

Backyard Suites How-to Guide



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Backyard Suites How-to guide

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Backyard Suites

What is a backyard suite?

A backyard suite is a second residence that is in a building located behind or beside the primary residence. They are sometimes referred to as laneway houses, carriage houses, garden suites or garage suites.

Why support backyard suites?

Backyard suites provide flexibility and choice for home owners by providing a housing form that can allow a property to better suit changing household needs, such as the need to provide a home for an aging parent or an adult child, supplement income with rent, house a care-giver or downsize to a smaller residence.

Suites also add different types and sizes of homes that are more affordable in low-density neighbourhoods. And because suites cannot be sold separately, they provide rental housing that contributes to a mix of tenures.

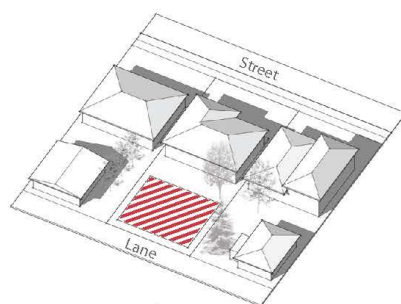


Guide overview

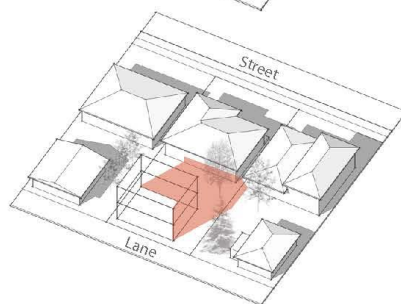
The Backyard Suite how-to guide shows ways to address the design intent from the rules and policies for backyard suites and highlights different ways to improve design outcomes. It is intended to inform the design process; help frame the conversation between neighbours about a proposed backyard suite; and guide City staff when reviewing the development permit.

The how-to guide walks the reader through the important design aspects identifying specific design aspects to consider at each stage with strategies that can be used to design the new backyard suite.

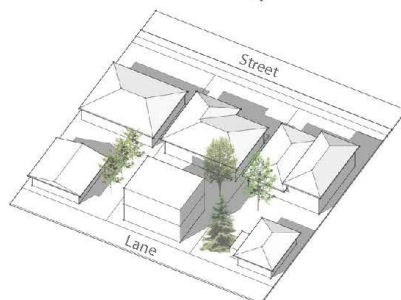
For information on the rules for backyard suites and to find out whether you can build a backyard suite on your property please visit: calgary.ca/suites



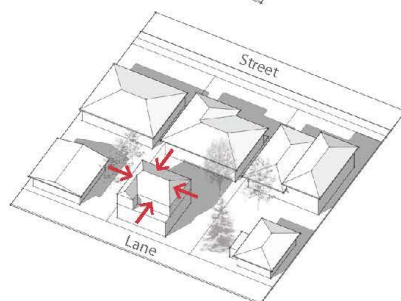
①
Building placement



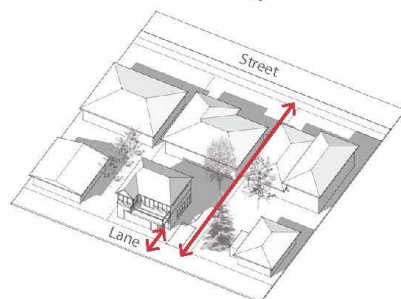
②
Sunlight and shadowing



③
Trees



④
Height and massing



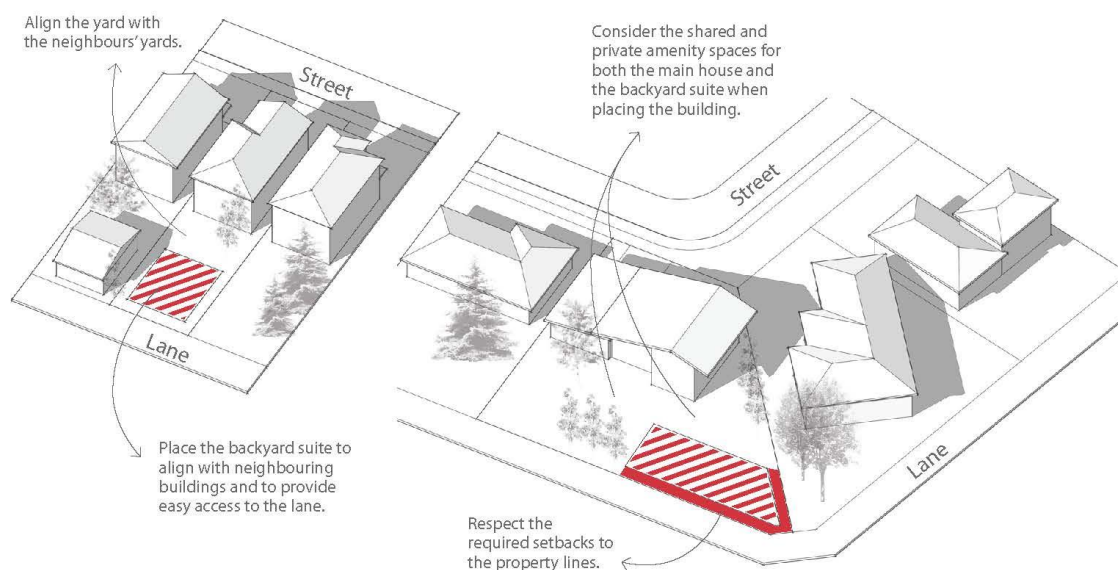
⑤
Balconies,
windows and access

1

Building placement

Design principles

- Consider the location of the adjacent yard space and buildings. The new backyard suite should be located to align with building and yard placement on neighbouring parcels. Where feasible, buildings should be located next to buildings and yards should be located next to yards. On a lot with a lane this principle will most often result in the new backyard suite being located next to the lane to match the location of neighbouring garages and parking pads.
- Consider how future tenants of the primary residence and the backyard suite will use the shared yard space when choosing the location of the backyard suite. Providing distinct amenity spaces for each of the households is encouraged.



② Sunlight and shadowing

Design principles

- Locate the backyard suite to maximize sunlight access for neighbouring parcels. On north south blocks the backyard suite should be located closer to the shared property line on the south side of the lot so that the neighbouring parcel to the north has better access to the southern aspect sun angle.
- Angled or stepped rooflines that let more sunlight into yards next to the suite are encouraged.



③ Trees

Design principles

- New backyard suites are encouraged to be located so that existing, healthy trees will be retained.
- Trees can screen windows, amenity spaces and buildings. Locating the new backyard suite to take advantage of existing trees can enhance privacy for tenants and neighbours and reduce the visual mass of the new suite.

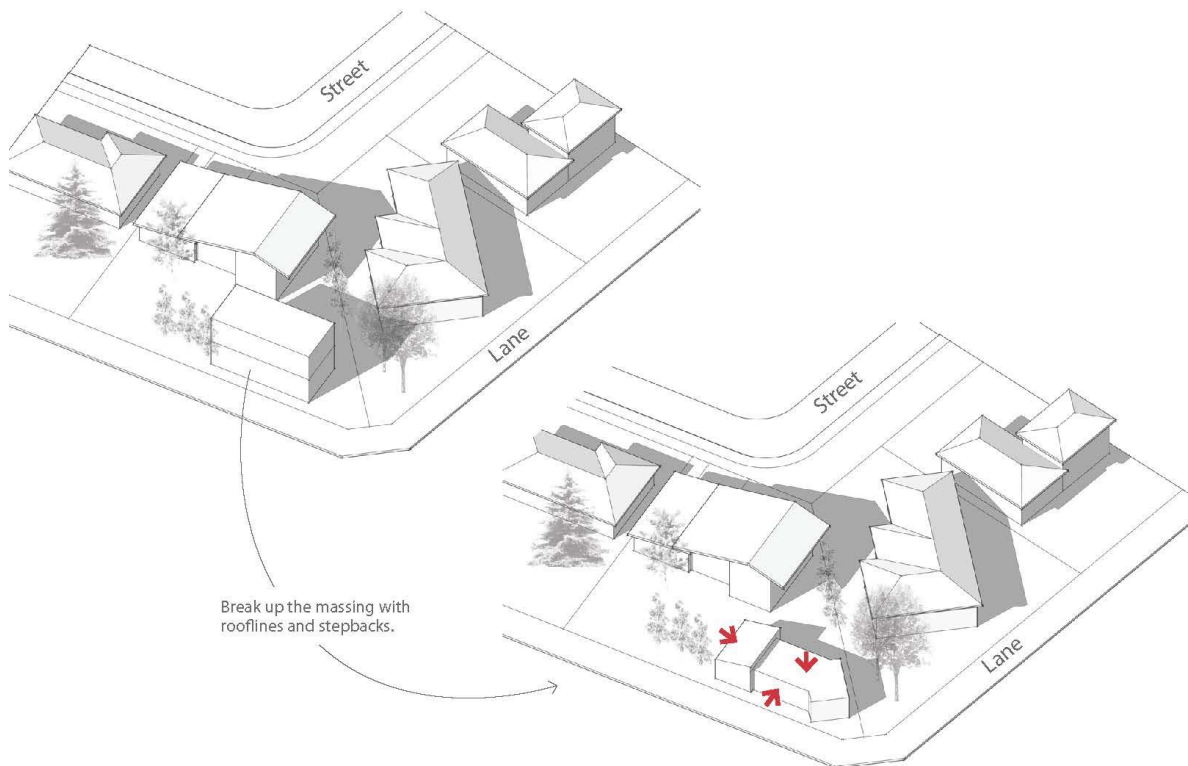


④

Height and massing

Design principles

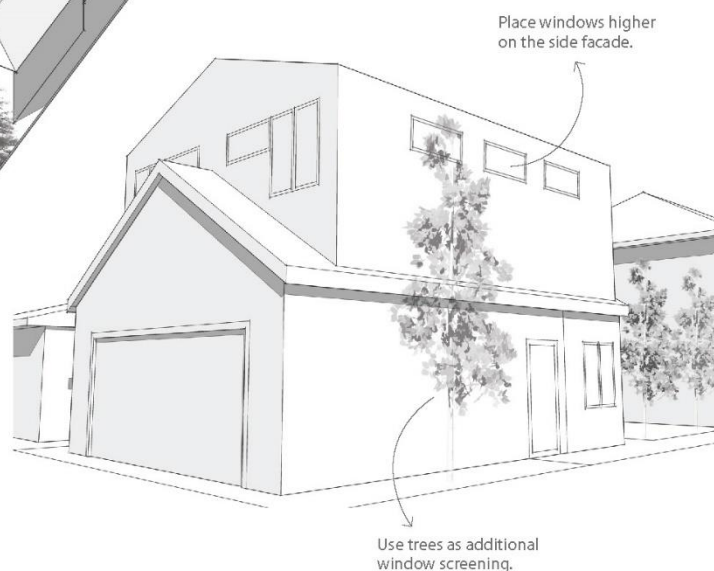
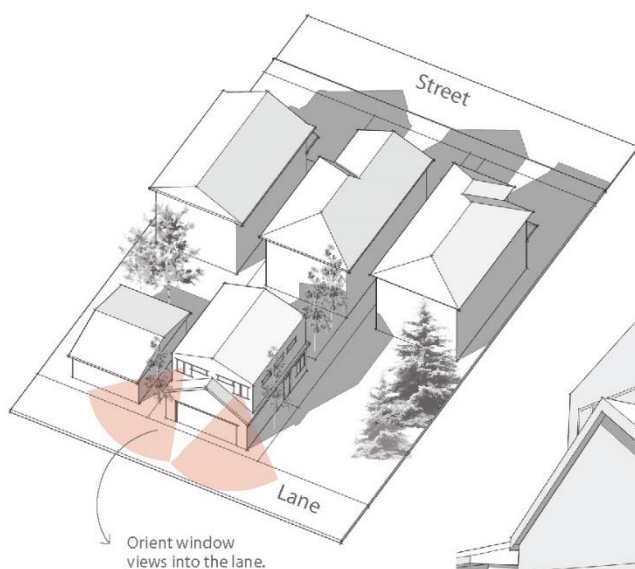
- Height should be transitioned from neighbouring parcels to reduce the perceived height of backyard suite from the neighbouring yard.
- Building facades should be articulated to reduce the appearance of height and volume.
- Rooflines should be articulated to provide more visual interest and reduce the appearance of height. This can be achieved by lowering the height of the primary façade and stepping the roofline.



5 Windows

Design principles

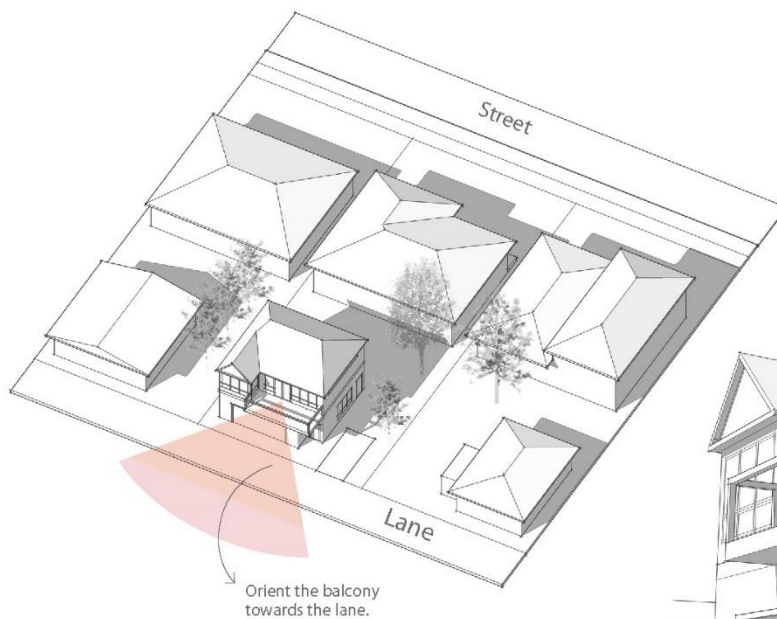
- Windows should generally be placed to provide views to the street, the lane or into the yard shared with the primary residence.
- The location of neighbouring buildings and trees should be considered when determining window placements. Windows on side facades are more appropriate where direct views of neighbouring yards are screened with trees or where the window overlooks a neighbouring garage.
- Some windows on the side facade will be supported to break up the visual mass of the wall where the windows are obscured or placed higher in wall to prevent direct overlooking.



5 Balconies

Design principles

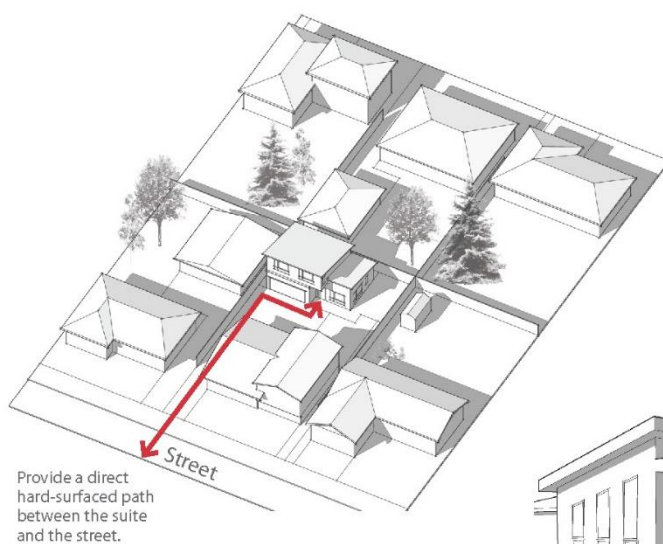
- Balconies should face onto the street, the lane or into the yard that contains the suite. Direct side views of neighbouring yards should be avoided and may be screened using privacy walls or trees.



6 Access

Design principles

- Where the backyard suite is located on a corner parcel it should have an entry that provides direct access to the street. Where this is not feasible, access to the street should be provided via a hard surfaced pathway extending from the entrance of the suite to the street.
- Where the backyard suite is located on a parcel with a lane it should have access to the lane through a direct entrance on the lane or provide direct access to the lane or the street via a hard surfaced pathway.
- Where the suite has an entry directly onto the lane the door should be set back from the lane with a hard surfaced landing to provide separation from the path of cars in the lane.
- On a laneless parcel access to the backyard suite should be as direct as possible from the public street via a hard surfaced pathway.



Putting it
together...



... into a comprehensive design process:

