

Secondary Suites

A secondary suite is a self-contained dwelling unit that is part of a house containing not more than two dwelling units (including the secondary suite) and any common spaces such as common storage, service rooms, laundry facilities or areas used for exit.

Secondary Suites are typically created within an existing single dwelling unit, (house) either constructed as an addition to an existing house or incorporated during the construction of a new house. It may have more than one storey and be above, below or on the same level as the principal dwelling unit.

Secondary suites are ONLY permitted in individual detached houses.



Building Code Requirements

Contact the Building Inspections department for building code requirements to ensure all requirements can be met before you consider developing a secondary suite:

1 Minimum Ceiling Heights for Living Spaces within a Secondary Suite

The ceiling height within a secondary suite must be no less than 1.95m (6' - 4 ¾"). Ceilings are permitted to be reduced below ductwork and beams where necessary but these areas are subject to evaluation by the Safety Codes Officer.

2 Exiting from a Secondary Suite

The main residence and a secondary suite must have at least one exit that leads directly to the outside. This may be a door that leads to an exterior stair or a door to a common set of interior stairs that is separated from both the main residence and suite. The walls and ceilings for such an exit must be provided with protection from the effects of fire to allow occupants adequate time to evacuate.

A direct exit from a suite may also be provided by cutting through the foundation for a door to the outside with steps leading to ground level. An exterior staircase that is not fully enclosed with walls and roof will require separation from unprotected openings from the main residence.

3 Fire Protection Between Suites

A secondary suite and the main residence must be separated from each other and from any common/shared spaces to allow occupants of either unit to evacuate in the event of a fire or other emergency. This is achieved by providing a continuous smoke tight barrier of minimum ½" drywall on both sides of common walls and on the underside of floor systems. Rooms containing gas-fired furnaces and/or hot water tanks need to be enclosed in a room separated by minimum ½" drywall on both sides of the walls and the underside of the floor system.

Zoning Requirements

This document has been created to assist you with navigating secondary suite standards. Things to confirm before planning a secondary suite:

Contact the Planning & Development department to ensure that the following code requirements are met before you consider developing a secondary suite:

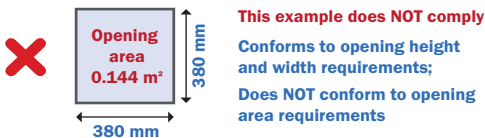
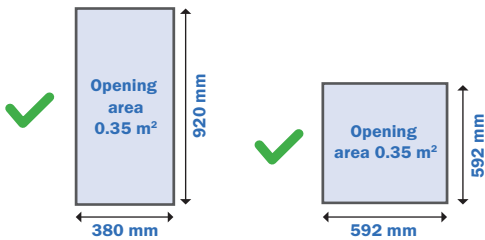
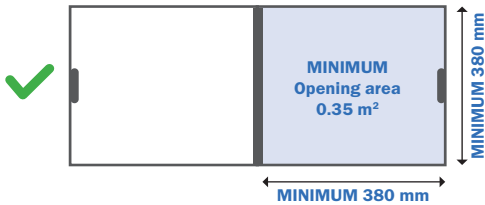
- Zoning – the land use district must allow a secondary suite
- Minimum lot area for a site accommodating a secondary suite 400m² - or the minimum area listed for the applicable land use district, whichever is greater
- Minimum lot width for a site accommodating a secondary suite - 13m or the minimum width listed for the applicable land use district, whichever is greater
- Parking – the subject property must accommodate two parking stalls for the dwelling and one to two stalls for the secondary suite
- Access – the secondary suite must have a separate access different from the access to the dwelling and contain living, cooking, sleeping, and sanitation facilities which are separate from those of the principal dwelling
- These considerations apply to secondary suites; other standards may apply above a garage (garage suites) or in a separate building from the main dwelling (garden suite)
- The schedule for development permit issuance is five to six weeks if no variances are requested and seven to eight weeks if there are variances. Variances require approval from the Municipal Planning Commission
- Once you have an approved development permit, you can apply for a building permit before beginning construction
- For more information, see Section 6.19 Suites, of Land Use Bylaw on www.airdrie.ca/bylaws

4 Bedroom Windows

Windows in bedrooms are required to provide an alternate method for exiting in the event of a fire or other emergency. A bedroom window must have an unobstructed open area of not less than .35 m² (3.76 ft²) with no dimension less than 380mm (15"). Windows below exterior grade must be provided with a clear space in the window well in front of the window of not less than 760mm (30"). The window must be openable and remain in an open position without the use of keys, tools or special knowledge. Security bars are likely not permitted.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

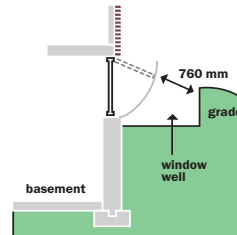
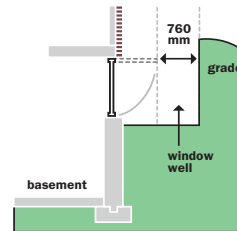
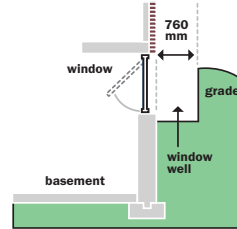
Examples of bedroom window open area and dimensions



4 Bedroom Windows continued

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

Examples of bedroom windows below the grade



5 Smoke Alarms

Homes containing a secondary suite must have smoke alarms that are interconnected to provide early detection and warning to occupants in both the main dwelling, the secondary suite and any common/shared spaces. All new developed areas require a smoke alarm in every bedroom and on every storey. Each smoke alarm must be hard-wired into an electrical circuit with a battery backup. All smoke alarms must be interconnected so they will operate in unison.

6 Carbon Monoxide Alarms (CO)

CO alarms are required in every residence with a fuel fired appliance or an attached storage garage. CO alarms must be located within each bedroom or located within 5m of each bedroom. All CO alarms must be interconnected so they will operate in unison.

7 Heating and Ventilation

An independent heating and ventilation system along with independent temperature control is required for secondary suites. No ductwork can be shared between the main residence and a secondary suite. There are various ways in which this requirement can be achieved. One common method is to install a second furnace serving only the secondary suite. Another popular option is an alternate heat source (electric baseboard or boiler heat) along with a means to provide adequate ventilation such as a heat recovery ventilator (HRV). Home owners are encouraged to investigate heating options with local heating service companies to minimize costs.

8 Sound Protection Requirements

Each dwelling unit must be protected from noise transmission. This requires sound-absorbing material and resilient channel to be installed in any wall or floor assembly separating dwelling units from each other or separating dwelling units from common spaces.

Who to contact

Buiding Inspections

403.948.8832

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Planning & Development

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