

Summary of Amendments

Secondary Suites Definition

The current definition of secondary suites in Zoning Bylaw 12800 limits these dwellings to single detached homes. A change in the definition of secondary suites is required to accommodate these types of dwellings in semi-detached, duplex and row housing. The new definition is also crafted to ensure that the suite is accessory and subordinate to the principal dwelling, and to distinguish semi-detached and row housing with secondary suites from stacked row housing.

Removing Minimum Lot Size Requirements for Secondary Suites

Currently, the minimum lot size for a single detached house with a secondary suite is 360 square metres. This requirement prevents owners of narrow lot housing or houses on smaller properties across the city from adding a secondary suite. Administration conducted a historical review of regulations to understand the rationale for this restriction.

Prior to 2007, an application for a secondary suite required that the property was 100 square metres larger than what was required for a single detached house in the applicable zone. In 2007, the minimum lot size for a secondary suite was reduced to 360 square metres, which was equal to the minimum lot size for single detached housing in most standard residential zones at the time. The minimum lot sizes for single detached housing have been reduced since 2007, but these changes have not been accompanied by corresponding decreases in minimum lot size for secondary suites.

In reviewing previous reports, Administration found that the original justification for requiring a larger lot for a single detached house with a secondary suite was to control the number of opportunities for suites and to ensure that parking could be accommodated on site. The intent of limiting opportunities is no longer compatible with the proposed direction for secondary suites and the City's objective of providing housing choice and affordability. Factors like parking can also be regulated more effectively when addressed directly, which is achieved through minimum off-street parking requirements that require parking to be provided on-site. If the required parking spaces for both the principal dwelling and the secondary suite are not able to be accommodated on-site, the application will either be refused or require a variance.

The total number of low density residential lots under 360 square metres in Edmonton is approximately 32,300 city-wide, and 5,700 within mature neighbourhoods. As noted in Attachment 1, historical patterns have shown an uptake of permitted secondary suites of less than 2 percent of the total number of single detached houses. Even when estimating for existing suites that may not

have permits, the total is still below 10 percent of single detached units. Therefore, the overall impact of this change is not expected to be significant on a cumulative city-wide scale, but will provide opportunities for home owners on these smaller properties to accommodate a suite if desired.

Changing Floor Area Requirements

When secondary suites are located fully within a basement, the size of the suite is simply required to be less than the total floor area of the main dwelling. This regulation is easy to achieve as it typically allows the suite to take up the bulk of the basement space. When excluding stairway space, the suite is ultimately just below the floor area of the first storey of the house as shown in Figure 1. In the case of a bungalow, the floor area of the suite would be just under that of the principal dwelling. Rather than an absolute cap in space, the regulation provides a proportional approach that effectively ensures that the suite is subordinate to the main dwelling.

Conversely, secondary suites that are developed fully or partially above grade are limited to 40 percent of the total above grade floor area of the building, or 70 square metres, whichever is less. The regulation serves to arbitrarily prevent a portion of the basement from being used as suite space, even though the secondary suite would not exceed the total size of the principal dwelling.

Figure 1

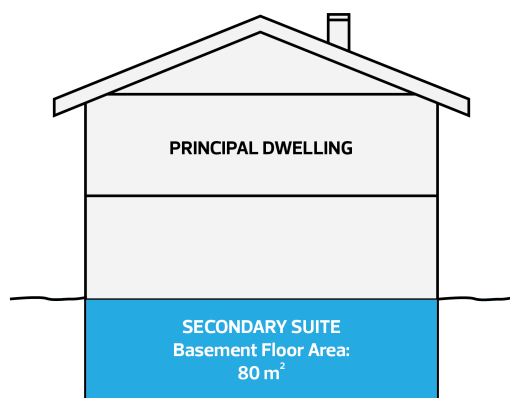
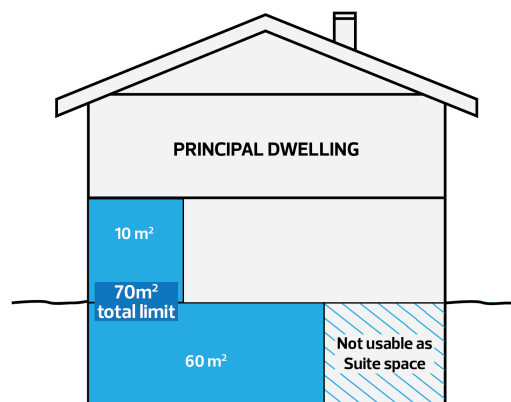


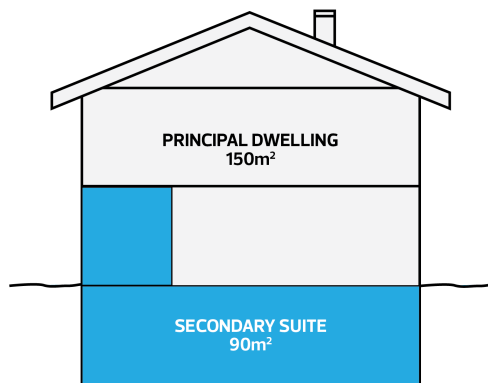
Figure 2



In reviewing the rationale for the 40 percent or 70 square metre limit in previous reports, Administration found that, rather than being focused on ensuring the secondary suite was subordinate to the principal dwelling, it was intended to address concerns that additions to the principal dwelling would be built in order to accommodate a secondary suite.

As homeowners are always free to develop additions, provided they comply with applicable development regulations, it was unclear why this rationale should be used as a limiting factor for absolute size of secondary suites. Rather, the proposed regulations maintain a proportional approach for all secondary suites, whether developed above or below grade, to ensure that they remain subordinate to the main dwelling. Overall building size and massing will continue to be regulated through site coverage, setback, and height restrictions. In instances where a proposed secondary suite does not meet the criteria of being subordinate to the principal dwelling, the Development Officer is able to deem these units to be semi-detached, duplex, or stacked row housing development and regulate accordingly.

Figure 3



Further Allowing Secondary Suites as a Permitted Use

The proposed amendments will make secondary suites a permitted use wherever single detached, semi-detached, duplex, or row housing are a listed use. Secondary suites have the same activities as other forms of low density residential development and as such are considered to be compatible with these zones. Making secondary suites permitted provides a more consistent approach to regulating low density residential uses and creates greater certainty for homeowners wishing to add a secondary suite to their property.

The proposed amendments would allow secondary suites in existing single detached, semi-detached, duplex and row housing as a permitted use, whether the principal use is discretionary or permitted.