

Welcome to
The City of St. Albert
Basement Suites

**Legalizing Your
Existing
Basement
Suite**

www.stalbert.ca

**Canada Mortgage
and Housing
Corporation is
Offering
A Financial
Assistance Program
Called RRAP**

For Further Information
Contact CMHC at:

1-800-668-2642

OR

Check their web site at:
www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca

Basement Suites in St. Albert

Alberta Municipal Affairs and Housing approved amendments to the Alberta Building and Fire Code regulations on December 31, 2006, to ensure safe construction and modifications for new and existing basement suites. Subsequently, St. Albert City Council has amended the Land Use Bylaw making Basement Suites a permitted use in low-density residential areas subject to certain requirements and regulations. A process has been developed to simplify legalization, clarify the Alberta Building Code and Fire Code requirements, and help to reduce costs for homeowners.

Conformance with the Alberta Building and Fire Codes will help to ensure safety and quality of life for the occupants of basement suites.

Do You Qualify?

If you have an existing basement suite for which a development permit and building permit is issued after December 31, 2008, you must meet the current Alberta Building Code standards including the recent amendments for secondary suites. These standards will also be required in new home construction where basement suites are proposed.

If you are building a new home and intend to develop a basement suite, the City's Land Use Bylaw and the Alberta Building Code Section 9.37 outline the requirements.

For further information
contact
City of St. Albert
Planning & Engineering
Division

Phone: (780) 459-1654
Fax: (780) 458-1974

Located at:
2nd Floor
5 St. Anne Street
St. Albert, Alberta
T8N 3Z9

Costs

Existing Basement Suite, or renovation / occupancy of existing suite:

- Development Permit	- \$165.00
- Building Permit	- \$232.00
- Safety Codes Fee	- \$ 9.28
	\$406.28

Basement suite included in application for new home construction:
(fees are additional to current fees for new home construction)

- Development Permit	- \$165.00
- Building Permit	- \$ 82.00
- Plus Safety Code Fee of 4% of total Building Permit Value	

Additional costs may include plumbing, gas and electrical permit fees, depending on the work being undertaken.



**For further
Information
Please Contact:**

Development Permit:

A City Development Officer
(780) 459-1654

**Building Permit and
Inspections:**

Building Inspection
Services
(780) 459-1654

or

Fire Prevention & Public
Education

(780) 459-1688

Existing Suites – Permits & Inspection

When development permit and building permit applications are received, the City will evaluate the proposed application against the Land Use bylaw regulations and a City Inspector will visit your home and conduct a preliminary assessment of your suite. The cost for inspections will be included in the building permit fee and written reports will be provided. The purpose of the inspection is to provide the information necessary to ensure the suite meets the requirements of the Alberta Building and Fire Codes. The inspector can help you to make decisions and move through the process to final approval as quickly as possible.

The Building Inspector will examine specific components within the suite such as the plumbing system, heating system, bedroom windows, exits, smoke alarms, fire separations, ventilation, gas appliances, etc. It may be necessary to look at parts of the main floor as well as the basement suite area. In some cases, plumbing, gas and electrical permits and inspections will also be required.

This may require the removal of small portions of wall and floor finishes to expose critical portions of the plumbing or gas systems.

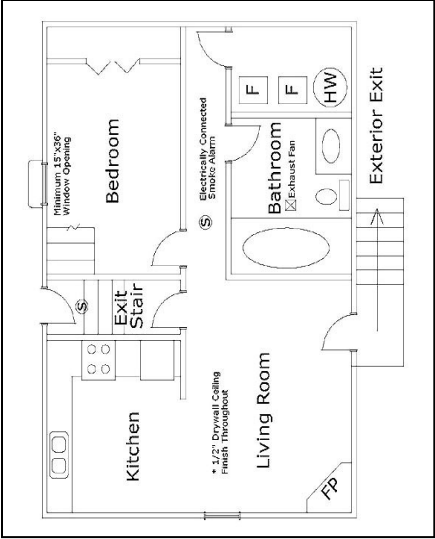
Following the preliminary inspections, you may complete the construction work as advised by the Inspectors and call for a final inspection prior to occupancy of the suite. When the work substantially conforms to the Alberta Building and Fire Codes, a letter will be issued allowing occupancy of the basement suite.

Existing in-law suites are also considered basement suites. The regulations contained in this brochure will apply, unless the in-law suite is properly decommissioned.

If you decide not to legalize your existing suite, you must contact a Development Officer at (780) 459-1642, for assistance with this process.

What you need to apply

- Call the Planning & Engineering Division at 459-1654 or apply in person
- Letter of Authorization if you are not the owner of the property
- Two copies of a floor plan
- Two copies of a site plan
- Two copies of building elevations
- Submission of permit applications and fees



Permits

A development permit must be obtained prior to new suite construction or approval of an existing suite. A building permit allowing commencement of the work will follow the development approval.

In addition plumbing, gas and electrical permits must be applied for when significant changes or additions to these components are necessary. The owner of the property may obtain these permits, but licensed tradesman may be required to complete some of the work.

A decommission confirmation will also be needed if you wish to discontinue use of the basement suite. Contact a Development Officer at (780) 459-1642, for assistance with this process.

Plan Requirements

To apply for a development permit and building permit the following minimum criteria are required:

Floor Plans

Two (2) copies of the Floor Plan of the suite with the following information:

- The floor areas of the basement suite and main dwelling
- The types and sizes of the bedroom windows
- Locations of electrically connected smoke alarms
- The exit door(s) and required bedroom exit window(s)
- Wall and ceiling construction materials and details
- Locations of all rooms within the basement
- Additional information may be requested upon review

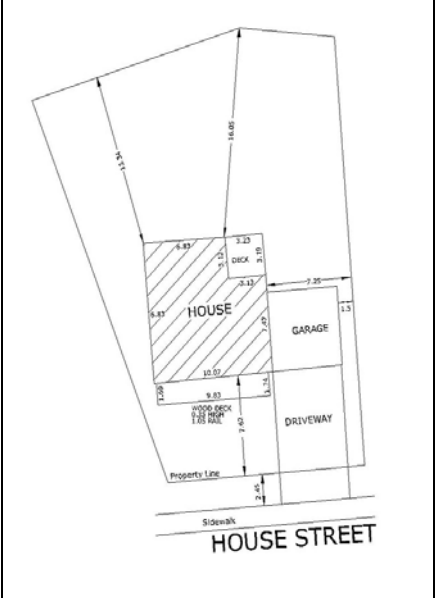
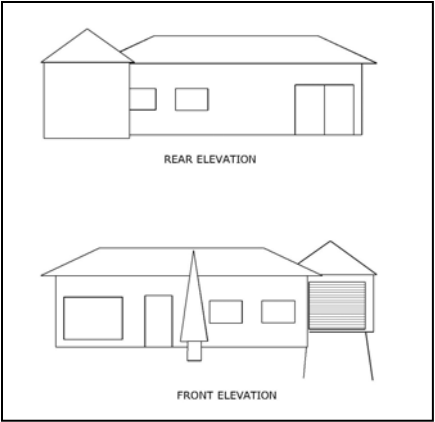
Building Elevations

Two (2) copies of the building elevation (or existing photograph) of the house, accurately drawn to scale and clearly indicating where the entrance to the basement suite will be located (Note: if the required separate entrance to the basement suite is to be from the exterior of the house, it must be from the side or rear of the house and not the front).

Site Plans

You will also need two (2) copies of a Site Plan showing the following information:

- The entire lot
- Property lines with dimensions
- Location of the house on the lot
- Identification and dimensions of setbacks from the property line
- Location of all parking spaces on the lot (specify location of basement suite parking space or spaces)



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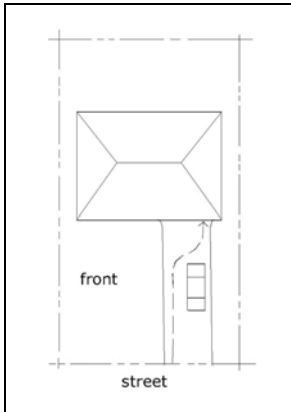
Parking

In addition to the required parking for the principal dwelling unit, a basement suite shall comply with the following parking requirements of the Land Use Bylaw:

- a. One stall for a bachelor suite, one bedroom or two bedroom units;
- b. Two parking stalls for a three-bedroom unit.

The extra parking space(s) for the suite must be contained on the private property and be situated on an asphalt or concrete surface. The stall must be at least 5.8m in depth and have a width of no less than 2.6m.

Please contact a Development Officer at (780) 459-1642 for more details.



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Suite Size and Location

The suite must be located within the basement of the existing house. The minimum area of a basement suite shall not be less than 30 square metres or 323 square feet.



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Limits on Uses

Suites may be allowed in single detached houses on lands zoned as R1 or R2 under the City Land Use Bylaw and you can only have one suite per home. Duplexes, townhouses, row houses, apartments, and other multi-family housing types do not qualify. The building must also be a single real estate entity. In other words, basement suites cannot be strata units.

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Height of Rooms and Spaces

The ceiling height for basement suites in an existing house must be 2.3m (7'-6") and conform to Table 9.5.3.1 of the Alberta Building Code, 2006 and be a minimum of 1.95m (6'-5") from the stair nosing to the underside of the ceiling. The minimum ceiling height must be maintained throughout the suite with some exceptions. Portions of the ceiling may be lower on the condition that provision is made for the minimum required floor area in each room.

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Minimum Window Areas

Opening windows are required in bedrooms to provide natural ventilation and a suitable means of exiting in an emergency. They must be openable from the inside without the use of tools or special knowledge. The bedroom window(s) must have a minimum unobstructed opening area not less than 3.77 sq.ft. (0.35m²) and no dimension less than 15" (380mm). Bathrooms must have an opening window or an exhaust fan vented to the exterior with insulated pipe.



For further information call (780) 459-1654

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Suite Area and Exits

Basement suites must have a separate entry from the principal dwelling unit, either from a common indoor landing or directly to the exterior. Separate exterior entries are restricted to the side or rear of the house. If the access is from the side, the stairwell must not be located within 1.0 m of the side property line.

Constructing Your Suite



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Safe Exiting Requirements

The basic principle of the exit requirements is that people have two ways of getting out of the building in case of fire. Some existing homes may need significant modifications to meet the exiting requirements in the Alberta Building and Fire Codes.

Doors

Minimum door sizes required:

Entry to basement.....	32" x 78" (810mm x 1980mm)
Bedroom(s).....	24" x 78" (760mm x 1980mm)
Bathroom.....	24" x 78" (610mm x 1980mm)

Exit Corridors and Stairs

An exit stairway connected to the main floor must have a door at the top of the stairs to restrict access and help prevent smoke from passing to the main floor suite. The exit stairway must be separated from the remainder of the dwelling by minimum 1/2" standard drywall or equivalent material on each side of the walls.

Handrails and guards shall conform to the requirements of the current Alberta Building Code.

If the existing bedroom window does not meet the minimum area required, you can:

- Replace the window to meet the minimum required size, or
- Provide an exterior door with direct access to the outside.

An Inspector can help resolve your specific situation.

Windows near an exit route

An unenclosed exterior exit stair from the basement suite must not be located adjacent to or pass in front of windows in the main floor dwelling unit.

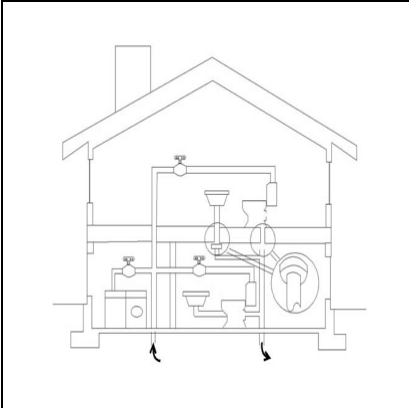


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Dwelling Unit Separations

The basement suite, furnace room and the main floor of the dwelling must be separated from each other by not less than one layer of ½" standard drywall or equivalent material on the ceiling and sides of adjacent walls.



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Pipes and Ducts Penetrating Dwelling Separations

Metal pipes, sheet metal air ducts and plumbing are allowed to pass through ceilings and walls between the suite and the main house but they must be tightly fitted.

Plastic water pipes can pass through ceilings and walls if they are tightly fitted and if they are not more than 30mm (1 in.) in diameter.

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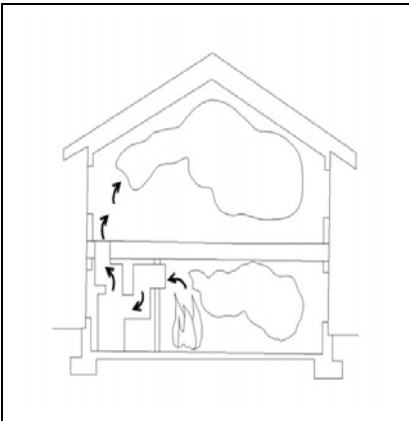
Heating Systems

Heating and ventilation systems must meet the requirements in Sections 9.32 and 9.33 of the Alberta Building Code and B149.1-05 Gas Code.

The heating system for a basement suite must be capable of maintaining an indoor air temperature of 22 degrees Celsius in all living spaces throughout the heating season.

In existing basement suites after December 31, 2008, the main house and the basement suite shall not share a common forced air ventilation system. This is to help prevent the danger of smoke or other harmful contaminants moving quickly from one dwelling unit to another. Alternative means of providing an equivalent level of safety will be considered.

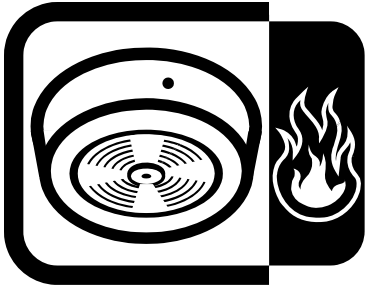
Heating systems, which do not change the air between suites, such as radiant hot water, electric baseboard, etc. are permitted, but another form of mechanical ventilation will also be required within the suite.



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Mechanical Ventilation

The basement suite must have at least one exhaust fan in the suite, usually placed in the bathroom.



Smoke Alarms/Carbon Monoxide Alarms

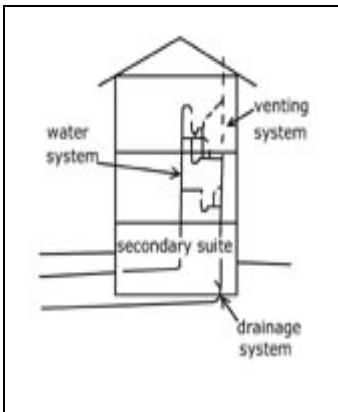
Electrically connected smoke alarms conforming to CAN/ULC-S531 are required in each dwelling unit and must be interconnected so that activation of one smoke alarm will cause all alarms within both units to sound.

Where bedrooms are developed, a smoke alarm must be located inside the bedroom or outside the bedroom within 5m (16ft.) of the bedroom door, measured following corridors and doorways.

Smoke alarms shall be installed with permanent connections to an electrical circuit and shall have no disconnect switch between the panel breaker and the smoke alarm.

Smoke alarms shall be installed in areas common to both dwelling units such as access to an exit.

Carbon monoxide alarms shall be installed in new basement suites. They must conform to CSA – 6.19, be located within 5 metres of the bedroom door(s) and be mechanically fastened at a height recommended by the manufacturer.



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Plumbing

Additional plumbing fixtures installed to accommodate a basement suite may affect the operation and performance of existing fixtures in other areas of the dwelling. Drainage, venting and water systems must meet the current National Plumbing Code requirements to ensure that an acceptable level of performance is maintained throughout the dwelling. Non-compliance may result in poor plumbing system performance, trap seal failures and the entry of sewer gas into the building.

Note: Provisions for a shared laundry or storage room facility are acceptable but wall and ceiling finish materials must meet the previously mentioned criteria for dwelling unit separation.

Occupancy

When construction of the basement suite has been completed, you must call the City of St. Albert, Building Inspection Services for a final occupancy inspection. When the suite has passed inspection, written approval will be given allowing occupancy of the basement suite.

Additional Information

For further clarification pertaining to the development or approval of a basement suite, please contact the City of St. Albert, Planning and Engineering Division at (780) 459-1654.



For further
information
call
(780) 459-1654

This guide has been prepared to provide convenient information only. If a contradiction exists between the guide and the relevant Bylaw or applicable Code, the Bylaws and Codes shall take precedence.