consider a text amendment to the Envision St. John's Development Regulations to allow accessory buildings in front of the building line in rural zones at Council's discretion, allow taller accessory buildings in rural zones, and increase the maximum permitted height for backyard suites in rural residential zones.

### **Discussion – Background and Current Status:**

In recent years, the City has received requests from property owners in rural zones seeking to construct an accessory building in front of the house. These properties are often large and deep, with the house set far back from the road and screened by trees. Currently, the Development Regulations require accessory buildings to be in the rear or side yard and located behind the building line. This means that they cannot be built closer to the road than the house, even where the house is barely visible from the road.

Staff propose to amend the Development Regulations to change the location requirements in some zones to allow accessory buildings in a front yard and in front of the building line, at Council's discretion. Staff also propose to increase the maximum height for accessory buildings in rural zones to up to 5 metres or the height of the main building on the lot, whichever height is greater. This change will allow taller garages and outbuildings on large, rural lots. These changes to accessory buildings location requirements and maximum building height would apply only to properties within these zones: Rural Residential (RR), Rural Residential Infill (RRI), Rural (RUR), Agriculture (AG), Forestry (F), Mineral Working (MW), Watershed (W), Open Space (O), and Open Space Reserve (OR).

In addition to increasing the maximum height for accessory buildings in rural zones, the amendment proposes to increase the maximum height for a backyard suite in the Rural Residential (RR) and Rural Residential Infill (RRI) Zones. The proposed amendment is attached.

### Alignment with the Envision St. John's Municipal Plan

The proposed amendment applies primarily to lands within the Rural District of the Municipal Plan. The proposed changes to accessory building location requirements would also apply to properties within the Forestry, Agriculture, Watershed, and Open Space Districts. The Municipal Plan recognizes the importance of retaining the rural character of these areas.

Many rural properties are large, deep lots with vegetation where a taller accessory building would not intrude on surrounding properties, and an accessory building could be placed in front of a house without obstructing the front of the property. The proposed change to increase maximum building height for a backyard suite in rural residential areas will allow loft-style buildings and a greater variety of designs. This is in line with Policy 4.1.2 of the Municipal Plan, to enable a variety of housing to create diverse neighbourhoods. This change is proposed for the RR and RRI Zones where there are large lots.

The proposed amendment recognizes the traditional rural development pattern of large, oversized lots and will allow flexibility for the siting and height of accessory buildings and the height of backyard suites. This is in line with Policy 8.10.3 of the Municipal Plan: "appropriate standards shall be established to ensure the quality and preservation of the rural environment."

### Public Consultation

Public consultation will be carried out in accordance with Section 4.8 of the Development Regulations. As this is a text amendment that aligns with Municipal Plan policies for the Rural District, staff recommend public notification (not a public meeting).

### **Key Considerations/Implications:**

1. Budget/Financial Implications: Not applicable.
2. Partners or Interested Parties: Property owners and residents in the affected zones; neighbouring property owners and residents.
3. Is this a New Plan, Master Plan, Strategy, Report, or Framework: No
4. Alignment with Strategic Directions:

A Sustainable City: Plan for land use and preserve and enhance the natural and built environment where we live.

A Sustainable City: Facilitate and create the conditions that drive the economy by being business and industry friendly; and being a location of choice for residents, businesses and visitors.

5. Alignment with Adopted Plans: Envision St. Johns Municipal Plan and Development Regulations.
6. Accessibility and Inclusion: Not applicable.
7. Legal or Policy Implications: A text amendment to the Development Regulations is required.
8. Privacy Implications: Not applicable.
9. Engagement and Communications Considerations: Public consultation will be carried out in accordance with Section 4.8 of the Development Regulations.
10. Human Resource Implications: Not applicable.
11. Procurement Implications: Not applicable.
12. Information Technology Implications: Not applicable.
13. Information Management Implications: Not applicable.
14. Other Implications: Not applicable.

**Recommendation:**

That Council consider a text amendment to the Envision St. John's Development Regulations to allow accessory buildings in front of the building line in rural zones at Council's discretion, allow taller accessory buildings in rural zones, and increase the maximum permitted height for backyard suites in two rural residential zones.

Further, that the amendment be publicly advertised in accordance with the Development Regulations.

**Prepared by: Faith Ford, MCIP, Planner III**

**Approved by: Ken O'Brien, MCIP, Chief Municipal Planner**

## Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Rural Accessory Buildings and Backyard Suites – REZ2600004.docx
Attachments:	- DRAFT - DR Amend No. 77, 2026 - Accessory Buildings and BY Suite Rural Zones- TEXT (ff).pdf
Final Approval Date:	Apr 8, 2026

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

**Ken O'Brien - Apr 6, 2026 - 4:35 PM**

**Jason Sinyard - Apr 8, 2026 - 3:31 PM**