

August 15, 2025

Amendments to Backyard Suite Regulations

1. What is a Backyard Suite?

A backyard suite is a small, self-contained home located on the same lot as a main house. Also known as garden suites, carriage homes, or laneway houses, they typically include a kitchen, bathroom, and sleeping area. They are separate from the main residence and are usually located in the backyard.

2. Are backyard suites currently allowed in Red Deer?

Yes, backyard suites are already a permitted use in Timberlands North, and a discretionary use in all other neighbourhoods.

3. What are the current regulations for Backyard Suite?

Each neighborhood is only allowed 15 per cent of the total number of Houses to have House Suites / Backyard Suites.

Current regulations:

1. Backyard Suite and a House Suite cannot exist on the same site
2. Must be placed only in a side yard or rear yard
3. Parking Requirements:
 - 1 additional stall for a suite with 2 or fewer bedrooms
 - 2 additional stalls for a suite with 3 or more bedrooms
4. Maximum Height:
 - 2 storeys with an overall maximum height of 10.0m measured from grade
5. Maximum Floor Area:
 - 75% of the building footprint of the principal dwelling unit
6. Setbacks:
 - Side yard setback minimum: same as site's zone regulation
 - Rear yard setback minimum: the larger of 0.9m or the width of any registered easement or right of way plus 0.5m

4. Why are Backyard Suite Regulations under Review?

At the February 19, 2025, meeting of the Municipal Planning Commission (MPC), the Commission presented and passed a resolution recommending that Red Deer City Council review the regulations for Backyard Suites giving specific consideration to:

- height restrictions,
- lot size, site coverage and developed floor area; and
- historic neighbourhoods.

This request came following MPC consideration of two different Backyard Suite applications requesting relatively large variances to the maximum size regulation.

At the March 24, 2025, Regular Council Meeting, Council considered MPC's recommendation and directed Administration to review the Backyard Suite regulations and bring back options for Council's consideration.

At the April 22, 2025 Council meeting, Council directed Administration to bring back amendments to the Zoning Bylaw for consideration by the end of Q3, 2025 that include:

1. Reduce maximum height of Backyard Suites
2. Amend floor area maximum regulation by exploring other options such as:
 - a. Floor area can be up to a certain square footage or 75% of the principal dwelling, whichever is greater.
 - b. Floor area can be tied to the lot size rather than the size of the principal dwelling.
3. Develop special regulations for Backyard Suites for Woodlea, Waskasoo, and Parkvale
4. Define 'Storey' and prevent liveable attic space in Backyard Suites.

At the August 5, 2025 Council meeting City Administration presented proposed Backyard Suite amendments to Council for consideration of First Reading.

5. What is being proposed?

At the August 5, 2025 Council meeting, Council considered First Reading of Bylaw 3357/M-2025 which included proposed amendments to the Backyard Suite regulations in the City of Red Deer Zoning Bylaw as per Council direction. Council considered the proposed bylaw and made additional amendments prior to granting First Reading.

In summary, the key changes proposed for Backyard Suites include:

- Building height: Maximum height of 5.5 m for Backyard Suites built at grade, or 7.4 m for Backyard Suites built over a garage.
- Introducing a maximum floor area of 75m² (807 ft²), while retaining the existing 75% of the principal dwelling rule – whichever is less.
- In any neighbourhood with character statements and overlays, Backyard Suites shall be subject to these regulations.
- Variance Powers: Any regulation in the bylaw relating to Backyard Suites may be relaxed by the Development Authority to a maximum of 15% in neighbourhood with Overlays or Character Statements.

A comparison of the current and proposed Backyard Suite regulations can be found at the end of this document. More information about the Backyard Suites review can be found on the [Engage Red Deer](#) website. The current regulations in place for Back Yard Suites can be found in Section 4.50 the [City of Red Deer Zoning Bylaw](#).

3. How can I provide comments?

Members of the public wishing to submit written comments on this Public Hearing matter may do so by:

- Completing and submitting the [Public Hearing Submission Form](#);
- Emailing your comments to publichearings@reddeer.ca;
- Dropping off a written copy of your submission at City Hall ([4914 48 Avenue](#)) during business hours to the attention of Red Deer City Council c/o Clerk, Legal & Legislative Services; or
- Mailing your submission to Red Deer City Council c/o Clerk, Legal & Legislative Services, Box 5008, Red Deer, AB T4N 3T4.

Deadline to submit written comments is 4:30 p.m. on Friday, September 5, 2025.

Detailed information on the Public Hearing process can be found on the City of Red Deer [Public Hearings](#) webpage.

4. How are the comments I submit used?

Any written comments received before the deadline of 4:30 p.m. on Friday, September 5, 2025 will be included in the agenda package provided for Council and the public.

5. What is the next step for this amendment?

Council will hold a Public Hearing on September 15, 2025, prior to consideration of Second and Third Reading (adoption) of the proposed bylaw. Anyone who wishes to speak at the Public Hearing is welcome to do so.

Backyard Suite Regulations: Existing and Proposed

4.50.10 Backyard Suite Dimensions		
Category	Regulations (Existing)	Regulations (Proposed)
Site Area	Minimum: 360.0m ²	Minimum: 360.0m ²
Site Frontage	¹⁴ As required for the Principal Use the Backyard Suite is accessory to, under the Zone regulations for the Site.	¹⁴ As required for the Principal Use the Backyard Suite is accessory to, under the Zone regulations for the Site.
Building Height	Maximum: 2 storeys with an overall maximum height of 10.0m measured from Grade	Maximum: Maximum 5.5m for Backyard Suites built at grade, or 7.4 m for Backyard Suites built over a garage.
Floor Area	Maximum: 75% of the Building Footprint of the principal Dwelling Unit	Maximum: 75% of the Building Footprint of the principal Dwelling Unit, or 75m ² whichever is lower.
Side Yard Setback	Minimum: Same as Site's Zone regulation	Minimum: Same as Site's Zone regulation
Rear Yard Setback	Minimum: the larger of: • 0.9m, or • the width of any registered easement or right of way plus 0.5m	Minimum: the larger of: • 0.9m, or • the width of any registered easement or right of way plus 0.5m
Separation Distance between Backyard Suite and primary Dwelling Unit	Minimum: 2.5m	Minimum: 2.5m
Variance Powers	N/A	Any regulation in the bylaw relating to Backyard Suites may be relaxed by the Development Authority to a maximum of 15% in neighbourhoods with Overlays or Character Statements

New subsection added as follows:

4.50.14 In any neighbourhood with character statements and overlays, Backyard Suites shall be subject to these regulations.

For more information, contact:

Corporate Communications
The City of Red Deer
403-396-9533