

Secondary Suites

A Guide to Constructing or Legalizing a Secondary Suite

This handout has been as a guide to help you construct or legalize a permitted secondary suite within residences in the City of Prince George.

What are secondary suites?

The City of Prince George Zoning Bylaw No. 7850, 2007 defines a secondary suite 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”

Are secondary suites permitted in all residential zones?

YES - Secondary suites are only permitted within **Single Detached Housing** in the following residential zones:

- AG: Greenbelt
- AF: Agriculture and Forestry
- AR1, AR2(m) and AR3(m): Rural Residential
- RS1(m), RS2(m), RS3 and RS4: Suburban and Single Residential
- RT1 and RT2: Two-Unit Residential - only within a single detached house
- C8: Commercial Conversion
- Z9: Hill Avenue
- Z14: Fraser River Bench Lands Compact Community

Is a secondary suite permitted within Two-Unit Housing (Duplex), accessory building or in Multiple Residential Housing?

NO - Secondary suites are only permitted within **Single Detached Housing** which the Zoning bylaw defines as: *“a building containing only 1 dwelling exclusively used for occupancy by 1 household”*.

Is a secondary suite permitted within Manufactured Housing?

YES - Secondary suites are permitted within Manufactured Housing that conform to the CSA A277 standards. Evidence of this standard must be provided for the secondary suite building permit application. **Secondary suites are NOT allowed in Manufactured Housing that meets CAN/CSA Z40 MH standards.**

Is the owner of a residence with a secondary suite required to live on-site?

NO - The owner is not required to live in either the secondary suite or the principal residence.

How many secondary suites are permitted per residence?

No more than **ONE** secondary suite is permitted per residence.

Is there a size limit for secondary suites?

The maximum floor area of a secondary suite cannot exceed the lesser of 90 m² (969 sq. ft.) or 40% of the total floor area of the principal residence.

Is off-street parking required for the secondary suite?

YES - A secondary suite use requires 1 parking space that is in addition to the 2 required parking spaces for the principal residence.

Is a secondary suite permitted if there are other uses at the residences?

NO - A secondary suite is not permitted in a residence with uses that include a bed & breakfast, community care facility, boarding or lodging house, or an agri-tourist accommodation.

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 to the BC Building Code standards and to City bylaws for health, safety and protection of personal property.

Building Permit Process:

The process for constructing a new secondary suite or legalizing an existing one involves the following:

Constructing a Secondary Suite	Legalizing an existing Secondary Suite
Confirm Zoning: Ensure that a secondary suite is a permitted use on your property.	
BC Building Code: Review the attached BC Building Code requirements for secondary suites.	
Project Planning: Review the requirements for Building Permit submissions (i.e. drawings and engineering), fees and process.	Pre-Application: Submit a completed Pre-Application Questionnaire (see attached) along with the \$75.00 application fee to book an inspection.
Building Permit Application: Submit a Building Permit application for the secondary suite along with 2 sets of drawings that include the layout and dimensions of the: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Floor Plan• Entrance locations• Site Plan• Off-Street Parking	

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.

For further information on the Building Permit process, please refer to the City of Prince George website at www.princegeorge.ca or talk to a Building Inspector at 250.561.7611.

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

BC Building Code Requirements for a Secondary Suite

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

Please have a professional designer complete the Building Code Analysis to ensure that the secondary suite complies with the BC Building Code regulations. The City of Prince George does not take responsibility for any errors or omissions in the Building Code Requirements listed below for secondary suites.

Minimum Ceiling height	Ceiling heights shall not be less than 2.0 m with no obstructions below this height along the path of exit travel from any area in the secondary 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	Exit stairs shall have a minimum width, measured between wall faces or guards, of not less than 860 mm.
Landings	Landings for exterior stairs serving a secondary suite shall not exceed 900 mm in length.
Means of Egress	Every public corridor and exit corridor that services a building containing a secondary suite shall be no less than 860 mm in width.
Fire separation for Exits	<p>Except as otherwise permitted, every exit other than an exit doorway shall be separated from adjacent floor areas by a fire separation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> having a fire resistance rating of 45 minutes, or having a fire resistance rating of not less than 30 minutes where the dwelling units are equipped with smoke alarms. <p>A fire resistance rating is not required for a fire separation of an exit from adjacent floor areas where the building is equipped with a sprinkler system.</p>
Openings near enclosed Exit Stairs & Ramps	Openings shall be protected 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.
Doors in a means of Egress	<p>Every exit door or door that opens into, or is located within a public corridor or other facility that provides an access to exit from a secondary suite shall:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> be not less than 1980 mm high, have a clear opening width of not less than 800 mm, and be permitted to swing inward.
Travel limit to Exits or Egress Doors	The travel limit from a floor level in a dwelling unit to an exit or egress door may exceed 1 storey provided the floor level within the dwelling unit is served by an operable window.
Shared Egress facilities	<p>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 2 separate exits unless the dwelling unit is served by a second and separate means of egress or an opening window.</p> <p>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 an:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> exit stairway which serves both suites, public corridor serving both suites and served by a single exit stairway, exterior passageway serving both suites and served by a single exit stairway, or 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	The “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 & Vent Piping	<p>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:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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, the permitted penetration through the gypsum board membrane is limited to a size of the diameter of the penetrating pipe, and the combustible piping does not penetrate the gypsum board protection membrane on the underside of a horizontal fire separation. <p>Combustible drain, waste and vent piping enclosed in an assembly or protected is permitted on both sides of a fire separation.</p>
Separation of Residential Suites	<p>Dwelling units in a building which contains a secondary suite shall be separated from each other by a:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> fire separation; or fire separation having a fire-resistance rating of not less than 30 minutes where the dwelling units are equipped with smoke alarms; or a fire separation having no required fire resistance rating where the building is equipped with a sprinkler system.
Air Ducts & Fire Dampers	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
Exposing Building Face of Houses	<p>In buildings which contain a secondary suite, the requirements do not apply provided:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> the exposing building face has a fire-resistance rating of not less than 45 minutes where the limiting distance is less than 1.5 m, and where the limiting distance is less than 0.6 m the exposing building face is clad with non-combustible material. <p>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.</p>
Smoke Alarms	<p>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:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> the fire separations have a fire resistance rating of 45 minutes or greater, or the building is equipped with a sprinkler system.
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 ² in an area with a dimension less than 545 mm may serve both suites in a building which contains a secondary suite.
Garages & 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 \$75.00 SPECIAL INSPECTION FEE AND BOOK FOR INSPECTION.

***** OFFICE USE *****

OK TO APPLY FOR BUILDING PERMIT: YES NO

REASON:

Building Inspector Signature

Print Name