

Information Bulletin

Containment & Separation for Attached Secondary Suite Design

Issues have been encountered on site for *secondary suite* occupancy within a single dwelling, where occupants do not have full-time access to their services (e.g. circuit breakers, mechanical systems, etc). As a result, The City of Winnipeg has established accessibility requirements for this type of occupancy. Occupants for each respective suite must have full-time access to their services without having to enter the other suite.

An attached secondary suite can only be developed within a *single detached dwelling* and must be *self-contained* and *suitably separated* from the principal *dwelling unit* and all *common spaces*.

Secondary suite is defined in the Manitoba Building Code (MBC).

“*Secondary suite* means a *self-contained dwelling unit* with a prescribed floor area located in a building or portion of a building of only residential occupancy that contains only one other *dwelling unit* and common spaces, and where both *dwelling units* constitute a single real estate entity.”

Appendix A expands on this definition:

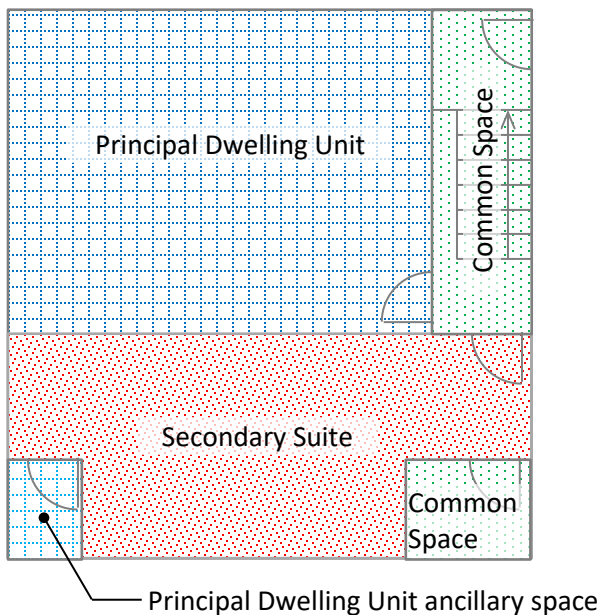
A secondary suite is a *self-contained dwelling unit* of a prescribed maximum total floor area that is part of a building containing not more than two *dwelling units* (including the secondary suite) and any common spaces such as common storage, common *service rooms*, common laundry facilities or common areas used for egress. Secondary suites are typically created within an existing single *dwelling unit*—commonly called a “house”—either constructed as an addition to an existing house or incorporated during the construction of a new house. A secondary suite may have more than one storey and may be on the same level as the principal *dwelling unit* of the house or be above or below it. *

Neither *dwelling unit* in a house can be strata-titled or otherwise subdivided from the remainder of the house under provincial or territorial legislation. This means that both *dwelling units* are registered under the same title.

*Note that some text has been removed in this location because it does not align with the Winnipeg Zoning By-law 200/206, Part 4. The Appendix A expanded definition shown above is permitted by the MBC **and** is in conformance with City of Winnipeg By-laws.

In order for a secondary suite to be *suitably separated*, a *smoke separation* must separate the secondary suite from the principal *dwelling unit* and from any *common spaces*.

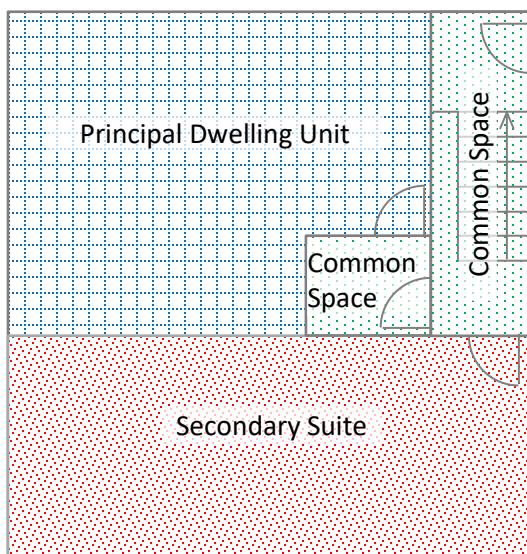
Common spaces must be accessible through common hallways, common stairways or other common use *means of egress*. A *common space* cannot be located where it can only be accessed through one of the suites.



Not Acceptable

The adjacent design is **not acceptable** for the following reasons:

- *Common spaces* and areas belonging to the *Principal Dwelling Unit* are accessible only via the secondary suite.
- Self-containment is not achieved.



Acceptable

The adjacent design is **acceptable**:

- Isolation is created from both suites
- *Common spaces* and areas are accessible to both suites without interference to the other occupant.

Building plans must identify *common spaces* and must clearly show the location of building services.

Service Rooms

A common *service room* requires *smoke separation*, Sound Transmission Class (STC) rating and access through a common area or public corridor.

A space is considered to be a “common *service room*” when any of the following is present in the space:

- A hot water tank serving both dwellings.
- A hot water tank located outside the *smoke separation* of the dwelling it serves.
- An HRV located outside the *smoke separation* of the dwelling it serves.
- A furnace or boiler located outside the *smoke separation* of the dwelling it serves.
- A single electrical service feeding a panelboard that serves both *dwelling units*.
- Two electrical services.
- Electrical overcurrent devices (e.g.: circuit breakers) feeding shared building services (i.e. a shared hot water tank), with the exception of the smoke alarm circuit.

Special Terminology

The italicized words and terms in this Bulletin shall have the meanings indicated below. Definitions that are copied directly from the MBC have been designated as such by “(MBC)” at the end of the definition. Italicized terms within these definitions are further defined in the MBC.

Common Spaces are areas used by occupants of both the primary and secondary suites and may include laundry, storage, building services and areas used for egress.

Dwelling Unit means a suite operated as a housekeeping unit, used or intended to be used by one of more persons and usually and usually containing cooking, eating, living, sleeping, and sanitary facilities. (MBC)

Means of egress means a continuous path of travel provided for the escape of persons from any point in a *building* or contained open space to a separate *building*, an open public thoroughfare, or an exterior open space protected from fire exposure from the *building* and having access to an open public thoroughfare. *Means of egress* includes *exits* and *access to exits*. (MBC)

Self-contained secondary suite means that all services for the *secondary suite* are readily accessible within the secondary suite or *common spaces*. *Secondary suite* occupants must not be required to enter the Principal *Dwelling Unit* to access their services.

Service Room means a room provided in a building to contain equipment associated with building services. (MBC)

Single detached dwelling means a building designed for residential occupancy and containing no more than one dwelling unit and no other occupancy. Includes modular and ready-to-move homes, but does not include mobile homes.

Smoke Separation is a separation between units that form a “smoke tight barrier.” To achieve a *smoke separation*:

- Common walls are required to have a minimum ½” drywall board on either side that is taped, sanded and sealed at junctions and penetrations.
- Floors must have a minimum ½” drywall board on the bottom finish that is taped and sanded.
- Doors in ‘smoke-tight barriers’ must be a minimum 1¾” thick solid core wood door with an approved self-closing device.

Suitably Separated means that each suite has its own access and has a *smoke separation* between suites and any *common spaces*.