



Secondary Suites

City of Meadow Lake

A secondary suite (also known as a revenue suite or basement suite) can be a beneficial addition to the home. It is important, however, that secondary suites conform to local bylaws and to applicable Codes, as these help ensure that the building is safe for all occupants and the public. Property owners who install secondary suites without obtaining a building permit do so at their own risk.

Existing suites that were installed without a building permit can often be brought into compliance, and owners of such properties are encouraged to obtain advice from the City Building Department.

Definition: *“Secondary suite” means a self-contained dwelling unit with a prescribed floor area located in a building or portion of a building of only residential occupancy that contains only one other dwelling unit and common spaces, and where both dwelling units constitute a single real estate entity. (NBC 2010)*

As of May 1, 2013, building permits for secondary suites in Meadow Lake may be issued for detached and semi-detached houses in residential zones. Building permits may also be issued for secondary suites in townhouses or rowhouses *provided that* the building conforms with section 9.10.11.12.(2) of the Building Code: *Where a building of residential occupancy contains more than 2 houses, a party wall that separates any 2 adjacent houses with a secondary suite from the rest of the building shall be constructed as a firewall to create separate buildings each containing no more than 2 adjacent houses with a secondary suite.*

Zoning Regulations (Zoning Bylaw 4/2002)

- 1 Minimum size of suite: 46 square meters (495 square feet)
- 2 Maximum size of suite: 59 square meters (635 square feet)
- 3 Must contain cooking, sleeping and toilet facilities
- 4 One additional off-street parking space must be provided for the suite, in addition to required parking for the dwelling
- 5 Only basement suites are allowed

Building Code Requirements (All references are to the National Building Code 2010)

Secondary suites must meet all Building Code requirements that pertain to single dwellings, including but not limited to the following:

- 1 No more than one secondary suite per dwelling (1.4.1.2)

- 2 Secondary suited must be located within the dwelling (i.e. no suites in outbuildings) (1.4.1.2)
- 3 Floor area of suite not to exceed 80% of the floor area of the rest of the dwelling, not including attached garage area. (9.1.2.1)
- 4 Finished ceiling height (measured from top of finished floor to bottom of finished ceiling) to be at least 1.95 metres (76.75 inches) (9.5.3.1)
 - a Height under beams and ducts to be at least 1.85m (72.5 inches)
 - b Clear height over stairs to be at least 1.95 metres (76.75 inches) (9.8.2.2)
- 5 Stairs to have a finished width of at least 860mm (34 inches) and wooden stair stringers to have a maximum spacing of 900mm (35.5 inches) (9.8.2.1, 9.8.9.4)
- 6 Stairs must be provided with a handrail between 865 - 965mm high (34 - 38") (9.8.7.4)
- 7 Entrance doors to be at least 810mm (32 inches) wide and 1980mm (78 inches) high (9.5.5.1)
- 8 Exits (9.9.9) must lead directly outside (i.e. not through a garage or another living space). Suite to be provided with either:
 - a one separate exit at grade level, or
 - b one common exit (i.e. foyer with separate doors leading to the suite and to the principal dwelling space)
- 9 Unless the building is sprinklered, every bedroom must have a window suitable for use as an exit (9.9.10.1), namely:
 - a easy to open from the inside with no special tools or knowledge
 - b have a clear opening of at least 0.35 square meters (3.77 sq feet) and at least 380mm (15") in width and height
 - c at least 760mm (30") clearance between the open window and any window well or other obstruction
- 10 Fire protection:
 - a Ceilings and both sides of walls separating secondary suite, common spaces and the remainder of the building to have a *continuous smoke-tight barrier* consisting of 12.7mm (1/2") drywall, mudded and taped (9.9.4.2, 9.10.9.2)
 - b Beams, teleposts, load-bearing walls to be protected by 12.7mm (1/2") drywall, mudded and taped (9.10.8.3)
 - c Where a window or door serving the suite is within 3m (9'10") of a window or door serving the rest of the house, all glass in those windows or doors shall be glass block or wired glass in steel frames. (9.9.4.6)
- 11 Sound control (9.11.2.1) The walls and ceiling separating the suite from the rest of the house must have an STC rating of 43 or better
 - o This is commonly achieved by placing sound-rated insulation in the cavity and installing resilient channel under the drywall on one side of the wall and on the ceiling. Other methods may also be suitable. Note that fibreglass insulation is not suitable as a sound barrier. Acoustical caulking must be applied at the top and bottom plates and corners of walls to prevent sound transmission at those locations. Note also that STC 43 does not eliminate all sound transmission.
- 12 Doors between suite, common spaces, furnace room and remainder of building (9.10.9.3) to:

- a Be *either* a 20-minute rated fire door assembly OR a solid-core wood door 45mm (1.75") thick in a rabbeted wood frame
 - b Have a latch
 - c Have a self-closing device that causes the door to close completely
- 13 Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarms (9.10.19, 9.32.3.9):
- a Alarms to be interconnected so that activation of any one alarm causes *all* alarms throughout the building to sound
 - b Smoke alarms to be located:
 - i In every bedroom,
 - ii In every furnace room,
 - iii In every common space, and
 - iv In the hallway or living area of each floor
 - c Carbon monoxide alarms to be located:
 - i In any room with a wood-burning stove or fireplace,
 - ii In the furnace room, and
 - iii Within 5m (16') of every bedroom on each floor
 - d All alarms must have a battery backup.
- Note that combination smoke/CO alarms are acceptable. Alarms must be CSA/ULC approved. The building owner is responsible to ensure that alarms are operational.
- 14 Heating and ventilation
- a Air ducts serving the suite cannot be connected to other parts of the house (9.33.1.1)
 - b The suite must have independent heating controls (9.33.4.3)
 - c Ventilation and makeup air must be provided in accordance with section 9.32.3

Addressing

- 1 The secondary suite will be identified by adding the letter "A" after the primary address, e.g. "123A Lake Street"
- 2 The addresses of both house and suite must be placed on the front wall of the house and must be plainly visible from the street.
- 3 Check with Canada Post for further requirements

Application

To apply for a building permit to construct a secondary suite, you are required to submit a plan showing the following information:

1. Dimensioned floor plans for all levels of the building showing room layouts and the use of each room.
2. Structural components such as columns and beams within the suite.
3. Cross section(s) showing room heights, structural details, fire separations and sound separation in detail.
4. Window sizes and location.

5. Ventilation provisions.
6. Complete details of forced air heating systems.
7. Exits, including the location of all exits from the house and the suite.
9. Site plan, including the location and dimensions of the on-site parking stalls for the suite and the principal dwelling.

Application for a building permit may be made by appointment between 8:30 am and 4:00 pm Monday to Friday at City Hall, 120 1st Street East, telephone 306-236-3622.

This information sheet has no legal status and cannot be used as an official interpretation of the various codes and regulations currently in effect. The City of Meadow Lake accepts no responsibility for any consequences resulting from persons relying solely on this information.

Revision:1-February-2015