

Purpose

This information brochure has been prepared to provide homeowners with an overview of Summerland's requirements for secondary suites. This brochure is for general guidance only, and does not replace bylaws and legal documents such as the Municipal Zoning Bylaw or the BC Building Code.

WHAT IS A SECONDARY SUITE?

The BC Building Code & Municipal Zoning Bylaw defines a secondary suite as an additional dwelling unit which:

- Secondary Suites shall be limited to one such Use within a principal Dwelling and be lesser than or equal to the Gross Floor Area of the principal Dwelling.
- Is located within a building of residential occupancy containing only one other dwelling unit; and
- Is located in and part of a building which is a single real estate entity.

In simple terms, a secondary suite is an area of a single family dwelling that is separate from the rest of the house. A secondary suite can include common areas with the rest of the house (such as a laundry room) but must contain facilities that are completely separated from the rest of the house, including at least one bedroom, a bathroom, and a kitchen. The kitchen would usually include cooking facilities such as a stove or microwave, but a stove plug of 220 volts or a gas line into the kitchen is also considered a cooking facility, since either of these hook-ups would enable quick and easy installation of a stove.

WHAT ARE THE MUNICIPALITY'S REQUIREMENTS FOR SECONDARY SUITES?

Secondary suites are permitted in principle buildings in single family zones. RSD1 / RSD2 / RSD3 / CR1 / A1/ RDH in a single family dwelling and RSH with lots having a minimum size of 460 m². Not for multi-family buildings. The Municipality has placed a number of conditions on the legalization of secondary suites including:

- Maximum of one (1) secondary suite per lot. This helps to ensure the preservation of the character of single family residential neighborhoods.
- No separate address will be assigned for secondary suites. Instead, the principle dwelling unit & secondary suite would retain the same legal address with a unit number to distinguish the two dwelling units.
- One (1) additional parking space is required. All single family homes must have at least 2 off-street parking spaces. This requirement means that all single family homes with a secondary suite must have at least 3 off-street parking spaces.
- Home occupations limited to businesses that do not generate traffic. For both the principle dwelling unit and the secondary suite, home occupations would be limited to businesses that do not generate traffic. Permission would be required in writing from the property owner(s) to operate a home occupation in a secondary suite.

HOW DO I GET PERMISSION TO CONSTRUCT A SECONDARY SUITE?

[Property Title Search.](#)

You will first need to determine whether there are any restrictions registered on the title of your property that may not allow you to have a secondary suite. These restrictions could include a restrictive covenant or Land Use Contract.

[Obtain construction estimate.](#)

You will need to obtain the services of a professional contractor to provide an estimate of the work required to legalize your secondary suite. This estimate should include the construction value required to legalize your suite.

[Apply for permits.](#)

Once you know what is required to legalize your suite, you can apply for a building permit to commence the work. Applicable building permit

fees will be required, based on the construction value of the work.

Ongoing inspections.

Once construction has commenced, a building inspector will conduct a variety of inspections throughout the project. Including a final occupancy inspection *prior* to anyone moving in to the space in order to ensure that the required work has been completed and meets the BC Building Code and Municipal Zoning Bylaw requirements.

Utility charges.

Once the building upgrades are completed and the Building Inspector issues a final occupancy permit, the property owner will then be responsible for additional utility bills each and every month. These will include water, sewer (where applicable), electricity and garbage removal. The installation of a Dual Meter is mandatory, and an electrical upgrade to the existing service may be required. In cases where the suite is not rented or occupied, the monthly utility fees will still be applicable.

WHAT ARE THE BUILDING CODE REQUIREMENTS?

The secondary suite must conform to the requirements of the British Columbia Building Code. The BC Building Code (BCBC) has adopted a number of alternative requirements for secondary suites to provide a minimum health and safety standards for occupants without imposing undue costs to owners.

The following general guidelines are provided to assist in clarifying the most critical health and safety requirements in the BCBC.

TABLE 1: OPTIONS TO CONSTRUCT A SECONDARY SUITE IN AN EXISTING BUILDING (options for existing walls only)			
Regulation	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Fire Resistance Rating in minutes	15 minutes	30 minutes	45 minutes
Sound Transmission Class (STC)	Approximately 32 – 35 STC	Approximately 34 – 37 STC	43 STC
BC Building Code References	9.10.9.14.(4)(a) Table D-2.3.4.-F and, A-1.1.1.2.(1)	9.10.9.14.(4)(b) A-1.1.1.1.(6)	9.10.9.14.(4) (c) and 9.11.1.1.(2)
Design			
Wall Construction	Wood studs with ½" gypsum board on both sides	Add a resilient channel and layer of ½" gypsum board to one side	Options for increased fire and sound rating in Subsection 9.10.3. and 9.11.1.
Ceiling Construction	Wood joists with ½" gypsum board on the underside	Add a resilient channel and layer of ½" gypsum board to ceiling	Options for increased fire and sound rating in Subsection 9.10.3. and 9.11.1.
Smoke Alarm Interconnection	All smoke alarms in both units and common spaces shall be photo-electric type and interconnected.	One additional photo-electric in each dwelling and common spaces shall be interconnected.	No interconnection between units and common spaces is required.

Smoke Alarm Locations	Smoke alarms shall be located and interconnected in each unit – in all bedrooms, between the bedroom door and the remainder of the storey, and in any common areas.
Carbon Monoxide Alarms (CO)	Where the home has an attached garage or a solid-fuel fired appliance (wood burning), a CO Alarm is required inside each bedroom or within 5m of each bedroom door, all interconnected.

Doors installed in walls that require a fire resistance rating must have labels confirming they have a fire protection rating of 20 minutes and have rated self closing devices. All other openings in a fire separation are required to be tightly fitted.

Safe Exiting

Doors

Both the secondary suite and the main house must each have at least one exit door that is at least 800mm (2'-8") wide and 1980mm (6'-6") high. The door must be equipped with an approved deadbolt lock. The door must also have a door viewer unless there is transparent glazing in the door or in a sidelight.

Shared Egress Facilities

Exit corridors, stairways or exterior passageways shared by the suite and main house, must be at least 860mm (2'-10") wide. It must be possible to travel from the suite door in opposite directions to two separate exits. A single exit is acceptable if both the suite and the main house have either a separate exit or a window with an opening, which is a minimum of 990 mm (3'-3") high, 530mm (1'-10") wide and less than 990mm (3'-3") above the floor. Please note that special precautions must be taken if an exit stair or ramp from one unit passes a window from the other unit.

Heating Systems

Each room in the secondary suite must have winter heating. In order to contain smoke and fire, a secondary suite and the main house are not permitted to share a common forced air heating system. Existing secondary suites that are heated with a common forced air system may apply for an equivalent approach to meet this Building Code requirement as follows:

- An additional interconnected photoelectric smoke alarm is to be installed in the furnace room, and
- The furnace is provided with a relay to shut down the furnace fan and gas valve if the alarm is activated, and
- The heat ducts and cold air return in the secondary suite are equipped with fire dampers where they penetrate the wall or ceiling membrane.

This approach is not necessary in buildings with hot water or baseboard heating.

Ventilation

The BC Building Code Section 9.32. for ventilation systems in new and existing houses (with and without suites) and should be consulted for the best option based on your requirements. A forced air system can utilize a duct type smoke detector to prevent the circulation of smoke. (9.32.3.2) If you are not using forced air to supply heat to the suite, a principal ventilation system must still be installed to allow a adequate air exchange for the suite. 9.32.3.4(6)

Plumbing

Each dwelling is required to be provided with a kitchen sink, a bathtub, or shower, a bathroom sink and a water closet.

Additional plumbing fixtures installed to accommodate a secondary suite will affect the operation and performance of existing fixtures in other areas of the dwelling. Drainage, venting and water systems must meet Plumbing Code requirements to ensure that an acceptable level of performance is maintained throughout the dwelling.

Gas and Electrical

Gas and Electric permits are required for any alterations to the respective systems. Permits must be obtained from the BC Safety Authority.

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