

# 4 STEPS TO A SECONDARY SUITE



A secondary suite is an additional dwelling located within a single family home. There are a number of reasons for considering a secondary suite. One is to generate rental income as a “mortgage helper”. Another reason is to provide housing for a relative. Whatever the reason, following these steps will make the process simple.

## 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. Visit [smithers.ca](http://smithers.ca) to view a copy of the Zoning Map.

## 2 Understand the Regulations.

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

- I have an existing single family home 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 space for 1 extra parking space on my property (3 total parking spaces are required).
- The size of the suite will be the lesser of 90 sq.m or 40% of the gross floor area of the family home.
- I have reviewed the “BC Building Code Compliance Checklist” on the reverse side of the 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 40% 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 or not 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.

At the end of your project you will be issued an Occupancy Permit - your secondary suite is now ready to be rented.

# BC Building Code COMPLIANCE CHECKLIST



- 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 3.8ft<sup>2</sup> (0.35m<sup>2</sup>) with no dimension less than 15" (380mm) in height and width. (Note: that 15"x15" 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 max. of 3'-4" (1m) from floor and max. 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 2 suites do not need to exceed 35.5" (900 mm) in length.
- 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 3/4" (45mm) solid core wood door with a maximum clearance of 1/4" (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. 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).
  - o Having a fire resistance rating of 45 minutes, or 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 1/2" (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 & GAS** work in a single family dwelling with a suite are to be performed by a certified contractor. Permits are required for any alterations. 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 1 suite.
- ADDRESSING.** A secondary suite will be given a suite number in addition to the existing street address. Building addressing must be clearly visible.