

Practices in other Jurisdictions

Municipalities often take unique ways of managing Secondary and Backyard Suites. Rules usually reflect their policy, parcel size and housing stock history, as well as jurisdictional context and local and regional economics.

Most municipalities limit the floor area of a Secondary Suite, ranging from 50 to 90 square metres, and from 33 per cent to 50 per cent of the gross floor area, although a common number seems to be a limit of 70 square metres or 40 per cent of the gross floor area or the floor area of the main dwelling unit, whichever is smaller. Most limit floor area to reflect that Secondary Suites should be secondary to the primary dwelling unit and different from a duplex.

Many municipalities require a parking stall for a Secondary or Backyard Suite, while some do not. Again, rules vary by municipality and are usually unique. For example; Vancouver requires parking based on year of construction of the primary dwelling (pre-2004, no parking required); the City of Victoria does not require additional parking, but on the other hand, has large parcel sizes that generally already have the ability to accommodate extra off-street parking; the City of Toronto requires an additional parking stall, but allows tandem parking; and the City of Edmonton requires 3 parking stalls for a dwelling with a Secondary, Garage or Garden suite.

Many municipalities allow Secondary Suites in all low density residential districts, while some limit them in small parcel districts. For example, the City of Victoria allows Secondary Suites in the R-1A, R-1B and R-1G districts, where the minimum parcel widths for parcels created after 1956 are 24 metres, 15 metres, and 15 metres. On the other hand, Vancouver allows Secondary and Backyard Suites on parcels as narrow as 7.3 metres. The City of Edmonton requires a minimum parcel area of 36 square metres and does not include suites as part of density.

A notable approach, Ontario mandates all municipalities through Provincial Law (the *Strong Communities through Affordable Housing Act, 2011*) to address Secondary Suites and ancillary dwellings (e.g. garage suites) in their Official Plans (rough equivalent of MDP's Alberta) and to allow them in all detached, semi-detached and row house dwellings. Rules, such as maximum or minimum floor areas, parking, appearance and licensing are left up to each municipality.

Many jurisdictions require an annual business license for a rental suite, including Vancouver, Surrey, North Vancouver and Kelowna, while others do not, such as Victoria. Notably, the City of Mississauga requires an initial license fee of \$1,000 for investor owners, and an annual fee of \$500 thereafter, whereas the fees are \$500 and \$250 for owner-occupants.