DISTRICT OF SUMMERLAND

BUILDING BULLETIN

NEW BUILDING - SECONDARY SUITE INFORMATION **Bulletin No. 25-07**

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 m^2. 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 2: Design Considerations for New Secondary Suite or Accessory Dwelling Unit

Code Reference	Requirement	Notes
Fire Separation of Service Rooms 9.10.10.3 & 9.10.10.4.	The service room (mechanical room) can serve both dwelling units and requires the common wall between the spaces to be constructed as a fire separation with the same fire-resistance rating as the assembly separating dwelling units.	When designing your secondary suite, fire separation continuity and ratings which are required from each side of the assembly must be considered.
Fire Resistance Rating of Loadbearing Elements 9.10.8.3.	All loadbearing walls, columns, and arches in the storey immediately below a floor or roof assembly shall have a fire-resistance rating of not less than that required for the supported floor or roof assembly.	A 30 minute fire-resistance rating requires ½" Type X gypsum board A 45 minute fire-resistance rating requires 5/8" Type X gypsum board
Fire Separation Continuity and Permitted Openings in Wall and Ceiling Membranes 9.10.5.1., 9.10.9.2., and 9.10.9.9.	A wall or ceiling membrane forming part of a fire-rated assembly is required to maintain the continuity of the separation. This is typically achieved by the installation of gypsum board. Penetrations of the continuous membrane in horizontal applications such as exhaust fans required the joist space to be lined with gypsum board. Vertical separation continuity is required in spaces such as behind bathtubs, showers, laundry boxes, and electrical boxes set into the wall assembly. In a house with a secondary suite, including their common spaces, ducts penetrating fire separations need not be equipped with fire dampers, provided they are noncombustible with all openings in the duct system serving one fire compartment.	

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Code Reference	Requirement	Notes
Separation of Residential Suites 9.10.9.16	Dwelling units shall be separated from each other and from ancillary spaces and common spaces with a fire separation; » having a fire-resistance rating not less than 15 minutes when all smoke alarms within the house are of photo-electric type and interconnected, » having a fire-resistance rating not less than 30 minutes when additional smoke alarms of photo-electric type are installed and interconnected, *or* » having a fire-resistance rating of not less than 45 minutes when smoke alarms are not installed and interconnected as listed in the bullets directly above.	A fire separation without a fire-resistance rating is permitted where the building is sprinklered. (Clause 9.10.9.16.(4)(d))
Fire Separation Construction 9.10.3.1.	<u>15 Minute Fire Separation:</u> » joist spaces filled with sound-absorbing material of not less than 150mm nominal thickness; » stud spaces are filled with sound-absorbing material; » resilient channel on one side of the separation spaced 400 or 600mm o.c., and; » not less than 12.7mm (1/2”) gypsum board on ceilings and on both sides of walls. To achieve 15 minute fire separation construction **all** smoke alarms shall be interconnected photoelectric type <u>30 Minute Fire Separation:</u> » walls, floor, and ceiling assemblies framed with wood studs; » joist spaces filled with rock/slag insulation or wet-blown cellulose fibre insulation; » non-load bearing stud spaces filled with preformed fiberglass insulation; » load bearing stud spaces filled with preformed rock/slag or cellulose fiber insulation; » resilient channel on one side of the fire separation spaced 400 or 600mm o.c., and; » not less than 12.7mm (1/2”) thick gypsum board on ceilings and both sides of walls. To achieve 30 minute fire separation construction, **an additional** smoke alarm shall be installed in each unit and be interconnected photoelectric type	The construction methods provided are an example of how to achieve the required fire-resistance rating between the primary dwelling unit and secondary suite. There may be alternative assemblies not listed that could achieve the minimum fire-resistance rating required. If used, these alternative methods are required to be appropriately referenced and detailed. The fire resistance rating of a ceiling is from the underside. The walls requiring a fire resistance rating separating the dwelling units are rated from each side.

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Code Reference	Requirement	Notes
	45-Minute Fire Separation: » the test methods described in Part 3; » the calculation method presented in Appendix D; » the construction specifications presented in Tables 9.10.3.1.-A and 9.10.3.1.-B Each Suite requires the installation of interconnected smoke alarms in each sleeping room, and a location between sleeping room sand the rest of the storey as per Section 9.10.19. of the BCBC 2024	
Piping Penetrations 9.10.9.7.	Drain, waste, vent, and central vacuum system piping that is not located in a vertical shaft is permitted to penetrate a fire separation required to have a fire-resistance rating or a membrane that forms part of an assembly provided either; » the *piping is noncombustible* and the penetration is either sealed by a firestop that has a fire-resistance rating not less than the required assembly, the piping is tightly fitted or cast in place (provided the material is steel, ferrous, copper, concrete, or masonry), or sealed to maintain the integrity of the fire separation. » the *piping is combustible* and the penetration is sealed by a firestop conforming to CAN/ULC S115.	
Bedroom Windows 9.9.10.1.	Except where the suite is sprinklered, each bedroom shall have at least one outside window or exterior door openable from the inside with a minimum area of 0.35m2 (3.77ft2) and no dimension less than 380mm (15”).	Where a bedroom window required for egress opens into a window well, a clearance of not less than 760mm shall be provided in front of the window.
Sound Rating 9.11.1.1.	A sound rating separating the principal dwelling unit from a Secondary Suite is required as follows: a) Construction having: » Joists filled with 150mm sound absorbing material (insulation); » Studs filled with sound absorbing material (insulation); » Resilient metal channel one side at 400mm or 600mm on centre; » Minimum ½” gypsum wall board on ceilings and both sides of walls, or; b) Construction having a minimum STC rating of not less than 43, or c) Separating assembly and adjoining construction with an ASTC rating or not less than 40.	

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 that 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 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 and District of Summerland Public Works Department