

# 4 STEPS TO A SECONDARY SUITE



A secondary suite is an additional dwelling located within a single-family home or semi-detached duplex. There are several reasons for considering adding a secondary suite; one is to generate rental income as a “mortgage helper”, another is to provide housing for a relative. Whatever the reason, following these steps will simplify the process.

## 1 Know your Zoning.

Before you begin designing your secondary suite, you need to know the zoning of your property. Currently, all residentially zoned properties (R-1, R-2, R-2A, R-6, R-7, A-1) where there is a single-family home are eligible to construct a secondary suite. Semi-detached duplexes in the R-2 zone with laneway access, outside Environmental Development Permit (EDP) Areas, are also eligible. Visit [Smithers.ca](http://Smithers.ca) to view a copy of the Zoning and OCP EDP Area maps.

## 2 Understand the Regulations.

The next step is to verify that your property and home can accommodate a secondary suite. If you check all these boxes you can proceed to the next step.

- I have an existing single family or semi-detached duplex on the property.
- I do not already have a secondary suite, carriage house, home occupation or boarding use within the home or on the property.
- I have room for 1 extra parking space on my property (added to the 2 parking spaces serving a residence).
- I have laneway access to my semi-detached duplex, am outside EDP areas, and meet the landscaping requirements (if applicable).
- I have reviewed the “BC Building Code Compliance Checklist” on the reverse side of this page.

## 3 Know the Costs.

Aside from permitting and construction costs, it is important to understand that if you construct a secondary suite you will be billed an additional 100% of the full rate for water & sewer and an additional 100% for garbage collection if a second cart is purchased. This is regardless of whether the suite is occupied or vacant.

## 4 Get the Permits.

Now is the time to submit a Building Permit Application. To get the ball rolling, you will need to include the following with your application:

- Site plan (2 copies) showing the location/setbacks of the home and location of parking.
- Floor plans (2 copies) that show the walls, window/door locations, fire separations, smoke alarm locations, routes of exiting, heating, electrical information and plumbing fixtures.
- Estimated value of construction.
- \$35.00 Application fee. Final Building Permit fee is \$6.25 per \$1,000 of total estimated value, minus the BP application fee paid.

At the end of your project, you will be issued an Occupancy Permit - your secondary suite is ready!

# BC Building Code

## Highlights for Secondary Suites



**\*THIS IS A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF WHAT MAY BE REQUIRED FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A SECONDARY SUITE. OTHER DETAILS MAY BE REQUIRED DEPENDING ON THE SCOPE OF THE PROJECT.\***

- SPRINKLERS** Some requirements may be reduced if the house with a secondary suite is sprinklered.
- FIRE SEPARATIONS**
  - Fire separations may be required to separate various elements of a house and secondary suite including between dwelling units, public corridors, exits, floors of exterior passageways and furnace rooms.
  - All load-bearing walls, columns, and arches in the storey immediately below a roof or floor assembly shall have a fire resistance rating of not less than that required for the supporting floor or roof assembly.
  - Fire separations shall have a fire resistance rating of either 15 minutes, 30 minutes or 45 minutes depending on the types and level of interconnection of smoke alarms within the house.
  - Fire separations can be constructed various ways with permitted assemblies to achieve the required Fire Resistance Rating (FRR).
  - Doors in a fire separation with a required Fire Resistance Rating of 45 minutes or less need not have a fire protection rating (i.e. no CAN/ULC rating) provided they are a minimum thickness of 1-3/4" and are solid core wood doors, have a self-closing device and are hung in a 1-1/2" thick wood frame.
  - Ducts penetrating a fire separation need not be equipped with fire dampers provided the ducts are noncombustible and all openings in the ducts serve one fire compartment only.
  - Any penetration of a fire separation for services or other reasons must be carefully planned and use permitted materials and systems.
- SOUND RESISTANCE**
  - Both dwelling units must have a level of protection from airborne noise. This is achieved through the use of permitted wall and ceiling assemblies to achieve the required Sound Transmission Class (STC) rating.
- EXITS**
  - Each dwelling unit requires a separate primary exit OR a door to a public corridor leading in opposite direction to two separate exits.
  - It need not be possible to go in more than one direction in a public corridor if both dwelling units have separate and direct access from each storey to a balcony or an openable window with a minimum unobstructed opening of 1m in height and .55m in width.
  - This window must be located so the sill is not more than 1m above the floor and 7m above the adjacent ground level.
  - Bedrooms must have an egress window with a minimum clear opening dimension of .35m<sup>2</sup> with no dimension less than 380mm. The sill of this window must be not more than 1.5m above the floor.
- SMOKE ALARMS** Smoke alarms are required in all dwelling units. Smoke alarm types and interconnection between dwelling units will be relative to the fire resistance rating of fire separations.
- CO ALARMS** Carbon Monoxide alarms are required if the house has either a fuel fired appliance or an attached garage. If required, the CO alarms must be interconnected between suites.
- VENTILATION**
  - Mechanical ventilation shall be provided for both dwelling units.
  - System design must ensure that smoke cannot be directed from one dwelling unit to the other in the event of a fire.
- HEATING SYSTEM CONTROL** Individual temperature controls shall be provided in each dwelling unit.
- CEILING HEIGHTS OF ROOMS OR SPACES, DOORWAY OPENING SIZES, STAIRS, RAMPS, LANDINGS, HANDRAILS AND GUARDS** Shall have the same BC Building Code requirements as for all other dwelling units.
- WIDTH AND HEIGHT OF CORRIDORS** Public corridors and exit corridors shall have a width of 860mm and a height of 2m.
- PLUMBING** Combustible drain, waste and vent piping not located in a vertical shaft is permitted to penetrate a fire separation required to have a fire resistance rating, provided the piping is sealed at the penetration by a fire-stop (i.e. "fire doughnut") that has an F rating not less than the fire resistance rating required for the fire separation.