

CONTACT

Planning & Development Services
City of Prince Albert
1084 Central Avenue

P: 306-953-4370
Email: pds@citypa.com

OFFICE HOURS
8:00 a.m. — 4:45 p.m.
Monday to Friday

www.citypa.ca



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Secondary Suite & Garage Suite Regulations

What you need to know before you construct a secondary suite or garage suite

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Prince Albert, SK
S6V 7P3
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General Requirements

Your Secondary Suite or Garage Suite must comply with all zoning and building code requirements. This brochure is intended as a guide to assist you with understanding those requirements. For further information and guidance, please contact the department directly.

A **Secondary Suite** is a self-contained dwelling unit that is an accessory use to and located within a One Unit Dwelling, and must meet the following requirements:

- One secondary suite is allowed in any One Unit Dwelling in residential zoning districts and the RMU zoning district. Secondary suites are not allowed in combination with Family Child Care Home, Group Family Child Care Home, Private Care Home, Residential Care Home, Private Day Care Home, Residential Day Care Home, Custodial Care Facility or on a site with a Garage Suite.
- One on-site parking space must be provided for the suite.
- Separate entrance from the exterior.
- Must be approved by the Building Inspector and meet all requirements of the Zoning Bylaw and National Building Code.

A **Garage Suite** is a self-contained dwelling unit that may be at or above grade, which is located within a detached garage or similar accessory building, and must meet the following requirements:

- One garage suite is allowed on a site with a One Unit Dwelling in the CR1 and CR2 zoning districts.
- The wall height for the accessory building may be increased to 6 metres.
- One on-site parking space must be provided for the suite.
- A garage suite is not permitted in combination with a secondary suite.

A building permit is required for a Secondary Suite or Garage Suite. The following must be submitted with your building permit application:

- Site plan drawn to scale with dimensions showing the location of the existing house, and the parking stalls;
- A floor plan, of the house and proposed suite;
- Indicate all materials to be used and window sizes; and
- Show the total square footage of each level of the house and the secondary suite. Show entrances, location of smoke alarms, carbon monoxide detectors. Show how separate heating will be achieved.

National Building Code Requirements

The following are generally required for a Secondary Suite and Garage Suite:

- May have a maximum size of the lesser of 860ft² or 80% of the square footage of the house.
- Each suite must have their own heating system, that does not share duct work and must be able to control their temperature individually.
- Secondary Suites must have an exterior entrance separate from the principal dwelling.
- The ceiling, walls, floors that separate one suite from another suite or to a common space requires minimum 1/2" drywall to be installed mudded and taped to create a smoke tight seal.
- Doors to common spaces, or suites need to have a solid core wood door. Door sizes are a minimum of 32" and have self closing devices.
- Wall and ceiling finishes must meet the required flame spread rating, wood paneling does not meet the required rating.
- Hardwired interconnected smoke alarms are required to be installed in every bedroom and in the hallway within 5 metres of the bedroom. The smoke alarms must be interconnected with each suite and be installed in all common areas.
- Each suite requires to have a sound transmission class rating of 43 between each other and all common areas. This can be achieved by filling the joist space, stud space with sound absorbing insulation, resilient channels and 1/2" drywall.
- Ceiling heights in secondary suites not less than 6'-4" and under beams or ducting not less than 6'1".
- A minimum width of 34" for stairs with a slip resistant finish. The head room clear height of 6'-4" for going down the stairs.
- Every stairway must have a 3 way switch to control the lights.
- If installing a separate power meter the above requirements will apply with the exception of the size limitations and 5/8 type X drywall will be required instead of the 1/2".
- The separate meter makes this a suite by definition under the National Building Code and not a secondary suite.
- Unless a bedroom has a door that leads directly to the building exterior, or the suite is sprinklered, each bedroom must have at least one outside openable window openable from the inside without the use of tools or special knowledge. This window must provide an unobstructed opening with a minimum area of 0.35m²(3.77ft²) and no dimension less than 380mm (15").

The above requirements are guidelines only. Additional requirements may be required for Garage Suites or on a case-by-case basis.

