

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:

- Has a total floor space of not more than 90 m² (968 ft²) in area or;
- Has a floor space less than 40% of the habitable floor space of the building which ever is less;
- 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 – Section 9.36 Secondary Suites. 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.

Fire Safety

In order to restrict the spread of fire and smoke, and to ensure the occupants a safe exit from the building in an emergency situation, a fire separation must separate the suite from the balance of the house. A fire separation is a construction assembly that acts as a barrier against the spread of fire. Wall and floor systems that are shared by both the suite and the remainder of the house must be separated by a fire separation with a fire resistance rating of 45 minutes. The fire resistance rating can be reduced to 30 minutes when interconnected, photoelectric smoke alarms are installed.

- To achieve a 45 minute fire resistance rating for walls, one layer of 15.9mm (5/8") Type X drywall on each side of the wall is required.
- To achieve a 45 minute fire resistance rating for ceilings, one layer of 15.9mm (5/8") Type X drywall is required.
- To achieve a 30 minute fire resistance rating for walls, one layer of 12.7mm (1/2") regular drywall on each side of the wall is required.
- To achieve a 30 minute fire resistance rating for ceilings, one layer of 12.7mm (1/2") Type X drywall or two layers of 12.7mm (1/2") regular drywall is required or one layer of 15.9mm (5/8") regular drywall.

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.

Bedroom Windows

Each bedroom must have a window, openable to the outside, to provide a second means of escape in case of fire. The window opening must be a minimum of 0.35 m² (3.76 ft²) in area with no dimensions less than 381mm (15"). The window must be openable from the inside without any special tools or knowledge. Security bars are not permitted.

Smoke Alarms

Smoke Alarms are required on each floor level and within each bedroom in the house and secondary suite.

In order to provide an early warning to occupants, hard wired photoelectric type smoke alarms are required in the house and suite, in addition to any existing smoke alarms. The additional smoke alarms must be interconnected so that the activation of one smoke alarm will cause the other alarms to sound.

Carbon Monoxide (CO) Detectors

A carbon monoxide detector must be installed adjacent to the sleeping areas in both the principle dwelling and the suite. CO is odorless and tasteless, and spreads evenly through space, so the CO detector can be placed almost anywhere. However, so the alarm can be heard, the detector should be located not more than 5 meters (16 feet) from a sleeping area.

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 requires that each bathroom and kitchen be equipped with an exhaust fan vented to the exterior. Intermittent, for two 4-hour periods daily or continuous operation for the bathroom fan is required. A fresh air intake is required if the suite contains any fuel fired appliances like a hot water tank or fireplace.

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.

For Existing or unfinished buildings owners may chose the following compliance methods with the BCBC 2018:

1. To apply acceptable solutions in Division B
2. To apply alternate solutions under clause 1.2.1.1.(1)(b)
3. To apply alternate compliance methods in table 1.1.1.1.(6), or
4. A combination of options 1, 2 & 3

Existing building alternate compliance methods for Secondary Suites:

Fire Resistance Rating	Type of smoke alarm & interconnections	Demising wall & ceiling assemblies
30 Minutes	An additional photoelectric smoke alarm required in each unit & to be interconnected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resilient channel space at 400 or 600mm o.c - Additional 12.7mm (1/2') gypsum board

Development Services
250-494-1373

Secondary Suite Requirements

APPLICATION

in order for an additional dwelling unit to be considered at secondary suite, the following criteria must apply:

- There is only one secondary suite permitted within the building.
- The secondary suite must be located in a building only containing a residential occupancy
- The secondary suite is located in or is part of a building containing only one other dwelling unit.
- The secondary suite cannot be subdivided from the building it is part of under the Strata Property Act. This means that both dwelling units are registered under the same title.

CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS

Separation of Residential Suites (including smoke alarms)

- Suites in residential occupancies shall be separated from adjacent rooms and suites by a fire separation having a fire resistance rating of not less than 45 minutes.
- A fire separation having a fire resistance rating of not less than 30 minutes can be approved if the dwelling units are equipped with smoke alarms conforming to Article 9.37.2.19
- Article 9.37.2.19, and additional smoke alarm of photo electric type conforming to CAN/UCL-531, "Standard for Smoke Alarms," shall be installed in each suite, The additional smoke alarm should not be interconnected to the other smoke alarms located within the same suite.
- It is important to note that these alarms are additional to the requirements of Subsection 9.10.19 and that each suite is still required to be provided with alarms in conformance with Subsection 9.10.19.
- Subsection 9.10.19 Smoke Alarm: Smoke alarms conforming to CAN/ULC-S531, "Standard for Smoke Alarms," shall be installed in each dwelling unit. At least one smoke alarm shall be installed on each storey, including basements, and on any storey of a dwelling unit containing sleeping rooms. A smoke alarm shall be installed in each sleeping room, and in a location between the sleeping rooms and the remainder of the storey, and if the sleeping rooms are served by a hallway, the smoke alarm shall be located in the hallway. If separating the suites with a fire separation having a fire resistance rating of 30 minutes, to provide in each suite an additional smoke alarm in the other suite (described in Article 9.37.2.19.) A 30 minute fire resistance rating can be achieved with 12.7mm (1/2") Type X gypsum board on framing 400mm o.c. (16") for vertical assemblies, and 12.7mm (1/2") Type X or 15.9mm (5/8") gypsum board on frame floor / ceiling assemblies. This is often typical construction in modern single houses.

If separating the suites with a fire separation having a fire resistance rating of 45 minutes, the fire rating of the vertical assemblies can be achieved with 12.7mm Type X gypsum board on a framing 400mm o.c. For the horizontal assemblies, the fire rating can be achieved by filling the

joist cavity with absorptive material in addition to steel furring channels spaced to a maximum of 400mm o.c. and one layer of 15.9mm (5/8") Type X gypsum board.

Air Ducts and Fire Damper

- Where a heating or ventilation duct system serves more than one suite, the system shall be designed and installed to prevent the circulation of smoke upon a signal from a duct type smoke detector.
- All exhaust ducts shall discharge to the outdoors (range hood, bathroom & dryer fans).

Doors in a Fire Separation

- A 45mm thick solid core wood door is permitted to be used where a minimum fire protection rating of 20 minutes is permitted. The door assembly shall have not more than a 6mm clearance beneath and not more than 3mm at the sides and top.
- Doors required to have a 20 minute fire protection rating, or to be 45mm solid core wood, may be mounted in existing door frames that are less than 38mm in thickness if it would require substantial framing alterations to accommodate a 38mm thick frame. A door closure mechanism shall be installed to maintain the integrity of the fire separation.

Heights of Rooms or Spaces

- The minimum height of rooms or spaces in a secondary suite over the required minimum area as indicated in Table 9.5.3.1 shall not be less than 2.0m.
- It shall be possible to travel from the required area of one room to the required areas of all other rooms within a secondary suite without reduction of the room height as required above.

Openings Near unenclosed Exit Stairs and Ramps

- The District of Summerland will exercise its judgment with regard to deciding which openings are close enough to the exit facility to pose a problem during the early stages of a fire and require appropriate opening protection. Those that directly pass the means of egress are required to be protected.

Combustible Drain, Waste and Vent Piping

- Combustible drain, waste and vent piping is permitted to be located within or penetrate a fire separation required to have a fire resistance rating provided
 - a. Except for the permitted penetration in Clause (b), the combustible piping is located within an assembly protected by a membrane of a minimum 12.7mm (1/2") gypsum board.
 - b. The permitted penetration through the gypsum board membrane is limited in size to the diameter of the penetrating pipe, and
 - c. The combustible piping does not penetrate the gypsum board protection membrane on the underside of a horizontal fire separation.

Protection from Contamination 2.6.2

- a. Backflow preventers shall be installed in conformance with CSA B64.10
- b. 2.6.2.7 **Hose Bibb** installed outside a building or inside a garage shall be protected against backflow – atmospheric breakers
- c. 2.6.1.11 protection against **Thermal Expansion** is required.

Egress from Bedrooms

- Except where the suite is sprinklered, each bedroom or combination bedroom shall have at least one outside window or exterior openable from the inside without the use of keys, tools or special knowledge and without the removal of sashes or hardware.
- The window referred to in the sentence above shall:

- a. Provide an unobstructed opening of not less than 0.35m² in area with no dimension less than 380mm (15”), and
- b. Maintain the required opening during an emergency without the need for additional support.

Sound Transmission

- Where a house contains a secondary suite, each dwelling unit shall be separated from every other space in the house in which noise may be transmitted by
 - A separating assembly and adjoining constructions, which together provide and *apparent sound transmission class (ASTC)* rating of not less than 47. Or;
 - A separating assembly providing a *sound transmission class (STC)* rating of not less than 50 and adjoining constructions that conform to Article 9.11.1.4

The **Apparent Sound Transmission Class** rating is determined through testing according to ASTM E413 and ASTM E336, which involves complex testing and measurement tools, or calculations in accordance with Article 5.8.1.4. or 5.8.1.5. For more information and assembly options that meet the requirements for compliance with ASTC, visit

www.constructioncanada.net/paradigm-shift-in-acoustic-regulations and <http://soundpaths.nrc-cnrc.gc.ca>

Venting of the suite shall meet Section 9.32 of the 2018 BC Building Code

The house shall be connected to the Municipal sanitary sewer system

The house shall be zoned appropriately to allow for secondary suites

Off-site parking is not permitted – all parking will be contained within the private property.