



DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT Secondary Suite Application Guide and Technical Requirements

The purpose of this guideline is to assist the homeowner, builder and contractor with the District of Kent requirements and Building Permit process for the accommodation of a Secondary Suite within a single family dwelling. At any time during the course of the process please feel free to contact District staff for assistance or clarification.

All Secondary Suites are required to have a building permit whether they already exist in the Principal Dwelling or are being considered in an existing dwelling or in a new dwelling under construction.

It is the responsibility of the property owner to ensure that all work in the construction of a Secondary Suite or the alteration to an existing dwelling to accommodate a Secondary Suite complies with Section 9.36 of the current edition of the BC Building Code and all other applicable District of Kent Bylaws and Provincial legislation.

1. Secondary Suite Criteria:

A request for a Secondary Suite to be located in a Principal Dwelling will be considered only if each item of the following criteria has been met:

- a) the Principal Dwelling is to be occupied by the owner of the property;
- b) there is only one Secondary Suite permitted in a single family dwelling;
- c) the Secondary Suite must be located in a building containing only a residential occupancy. A suite in a detached building will not be permitted;
- d) the Secondary Suite is to be located in or be part of a building

containing only the Principal Dwelling;

- e) the area of the Secondary Suite cannot exceed 90 m² (968.8 sq ft) of finished living area. This does not include the areas used for common storage, common laundry facilities or common areas used for egress;
- f) the area of the Secondary Suite cannot exceed 40% of the total living floor space of the building it is located in. The floor area of an attached garage will not be counted toward the living floor space of the Principal Dwelling;
- g) the minimum ceiling height in the Secondary Suite shall not be less than 2.0 m (6' 6").
- h) the Secondary Suite is located in

and is part of a building which is a single real estate entity. The Secondary Suite cannot be subdivided from the building under the Strata Property Act. This means that both dwelling units are registered under the same title.

2. Technical Requirements for new and existing Secondary Suites:

all suites are to have -

- a) a toilet, basin and bathtub or shower
- b) kitchen sink
- c) provisions for secondary cooking facility, cleaning and storage
- d) laundry facility, either separate or shared with the Principal Dwelling.
- e) heating system capable of maintaining a minimum temperature of 22°C during the heating season (e.g. electric baseboard)

3. Safety Requirements:

- a) currently, the BC Building Code requires Smoke Alarms on each floor of a single family dwelling and a Carbon Monoxide (CO) Alarm within 5 m (16') of bedrooms. The Secondary Suite is required to have a hard wired, stand alone Smoke Alarm. An additional hard wired, interconnected, Photo-Electric Smoke Alarm is to be installed in both the Secondary Suite and the Principal Dwelling within 5 m (16') of the bedrooms. (the purpose of the Photo-Electric Smoke Alarm

is to reduce the frequency of false alarms between the two living quarters.)

- b) if your building has a fuel fired appliance or attached garage, a hard wired, stand alone Carbon Monoxide (CO) alarm is to be installed within 5 m (16') of each secondary suite bedroom.
- c) an exit must be provided directly to the exterior unless a shared exit that is fire separated is provided. Exits are not permitted through a garage or service room. The exit door for the Secondary Suite is permitted to open inward.
- d) stair width shall be a minimum 860 mm (34") with a rise and run configuration which conforms to the requirements of Section 9.8 of the current edition of the BC Building Code.

4. Heating / Ventilation System of the Secondary Suite:

- a) forced air heating and ventilation systems are not permitted to be interconnected between the Principal Dwelling and the Secondary Suite.
- b) **For new dwellings, the Secondary Suite is to have its own, independent heating system. A Secondary Suite, new or existing, is to have its own principal fan, sized and controlled in conformance to the Ventilation Requirements of Section 9.32 of the current edition of the BC Building Code.**

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- c) new dwellings are to be designed so that the furnace room for the Principal Dwelling is not located in the Secondary Suite.
- d) for existing dwellings that have the furnace room servicing the principal dwelling unit located in the Secondary Suite, the doors to the furnace room are to be a hinged type complete with weather stripping and a self closing device. Doors must be 20 mm rated or 45 mm solid core. (Under the BC Safety Authority Regulations, a gas appliance may not be located in a bedroom.)
- e) for existing Principal Dwellings, one of the following three options may be used to bring the heating system into compliance:
 - i) the heat register outlets and cold air returns are to be disconnected from the main air plenum and covered with sheet metal and sealed. The Secondary Suite would then be supplied with electric base board heaters.

OR

- ii) where the heating or ventilation duct systems serve both the Secondary Suite and the Principal Dwelling, the system shall be designed and installed to prevent the circulation of smoke upon a signal from the interconnected photoelectric duct type smoke detectors in the Principal Dwelling and the Suite. Ducts penetrating fire separations shall be equipped with fire dampers if the duct system serves both

the Principal Dwelling and the Secondary Suite.

OR

- iii) an independent furnace and duct system may be installed to heat the Secondary Suite.

5. Separation between the Principal Dwelling and the Secondary Suite:

- a) Secondary Suites shall maintain a minimum 30 minute fire separation between itself and the Principal Dwelling with 1/2" drywall on both sides of the wall surfaces. Ceilings between the suite and the Principal Dwelling are to have: 1/2" type X or 5/8" drywall. (It is recommended that the ceiling of the suite be insulated with a min. R28 to reduce noise between the suite and principal dwelling.)
- b) it is important to note that when dealing with bathrooms that are on adjacent walls to the Principal Dwelling, that the drywall must run continuously behind the tub or shower stall. (These fixtures do not account for any type of fire resistance rating whether they are steel or fiberglass.)
- c) combustible drain, waste and vent piping must be enclosed by a minimum of 1/2" drywall. Openings in the drywall around the drain, waste or vent piping are to be sealed.
- d) any serious health or life safety matter observed during the inspection must be rectified to the satisfaction of the Building Inspector.

6. Application for a Building Permit:

Applications for a Building Permit are to be made at the District of Kent Municipal Hall. The applicant must provide:

- a) legal description and/or civic address;
- b) current title search document;
- c) 2 sets of dimensional floor plans are to include:
 - i) all rooms clearly labeled,
 - ii) location of smoke alarms and CO detectors,
 - iii) heating system for the suite,
 - iv) a detail of the construction for the fire separation between the Secondary Suite and the Principal Dwelling at adjacent walls and the floor/ceiling.
 - v) where tubs or showers in washrooms for the Secondary Suite and the Principal Dwelling are located side by side, the drywall for the fire separation must be applied first, before the tubs or showers are installed.
- d) name, address and phone number of the owner and builder;
- e) name, address and phone number of the plumbing contractor.

7. Properties Serviced by Private Septic Systems and Wells:

- a) A building referral form is to be completed by a Registered Waste Water Practitioner and submitted with the building

permit application for all Principal Dwellings on properties serviced by private septic systems.

- b) **2** sets of floor plans to be submitted to the Building Department; **2** are to be signed by the Registered Practitioner.
- c) The pink copy of the septic permit file form is to be submitted with the permit application if alteration or repair to the septic system is required.
- d) A well water potability certificate is to be provided with the building permit application.

8. Process of Building Permit Application:

A site inspection and review of plans for compliance with the bylaws of the District will be undertaken. The issuing of the permit may be delayed depending on:

- a) volume of applications;
- b) the **accuracy** of the application;
- c) the compliance of the plans with the applicable zoning and other bylaws including the current edition of the building code.

9. Issuance of a Building Permit for a Secondary Suite:

A Permit will be issued following the acceptance of plans showing compliance with the District of Kent Bylaws and other applicable enactments and the payment of the appropriate permit fees. Please note that contractors are required to have valid trade qualification identification

for sub-trade permits and a current Business Licence with the District of Kent. **NOTE:** No construction shall be commenced or undertaken without a permit being first obtained from the Building Department.

10. Required Inspections:

a) Rough Plumbing

Inspection – is to be called when all drains, waste pipes, vents and water piping has been completed and with the appropriate test applied.

Note: Any plumbing to be covered by concrete must first be inspected and accepted.

b) Frame Inspection - to be called when all framing of the interior walls are complete including all electrical wiring, plumbing and heating has been roughed in. All fire stops have been completed in the furred foundation walls and drop ceilings. (It is recommended that the suite be serviced by its own electrical sub-panel.)

c) Insulation and Vapour Barrier Inspection – when the thermal insulation and vapour barrier are completed, and prior to the application of the drywall. (It is recommended that the ceiling of the suite be insulated minimum R28 for the benefit of both the occupants of the suite and the home owner.)

d) Drywall Inspection –is to be called as the rated drywall is applied to ensure that the correct product is used to achieve the required fire separation.

e) Final Building Inspection -

when all construction is completed and before occupancy. (A Carbon Monoxide Detector is to be installed within 5m of bedrooms for both the Principal Dwelling and the Secondary Suite in addition to the interconnected photo-electrical smoke detectors in both the Principal Dwelling and the Secondary Suite.)

No Person shall use or Occupy or cause or permit to be caused or occupied any building or part thereof until he has received an Occupancy Permit from the Building Official.

Building Inspections: 604-796-2235
Requests received prior to 4:00 p.m. will be scheduled for inspection the following business day.

When requesting an inspection please provide: Your Permit Number, A Contact Name and Phone Number, The Type of Inspection, The address of the Building Site. (Any information that has not been provided may result in an inspection not being scheduled and delay in construction.)

RELATED SERVICES

[Listing of Registered Onsite Wastewater Practitioners](#) Please view the Onsite Wastewater Systems Web Site at owrp.asttbc.org

[Natural Gas & Electrical Inspections](#)
Service Centre BC (BC Safety Authority)
Suite 1 - 45467 Yale Road West
Chilliwack, BC V2R 3Z8
Tel: 604-795-8415 Fax: 604-795-8408

[Land Registrations, Easements, Rights-of-Way](#)
Land Title Office
Suite 300, 88 – 6th Street
New Westminster, BC V3L 5B3
Tel: 1-877-577-5872