



THE CITY OF REVELSTOKE

Secondary Suites
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The purpose of this handout is to provide a general guideline to the City's policies/bylaws and BC Building Code regulations with respect to Secondary Suites. This guide is not a bylaw. For details and legal documents, you must consult the relevant bylaws and provincial legislation.

APPLYING FOR A SECONDARY SUITE PERMIT

- Fully detailed and dimensioned floor plans, showing wall, equipment and window/door layouts, fire separations, smoke alarm locations, routes of exiting, heating, electrical layout, etc.,
- Completed Building Permit Application*
- Other documentation as required
- Plumbing Permit Applications if required*
- Electrical and Gas permits are handled through the Provincial Offices in Salmon Arm

*available at Planning, Building and Enforcement, main floor, City Hall

SECONDARY SUITE BUILDING REQUIREMENTS

- In the City, a secondary suite must comply with the following provisions:
- Secondary Suites have a minimum size of 400ft² (38m²) and a maximum size of 40% of the total floor area of the building, up to 969ft² (90m²);
- Secondary Suites are only allowed in Single Family Dwellings, not in Duplexes, or Multi-family Residential buildings;
- Secondary Suites must be located in the principal structure on the site. Suites are not allowed in accessory buildings such as garages;
- Only one Suite may be developed per Single Family Dwelling;
- The Zoning Bylaw restricts the number of accessory uses, which may occur in any dwelling unit. Please contact the department for more information regarding the operation of child care facilities and home based businesses in conjunction with a secondary suite;
- A Secondary Suite may not be stratified;

- One additional parking space must be provided for the Secondary Suite. This is in addition to parking spaces required for Single Family Dwellings (i.e., 1 space for lots with an area of 370 sq. m. or less or 2 spaces for lots over 370 sq. m.); each space must be capable of independently exiting the property; only one driveway access per Single Family Dwelling lot; min. driveway access of 4m and maximum of 6m.
- Secondary Suites are permitted in a basement or cellar, provided egress requirements of Building Code B.C. 2012 have been met including window well depth and height requirements.

SECONDARY SUITE BUILDING CODE SPECIFICATIONS

The 2012 BC Building Code, Part 9, governs residential construction, and includes Section 9.36, which details the following Secondary Suite provisions:

- **MAXIMUM SIZE** of the lesser of 969ft² (90m²) or 40% of the total habitable floor space of the house.
- Located within a building of residential occupancy containing only one other dwelling unit.
- Located in and part of a building which is a single real estate entity.
- **CEILING HEIGHTS** of Secondary Suites shall not be less than 6'-7" (2m) with no obstructions below this height along the path of exit travel from any portion of the suite;
- **BEDROOMS** must have at least one operable window with a minimum unobstructed operable area of 3.8ft²(0.35m²) with no dimension less than 15" (380mm) in height and width. (Note that 15" X 15" does not provide the minimum required area.) The bottom of the opening must not be higher than 5'-0" (1.5m) from the floor, and the window must be operable from the inside without special knowledge;
- **MINIMUM WINDOW AREAS** – The code requires that a certain amount of natural light be provided to specific rooms within a dwelling. Except for the above noted bedroom window requirement, the code allows the required window area for other rooms to be in any location within a Secondary Suite;
- **A SECOND EXIT** or operable window min. 3'-4" (1m) high, 1'-10" (550mm) wide, located a maximum of 3'-4" (1m) from floor and max. 23'-0" (7m) from grade must be provided, where the primary exit leads to:
 - an exit stair serving both suites,
 - a public corridor serving both suites and served by a single exit stairway,
 - an exterior passageway serving both suites and served by a single passage way,
 - a balcony serving both suites and served by a single exit stairway.
- **EXIT STAIRS** must be a minimum of 2'-10" (860mm) wide;

- LANDINGS for exterior stairs serving two suites do not need to exceed 35.5" (900mm) in length;
- EXIT DOORS must be a minimum 6'-5" (1980mm) high and 2'-8" (810mm) wide, and are permitted to swing inwards. The door must swing on it's vertical access. A sliding glass door is not permitted as the only exit door from a suite;
- DOORS that penetrate fire separations are to be fire rated as below and equipped with self-closing devices;
 - For 45 and 30 minute fire separations, a 20 minute rated door is required, but a 1-3/4" (45mm) solid core wood door with a maximum clearance of 1/4" (6mm) at the bottom, and 1/8" (3mm) at the top and sides may be used.
 - For a 1 hour fire separation, a 45 minute rated door is required.
- 120 volt SMOKE ALARMS are required within each dwelling unit **plus each sleeping room**, and are required to be interconnected between floors. Depending on the floor plan, more than one detector may be required in each suite;
- ADDITIONAL 120 Volt PHOTO-ELECTRIC SMOKE ALARMS are required if the required fire separation is to be reduced from 30 minutes to 25 minutes between suites, and again must be interconnected between each suite;
- FIRE SEPARATIONS in dwelling units, exits, and common rooms (such as laundry, storage or furnace rooms) shall be separated from adjacent floor areas by fire separations (drywall) (see notes):
 - having a fire resistance rating of 30 minutes, or
 - having a fire resistance rating of 25 minutes, if used in conjunction with photo-electric smoke alarms;
 - no fire resistance rating if the building is sprinklered.
- FURNACE ROOMS – unless the furnace room is completely contained within the main dwelling, the common walls are to be separated from the suite by the required fire separation. A rated door with self-closing device may also be required. Because of the number of ducts and pipes typically contained within a furnace room, it may be very difficult to provide such separation. The City may accept the installation of a heat detector, in lieu of a proper rated fire separation.
- COMBUSTIBLE WATER DISTRIBUTION PIPING may penetrate fire separations if fire-stopped and not in excess of 1-3/16" (30mm);

- COMBUSTIBLE WASTE, DRAIN, AND VENT piping may penetrate a fire separation, provided:
 - it is protected by 1/2" (12.7mm) drywall,
 - the penetration is no bigger than the piping,
 - the combustible piping does not penetrate the gypsum board ceiling membrane;
- EXPOSING BUILDING FACES (exterior walls facing property lines) of a house must have a 45 minute fire rating when within 4'-0" (1.2m) of the property line, and be of non-combustible construction when within 2'-0" (0.6m) of the property line.

ELECTRICAL, PLUMBING and HEATING

- Permits for any plumbing, electrical or gas work in a single family dwelling with a suite are to be obtained by certified contractors, as homeowner permits are not allowable. Please check with the Province should you have electrical or gas questions. Permits are required for any work, which may have been done without a permit;
- Each suite is to be provided with sanitary facilities, and provisions for laundry facilities;
- One electrical panel serving both a secondary suite and the main dwelling is permitted and may be located anywhere within the dwelling as per requirements of the Canadian Electrical Code, provided it is accessible to both parties (common area);
- Air from one dwelling unit cannot be circulated to another suite, so a common forced air furnace cannot serve more than one dwelling. If there is a common furnace, the ducts into one unit will have to be closed off inside the fire separation and a different source of heat provided to that unit.

NOTES

1. A 30 MINUTE WALL FIRE-RESISTANCE RATING is achieved in existing situations with a minimum of 2" x 4" studs @ 16" o/c. For new construction, 1/2" or 5/8" Type 'X' G.W.B. must be used.
2. A 45 MINUTE WALL FIRE-RESISTANCE RATING is achieved with a minimum of 2" x 4" studs @ 16" o/c with 1/2" or 5/8" Type 'X' G.W.B. on each side of the wall.

3. A 1 HOUR WALL FIRE-RESISTANCE RATING is achieved with a minimum of 2" X 4" studs @ 16" o/c with 5/8" Type "X" G.W.B. on each side of the wall.
4. A 30-MINUTE FIRE-RESISTANCE RATED CEILING is achieved with one layer of 1/2" Type 'X' G.W.B. on wood floor joists @ 16" o/c.
5. A 45-MINUTE FIRE-RESISTANCE RATED CEILING is achieved with 5/8" Type "X" G.W.B. fastened to wood floor joists @ 16" o/c.
6. A 1 HOUR FIRE-RESISTANCE RATED CEILING is achieved with two layers of 5/8" Type 'X' G.W.B. on wood floor joists @ 16" o/c.

March 1, 2013