

DECISION
CITY OF GRANDE PRAIRIE
SUBDIVISION AND DEVELOPMENT APPEAL BOARD

Appeal File Number: SDAB 2026-004D
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 PL260095 for legalization of an existing unauthorized secondary suite with variance within a semi-detached dwelling located at B - 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 PL260095 is refused.

Procedural History:

6. The Hearing commenced at 10:13 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 PL260095.

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. Eight (8) notification packages were distributed to adjacent residents.
 - e. Following the review, the Development Authority refused the Application on April 29th and issued the Notice of Refusal.
 - f. The Applicant then submitted an Appeal within the legislated timeframe, resulting in the Hearing before you today.
 - g. The proposal was evaluated under the Municipal Development Plan (MDP) and the Land Use Bylaw (the "LUB").
 - h. In November 2024, Council amended the Land Use Bylaw to allow secondary suites in semi-detached dwellings. Prior to that, they were only allowed in single detached dwellings. Part of that rule was that they had to each be on their own separately titled lot. The amendment was intended to balance increasing housing flexibility while managing density and ensuring that appropriate servicing and long-term planning was in place.
 - i. Administration's analysis is focused on compliance with the LUB and alignment with planning objectives.
 - j. While additional density may be achievable on this property, the proposal doesn't follow the compliance pathways and doesn't meet the bylaw, including the eligibility, the bedroom limits, and the subordinate use.
 - k. The subject property is developed as a semi-detached dwelling on a single titled parcel. Under 57.2 of the Land Use Bylaw, secondary suites in semi-detached dwellings are only permitted on separately titled lots.
 - l. The proposed secondary suite contains three (3) bedrooms. Section 57.6.a. limits secondary suites to one (1) bedroom where the unit frontage is less than 9.2 metres. The subject unit has an approximate frontage of 7.6 metres. It therefore does not meet that requirement.
 - m. Section 57.4 requires that secondary suites remain subordinate and accessory to the principal dwelling. In this case, the scale and 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 as a comparable intensity and does not maintain a subordinate relationship as intended by the bylaw.

- n. Administration concluded that the proposal does not comply with multiple provisions of the LUB and therefore refuse the bylaw. The proposal represents an over-intensification of the site and does not follow the established compliant development pathways; accordingly, Administration recommends the Appeal be denied and the Development Authority's Decision be upheld.

Presentation from the Appellant:

13. Stated that they are the owner of 9307 - 106 Avenue.
14. Ashley L'Hirondelle presented oral and written submissions to the Board requesting a variance from the strict literal enforcement of Sections 57.2, 57.6.a., and 57.4 of the Land Use Bylaw C-1260.
15. The Appellant presented:
 - a. They stated their goal with this Application is to legalize a safe, highly functional and deeply needed secondary suite without undergoing significant financial distress.
 - b. They stated they understand and respect the role of the Development Authority in upholding the City's bylaws; however, a rigid literal application of these three specific clauses creates an unnecessary administrative and financial barrier to housing while providing zero measurable benefit to the surrounding neighbourhood.
 - c. They stated this specific property possesses the unique site depth, physical configuration and infrastructure necessary to comfortably absorb this three-bedroom suite without causing any negative impacts on neighbourhood density, traffic or aesthetics.
 - d. They asked that they focus their efforts on making this home structurally safe for Grande Prairie residents.
 - e. They asked the Board to overturn the refusal and grant the necessary variances for this uniquely capable lot and approve this Application.
 - f. The refusal under Section 57.2, which states that a secondary suite in a semi-detached dwelling is only permitted if the units are on separate titled lots:
 - i. From a purely administrative standpoint, this property is flagged because it currently sits on a single undivided parcel of land, but they asked the Board to look past the paperwork and look at the physical reality of the structure.

- ii. Architecturally, structurally and visually, this building is a standard semi-detached duplex. Its height, its massing, its setbacks and its exterior design perfectly match the established character of the residential transition zone. From the street, it is indistinguishable from any legally subdivided duplex down the road.
 - iii. The presence or absence of an invisible legal property line drawn down the middle of the building does not alter how this structure interacts with the land. It does not change how sunlight hits the neighbouring yards, how municipal water flows into the building, or how the property functions on a day-to-day basis.
 - iv. Forcing a property owner to undergo a lengthy, thousands of dollars title subdivision process before a secondary suite can even be evaluated, creates an unnecessary hurdle. A paper land title change does not protect a tenant, structural integrity and building codes do.
 - v. Utilizing this administrative technicality to block immediate viable housing is a direct contradiction to our community's needs. The lack of a subdivided line does not change how safely this building functions on the street today.
- g. The second reason for refusal site Section 57.6.a., which restricts narrow lots frontage of 9.2 metres or less to a maximum of one (1) bedroom.
- i. The Appellant stated their property has a frontage of 7.6 metres and the suite contains three (3) bedrooms.
 - ii. They stated the City wants to prevent overcrowding, excessive noise and street parking congestion on narrow lots where curb space is limited.
 - iii. They stated that while their lot frontage is technically narrow, the overall depth and total area of the parcel are exceptional because of this unique site configuration.
 - iv. They stated they are able to completely neutralize the City's concerns regarding traffic and congestion through dedicated on-site infrastructure, specifically the property features.
 - v. The Appellant showed a picture of the property and parking.
 - vi. The property features a deep concrete front driveway as seen capable of holding four (4) vehicles and a wide area in the back that can easily support four (4) more vehicles. Because every single vehicle associated with both the primary dwelling and the secondary suite can be accommodated entirely within the boundaries of the private property, the narrow 7.6 metre 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 neighbour's sight lines.

- vii. The Appellant stated a bedroom count is highly inaccurate way to measure neighbourhood intensity. The City assumes that three bedrooms mean three or four vehicles. In reality, a three-bedroom basement suite is uniquely suited for a single parent with children or a young couple who requires dedicated home offices to participate in Grande Prairie's modern economy.
- viii. They stated to structurally demolish two bedrooms down to a one-bedroom layout does not automatically change the number of residents, but it does completely eliminate this property as an option for local families.
- h. The final refusal reason relies on Section 57.4, stating that a secondary suite must remain subordinate and accessory to the principal dwelling and argues that a three (3) bedroom suite operating in a basement is too intense to be subordinate.
 - i. They stated they disagree with this interpretation of intensity. By its very definition, a basement suite is physically, structurally and spatially subordinate to the primary home. It is confined entirely within the lower foundation walls of the building. The primary dwelling occupies the prominent upper level controlling architectural design of the building, the main entryways, and the vast majority of the building's usable interior volume.
 - ii. The number of interior doors in a basement does not change the physical footprint of the basement. Whether a lower level is left as an open concept recreation room or divided into bedrooms, the total floor area remains exactly the same. A three bedroom simply allows for a more comfortable, practical division of space for a family. It does not elevate the basement to a position of dominance over the primary upper home.
 - iii. The primary unit remains the dominant user of the site, sharing its foundational utility infrastructure, such as the main water and gas lines, which naturally throttles and regulates the operational intensity of the entire property.
- i. They presented the significant costs associated with trying to meet the requirements by these bylaws.
 - i. They stated they have already invested a significant amount to bring the basements into compliance, just over \$60,000, which they were fine doing because it prioritizes fire and safety for their tenants.

- ii. Being quoted upwards of \$50,000 just to separate the sewer lines alone was the realization that without some sort of variance or help, they would not be able to afford to turn this property into its full potential of accommodating four (4) families instead of two (2).
 - iii. They stated they haven't even touched on the cost of lawyers, splitting other utilities, surveyors and separating of the title along with the other possible costs associated with subdividing the lot. These are just a few things that were touched on with the Appellant's conversations with the City that would need to be done, the Appellant advised.
16. They stated it is important to recognize that Grande Prairie is currently facing an undeniable housing crunch with low vacancy rates and rising costs hitting low to moderate income families the hardest.
- a. Most basement suites on the market are restricted to one or two bedrooms, effectively shutting out families or multi-generational households who wish to remain together.
17. By granting a variance today, you are not creating a negative precedent. Instead, you are validating a high-quality family sized housing unit that perfectly aligns with Grande Prairie's strategic goals of expanding rental choices and tackling the missing middle housing market.
18. They stated they are a responsible property owner. They are not asking to bypass safety and are fully prepared to accept a conditional approval. They stated they are entirely committed to working hand-in-hand with the City building inspectors to verify and upgrade all critical Alberta building code life safety requirements.
19. They asked the Board to focus efforts on making this home structurally safe for Grande Prairie residents rather than letting valuable housing sit vacant over rigid zoning technicalities.
20. They asked the Board to overturn the refusal, grant the necessary variances, for this uniquely capable lot and approve this Application.

Questions from the Board:

21. The panel asked the following questions of the Appellant:
- a. The front paved parking and access is to the top of the unit and then people that will park in the back, they access the property through the side door and go into the basement?
 - i. The Appellant answered in the affirmative.

- b. Currently, how are the utilities managed?
 - i. The Appellant answered that they cover utilities. They added from their understanding, with other legally suited properties, you don't necessarily have to split the utilities and that's more of like a fourplex condo thing. They could cover the utilities for both and just rent it out that way.
- c. You access the front parking from a paved street; how do you access the back parking?
 - i. The Appellant answered it was the back alley.
- d. Is that back alley paved?
 - i. The Appellant answered in the negative.
- e. Is it graded regularly?
 - i. The Appellant answered that they would assume it has to be to an extent because there is other back-alley access parking for other houses in that area.
 - ii. This year, due to, they thought, financial cutbacks, they thought overall it was a little bit hard with snow plowing this year. They believe it's plowed and have driven back there and seen other people driving back there as well, too, in the wintertime.
- f. And if they have a vehicle that can't maneuver an unplowed back alley, they'll be parking on the street?
 - i. The Appellant answered in the affirmative but added they haven't seen that occur.
 - ii. All their tenants park in the back, they utilize both parking spaces. They've had actual families, people that have rented the place together that have four vehicles. They've had people that share one vehicle.
 - iii. They stated they can't control how many vehicles people have and how many people choose to live even in a solid family. You could have a mom, dad, five kids, two of them that are driving right there. That can be three, four vehicles, just a single family.

Presentation in Favour of the Appeal:

- 22. Brandon Hollinger, Co-owner of the subject property, presented an oral submission:
 - a. Hollinger asked if the alleys are supposed to be plowed by the City? The Board did not have the answer.
 - b. Hollinger stated that they were in favour of the variance.

Questions from the Board:

23. The panel asked how long Hollinger was a Co-owner of the property:
 - a. Hollinger answered, since 2024.

Presentation in Opposition of the Appeal:

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

Appellant's Rebuttal:

25. The Appellant stated that they have another property in Hillside, on 105 Avenue and there is lots of back-alley access to parking. They stated they don't know but imagine some sort of plowing would be done, though not as much as main streets. They stated they know you can drive down back-alley accesses in the wintertime and park. They indicated their tenants there all use the back-alley access and park in the back. There is no on-street parking that they're utilizing.

Final Questions from the Board:

26. The Board asked the Development Authority if they were able to answer if back alleys were cleared by the City.
 - a. The Development Authority indicated they could pull the City's Snow Clearing Policy and obtain clarity and send it to the Board for their information.
 - b. The policy information was forwarded to the Board at the end of the hearing and they reviewed it prior to deliberations.

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 B) 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 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 PL260095 is refused.

“Linda Murphy” (signed) _____
 Linda Murphy, Chair
 Subdivision and Development Appeal Board

June 18, 2026 _____
 Date