



CITY OF  
PRINCE GEORGE

**Current  
Planning and  
Development  
Division**

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*This guide has been prepared to provide convenient information only. It is neither a bylaw nor a legal document. If any contradiction between this guide and the relevant Municipal Bylaws and/or applicable codes is found, such bylaws and/or codes shall be the legal authority.*

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# CIRCULAR

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

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## Constructing or Legalizing a Secondary Suite

The purpose of this handout is to help you prepare an acceptable Building Permit Application for a secondary suite in the City of Prince George. This handout is relevant for legalizing existing suites (subject to zoning confirmation) and the construction of new suites.

A secondary suite is defined in the City of Prince George Zoning Bylaw No. 7850 as: *“an accessory, self-contained dwelling within a single detached house, exclusively used for occupancy by one household that complies with the requirements of this Bylaw.”*

### COMMON QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- 1) ARE SECONDARY SUITES PERMITTED ONLY IN CERTAIN ZONES?  
**Yes.** Secondary suites are only permitted in the following zones:
  - AG: Greenbelt
  - AF: Agriculture and Forestry
  - AR1,2,3m: Rural Residential
  - RS1m,2m, 3, 4: Suburban and Single Residential
  - RT 1,2: Two-Unit Residential (only in detached, single family dwelling)
  - C8: Commercial Conversion
  - Z9: Hill Avenue
  
- 2) CAN I BUILD A SECONDARY SUITE IN A TWO-UNIT DWELLING, ACCESSORY BUILDING OR MULTIPLE RESIDENTIAL DWELLING?  
**No.** Construction of a secondary suite is only permitted in a detached, single-family dwelling. A single detached house is defined as a *“building containing only 1 dwelling exclusively used for occupancy by 1 household.”*
  
- 3) CAN I BUILD A SECONDARY SUITE IN A MANUFACTURED HOME?  
**A secondary suite can only be constructed in manufactured homes that conform to the CSA A277 standards.** Evidence of this compliance must be submitted with the permit application.
  
- 4) DOES THE OWNER OF THE RESIDENCE HAVE TO LIVE ON-SITE?  
**Yes.** A secondary suite may only be permitted in a detached single-family dwelling where the property owner is a resident of either the secondary suite or the principal residence.

- 5) HOW MANY SECONDARY SUITES ARE PERMITTED PER DWELLING?  
**One.** No more than one secondary suite shall be permitted per residence.
- 6) IS THERE A SIZE LIMIT FOR A SECONDARY SUITE?  
**Yes.** The maximum floor area of a secondary suite shall not exceed the lesser of 75 m<sup>2</sup> or 40% of the total floor area of the principal residence.
- 7) WILL OFF-STREET PARKING BE REQUIRED FOR THE SUITE?  
**Yes.** One parking space per unit will be required for the secondary suite. This is in addition to the two required spaces for a single-family residence.
- 8) IS A SECONDARY SUITE PERMITTED IN CONJUNCTION WITH AN AGRI-TOURIST ACCOMMODATION, BED & BREAKFAST OR COMMUNITY CARE FACILITY?  
**No.** A secondary suite is only permitted as a secondary use to a single-family residence.
- 9) DO I NEED A BUILDING PERMIT FOR A SECONDARY SUITE?  
**Yes.** You must obtain a building permit for a secondary suite to ensure it is constructed in accordance with the BC Building Code and City Bylaws relating to health, safety, and the protection of personal property.

### **Building Permit Process for:**

#### **A new residence with a secondary suite:**

- 1) Confirm zoning to ensure a suite is a permitted use for your property.
- 2) Review the attached BC Building Code requirements for secondary suites.
- 3) See Information Circular No. 1 for general information regarding planning the project, requirements for a building permit (including complete drawings and truss details, etc.), permit fee and the process.
- 4) Submit a Building Permit application for the secondary suite. This application must be separate from the Building Permit for the new residence.
- 5) Submit two sets of drawings with your Building Permit consisting of the site, off-street parking, entrance locations and floor plans indicating all measurements of the proposed suite. **Please be sure to indicate the area of the suite, locations of entrances and off-street parking on all submitted drawings.**

The more complete your drawings are, the faster your building permit will be approved.

#### **An existing residence with a new secondary suite or legalizing an existing secondary suite:**

- 1) Confirm zoning to ensure a suite is a permitted use for your property.
- 2) Review the attached BC Building Code requirements for secondary suites.
- 3) Fill out the attached pre-application questionnaire, pay the application fee of \$50.00, and book an inspection.
- 4) Submit a Building Permit Application. Requirements for a building permit include complete drawings of the floor plans with area and measurements, locations of entrances and off-street parking and the permit fee. **Please be sure to indicate the area of the suite, locations entrances and off-street parking on all submitted drawings.**

#### **Note:**

- *A Plumbing Permit is required for the installation of fixtures in a secondary suite. The plumbing permit application and fixture installation must be completed by a licensed plumber.*
- *A Water Meter must be installed by the plumber if one is not already installed in the home.*

**Please come in and talk to a Building Inspector and/or Planner for more information.**

## **BC Building Code Requirements for a Secondary Suite**

The 2006 BC Building Code, Part 9, governs residential construction, and includes Section 9.36 which details for Secondary Suite Provisions. Both existing and the construction of new suites shall be in accordance to the BC Building Code.

**Building Code Analysis** - To assist in processing your building permit application, please have a professional designer complete a code analysis (covering all required information indicated on the attached form) on front page of architectural drawing. It is the designer's responsibility to ensure that the proposed suite conforms to the BC Building Code regulations. The City of Prince George does not take responsibility for any errors or omissions in Building Code Requirements as listed below:

- **MINIMUM CEILING HEIGHT** of secondary suites shall not be less than 2.0 meters with no obstructions below this height along the path of exit travel from any area in the suite.
- **SOLID BLOCKING** may be omitted for doors where the interior wall finish adjacent to the door is in place prior to the construction of a secondary suite.
- **EXIT STAIRS** within or serving a building which contains a secondary suite shall have a minimum width, measured between wall faces or guards, of not less than 860 mm.
- **LANDINGS** for exterior stairs serving a suite shall not exceed 900 mm in length.
- **MEANS OF EGRESS** of every public corridor and exit corridor that services a building containing a suite shall be no less than 860 mm in width.
- **FIRE SEPARATION FOR EXITS** Except as otherwise permitted, every exit other than an exit doorway shall be separated from adjacent floor areas by a fire separation:
  - a) having a fire resistance rating of 45 minutes, or
  - b) having a fire resistance rating of not less than 30 minutes where the dwelling units are equipped with smoke alarms.Please note, a fire resistance rating is not required for a fire separation which separates an exit from adjacent floor areas where the building is sprinklered.
- **OPENINGS NEAR ENCLOSED EXIT STAIRS AND RAMPS** Where an unenclosed exterior exit stair or ramp provides the only means of egress from a dwelling unit in a building that contains a secondary suite and the stairs are exposed to the hazards of fire from unprotected openings in the exterior wall of another fire compartment, the openings shall be protected.
- **DOORS IN A MEANS OF EGRESS** Every exit door or door that opens into or is located within a public corridor or other facility that provides access to exit from a suite shall
  - a) be not less than 1980 mm high,
  - b) have a clear opening width of not less than 800 mm, and
  - c) be permitted to swing inward.
- **TRAVEL LIMIT TO EXITS OR EGRESS DOORS** In a building which contains a secondary suite, the travel limit from a floor level in a dwelling unit to an exit or egress door may exceed one (1) storey provided the floor level within the dwelling unit is served by an operable window.

- **SHARED EGRESS FACILITIES** Where an egress door from a dwelling unit opens onto a public corridor or exterior passageway it shall be possible from the location where the egress door opens onto the public corridor or exterior passageway to go in opposite directions to two (2) separate exits unless the dwelling unit is served by a second and separate means of egress or an opening window.

Each dwelling unit shall be provided with a second and separate means of egress or an opening window, where the egress door from either dwelling unit opens onto

- a) an exit stairway which serves both suites,
  - b) a public corridor serving both suites and served by a single exit stairway,
  - c) an exterior passageway serving both suites and served by a single exit stairway, or
  - d) a balcony serving both suites and served by a single exit stairway.
- **EXIT SIGNS** Exit signs are not required within a building which contains a secondary suite.
  - **STRUCTURAL FIRE RESISTANCE** “Minimum Required Fire-Resistance Ratings for Structural Members and Assemblies” does not apply to a building which contains a secondary suite.
  - **COMBUSTIBLE WATER PIPES** Combustible water distribution piping that has an outside diameter of not more than 30 mm is permitted to partly or wholly penetrate fire separations that are required to have a fire resistance rating without being incorporated in the assembly at the time of testing as required, provided the piping is sealed.
  - **COMBUSTIBLE DRAIN, WASTE AND VENT PIPING** is permitted to be located within or penetrate a fire separation required to have a fire-resistance rating provided:
    - a) except for the permitted penetration in Clause (b), the combustible piping is located within an assembly protected by a membrane of a minimum 12.7 mm gypsum board.
    - b) the permitted penetration through the gypsum board membrane is limited to a size of the diameter of the penetrating pipe, and
    - c) the combustible piping does not penetrate the gypsum board protection membrane on the underside of a horizontal fire separation.

Combustible drain, waste and vent piping enclosed in an assembly or protected is permitted on both sides of a fire separation.
  - **SEPARATION OF RESIDENTIAL SUITES** Dwelling units in a building which contains a secondary suite shall be separated from each other by:
    - a) a fire separation; or
    - b) a fire separation having a fire-resistance rating of not less than 30 min where the dwelling units are equipped with smoke alarms; or
    - c) a fire separation having no required fire resistance rating where the building is sprinklered.
  - **AIR DUCTS AND FIRE DAMPERS** Where a heating and ventilation duct system serves more than one suite, the system shall be designed and installed to prevent the circulation of smoke upon a signal from a dust-type system serving only one fire compartment.
 

Ducts penetrating fire separations need not be equipped with fire dampers, provided they are non-combustible with all openings in the duct system serving only one fire compartment.
  - **EXPOSING BUILDING FACE OF HOUSES** In buildings which contain a secondary suite, the requirements do not apply provided:
    - a) the exposing building face has a fire-resistance rating of not less than 45 min where the limiting distance is less than 1.5 m, and
    - b) where the limiting distance is less than 0.6 m the exposing building face is clad with non-combustible material.

Window openings in the exposing building face shall not be permitted if the limiting distance is less than 1.2 m and shall be limited, where the limiting distance is 1.2 m or greater.

- **SMOKE ALARMS** An additional smoke alarm of photo-electric type conforming to CAN/ULC-S531 "Standard for Smoke Alarms," shall be installed in each suite.

An additional interconnected smoke alarm is not required to be installed in the suite provided:

- a) the fire separations have a fire resistance rating of 45 minutes or greater, or
- b) the building is sprinklered

- **SOUND CONTROL** The assemblies separating the residential suites need not comply with the sound control requirements.
- **ATTIC SPACE ACCESS** An attic space access hatchway not less than 0.32 m<sup>2</sup> in an area with a dimension less than 545 mm may serve both suites in a building which contains a secondary suite.
- **GARAGES AND CARPORTS** Section 9.35 is applicable to garages and carports serving a building which contains a secondary suite.

**SECONDARY SUITE**  
(IN EXISTING HOME)  
**PRE-APPLICATION QUESTIONNAIRE**

**PLEASE NOTE:** *The owner of the single detached housing shall be a resident of either the secondary suite or the principal dwelling as required by Section 5.6.6. of the City of Prince George Zoning Bylaw No. 7850, 2007.*

APPLICANT'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_ PH: \_\_\_\_\_

OWNER'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_ PH: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS OF PROPERTY: \_\_\_\_\_

AGE OF HOUSE: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE SUITE WAS CONSTRUCTED: \_\_\_\_\_

SUITE CONSTRUCTED BY: \_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER OF BEDROOMS: \_\_\_\_\_ TYPE OF HEATING: \_\_\_\_\_

SEPARATE ENTRANCE: \_\_\_YES \_\_\_NO INSPECTION FEE PAID: \_\_\_YES \_\_\_NO

OWNER/APPLICANT SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTE:** FOR THE INSPECTOR TO DETERMINE IF THE SUITE CAN MEET THE SAFETY REQUIREMENTS OF THE BUILDING CODE AND CAN BE LEGALIZED, PLEASE COMPLETE THE ABOVE INFORMATION, PAY THE \$50.00 SPECIAL INSPECTION FEE AND BOOK FOR INSPECTION.

\*\*\*\*\* OFFICE USE \*\*\*\*\*

OKAY TO APPLY FOR BUILDING PERMIT: \_\_\_\_\_YES \_\_\_\_\_NO

REASON: \_\_\_\_\_

Building Inspector:

\_\_\_\_\_

Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature