

Doing Suited Houses The Right Way



**The City of Edmonton
Supports YOU to
Increase Your Cash Flow**

Suited houses in the City of Edmonton typically do not have permits. In other words, there are a lot of “illegal” basement suites out there. The truth is, you won’t go to jail if you have a suite without a permit, not even close! Let’s change the language to conforming suites and non-conforming suites to more accurately reflect how the city views these properties.

In this presentation, there will be an explanation of the most common requirements to have a conforming suite. If you own a non-conforming suite, how would you potentially become discovered by city officials and more importantly, what will happen if you do? Finally, a discussion of the most effective ways to remedy the situation if this occurs.

Zoning Requirements

- Most common zoning permitted RF1, RF2, RF3, RF4,
- Semi detached not permitted: townhouse, side by side duplex

Important: if you purchase a semi-detached property with a suite you are assuming a calculated risk

Reference: Bylaw 12800

http://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/documents/Bylaw15036PosseOct24.pdf#xml=http://search1.edmonton.ca/texis/ThunderstoneSearchService/pdfhi.txt?query=bylaw+12800&pr=www.edmonton.ca&prox=page&rorder=750&rprox=250&rdfreq=0&rwfreq=0&rlead=750&rdepth=0&sufs=1&order=r&cq=&id=4d9b01f039Common%20Fire%20Safety%20Requirements

Fire Safety Requirements: Common Problems

- Bedroom window size: opening of 3.8 square feet with no measurement of less than 15 inches
- 3/8 inch or fire rated drywall on walls and ceilings in basement. Furnace room, laundry room, common areas, storage rooms, underneath staircase. Remember: the lower suite needs to be a self contained fire proof unit.
- Inter connected smoke detectors with power source hard wired into house. If one goes off, they all go off.
- Basement Ceiling height of 77 inches
- Suites are separated and each have their own means of entry and exit. No shared entryway.

Reference

http://www.edmonton.ca/for_residents/emergency_services/fire-prevention-secondary-suit.aspx

Key Contact:

Dave Gagne
Fire prevention officer
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Building Code: Common Problems

- Electrical Inspection always required. Common issues: reverse polarity, improper grounds, separate breakers for kitchen electrical, sufficient plug ins.
- Sufficient parking. 2 spots for upper, 1 per 2 sleeping units in suite. Dimension of 2.6m x 5.5m. Inside of garage can be used towards parking spots.
- Hand rail guidelines: no horizontal members except for top rail, vertical members must be 10cm apart, height minimum of 100cm.
- Stair risers need to be of consistent height
- Overall condition of foundation: a cracked foundation may result in a call for an engineering report
- Appearance of mold issues may require health inspection
- New suite development requires 2 furnaces; pre-existing suites may have 1 furnace

Important: Keep an eye out for these deficiencies when shopping for a basement suited house

Key Contact:

Bernie Reichert

Safety codes officer

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Non-Conforming Suite is discovered: What happens?

How do they find out?

- Owner volunteers for inspection
- Neighbor complaint
- Tenant complaint

Step 1: Planning and Development / Land Use inspection

1. The inspectors will first stop by the suite and attempt to gain access from the tenant
2. The inspectors will second schedule an appointment with you in writing

Important: When they arrive, they are looking for: separate renting/leads and a cooking facility aka 220v wiring, stove, fridge

Step 2: Report for required upgrades

- The owner will be mailed a detailed report of all needed upgrades
- Owner has 1 year to obtain permits and begin work

Important: Choose a contractor who knows how to complete these items to code

Step 3: Choose action to take

- A: Decommission suite
- B: Upgrade and get permits for suite
- C: Non compliance to city orders

A: Decommission Suite

- Issue a letter stating this will be a “single family dwelling”
- Decommission 220v and cooking facility
- Only have 1 tenant

Important: if a suite is decommissioned, then to build a suite in the future will require 2 furnaces

B: Upgrade suite and obtain permits

- 1 year to obtain permits and begin work
- 1 year to complete
- This will be at the discretion of the inspectors

Important: work with the inspectors to show them constant progress

C: Non compliance to city orders

1. Orders to comply with date and time
2. Charges
 - a. Fine up to 15k
 - b. 1k/day fine from compliance date
 - c. Prison time up to 6 months
 - d. Order to complete work
 - e. At discretion of judge
3. Contempt of court

Important: it's not a good idea to ignore city orders

Cornerstones Grant

Follow these steps

- ▶ 1. Inspection
- ▶ 2. Permit application / approval
- ▶ 3. Contractor estimates x2
- ▶ 4. Grant Application / Approval
- ▶ 5. Completion of Work
- ▶ 6. Final inspection
- ▶ 7. Permit issued
- ▶ 8. Grant money Re-imbursement

Reference

http://www.edmonton.ca/for_residents/programs/cornerstones.aspx

Key Contact:

Valerie Ball
Secondary Suites Coordinator
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Important: the city wants to give this money away, getting approval is very easy

Reference

http://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/planning_development/secondary-suites.aspx

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Suited House Diligence Checklist

Location within neighborhood:

Bust Stop____ LRT____ Grocery____ Park____ Major Road____ Employment____

Zoning____

Upper Suite:

(Rate 1 = poor, 2 = fair, 3 = good, 4 = excellent)

- Curb Appeal
- Secure Feel
- First impression upon suite entry
- Overall condition of suite

Expected rent_____

Garage rent_____

Lower Suite:

(Rate 1 = poor, 2 = fair, 3 = good, 4 = excellent)

- Curb Appeal
- Secure Feel
- First impression upon suite entry
- Overall condition of suite

Expected rent_____

Features Present

(Check for yes)

- Bedroom Windows 15 inches @ each dimension, 3.8sf
- Suite fully dry walled for fire separation
- Common and mechanical areas dry walled for separation
- Inter connected hard wired smoke detectors
- Basement ceiling height 77 inches
- Each suite has separate means of entry
- Sufficient parking spots 2.6m x 5.5m
- Hand rails 10cm distance between vertical members, 100cm high
- Consistent height of stair risers
- Foundation in good shape
- Suitable cooking facility
- Absence of mold/water damage

Renovation required to obtain permits: _____