

DECISION
CITY OF GRANDE PRAIRIE
SUBDIVISION AND DEVELOPMENT APPEAL BOARD

Appeal File Number: SDAB 2026-003D
Appeal By: Ashley L'Hirondelle
Appeal Against: The City of Grande Prairie, Development Authority
Hearing Date: June 11, 2026
Decision Date: June 18, 2026
Board Members: Linda Murphy, Chair & Presiding Officer
Alan Ingram and Terri Ellen Sudnik
SDAB Clerks: Charlene Loxam
Jessica Sanderson

Participants at the Hearing:

- Alison Downing, Development Officer
- Ashley L'Hirondelle, Appellant
- Brandon Hollinger, Co-owner of the subject property

Description of the Appeal:

1. The Appeal before the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (the "Board" or the "SDAB") was brought by Ashley L'Hirondelle.
2. On April 29, 2026, the City of Grande Prairie, Development Authority refused Development Permit PL260094 for legalization of an existing unauthorized secondary suite with variance within a semi-detached dwelling located at A - 9307 - 106 Avenue, Grande Prairie, Alberta.
3. A Variance Application was included requesting to vary three requirements for secondary suites under the Land Use Bylaw:
 - a. 57.2 Each unit of a semi-detached dwelling must be situated on its own separate lot in order to be eligible to add a Secondary Suite;
 - b. 57.4 Secondary suites shall be accessory and subordinate to the principal dwelling; and
 - c. 57.6 The number of bedrooms allowed shall be proportional to the lot width:
 - a. Small lot (Up to 9.2m lot width): No more than one (1) bedroom.

4. The subject parcel is owned by the Appellant, Ashley L'Hirondelle, and Brandon Hollinger, and is designated as Residential Transition (RT) under the City of Grande Prairie's Land Use Bylaw C-1260.

Decision:

5. The Appeal is hereby denied, and the decision of the Development Authority is upheld and confirmed. Development Permit PL260094 is refused.

Procedural History:

6. The Hearing commenced at 9:31 a.m. on June 11, 2026, and concluded on the same date.

Preliminary Matters:

7. At the outset of the Appeal Hearing, the Chair confirmed with the parties in attendance that there was no opposition to the composition of the panel.
8. The Chair outlined how the Hearing would be conducted, including the order of appearance of parties, and no opposition was noted.
9. The Appeal was filed on time, and in accordance with Section 686 of the *Municipal Government Act*, RSA 2000, c. M-26 (the "*Municipal Government Act*" or the "*MGA*").

Submissions:

10. The Board received oral and/or written submissions from:
 - a. Alison Downing, Development Officer
 - b. Ashley L'Hirondelle, Appellant
 - c. Brandon Hollinger, Co-owner of the subject property
 - d. Monica Chambers, GP Lawn Doctor
 - e. Kyle Cloutier
 - f. Gerben Groenhof
 - g. Cindy and Dennis Koziar
 - h. Kailee L'Hirondelle

Summary of the Hearing

Presentation from the Development Authority:

11. The Development Authority presented written and oral submissions to the Board. In summary, the Development Authority submitted that the SDAB should deny the Appeal and uphold the Development Authority's Decision to refuse Development Permit PL260094.

12. The Development Authority presented:
 - a. This is an Appeal of the Development Authority's Decision to refuse a development permit for the legalization of an existing unauthorized secondary suite within a semi-detached dwelling.
 - b. The Application seeks to legalize a secondary suite that was constructed without the required approvals.
 - c. The property is in the Residential Transition (RT) District, which is intended to provide transition between lower density residential areas and higher density forms while maintaining compatibility with the surrounding development.
 - d. As part of the Application review, adjacent landowners were notified in accordance with the Land Use Bylaw (the "LUB") and provided an opportunity to comment.
 - e. Eight (8) notification packages were distributed and no comments were received.
 - f. Following the circulation and review, the Development Authority refused the Application on April 29th, 2026, and issued a Notice of Refusal.
 - g. The Applicant then submitted an Appeal within the legislative timeframe, resulting in the Hearing before you today.
 - h. The proposal was evaluated under the Municipal Development Plan (MDP) and the LUB.
 - i. In November 2024, Council amended the Land Use Bylaw to allow secondary suites in semi-detached dwellings, provided that each unit is located on a separate titled lot. This amendment was intended to balance increasing housing flexibility while managing density and ensuring appropriate servicing and long-term land use planning.
 - j. Administration's analysis focused on compliance with the LUB and alignment with planning objectives.
 - k. While additional density may be achievable, the proposal does not follow the established compliance pathways and does not meet key provisions of the LUB related to eligibility, bedroom limits and subordinate use.
 - l. The subject property is developed as a semi-detached dwelling on a single titled parcel. Under Section 57.2, secondary suites and semi-detached dwellings are only permitted on separately titled lots. This requirement was introduced to prevent unanticipated density, including the potential for four (4) units on a single parcel, and to ensure consistency with subdivision standards and servicing considerations.

- m. The proposed secondary suite contains three (3) bedrooms. Section 57.6.a. limits secondary suites to a maximum of one (1) bedroom where the unit frontage is 9.2 metres or less. The subject unit has an approximate frontage of 7.6 metres and does not meet this requirement; exceeding the permitted scale for a property of this width.
- n. Section 57.4 requires secondary suites to remain subordinate and accessory to the principal dwelling. In this case, the layout of the proposed suite would allow it to accommodate a household similar in size to the main dwelling. As a result, it would function at a comparable intensity and does not maintain the subordinate relationship intended in the bylaw.
- o. Administration concluded that the proposal does not comply with multiple provisions of the LUB; including eligibility requirements, bedroom limits and the requirement to remain subordinate.
- p. The proposal represents an over-intensification of the site and does not follow established compliance development pathways.
- q. Accordingly, Administration recommends that the Appeal be denied and the Development Authority's Decision be upheld.

Presentation from the Appellant:

- 13. Ashley L'Hirondelle presented oral and written submissions to the Board.
- 14. The Appellant:
 - a. Presented that they are the owner of 9307 - 106 Avenue, Unit A.
 - b. Acknowledged and thanked the Development Authority and City Staff for their work of this Application and understands that they are reasonable for applying the Land Use Bylaw as written. They appreciate the time and effort they have dedicated to reviewing this file.
 - c. Asked the Board to consider the unique circumstances of this property and grant variances that would allow an existing secondary suite to be legalized.
 - d. Stated that their goal was simple - to provide safe, compliant, housing that serves a real need in our community and not to avoid regulations or safety requirements.
 - e. Shared that they are fully committed to meeting all applicable building and life safety standards and working cooperatively with the City to address any concerns.
 - f. Said they believe the evidence shows that approving this Application would not negatively impact the neighbourhood and would support Grande Prairie's broader housing objectives.

- g. Shared that in regard to Section 57.2 (that a secondary suite in a semi-detached dwelling be located on a separate titled lot):
- i. Their understanding of the purpose behind this rule is that the City wants to ensure that development intensity is managed appropriately and that the properties remain compatible with surrounding neighbourhoods.
 - ii. However, in this case, the lack of subdivision is an Administrative issue rather than a physical planning issue. The building itself is a standard semi-detached dwelling. It looks like other duplexes in the area. It has the same scale, massing, setbacks and overall appearance that residents already expect in the Residential Transition (RT) District. From the street, there is no visible difference between this property and a legally subdivided duplex.
 - iii. The absence of a property line through the middle of the building does not affect neighbouring properties. It does not increase traffic, create additional shadowing, change the building's appearance or alter how the property functions day-to-day.
 - iv. What it does create is significant administrative and financial hardship. Subdivision involves surveys, legal work, registration costs, utility reviews, potential servicing requirements and lengthy processing timelines. For an individual property owner, these costs can quickly amount to several thousands of dollars before any housing benefit is realized. They stated that just to separate the sewer line, they were told it would be upwards of \$50,000 just for that alone.
 - v. They stated that they have already invested over \$60,000 in bringing the basements into compliance.
 - vi. They presented that the basements are legal and that it is their understanding that no basements were legally permitted at all from the previous owner. The fire alarms, electrical and kitchens are legal with permits.
 - vii. Requiring those expenditures and prerequisites to legalizing a secondary suite creates a significant financial hardship. The costs associated with subdivision do not improve the safety of the suite, do not change the appearance of the property and do not reduce any measurable impact on the surrounding neighbourhood. Instead, they create a financial obstacle that makes it substantially more difficult to provide needed housing.
 - viii. They stated in their particular circumstances, the requirement to subdivide and split title before the suite can be considered legal, places

- a disproportionate financial burden on the property while offering little practical planning benefit.
- ix. They asked the Board to consider whether the hardship created by mandatory subdivision outweighs any public benefit that would result from enforcing the requirement in this specific case.
 - x. They stated they are willing to explore subdivision as a future option; however, they submitted that the Board should focus on the actual land use impacts before it today.
 - xi. The building functions safely and appropriately, regardless of whether a legal line has been drawn through the parcel. More importantly, tenant safety is determined by compliance in building and fire codes, not by the existence of a separate title.
 - xii. They stated that they are committed to ensuring that all required life safety measures are in place, including fire separation, smoke detection, and emergency egress requirements. They stated they believe most of this is already in place.
 - xiii. For those reasons, they asked the Board to consider whether the intent of the bylaw can be achieved without requiring subdivision.
- h. In regard to Section 57.6.a. (the three (3) bedroom configuration of the suite):
- i. They stated they understand that the purpose of this provision is to prevent overcrowding, excessive parking demand and negative impacts on neighbouring properties. They stated that the actual conditions of this property address those concerns.
 - ii. The Appellant showed a picture of the property and parking.
 - iii. The Appellant shared that they believe the property contains adequate off-street parking to accommodate residents without creating congestion on public roads. There's already a paved pad, and there's places for parking in the back that can easily accommodate four (4) vehicles. The Appellant shared that because parking can be accommodated on-site, the practical impact on the neighbourhood is minimal.
 - iv. They asked the Board to consider the changing housing needs within our community. They stated a three-bedroom secondary suite provides housing options that are increasingly difficult to find. Many families cannot afford a full detached home. Multigenerational households are becoming more common. Parents, grandparents, adult children, and young families are increasingly sharing housing to manage rising living costs. A three-bedroom suite allows these residents to remain in the community while living in safe, affordable housing.

- v. The number of bedrooms alone does not necessarily determine the intensity of a property. A three-bedroom suite may be occupied by a small family with one (1) vehicle. Conversely, a one-bedroom unit may house multiple adults with multiple vehicles. The reality is that the occupancy patterns vary considerably.
- vi. They stated they believe it is more appropriate to evaluate the actual impacts on parking safety and neighbourhood compatibility rather than relying solely on the frontage measurement. While the frontage of this lot is 7.6 metres, the overall site has the capacity to accommodate the use responsibly. The 7.6 metres front curb has an effective impact of zero on public street parking. The vehicles are off the road, out of the way of snowplows and completely clear of their neighbour's sight lines.
- i. In regard to Section 57.4, (whether the secondary suite remains subordinate and an accessory to the principal dwelling):
 - i. They stated the principal dwelling remains the dominant residential use on the property.
 - ii. The main unit occupies the primary living space, maintains the principal architectural presence, and continues to define the character of the property. The secondary suite is located entirely within the lower level of the home and remains physically and functionally accessory.
 - iii. The fact that the suite contains three (3) bedrooms does not change its physical size or position within the structure. The basement remains the basement regardless of how the interior space is arranged. Whether the area contains one (1) bedroom, two (2) bedrooms or three (3) bedrooms, the footprint of the suite remains the same; the principal dwelling remains in the dominant component of the property.
 - iv. They suggested that bedroom count alone is not an accurate measure of intensity. Many three-bedroom suites are occupied by families requiring additional sleeping space, a nursery or home office space. The presence of additional rooms does not automatically make a suite equal to the principal dwelling. In both form and function, this suite remains subordinate and accessory.
- j. They stated they appreciate that the Board's role is to balance the intent of the Land Use Bylaw with the realities of individual properties. They stated that this property represents a situation where the strict application of the bylaw creates hardship without producing a corresponding public benefit.
- k. They stated these suites already exist. It can provide safe, stable housing for local residents, they have strong support from neighbours and people of the

community, it blends into the neighbourhood, it does not alter the appearance of the street, it can accommodate parking on-site and, with appropriate building code compliance, they can operate safely.

- l. They stated granting these variances would not create a new or incompatible form of development, it would simply allow a suitable housing unit to contribute to Grande Prairie housing supply.
- m. They stated they believe that outcome is consistent with the City's broader goals of increasing housing choice, supporting affordability and making efficient use of existing residential infrastructure.
- n. They stated they respect the City's Decision and understand why the Application was refused under a strict interpretation of the bylaw; however, they asked the Board to consider the actual impacts of this proposal and the practical benefits it provides.
- o. They stated they are committed to working cooperatively with City Staff, completing any required life safety upgrades and complying with any reasonable conditions the Board may choose to impose.
- p. They requested that the Board grant the necessary variances and approve this Application.
- q. Thanked the Board for their time, consideration and service to the community.

Questions from the Board:

15. The panel asked the Appellant to give more detail about the costs to split the sewer.
 - a. The Appellant responded that they called Reco and Ashley advised that they told the Appellant because you have to dig up the cement driveway, the City sidewalk and go into the middle of the road, that it could be a cost of anywhere between \$35,000 to \$50,000. They basically said have a contingency of \$50,000 because you're probably going to need it.

Presentation in Favour of the Appeal:

16. Brandon Hollinger, Co-owner of the subject property, presented an oral submission:
 - a. They stated they were in favour of the property with a variance.
 - b. They stated it functions as it should.
 - c. They stated they can't really see any reason why it would be a safety concern or anything other than red tape to not have this go through.

Presentation in Opposition of the Appeal:

17. There was no one present who wanted to speak in opposition of the Appeal.

Final Questions from the Board:

18. The Board asked the Development Authority: In regard to green space, lawn, drainage, that kind of thing, were there any concerns with regards to lack thereof?
 - a. Alison Downing answered, no, other than what's mentioned in the report, the Application meets the Land Use Bylaw. They can provide the required on-site parking without affecting the property.
 - b. Downing followed up to indicate that there is a requirement that on-site parking would need to be hard-surfaced, but it has sufficient space from the side property line for drainage. There's nothing in the LUB that requires green space.

Closing Statements:

19. Development Authority

- a. Downing clarified the requirement for a new sewer line. When you have separately titled properties, there's a requirement that each lot be serviced independently. Services can't cross lot. So, the biggest cost with subdivision is the fact that each lot would now have to have its own independent water and its own independent sewer. That is where the bulk of the cost with having to subdivide comes from.

20. Appellant

- a. In response, the Appellant agreed with Downing that it's a huge cost with splitting. They estimated surveying costs are approximately \$3,000 - \$4,000, then splitting Aquatera, the sewer line, could be upwards of \$50,000.
- b. They indicated that additional requirements are needed with the property including paving the pad, which they estimated at \$12,000.
- c. They added that from their understanding with talking to the City, it doesn't seem like a lot needs to be done with the property besides the subdividing and splitting of titles. There again, you still have the cost of actually splitting the titles too.
- d. The Appellant indicated this can come into thousands and thousands of dollars, which they don't have.
- e. They added with the functionality of the property it feels like it's not necessary.

Decision

Reasons for Decision

1. The Board notes that its jurisdiction is found in Section 687(3) of the *Municipal Government Act*, RSA 2000, c. M-26 (the “*Municipal Government Act*” or the “*MGA*”).
2. In determining this Appeal, the Board considered the *MGA*, the City of Grande Prairie Land Use Bylaw C-1260 (the “*LUB*”), the evidence presented at the Hearing, written and oral submissions, and the circumstances and merits of the Application.
3. The Board acknowledges that the *LUB*, Section 57 addresses Secondary Suites.
4. The Board agrees with the Development Authority that the subject property is not in compliance with Section 57.2 of the *LUB*:
 - a. Section 57.2 reads:

“Each unit of a semi-detached dwelling must be situated on its own separate lot in order to be eligible to add a Secondary Suite.”
 - b. The subject semi-detached dwelling unit (Unit A) is on a single parcel that contains both halves of a semi-detached dwelling and as such is not in compliance with Section 57.2.
 - c. The Board further agrees that restricting secondary suites to separate titled lots serves a purpose in managing residential density and ensuring compatibility with neighbourhood form and infrastructure capacity.
 - d. The Board found that sufficient planning evidence was not presented to vary the requirement.
5. The Board agrees with the Development Authority that the subject property is not in compliance with Section 57.6.a. of the *LUB*:
 - a. Section 57.6.a. of the *LUB* reads:

“The number of bedrooms allowed shall be proportional to the lot width:
 - a. Small lot (Up to 9.2m lot width): No more than one (1) bedroom”.
 - b. The subject semi-detached dwelling unit, which has an effective unit frontage of approximately 7.6 metres, included a three-bedroom secondary suite when only one is permitted under the *LUB*.
 - c. The Board agrees with the Development Authority that the requirement is intended to control occupancy and limit development intensity.
 - d. The Board found that sufficient planning evidence was not presented to vary the requirement.

6. The Board agrees with the Development Authority that the subject property is not in compliance with Section 57.4 of the LUB:
 - a. Section 57.4 states:

“Secondary suites shall be accessory and subordinate to the principal dwelling.”
 - b. The Board agrees with the Development Authority that the proposed three-bedroom secondary suite could operate at an intensity comparable to the primary unit and does not maintain a clearly subordinate relationship to the primary unit.
 - c. The Board further agrees with the Development Authority that this regulation ensures that secondary suites do not function as dwelling units of comparable scale or intensity to the main residence.
 - d. The Board found that sufficient planning evidence was not presented to vary the requirement.
7. The Board finds insufficient planning merits were presented to support varying the number of requirements necessary to legalize the secondary suite.

Conclusion

1. To conclude, the Board was presented with no evidence that the Development Officer relaxed, varied or misinterpreted any provision of the City of Grande Prairie’s Land Use Bylaw C-1260.
2. For the reasons set out above and herein, the Appeal is denied. The Decision of the Development Authority is upheld and confirmed. Development Permit PL260094 is refused.

“Linda Murphy” (signed)

Linda Murphy, Chair
Subdivision and Development Appeal Board

June 18, 2026

Date