



TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS FOR SECONDARY SUITES

The Town of Smithers Zoning Bylaw, Building Bylaw and BC Building Code (Section 9.36 and Appendix A) regulate the location and construction of secondary suites. These requirements for new construction secondary suites and renovation of existing suites are summarized below:

GENERAL:

- Only permitted within a single family dwelling (i.e. not in duplexes or detached buildings) in the A-1, R-1, R-2, R-6, and R-7 zones (Zoning Bylaw map available at the Town office or visit www.smithers.ca).
- Maximum of 1 suite may be developed per single family dwelling.
- A home based businesses or boarding use is not permitted in a home where there is a suite.
- 1 additional off-street parking space must be provided for the suite. This is in addition to the 2 parking spaces required for the single family dwelling (total of 3 off-street parking spaces).

CONSTRUCTION:

- MAXIMUM SIZE** is the lesser of 90 m² (969 ft²) or 40% of total habitable floor space of the house.
- CEILING HEIGHTS** shall not be less than 6'7" (2 m) with no obstructions below this height along the path of exit travel from any portion of the suite.
- BEDROOMS** must have at least one open-able window with a minimum unobstructed open-able area of 3.8ft² (0.35m²) with no dimension less than 15" (380mm) in height and width. (Note: that 15" x 15" does not provide the minimum required area). The bottom of the opening must not be higher than 5'-0" (1.5 m) from the floor and the window must be open-able from the inside without tools or special knowledge.
- EXITS.** Each dwelling requires a separate primary exit OR a door to a public corridor leading in opposite directions to 2 exists. Where the primary exit leads to:
 - An exit stair serving both suites;
 - A public corridor serving both suites and has a single exit stairway;
 - An exterior passageway serving both suites and exits in one direction only;
 - A balcony serving both suites and has a single exit stairway.

An open-able window minimum 3'-4" (1m) high, 1'-10" (555mm) wide located a maximum of 3'-4" (1m) from floor and maximum 23'-0" (7m) from grade must be provided.

- EXIT STAIRS** must be a minimum of 34" (860 mm) wide and landings for exterior stairs serving two suites do not need to exceed 35.5" (900 mm) in length.
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- **EXIT DOORS** must be a minimum 80" (1980 mm) high and have a clear width of opening of 32" (810 mm) wide and are permitted to swing inwards. A sliding glass door is not permitted as the only exit door from a suite.
- **DOORS BETWEEN DWELLING UNITS** and doors between other rooms shared by both families within the building must have fire resistance rating of at least 20 minutes and be equipped with a self-closing device:
 - For 1 hour, 45 and 30 minute fire separations, a 20 minute rated door is required. A 1 ¾" (45mm) solid core wood door with a maximum clearance of ¼" (6mm) at the bottom and 1/8" (3mm) at the top and sides is permitted.
- **CARBON MONOXIDE ALARM.** Where a fuel-burning appliance is installed or where the garage is attached, an interconnected carbon monoxide alarm must be installed in each dwelling unit.
- **120 volt IONIC SMOKE ALARMS** are required within each dwelling unit and are required to be interconnected between floors. Depending on the floor plan, more than one detector may be required in each suite. Ionic smoke alarms respond to flaming fires.
- **ADDITIONAL 120 Volt PHOTOELECTRIC SMOKE ALARMS** are required and must be interconnected between each suite if the required fire separation is to be reduced from 45 minutes to 30 minutes between suites. Photoelectric smoke alarms respond to smoldering fires.
- **FIRE SEPARATIONS** in dwelling units, exits and common rooms (i.e. laundry, storage or furnace rooms) shall be separated from adjacent floor areas by fire separations (drywall).
 - Having a fire resistance rating of 45 minutes, or
 - Having a fire resistance rating of 30 minutes if used in conjunction with photo electric smoke alarms.
 - No fire resistance rating if the building is sprinkler-ed.
- **FURNACE ROOMS.** Unless the furnace room is completely contained within the main dwelling, the common walls are to be separated from the secondary suite by the required fire separation. A rated door with self-closing device may also be required. Because of the number of ducts and pipes typically contained within a furnace room, it may be very difficult to provide such separation. The Town may accept the installation of a photo-electric alarm, in lieu of a proper rated fire separation.
- **COMBUSTIBLE WATER DISTRIBUTION PIPING** may penetrate fire separations if fire-stopped and not in excess of 1 - 3/16" (30mm).
- **CENTRAL VACUUM SYSTEM** must only serve one suite.
- **CEILING POT LIGHTS** - maximum of 5 inches in diameter.
- **BATHROOM FANS** – max 12" fan box to 5" duct.
- **COMBUSTIBLE DRAIN, WASTE AND VENT** piping may penetrate a vertical fire separation, provided:
 - It is protected by ½" (12.7mm) drywall.
 - The penetration is no bigger than the piping and is caulked.
 - The combustible piping does not penetrate the gypsum board horizontal ceiling membrane.

ELECTRICAL, PLUMBING & HEATING:

- Plumbing, electrical or gas work in a single family dwelling with a suite are to be performed by a certified contractor. Permits are required for any alterations.
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- Each suite is to be provided with sanitary facilities and separate water shutoffs.
- The secondary suite and the main dwelling unit must each be served by their own electrical panel. One panel serving both suites is acceptable provided it's installed in a common area accessible by both the suite and main dwelling unit.
- Heating or ventilation ducts serving both suites shall be designed to prevent the circulation of smoke. Ducts penetrating fire separations need not be equipped with fire dampers providing they are metal and all openings in the duct system serve only one suite.

ADDRESSING:

- Only one address number is assigned by the Town of Smithers per single family home. Secondary suites are given a suite number in addition to the building number assigned by the Town.
- Building addressing must be clearly visible.

BUILDING PERMIT APPLICATIONS:

All Building Permit Applications for new secondary suites or the renovations of existing secondary suites require the following:

- Completed Building Permit Application (available at the Town Office or online at www.smithers.ca).
- Building Permit Application fee of \$35.00 (Building Permit fee is based on the value of construction).
- Site plan (2 copies) showing the siting of the house and location of parking.
- Floor plans (2 copies) that show walls, window/door locations, fire separations, smoke alarm locations, appliances, routes of exiting, heating, electrical information, plumbing fixtures, etc.

The above information is for informational purposes only. It is encouraged that you begin your secondary suite construction or renovation planning with a discussion with the Town of Smithers Building Inspector, who can verify the specific requirements for your project. Voluntary inspections can be arranged through the Development Services Department.

For Further Information Contact:

Town of Smithers Development Services Department
1027 Aldous Street
PO Box 879
Smithers, BC V0J 2N0

Office Hours
Monday to Friday (except Holidays)
8:30 am to 4:30 pm
Telephone: (250) 847-1600

