

Secondary suites

A guide to developing a secondary suite.



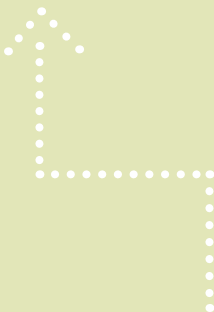
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This information is meant to serve as a guide if you are planning on developing a secondary suite. If you have questions or would like more information on existing secondary suites, please call Development & Building Approvals at 403-268-5311.



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.

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, with each having a separate entrance.

Secondary suites differ from a duplex in that they are limited in size to a maximum of 70 square metres (m²) in most cases. Secondary suites offer greater flexibility in form and placement on a property while a common entrance is permitted, provided it leads directly to the exterior and is separated from adjacent floor areas.

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 use 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 7.)

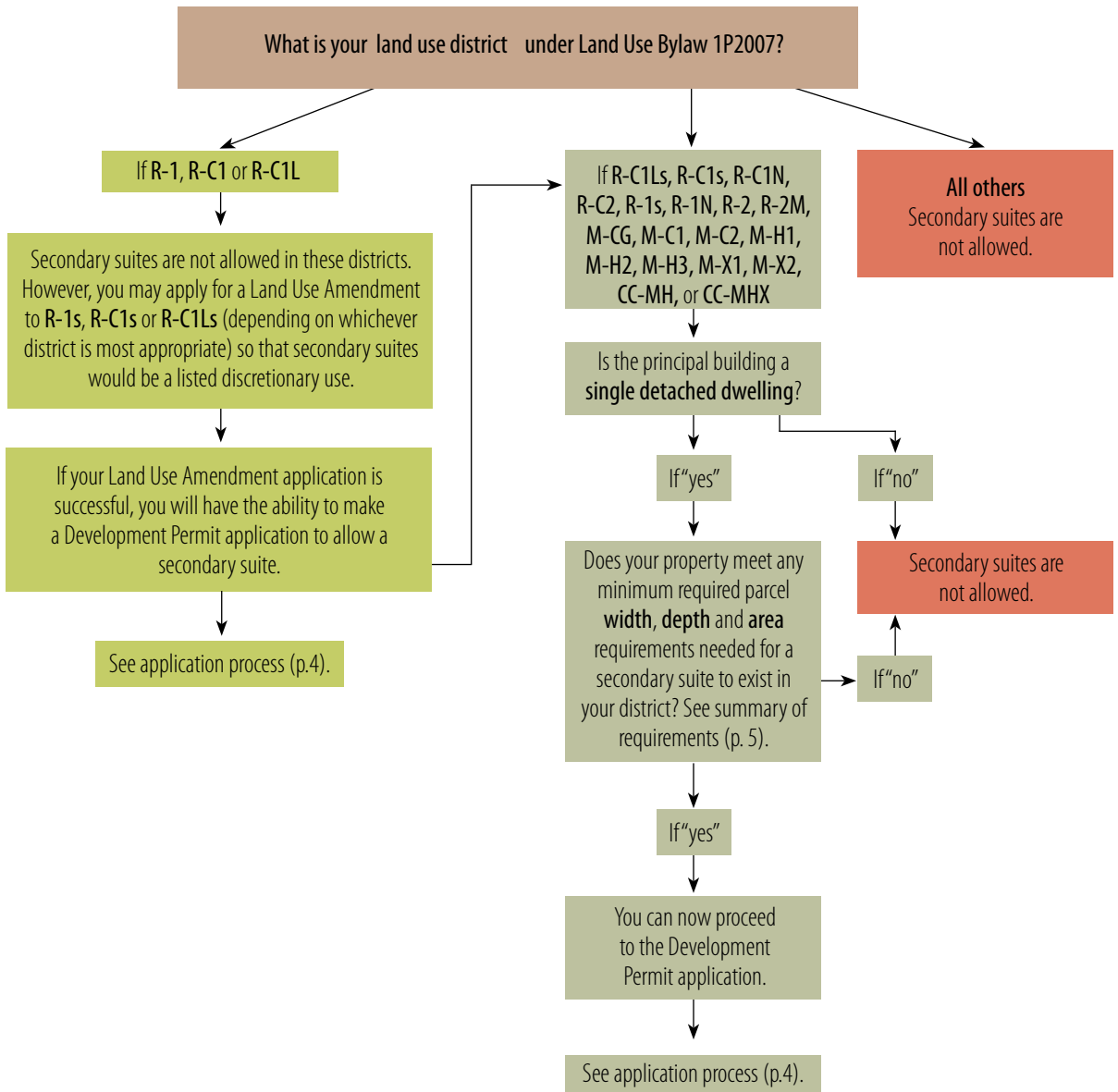
Determining land use

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
Land Use Amendment (if applicable)	Development Permit –	Building Permit for a secondary suite
Important points <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. 	Important points <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All applications for secondary suites will require an approved and released Development Permit before a Building Permit can be applied for. • Be sure to obtain a copy of the Development Permit- Secondary Suite Attached or Detached 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. 	Important points <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional dwelling units (secondary suites) must comply with the Alberta Building Code.

Determining property and building code requirements

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

Yes. Generally, secondary suites must not exceed 70 m² in floor area. However, in the R-C2 and R-2 districts, when the width of the property is 13 m or wider, a secondary suite may exceed 70 m² in area.

Summary of Requirements

Land Use District	Minimum required parcel width	Minimum required parcel depth	Minimum required parcel area
R-1s	13 m for a secondary suite – detached garden	30 m	390 m ² for secondary suite – detached garden
	11 m for all other forms		330 m ² for all other forms
R-C1Ls	24 m	30 m	1,100 m ²
R-C1s	15 m	30 m	400 m ²
R-C1N, R-C2, R-1N, R-2, M-CG, M-C1, M-C2, M-H1, M-H2, M-H3, M-X1, M-X2, CC-MH, CC-MHX	13 m for a secondary suite – detached garage and secondary suite – detached garden	30 m for secondary suite – detached garage and secondary suite – detached garden	400 m ² for secondary suite – detached garage and secondary suite – detached garden
	9 m for all other forms		
R-2M	13 m for a secondary suite – detached garage and secondary suite – detached garden	30 m for secondary suite – detached garage and secondary suite – detached garden	400 m ² for secondary suite – detached garage and secondary suite – detached garden

Does my secondary suite need a direct access?

Yes. Each dwelling unit must have at least one exit that leads directly to the exterior. Provided the exit is protected according to the Alberta Building Code, a shared exit will be acceptable.

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 m², with no dimension being less than 1.5 m. 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.

Summary of common requirements

- The minimum ceiling height for living spaces in a secondary suite is 1.95 m.
 - 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 m from a property line).
 - Must provide smoke separation between a secondary suite and the main dwelling unit. This is required on the ceiling of the suite, around common areas and 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 ½-inch dry wall* on the ceiling and both sides of all room walls. Dry wall must be tightly fitted around the ductwork.
 - Secondary suites must be served by an independent heating and ventilation system.
 - Bylaw 55M-89(15) requires suites have an independent electrical service panel or convenient access to a shared electrical service panel. This means the electrical panel must be located in a common area or have separate panels provided for the suite and main dwelling unit.
- * Applies to basement suites only. Other forms are subject to higher building code requirements.



What other forms of secondary suites can be developed?

Although suites located within a home are the most common, a secondary suite may also take the form of one of the following:

- Above a rear detached garage.
- Detached (stand-alone) garden suite.

Above a rear detached garage



- May have a maximum allowable height of 7.5 m above grade.
- Must meet the maximum allowable parcel coverage for your district.
- Must meet the minimum required building setbacks for a **secondary suite – detached garage**, which include:
 - (i) A rear setback of 0.6 m for that portion of the building used as a private garage and 1.5 m for that portion used as a secondary suite.
 - (ii) A side yard setback of 1.2 m.
- Must be located at least 3.0 m from the house.

Detached (stand-alone) garden suite



- May have a maximum allowable height of 5.0 m.
- Must meet the maximum allowable parcel coverage for your district.
- Must meet the minimum required building setbacks for a secondary suite – detached garden, which include:
 - (i) A rear setback of 1.5 m.
 - (ii) A side setback of 1.2 m.
- Must be located at least 3.0 m from the principal building.

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.

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 Tr. 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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