

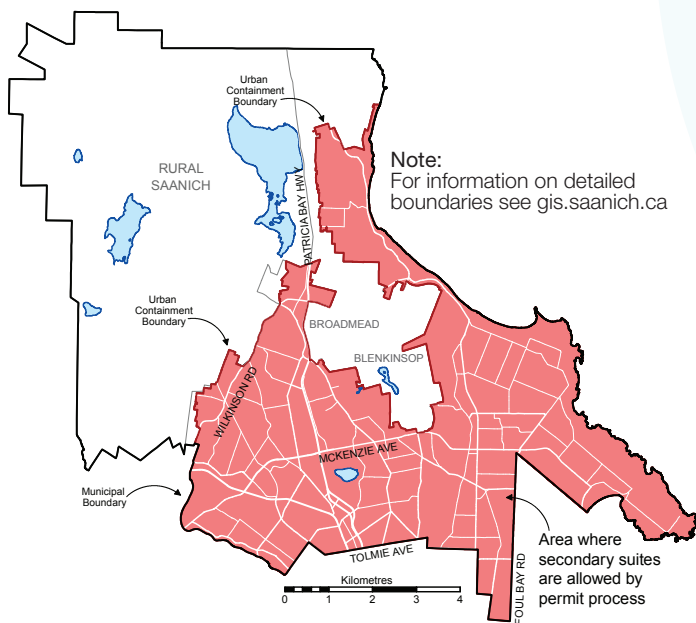
A Guide to Secondary Suites



Introduction

Building on the Saanich Official Community Plan (OCP) that supported secondary suites as a form of affordable housing, studies were undertaken in 2009 and in 2014. The studies resulted in secondary suites being permitted in single family residential zones (RS zones only) in Saanich. Some exceptions are areas outside the Urban Containment Boundary (UCB) and the Broadmead neighbourhood, where there are restrictive covenants (see map).

The intent of this brochure is to aid homeowners, designers and builders to construct secondary suites within permitted areas.



What is a secondary suite?

A secondary suite is a self-contained dwelling unit located within a single family dwelling that includes cooking, sleeping and washroom facilities. The installation of a secondary suite in a new or existing single family dwelling is permitted subject to meeting the BC Building Code, the Saanich Zoning Bylaw, the Saanich Building and Plumbing Bylaw and any other requirements.

What are the basic requirements?

Secondary suites must comply with all of the following requirements outlined below:

- The property must be located within the defined secondary suite area (see map on opposite page).
- The property must be zoned for single family use; RS Zones only.
- Conditions of the relevant zone must be met (i.e. Maximum floor area/floor space ratio).
- The Secondary suite must be wholly contained within the single family dwelling and may not be connected to the house by a breezeway or enclosed hallway.
- No more than one (1) secondary suite per lot or per single family dwelling.
- The registered owner of the property must occupy the main dwelling unit or the secondary suite as their principal residence – (a signed affidavit is required).
- An Occupancy Permit must be issued by the Saanich Inspections Services Division, based on the requirements.
- One (1) additional on-site parking space must be provided. Tandem parking on the driveway is permitted.
- No more than two (2) kitchens are permitted per lot or per single family dwelling.
- Boarders are not permitted within the secondary suite.
- Maximum allowable floor area of suite is 40% of the dwelling up to a maximum of 90 sq.m. (968 sq.ft) of finished living space.

Note: some properties may have covenants registered on title that restrict secondary suites. For a complete list of documents registered on your property, verify your title document or request a title search at the Land Title Office.

Inspection Services staff is available to discuss the requirements for your secondary suite, as each situation may differ.

What is the process to construct?

Existing and New Single Family Dwelling

- Review the requirements to make sure you are able to comply with them
- Complete and submit a Building Permit Application for Renovations or Additions to a Single Family Dwelling (see checklist for further details)

New Developer Built Home

The Secondary Suite will not be legal until such time that the owner submits a signed owner affidavit confirming that they occupy either the main dwelling or the secondary suite as their principle residence.

If you sell the property in the future, the new owner will need to complete and sign a new affidavit confirming that they will occupy either the single family dwelling or the secondary suite as their principal residence.



What documents do I need?

To make application for a secondary suite the following documents are required:

- Application drawings (See Checklist for further details)
- Completed Building Permit Application
- Completed Agent Authorization form (if required)
- Completed Plumbing Permit Application
- Application fee
- Completed owner affidavit



What is required on my drawings?

Application drawings must include the following:

Site Plan

- Full dimensions of lot, north arrow and scale.
- All existing and proposed buildings with dimensions from property lines.
- Geodetic elevations of existing Natural Grade shown at all external corners of proposed buildings (must be determined by a BCLS).*
- Easements, Covenants and Rights-of-Way identified and dimensioned.*
- On-site parking spot allocated for tenant.
- Trees on the property or boulevard, including species and diameter.
- Location of driveway

Floor Plans

- All rooms labelled with intended use and dimensions, including door and window dimensions and locations.
- Floor areas of each floor.
- Foundation and crawlspace details.
- Secondary suite areas identified.
- For renovations provide existing floor plans and revised floor plans.

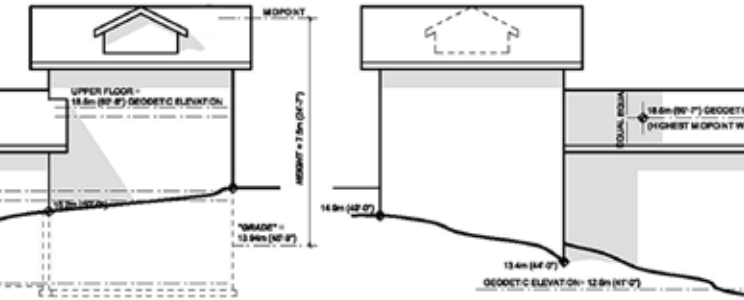
**Addition permit's only.*



What is required on my drawings? *(continued)*

Elevation Plans

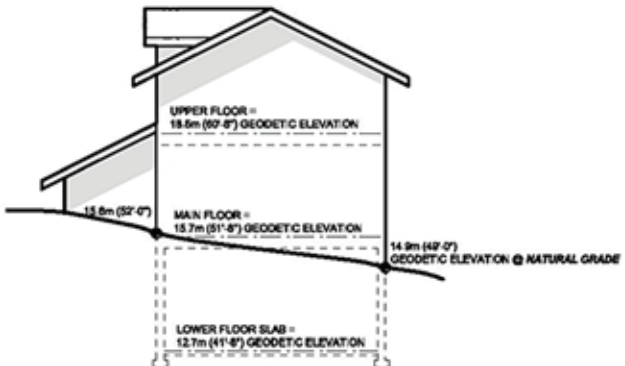
- Elevation drawings of all sides of building – Labelled North, South, East, West or Front, Rear, Left Side and Right Side.
- Geodetic elevations of existing Natural Grade, proposed Finish Grade, Average Grade and main floor.*
- Basement and non-basement area identified with horizontal dashed line.
- Height calculations - From Natural Grade and Single Face.*



Cross-Section

- Complete cross-section drawing(s) with reference on floor plans as to the location.
- Details of framing, sheathing, rainscreen, interior and exterior finishes, insulation, ventilation and roof materials.*
- Engineered designed elements – Letters of Assurance and sealed drawings.

**Addition permit's only.*



Common questions

Can I build a secondary suite in a duplex?

No, only in a single family house.

Is a common laundry room included in the gross floor area (GFA) of a suite?

No, common spaces such as laundry rooms, storage areas or egress areas that are used by both units are not included in the suite's gross floor area.

Do I need to hire an architect to create a secondary suite?

Your secondary suite does not need to be designed by an architect or building designer, but all plans and drawings must be accurate and to scale with dimensions shown. Specifications must be sufficiently detailed to establish that the construction will comply with the BC Building Code, the Saanich Zoning Bylaw, the Saanich Building and Plumbing Bylaw and any other requirements.

Does my secondary suite get a separate mailing address?

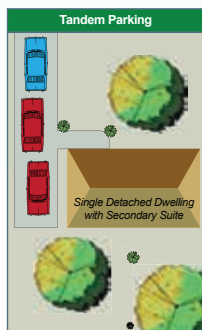
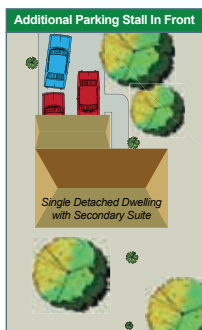
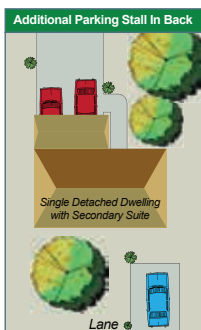
Yes, the civic address remains the same and the District will assign units A and B to the property and will be recognized by Canada Post.

Do I get a second garbage can?

If you require extra garbage cans they are available at additional cost from greenergarbage@saanich.ca or 250-475-5533.

Do I need extra parking?

Yes, one extra parking space is required. Tandem parking on the driveway is permitted. The additional parking space must be entirely on the property containing the secondary suite.



Common questions *(continued)*

Will I be fined for acknowledging an existing secondary suite?

If you have an existing secondary suite and you would like to upgrade the suite to current requirements, you will not be fined for having an illegal suite. One of the main purposes is to encourage homeowners to ensure existing suites meet the minimum Health and Safety Standards established by the BC Building Code.

How do I legalize my secondary suite or construct a new one?

If a property owner wishes to legalize an existing secondary suite or construct a new suite, the construction of the suite must conform to the Saanich Building and Plumbing Bylaw No. 8627 and the provisions of Section 9.37 of the BC Building Code.

What is the permitting process to legalize a suite?

After confirming that you meet the requirements for ownership, lot size, zoning and location, you can apply to the District of Saanich for a Building Permit.

As part of the Building Permit Application process, the following is required:

1. Property Title Search. The property owner must provide a current title search and copies of any charges registered against the title. You must review this title search to ensure there are no restrictions registered on the title of your property prohibiting a secondary suite. The District will also conduct its own review of the documentation.
2. You must obtain a Building Permit Application Form and complete it to the satisfaction of the District.
3. You must provide two copies of the plans for your secondary suite including a site plan of the principal dwelling showing the location of all buildings on the site, required setbacks, an additional parking space for the suite, the building elevations and the floor plans.
4. You must obtain an Owner Occupancy Declaration Form from the District of Saanich, complete the declaration to the satisfaction of the District and submit it as part of the Building Permit Application.

What if I already have a suite?

Existing suites will need a Building Permit to ensure that they comply with the BC Building Code requirements for secondary suites. Owners of properties containing existing suites that do not meet code requirements will have to make necessary changes (i.e. upgrades).

What is an Owner Occupancy Declaration?

It is a legal document which confirms that the registered owner of the parcel on which the secondary suite is situated resides in either the primary unit within the single family dwelling or the secondary suite. The owner must reside in the single family dwelling to ensure that the property is well maintained and the tenants are respectful of the neighbourhood. The Owner Occupancy Declaration Form is available at the Inspection Services counter at the Municipal Hall.

Will the value of my property increase if I have a suite?

Having a suite may positively affect the assessment of your property. Please contact BC Assessment Authority for further information regarding this.

Do I need a permit?

Yes, all secondary suites will require a Building and Secondary Suite Permit to be legal. During the Building Permit Review Process the Secondary Suite Design will be checked for compliance with requirements of Zoning Bylaw #8200 as well as the BC Building Code.

Once a Building Permit has been obtained, building inspections are performed to ensure compliance with the BC Building Code. Once code compliance has been confirmed through a building permit, then the applicant must complete whatever zoning requirements have been identified, such as parking.

A plumbing permit will be required if there is any alteration to the plumbing system.

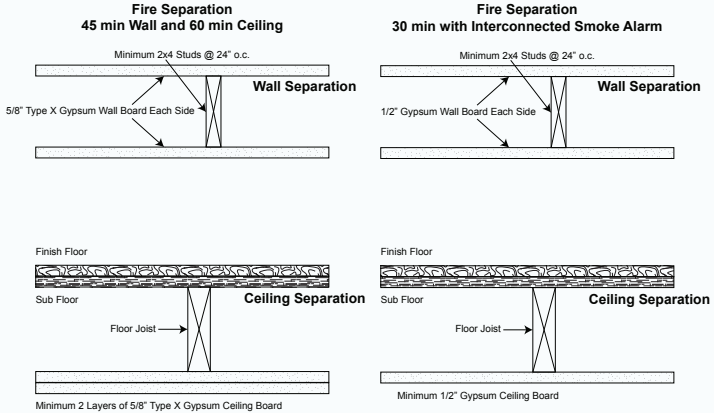
When is a suite considered legal?

A secondary suite is considered legal when the owner has obtained an occupancy permit for a secondary suite from the District of Saanich. A permit will only be issued if the secondary suite has been inspected by the municipal Building Inspector and has been found to meet the requirements of Section 9.37 of the BC Building Code, the Zoning Bylaw, Building and Plumbing Bylaw and all other municipal bylaws and regulations.

What are the building code requirements?

Fire Separation

- A fire separation having a fire resistance rating (FRR) must be created between the main dwelling and the secondary suite. The FRR must be 45 minutes for 1 storey buildings and 1 hour for 2 storey buildings.



- To reduce the required 1 hour or 45 minute fire separation between the secondary suite and main dwelling to 30 minutes, a solid wired interconnected photo-electric smoke alarm shall be installed in each suite.
- The doors and frames between the suite and the main dwelling must be self closing and are required to have a 20 minute fire resistance rating if the fire separation is 30 minutes or 45 minutes, or a 45 minutes fire resistance rating if the fire separation is 1 hour.
- Horizontal service chases must have a fire resistance rating equal to the other FRR.

Safe Exiting

- Hinged exit door (min. 32") with door viewer or clear glass.
- Required minimum bedroom window opening size (minimum 15" width/height, minimum 3.77 sq ft area).
- Headroom must be not less than 2.0 m throughout the path of travel to the exit.

Ventilation

- Principal ventilation systems are required to exhaust from kitchens and bathrooms and to supply air to bedrooms and living areas. Principal ventilation fans must run continuously, controlled by a dedicated switch and with a sound rating not to exceed 1.0 sone. If the building includes a heated crawl space, it must be connected to floor above by at least one transfer grille 25 sq cm for each 30 sq m of crawlspace area.

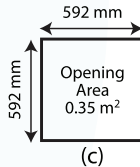
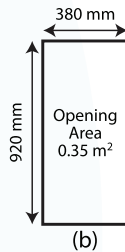
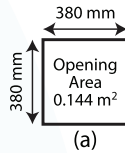
Plumbing

- Shut-offs shall be installed where the water supply enters each dwelling unit, so that when one suite is shut off, the water to the remainder of the building is not interrupted.

Smoke Alarms

- Smoke alarms must be installed on all floors and inside all new bedrooms and between the bedrooms and the remainder of the storey. These smoke alarms need not be interconnected between suites but must be interconnected within each suite.
- Hardwired carbon monoxide alarm(s) are required in each sleeping room or within 5 m of all bedroom doors where there is a fuel-burning appliance or an attached garage in the building (alarms must be interconnected throughout the building).
- Forced air ducted heating systems servicing both dwelling units must be equipped with a system designed and installed to prevent the circulation of smoke upon a signal from a duct-type smoke detector.
- A furnace or HVAC that services the main dwelling must not be located in the suite.

Bedroom Windows



(a) conforms to opening height and width requirements; does not conform to opening area requirements.

(b) and (c) conform to height, width and opening area requirements.

Need More Information?

District of Saanich
Planning Department
Zoning Inquiries 250-475-5471
Inspection Services 250-475-5457

770 Vernon Ave.
Victoria BC V8X 2W7
www.saanich.ca

Other Resources:

Land Title Office - Victoria Office
110-1321 Blanshard St.
Victoria, BC V8W 0B7
1-877-577-5872
www.ltsa.ca

BC Safety Authority - Victoria Office
310 - 771 Vernon Ave.
Victoria BC V8X 5A7
1-866-566-SAFE (7233)
www.safetyauthority.ca
www.thinkpermit.ca

BC Assessment
400 - 3450 Uptown Blvd.
Victoria BC V8Z 0B9
1-866-825-8322
www.bcassessment.ca

HPO (Homeowner Protection Office)
Suite 2270 - 1055 West Georgia St.
PO Box 11132 Royal Centre
Vancouver BC V6E 3P3
1-800-407-7757
www.hpo.bc.ca

Vancouver Island Health Authority
201 - 771 Vernon Ave.
Victoria BC V8W 1B4
250-519-3401
www.viha.ca

WCB (Workers Compensation Board of BC)
PO Box 4700 Station Terminal
Vancouver BC V6B 1J1
1-888-621-7233
www.worksafebc.com

