



Secondary Suite Guideline

What is a secondary suite?

A Secondary Suite is a self-contained dwelling unit that is part of the principal dwelling unit containing not more than two dwelling units (including the secondary suite) and any common spaces such as storage, service rooms, common laundry rooms or common areas used for exit. Primary and secondary suites must have a single title of ownership. Development and Building permits are required for all secondary suites.

All “Garden, Garage and Mother In-Law” suites are considered Secondary Suites.

All information provided in this guide references requirements of the National Building Code (Alberta Edition) and City of Spruce Grove Land Use Bylaw C-824-12

Basic Secondary Suite Requirements

Secondary Suite address must be a minimum of 10 cm tall and visible from the street prior to occupancy.

The minimum ceiling height for living spaces is 1.95m.

A secondary Suite must have a direct exit to the outdoors.

Each bedroom in a secondary suite must have at least one window for emergency escape during a fire. This window must be openable from inside without the use of keys, tool or special knowledge and without removal of sashes or hardware.

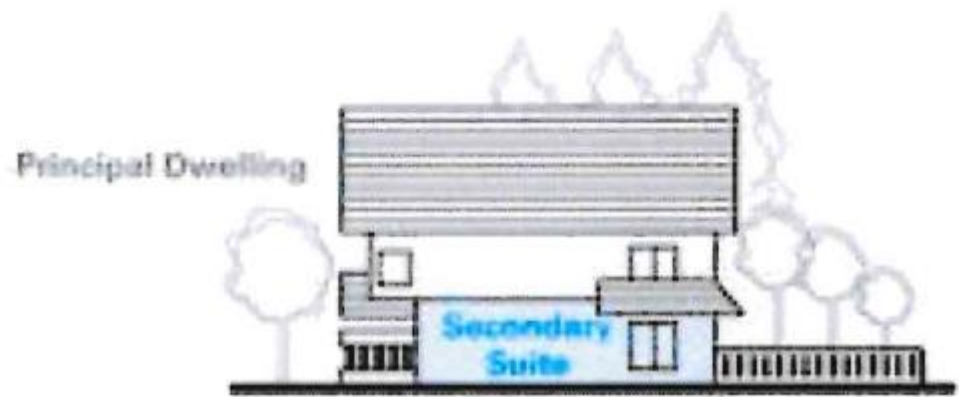
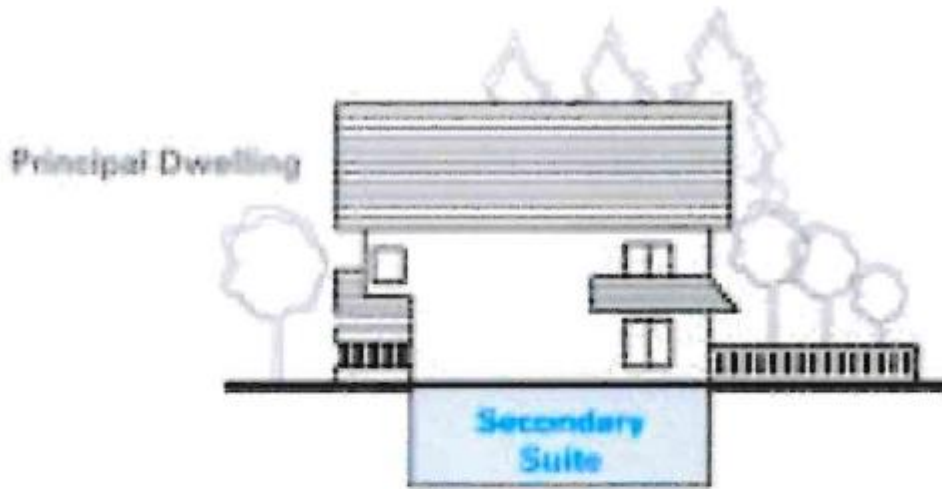
A smoke-tight barrier is required between suites and common areas by installation of ½” drywall. Service (mechanical) rooms also require a smoke-tight barrier to be installed on walls and ceiling by installing ½” drywall.

Homes containing a secondary suite must have interconnected smoke and carbon monoxide alarms and in primary and secondary suites and have smoke alarms in every bedroom.

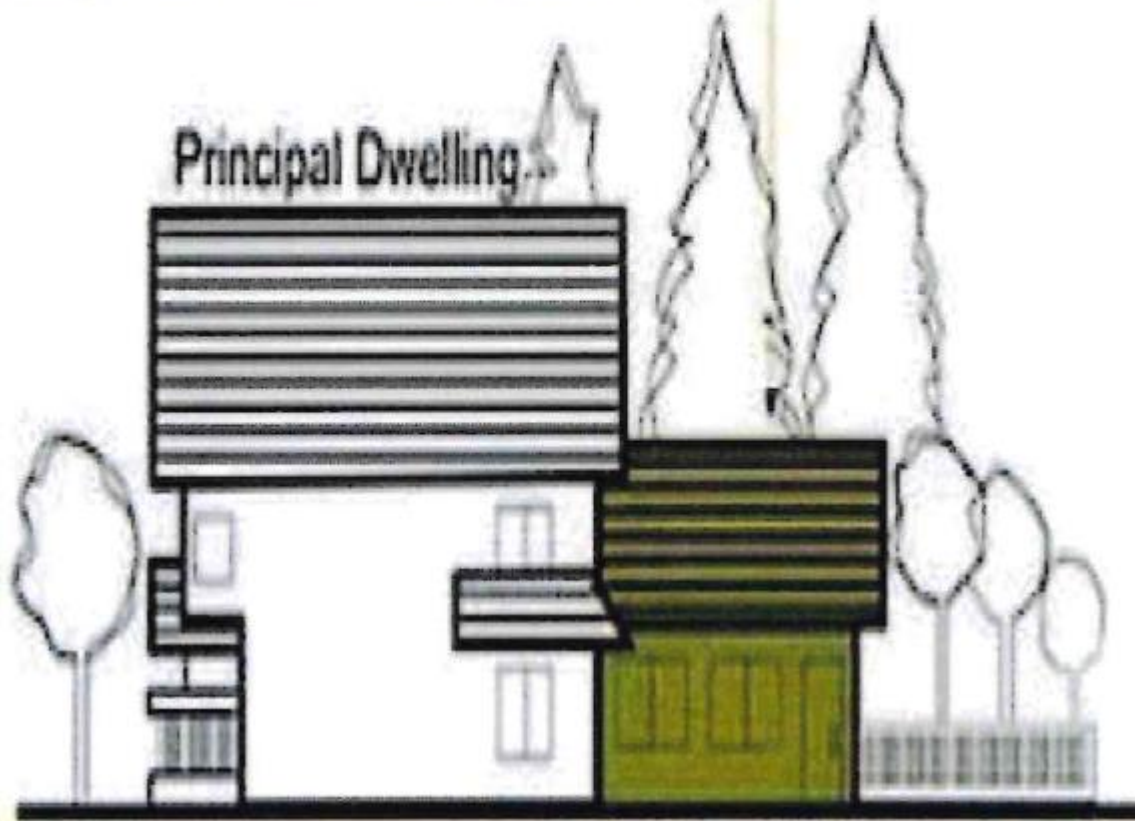
Secondary suites require an independent heating and ventilation system to be installed.

Sound transmission (insulation, resilient channel) must be installed between primary and secondary suite and common areas.

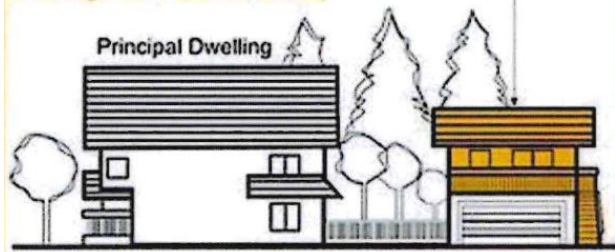
Utility room doors must have a door opening of 810mm (32”).



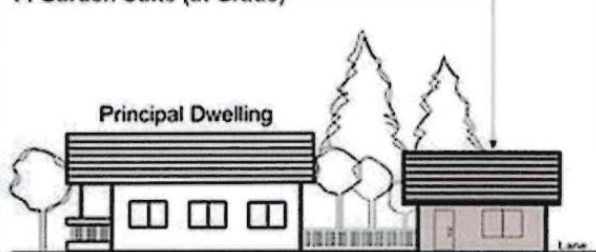
C. Secondary Suite Attached to Single Detached Dwelling at Grade



E. Garage Suite (above Grade)



F. Garden Suite (at Grade)





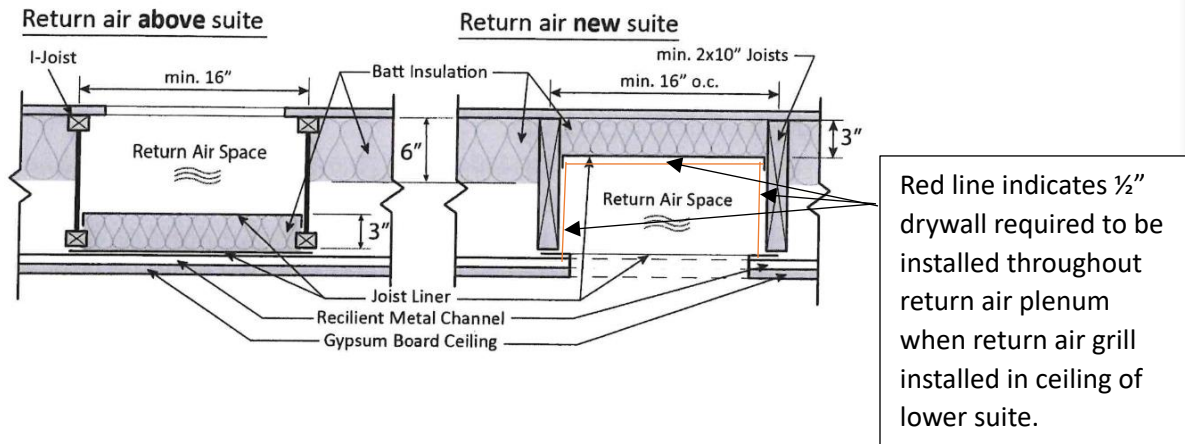
Sound Transmission

A minimum STC rating of 43 must be maintained between suites and common areas or a separating assembly and adjoining constructions which provide an ASTC rating of not less than 40. Walls between suites and common spaces must be filled with sound absorbing material, Joist spaces must be filled with sound absorbing material that is a minimum of 150mm (6") in thickness.

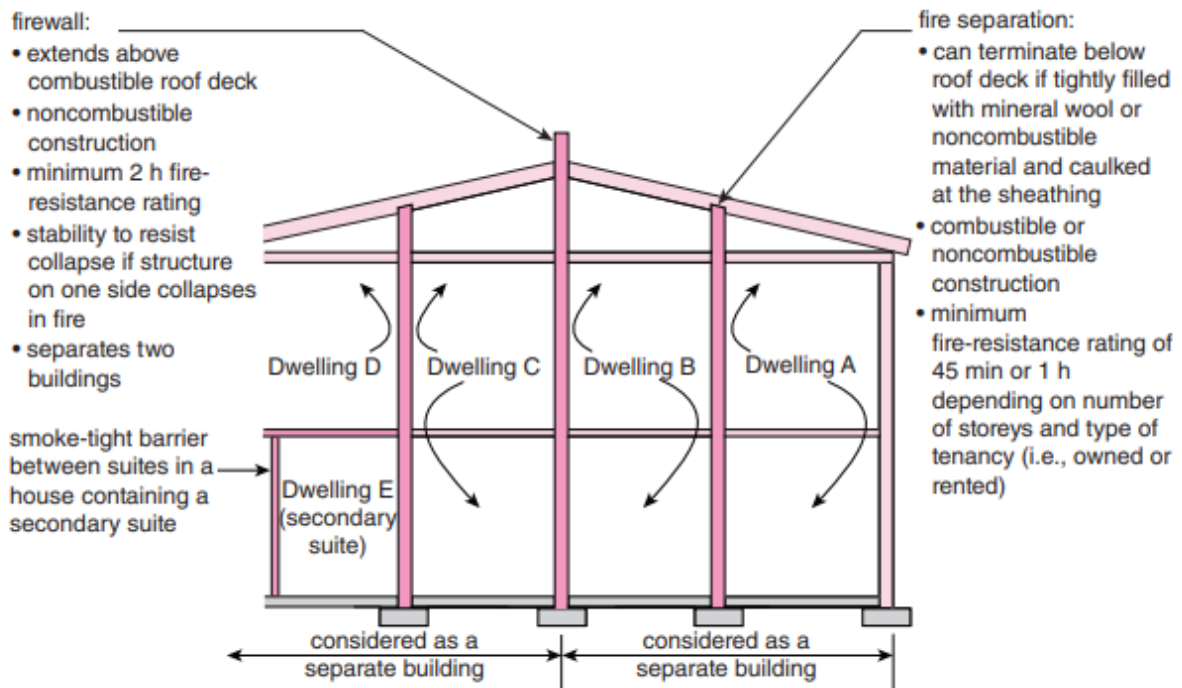
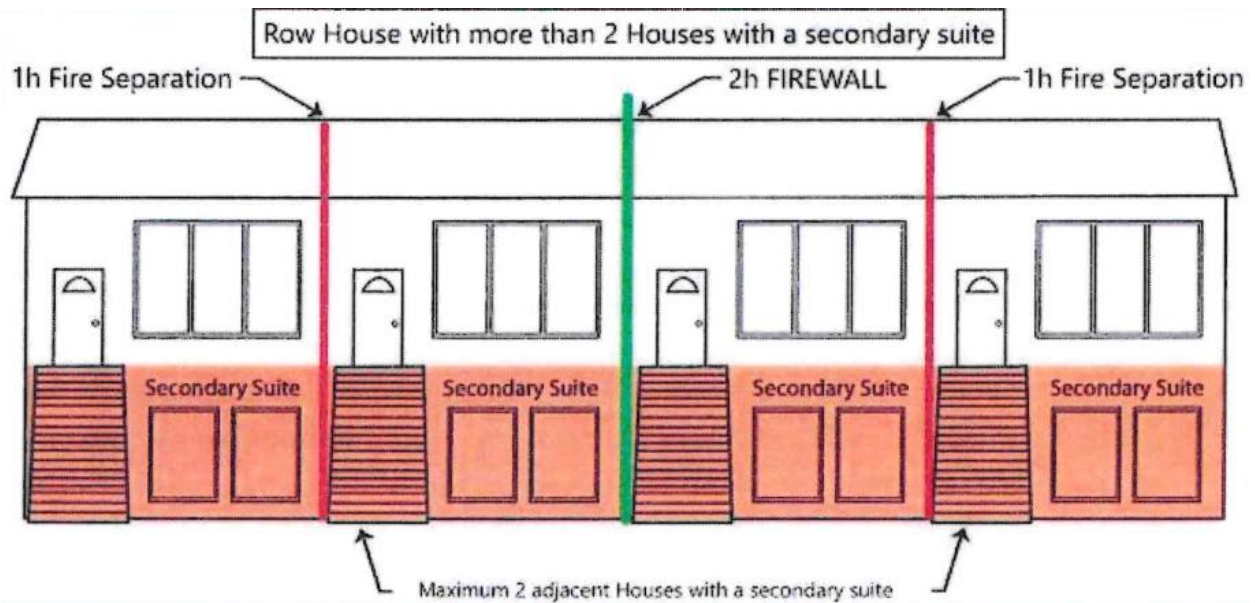
Fire/Smoke Separation

A smoke-tight barrier is required between primary and secondary suites and common spaces. This is achieved through installing ½" drywall with all joints, penetrations sealed with drywall mud and tape, approved smoke barrier sealant or fire stop material.

Smoke-tight barriers and sound transmission must be maintained at return air plenums. The picture below is an example of how to achieve compliance.



Row houses that contain more than two units of residential occupancy and a secondary suite require a firewall to be installed as the party wall between every two adjacent units. See drawings on next page.



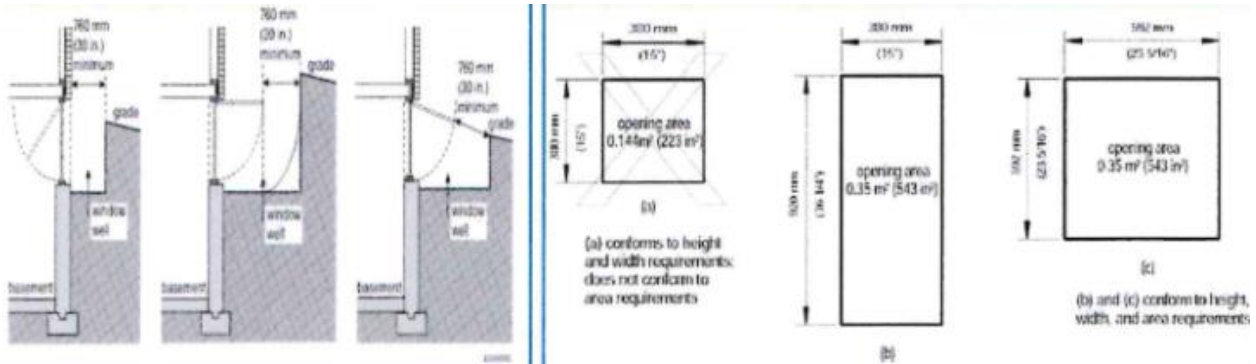
Heating and Ventilation Requirements

A secondary suite must have a independently controlled heating and ventilation system. This system must not be interconnected with the primary suite. Some ways to satisfy this requirement may be:

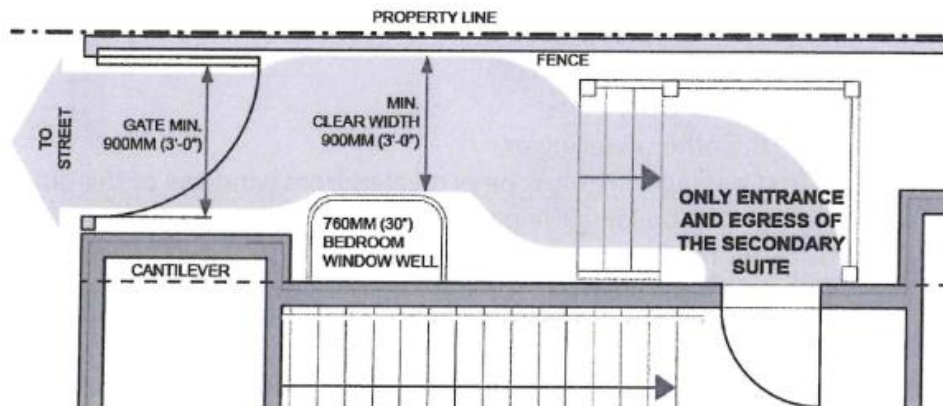
- Install a separate furnace and ductwork for the secondary suite
- Install hydronic heat and heat recovery ventilator
- Install electric baseboard heat and heat recovery ventilator

Exit/Egress and Exterior access to Secondary Suites

Where a bedroom window opens into a window well, a minimum clearance of not less than 760mm shall be provided in front of the window. The bedroom window opening must be at least 0.35m² (3.75 sq.ft) with no dimension less than 380mm (15”).



When a secondary suite cannot be accessed through the principal dwelling ensure there is an exterior 900mm path from the street to the secondary suite entrance door.





When a “means of egress” is an exterior stair from the secondary suite a unprotected opening in exterior walls of the building shall be protected with wired glass in steel fixed frames or glass block conforming to Articles 9.10.13.5. and 9.10.13.7. of NBC(AE) 2023, where

- a) An unenclosed exterior stair or ramp provides the only means of egress from a suite and is exposed to fire from unprotected openings in the exterior walls of
 - i) another fire compartment, or
 - ii) another dwelling unit, ancillary space or common space in a house with a secondary suite, and
- b) Unprotected openings in the exterior walls of the building are within 3m horizontally and less than 10m below or less than 5m above the exit stair or ramp.

