

Secondary Suite

The purpose of this information guide is to explain the requirements for secondary suites.

“The information contained within this guide is for convenience only and does not serve to substitute or supersede applicable City Bylaws, governing Provincial / Federal Codes, and laws. Any references to Bylaws, Codes and laws pertain to those effective at the time of this guide’s creation or revision. If the date on this guide exceeds three (3) years, the information contained may be outdated- in such circumstance, refer to the current Bylaws, Codes and laws. Building Owners are responsible for ensuring that any existing or proposed construction, and other works, comply with all applicable Bylaws, Codes and laws.”

Other Information Related to this Topic

- [Parking Areas and Driveways](#)

Overview

The City’s secondary suite program provides affordable rental housing while providing for greater bylaw compliance and public safety.

It manages the inclusion of secondary suites in neighbourhoods by addressing complaints, suite size limits, the number of accessory uses, payment of utility and other fees, and management of suites where the owner does not reside on the property.

Its objectives include:

- increased safety standards;
- protection of affordable housing options;
- to minimize the impact on neighbourhoods;
- fair and equitable fees;
- assisting property owners with legalization efforts; with
- a focus on citizen ‘complaint-based’ enforcement priorities

What is a Secondary Suite?

A secondary suite is defined as “an accessory dwelling unit fully contained within a primary dwelling unit.” It is one or more habitable rooms constituting one self-contained unit with a separate entrance used, or intended to be used, for living and sleeping purposes for not more than one family and containing not more than one kitchen or one set of cooking facilities.

Zoning Bylaw Requirements

A secondary suite:

- is permitted within R1, A1, A2, A3 and RM6 Zoning Districts
- must be fully contained within a primary dwelling unit containing no other secondary suites.
- uses for living and sleeping purposes for not more than one family
- contains not more than one kitchen or one set of cooking facilities
- has a minimum area of 32.52sq. m. (350 sq. ft.)
- may be located anywhere within a primary dwelling unit
- will not be permitted in a dwelling with:
 - another secondary suite
 - boarders and lodgers
 - bed and breakfast
 - home occupations that include in-home client services
- cannot be subdivided from the principal into separate parcel by strata plan, air space parcel plan or otherwise.
- Does not require additional parking.

Building Code Requirements

All construction to accommodate a secondary suite shall comply fully with Part 9 of the BC Building Code.

The following information **highlights** some critical requirements for the construction of a secondary suite. It is **not the complete list** of construction requirements and owner/builder should consult Part 9 of the BC Building Code for complete secondary suite construction requirements.

- **Fire Separations between a Secondary Suite and Principal Dwelling Unit (including common spaces) shall have:**
 - a minimum 45-minute fire-resistance rating for walls and ceilings between the principal dwelling unit and the secondary suite if there is no interconnected smoke alarms between the principal dwelling and the secondary suite; or
 - a minimum 30-minute fire-resistance rating is permitted if an additional interconnected photo-electric smoke alarm is installed in the principal dwelling unit and in the secondary suite; or
 - a minimum 15-minute fire-resistance rating is permitted if ALL smoke alarms within the hose are of photoelectric and interconnected.

- **Smoke Alarms** – The principal dwelling unit and the secondary suite shall have:
 - interconnected smoke alarms; and
 - an additional interconnected photo-electric type smoke alarm in each, the principal dwelling unit and the secondary suite, and are connected if the fire separation between the principal dwelling and the secondary suite have only 30-minute fire-resistance rating; or
 - Smoke alarms throughout the entire house and shall be photoelectric and interconnected if the fire separation between the principal dwelling unit and the secondary suite has only 15-minute fire-resistance rating.

- **Sound Insulation** – Walls and ceilings separating the principal dwelling and secondary suite shall have:
 - Sound insulation, resilient channel on ceiling, and 12.7 mm (1/2”) drywall; or
 - STC rating of not less than 43; or
 - ASTC rating of not less than 40.

- **Combustible Drain, Waste and Vent (DWV) Piping** are permitted to penetrate a vertical fire separation, provided the pipe is sealed at the penetration by a fire stop that has an F rating not less than the fire-resistance rating required for the fire separation. Combustible DWV piping are not permitted to penetrate a horizontal fire separation.

- **Heating System** – It is preferable for the secondary suite to have its own heating or ventilation system independent of the principal dwelling unit. If forced-air heating and/or ventilation ducts are serving both the secondary suite and principal dwelling unit, duct-type smoke detectors must be installed to shut down the heating and the ventilation system. In addition, they must be equipped with fire dampers where penetrating required fire separations.

- **Central Vacuum Systems** – are not permitted to serve more than one suite.

- **Electrical Panel** – The secondary suite in a new house must be provided with a separate panel or access to a panel located in a common space. This requirement does not apply to existing conditions.

- **Service Room** – Shared access by the principal dwelling unit and the secondary suite to a service room containing common HVAC equipment is not required.
 - If there is fuel fired appliances, they shall be separated from the remainder of the house by a fire separation having a fire-resistance rating not less than what is required for the fire separation between the principal dwelling unit and the secondary suite.

- If the service room is located in the secondary suite, it shall be treated as part of the principal dwelling unit and shall be fire-separated from the secondary suite.

Permit Requirements

Property owner must obtain and finalize a building permit and any related plumbing, electrical, gas or heating permits for a secondary suite.

Building Permit

Building permit application requirements for a secondary suite in a new or existing dwelling can be found on the [Secondary Suite Program](#) page.

All Building Permit applications are subject to the existing Building Permit [Fee Schedule](#) based on construction value.

Sub-Trade Permits

After the issuance of a building permit for the secondary suite the licensed electrical, plumbing and gas contractors can obtain their own sub-trade permits if required. Homeowners are not permitted to carry out sub-trade works in a dwelling with a secondary suite.

Inspection Requirements

The electrical, plumbing and gas contractors have to call for inspections and obtain acceptance of their rough-in work from the inspectors before the general contractor can request a framing inspection.

The building inspector will not conduct a final inspection unless all the sub-trade final inspections have been accepted by the electrical and plumbing & gas inspectors.

Supplementary Utility Fees

All residential properties identified with a secondary suite may be charged with supplementary utility fees. For more information about utility fees, please contact the Revenue Services directly at 604-294-7350 or visit their [website](#).

Decommission a Suite

If the owner wants to remove (decommission) a suite the owner must:

- engage a licensed electrical contractor and obtain a permit to:
 - remove the 40-amp range receptacle and install a box cover.

- disconnect and remove the range breaker from the panel and install approved panel fillers.
- remove the hood fan and disconnect and safely terminate the range hood wiring in an electrical junction box.

- engage a licensed gas contractor and obtain permit to remove the gas supply to gas stove under permit.

- reinstate an access door between the decommissioned suite and the principal dwelling.

- call for electrical and gas final inspections.

Business License Requirements

A Business License is required for property owners who rent out both the principal dwelling unit and the secondary suite. The license is subject to the conditions of the “House Rental Business License” Bylaw that includes community standards and practices to assist in enforcement of any issues that impact adjacent properties or neighbourhoods.

For More Information

For more information about license requirements please contact Licensing directly at 604-293-7320 or visit their [website](#).

If you have any question regarding secondary suites, please contact the Building Division at 604-294-7130 or permits@burnaby.ca.