



Secondary Suites in Duplexes

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Purpose:

The purpose of this bulletin is to provide information to owners and builders regarding the construction of secondary suites in duplexes and alterations to an existing duplex to accommodate a secondary suite.

Background:

On June 18, 2018, Council adopted Bylaw 9865 to allow secondary suites in standard two-unit dwelling (duplex) zones. Secondary suites are accessory, self-contained dwellings within a residential building. As per the BC Building Code, construction requirements for a suite in a duplex are different than a secondary suite in a single-family dwelling.

Implementation:

The following information is provided to identify some life and safety requirements as per the BC Building Code for the construction of a suite in a duplex and alterations to an existing duplex to accommodate a suite.

- **Fire Separation between a Suite and Principal Dwelling Unit:** a minimum 1 hour fire resistance rating is required for walls and ceilings.
- **Smoke Alarms:** smoke alarms are required in each unit along with each sleeping room. Smoke alarms to be hardwired and required to sound all smoke alarms within the suite when activated.
- **Air Ducts and Fire Dampers:** the suite is to have its own forced-air heating or ventilation system independent of the main dwelling unit.
- **Sound Transmission:** the construction separating units is required to have a minimum sound transmission classification of 50.

These are not complete construction requirements. The owner/builder should consult the BC Building Code for complete suite construction requirements.

A secondary suite in a duplex does not have a minimum or maximum floor area, but cannot exceed 40% of the total floor area of the dwelling unit in which it is contained. No more than one secondary suite is permitted per dwelling unit and the secondary suite is not permitted to be stratified. See Section 5.4.1 of *Zoning Bylaw 8500* for more information.

If an existing duplex is legal non-conforming (i.e. located in a zone that does not allow duplexes), the property must first be rezoned in order to legitimize the existing duplex and allow the use of a legal secondary suite. If the property is already zoned for duplexes, no rezoning would be required.

Should you have any questions, comments or suggestions concerning this bulletin, please contact the Building Approvals Department at 604-276-4285.