



This information is provided for clarification purposes only and is not in substitution of any applicable City Bylaws or Provincial or Federal Codes or laws. In the case of any contradictions, legislative Codes, laws or Bylaws take precedence. You must satisfy yourself that any existing or proposed construction or other works complies with such Bylaws, Codes, applicable Acts, regulations, and decisions and orders of any person or body having jurisdiction over the Lands.

Secondary Suites

No.: BUILDING-22

Date: 2007-06-19

Revised: 2025-07-28

This bulletin is to inform Owners and Builders on secondary suites and their general requirements.

Summary:

- Secondary suites must be an accessory use and be completely enclosed within the primary dwelling as not to externally appear as a separate unit.
- To bring existing secondary suites that have not been previously permitted into compliance, an [Interior Finishing, Alterations Residential Plan Review Application](#) must be completed and submitted with the required drawings.

What is a Secondary Suite?

A secondary suite is an accessory, self-contained dwelling within single detached housing, two-unit housing, small-scale multi-unit housing or town housing, exclusively used for occupancy by one household.

- Secondary suites in single family housing, two-unit housing, small-scale multi-unit housing and town housing have different building standards, please reference the BC Building Code for more details.
- Please reference the Zoning Bylaw to identify zones that permit secondary suites.

Existing Secondary Suites

- For a secondary suite to be permitted and legal, it must be reviewed and inspected by the City, and may require upgrades to help ensure life safety and compliance with the BC Building Code, the City Zoning Bylaw, and all other applicable enactments.
 - This may require any work/construction previously completed without the benefit of plans or permits to be exposed.
- **Please submit a completed *Interior Finishing, Alterations Residential Plan Review Application* form with the required drawings and documents to City Hall.**

Construction Requirements

These are not the complete construction requirements. Please consult the BC Building Code and the Zoning Bylaw for the complete list of requirements.

General

- Secondary suites must be completely enclosed within the same building as the principal dwelling unit in single detached housing, completely within the same dwelling unit in small-scale multi-unit housing, or completely contained within the same dwelling unit or strata lot in two-unit housing or town housing.
 - The secondary suite must not appear as a separate unit from the outside.
 - Secondary suites are not permitted to be stratified.
 - A secondary suite can not be in a detached accessory building.
- No more than one secondary suite shall be permitted per dwelling unit.
 - A maximum of 50% of the total units in town housing are permitted to contain a secondary suite.
- A secondary suite must not exceed 40% of the total floor area of the dwelling unit in which it is contained, and total area of the secondary suite must not exceed 120m².
 - In single detached housing: secondary suites must have a minimum floor area of at least 33.0m².
 - In small-scale multi-unit housing and town housing: secondary suites must have a minimum floor area of at least 25.0m².
- Common spaces such as common storage, common service rooms, common laundry facilities, and common areas used for egress within the building encapsulating the secondary suite and primary dwelling are permitted.

See over →

- A building containing a secondary suite must not be above or below any other unit or occupancy.

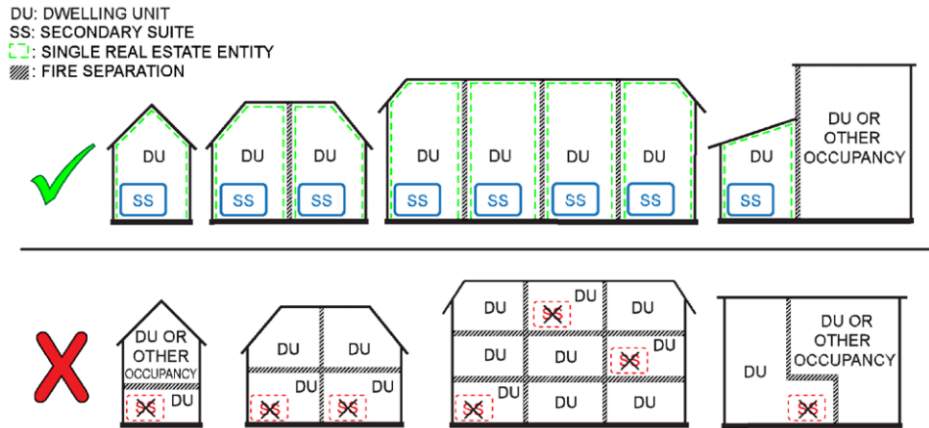


Image retrieved from Government of BC, Building and Safety Standards Branch, 2019

Entry Doors

- The design and placement of entry doors for the secondary suite shall not face the primary street upon which the principal dwelling is located. The location must be to the satisfaction of the Director of Building Approvals.
- Each dwelling unit shall be provided with a second and separate means of egress from the principal unit that does not front the main street.
 - The entry door of the secondary suite shall not face the primary street upon which the principal dwelling is located.

Smoke Alarms and Fire Separations

- Smoke alarms shall be installed in each dwelling unit unless otherwise stated.
 - Interconnected smoke alarms must be photo-electric and may rely on wireless technology.
- Common spaces that are a part of a shared means of egress must be separated from the dwelling units with a fire separation.
- A fire separation between the primary dwelling and secondary suite is required and subject to the following:
 - 45 minute fire resistance rating is required if smoke alarms are not interconnected (smoke alarms are still required).
 - 30 minute fire resistance rating is permitted where additional photo-electric smoke alarms are installed in each unit and are interconnected.
 - 15 minute fire resistance rating is permitted if every smoke alarm in the building (includes primary dwelling, secondary suite, and common spaces) is interconnected and photo-electric.
 - No fire resistance rating is required if the building in which the primary and secondary dwellings are located is fully sprinklered.

Sound Transmission

- Sound transmission between a secondary suite and primary dwelling must meet ASTC 20 and STC 43.

Carbon Monoxide Alarms

- Carbon monoxide (CO) alarms are required and must be interconnected and may rely on wireless technology for interconnection.

References

- [BC Building Code](#)
- City of Richmond [Zoning Bylaw 8500](#)
- [Building and Safety Standards Branch Information Bulletin, Secondary Suites. 2019](#)
- City of Richmond [Interior Finishing, Alterations Residential Plan Review Application \(PL-43\)](#)

Should you have any questions, comments, or suggestions concerning this bulletin, please reference the Bulletin number and email building@richmond.ca or call the Building Approvals General Inquiries line at 604-276-4118.