

Secondary suites

A guide to developing a secondary suite.



This information is meant to serve as a guide if you are planning on developing a secondary suite. If you have questions, or would like more information on existing secondary suites, please call Development & Building Approvals at (403) 268-5311.

What is a secondary suite?

A secondary suite (also known as a basement suite, mother-in-law suite or granny suite) is a self-contained accessory living space consisting of a bedroom, bathroom and kitchen developed within, or on the same property as a single family home. A secondary suite must also have a direct access to the exterior of the building in which the unit is contained.

What's the difference between a duplex and a secondary suite?

The City of Calgary Land Use Bylaw 1P2007 defines a duplex as a building that contains two dwelling units, one located above the other.

Secondary suites differ from a duplex in that they are limited in size to a maximum of 70 square metres (753 square feet) and offer greater flexibility in form and placement on a property.

The addition of a secondary suite to a duplex or semi-detached form of development is not allowed.

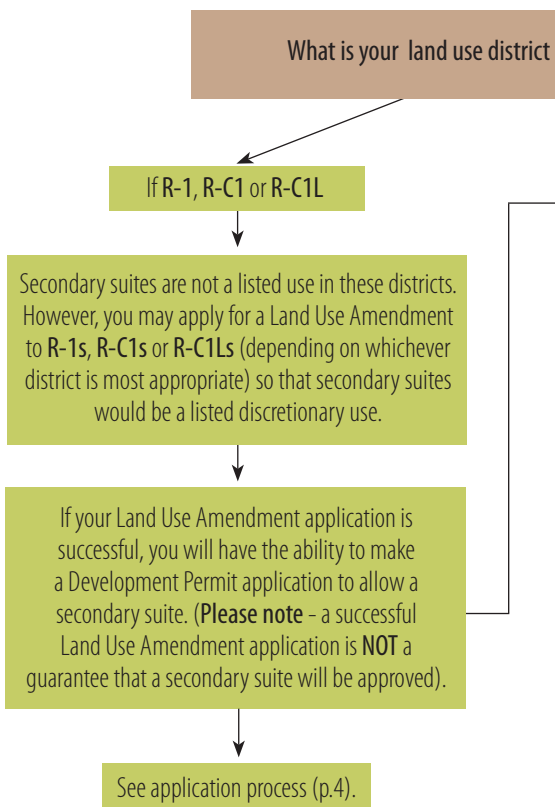
I plan to develop a secondary suite in my home. What do I need to consider?

- Is the secondary suite an allowed use in your land district? (See land use flow chart on page 2.)
- Does your property meet the minimum Land Use Bylaw requirements for a secondary suite in your district? (See Summary of Requirements on page 5.)
- Are you aware of the building code requirements? (See Alberta Building Code requirements on page 6.)

Determining land use

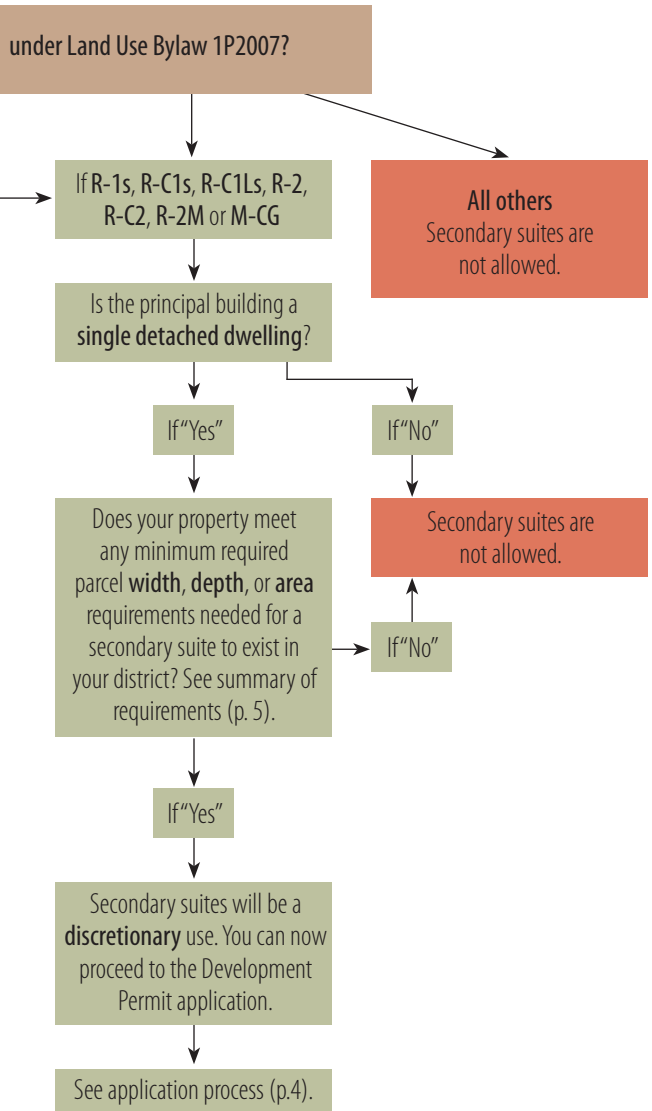
How do I find out what my property's land use district is?

Visit The City of Calgary website at calgary.ca/myproperty.



Secondary suites are only possible in certain land use districts and are only allowed on a parcel that contains a single family home.

Your land use district will determine the steps you need to take when applying for a secondary suite. A Building Permit (Step 3 in Table) is mandatory in all scenarios.



The application process

All application requirements and information on related fees for a Land Use Amendment, Development Permit and Building Permit are available online at calgary.ca/dba.

If applicable	Mandatory	Mandatory
<p style="text-align: center;">Land Use Amendment (if applicable)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Development Permit - Change of Use</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Building Permit for a secondary suite</p>
<p>Important points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only those properties which do NOT have a Land Use District that has secondary suites as a listed use will be required to make an application for a Land Use Amendment. • It is important to be mindful that a successful Land Use Amendment is NOT a guarantee that a secondary suite will be approved. The decision to approve or refuse the addition of a secondary suite is at the discretion of the Development Authority and will be based on your Development Permit. • A Land Use Amendment can be a lengthy process. For more information, call (403) 268-5311. 	<p>Important points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All applications for Secondary Suites will require an approved and released Development Permit for a Change of Use before a Building Permit can be applied for. • Be sure to obtain a copy of the Development Permit- Change of Use Checklist to ensure that your application is complete with all the necessary documents and drawings so that we may make a decision in a timely and efficient manner. 	<p>Important points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional dwelling units (secondary suites) built after Dec. 31, 2006 must comply with the Alberta Building Code. • Additional dwelling units (secondary suites) built before Dec. 31, 2006 must comply with the Alberta Fire Code by Dec. 31, 2008.

Determining property and building code requirements

Are there any limitations on what size a secondary suite can be?

Yes. Secondary suites must not exceed 70 square metres (753 square feet) in gross floor area (including any servicing and/or mechanical areas but excluding the area covered by stairs).

Below is a summary of the requirements for each district that have secondary suites as a listed use.

For more detail on the specific requirements for your land use district, please refer to Land Use Bylaw 1P2007 or contact Development & Building Approvals at (403) 268-5311. An electronic copy of Land Use Bylaw 1P2007 can be found on The City's website at calgary.ca/landusebylaw.

Summary of Requirements

Land Use District	Minimum required parcel width	Minimum required parcel depth	Minimum required parcel area
R-1s	13 metres for a secondary suite – detached garden and attached at grade	30 metres	390 square metres for detached garden and attached at grade
	11 metres for all other forms		330 square metres for all other forms
R-C1Ls	24 metres	30 metres	1,100 square metres
R-C1s, R-2, R-C2, R-2M, M-CG	15 metres	30 metres	400 square metres

Does my secondary suite need a separate access?

Yes. All secondary suites are required to have a separate and direct access to grade. A secondary suite may not share a foyer with any entrance to the principal dwelling unit.

Do I need to provide parking for my secondary suite?

Yes. A secondary suite requires that at least one motor vehicle parking stall is provided in addition to those required for the principal residence.

Will I need to provide any amenity space for the secondary suite?

Yes. Secondary suites must have a private amenity space that is located outside and which is a minimum of 7.5 square metres, with no dimension being less than 1.5 metres. This space may be provided in the form of a balcony, deck or patio.

Once I develop a secondary suite, do I have any legal responsibilities as a landlord?

Yes. In Alberta, the responsibilities of landlords and renters are covered by the *Residential Tenancies Act*. Additional information can be found at servicealberta.ca and landlordandtenant.org.



Are there any Alberta Building Code requirements I should be aware of before developing a secondary suite?

Yes. Below are some common requirements that must be considered. Please note that this is not a complete list. For detailed and complete building codes and fire regulations refer to the Alberta Building Code and the Alberta Fire Code at municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/cp_secondary_suites.cfm or contact the Province of Alberta's Municipal Affairs and Housing Safety Services branch at 1-866-421-6929.

Summary of common requirements

- The minimum ceiling height for living spaces in a secondary suite is 1.95 metres.
- Each bedroom in a secondary suite must have at least one window for emergency escape in the event of a fire (window must be located at least 1.2 metres from a property line).
- Must provide fire-protected walls and ceilings between a secondary suite and the main dwelling unit plus around common exits by the use of ½-inch drywall*.
- Homes containing a secondary suite must have interconnected smoke alarms installed to cover both dwellings.
- Gas-fired furnaces and water heaters need to be enclosed in a room with fire-protected walls and ceiling by the use of ½-inch dry wall*.
- Secondary suites must be served by an independent heating and ventilation system (suites constructed before Dec. 31, 2006 may have a combined system).

* Applies to basement suites only. Other forms are subject to higher building code requirements.

What other forms of secondary suites can be developed?

Although the basement suite is the most common form, a secondary suite may also take the form of any of the following:

- Above a rear detached garage.
- On the main floor of a detached dwelling.
- Detached (stand-alone) garden suite.

A summary of rules for each of the three forms follows.

Above a rear detached garage



- Will have a maximum allowable height of 7.5 metres above grade.
- Is subject to the maximum allowable parcel coverage for your district.
- Is subject to the minimum required building setbacks for a **secondary suite - detached garage**, which include:
 - (i) A rear setback of 0.6 metres for that portion of the building used as a private garage; and 1.5 metres for that portion used as a secondary suite.
 - (ii) A side yard setback of 1.2 metres.
- Must be located at least 3 metres from the house.



On the main floor of a single detached dwelling



- Will have a maximum allowable height of 5.0 metres for that portion of the building that contains the secondary suite.
- The suite must have its own separate and direct access to grade.
- Is subject to the maximum allowable parcel coverage for your district.
- Is subject to the required minimum building setbacks for a secondary suite – attached at grade as outlined in the Low Density Residential General Rules section of the Land Use Bylaw 1P2007.

Detached (stand-alone) garden suite



- Will have a maximum allowable height of 5.0 metres.
- Is subject to the maximum allowable parcel coverage for your district.
- Is subject to the minimum required building setbacks for a secondary suite - detached garden, which include:
 - (i) A rear setback of 1.5 metres.
 - (ii) A side setback of 1.2 metres.
- Must be located at least 3 metres from the principal building.

Permit applications are accepted
Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

The City of Calgary

Development & Building Approvals
Third Floor, Calgary Municipal Building
800 Macleod Trail S.E.
Calgary, Alberta T2P 2M5

For the status of your application: (403) 268-5311

To book an inspection: call 3-1-1

For more information: calgary.ca/dba



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