

Proposed Changes to Secondary Suite and Backyard Suite Approvals

Calgary City Council has directed Administration to bring forward amendments to the Land Use Bylaw at the July 21, 2026 Public Hearing that would make Secondary Suites and Backyard Suites permitted uses in low-density residential districts across the city.

Currently across most of the city, secondary suites only require a building permit. They do not require a development permit. Backyard Suites require both a development permit and building permit. Due to the approval of the Repeal Bylaw, as of August 4th 2026, many secondary suites will once again require a development permit, and will once again be a discretionary use – meaning applications are reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

On July 21st 2026 City Council will decide whether homeowners who meet all Land Use Bylaw rules for secondary suites or backyard suites are able to receive approval with a rule-based compliance review instead of a case-by-case discretionary review.

The proposed change from discretionary uses to permitted uses reduces the time, cost, and uncertainty that Calgarians can face when adding a suite to their property. Suites remain subject to building code, public health, safety, and zoning standards. Calgary residents are encouraged to attend or submit comments at the July 21st Public Hearing if they wish to share their views on this proposal.

What's the difference between a permitted use and a discretionary use?

- Permitted uses that comply with all the rules of the Land Use Bylaw must be approved by The City.
- A discretionary use may or may not be approved, depending on how the use aligns with City policies and the rules of the Land Use Bylaw.
- For permitted uses that don't comply with all the rules, The City can use discretion, public feedback and City policies to make the decision whether the use should be approved.
- The City may approve a discretionary use that does not comply with the rules of the Land Use Bylaw.
- The City may also refuse a discretionary use that does comply with all the rules of the Zoning Bylaw, based on discretion.
- A discretionary use can be appealed by anyone claiming to be affected, for any reason.

- A permitted use that meets all the rules can only be appealed on the grounds that the approval was issued in error, or the Land Use Bylaw was misinterpreted.