

**What is a secondary suite?**

“Secondary suite” means a self-contained dwelling unit (with living, sleeping, bathroom and kitchen spaces) within but accessory to a principal use single family dwelling or duplex, sharing at least one heated wall or floor; comprising of one real estate entity with shared utility services; having a separate entry to the exterior or a shared space; and having an Occupancy Certificate attesting compliance to the BC Building Code.

**Is my suite legal now that zoning allows it?**

No. Despite that zoning may enable your suite, you still require a building permit and Occupancy Certificate to comply with the BC Building Code. This protects you and your tenants. This is the case even if you are paying extra for utilities/garbage/recycling.

**How can I make my secondary suite legal?**

Review your home’s layout, including plumbing and mechanical systems, and decide what options/opportunities you have for a secondary suite. Depending on the age and design of the house, there are a range of options for meeting current Code requirements, and you may need professional advice from an experienced designer or contractor. Links are provided at the end of this FAQ for the Province’s 50-page guide for secondary suites (Home-Suite-Home), the City of Salmon Arm’s planning and building departments, and the BC Building Code. After you’ve completed your floor layout plans, submit 2 sets of drawings and a building permit application to the City for review. After the building permit is issued, an inspector will visit the site to verify Code compliance of the work. Upon approval of the final inspection, an Occupancy Certificate will be provided for your legal secondary suite.



**What is the biggest BC Building Code challenge when constructing or legalizing a Secondary Suite?**

This is usually fire separation and sound transmission between units, especially with ducted forced-air mechanical systems and if units are in an up/down configuration. It is critical to address this for life safety, insurance, and Code compliance. The points below provide a high level summary of the 2024 BC Building Code requirements; however, there may be additional considerations for your specific scenario:

- Fire Separations** must be continuous between the two units and to attached garages, typically with a 45 minute fire-resistance rating. This is usually achieved with layers of fire-rated gypsum board (Type-X drywall). A vertical wall separation is easier to achieve than horizontal (up/down). Any opening in the fire-rated wall/ceiling such as a door, a duct, or plumbing must also be addressed by installing fire-rated product, fire dampers, and/or fire-stop caulking to slow the spread of smoke and flames.
- Sound transmission** must meet a STC rating of 43 between units, vertically or horizontally. This is usually achieved with a combination of acoustic insulation and resilient channels for the walls/ceilings between the units.
- Mechanical heating** that serves more than one unit must be equipped with fire dampers and duct-type smoke detectors tied to a shut-down device. Separate thermostat controls are also required. Cost and complexity mean that separate heating systems (e.g. electric base board in one unit/ ducted in the other) can more readily be achieved.



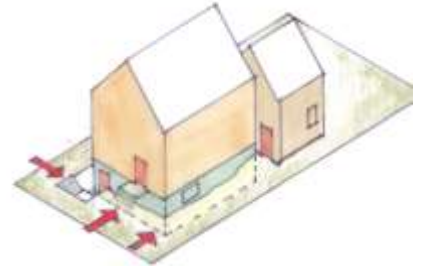
*The 90m<sup>2</sup> floor area cap no longer applies to suites and accessory dwelling units in R zones BUT it remains in effect in the A1, A2, and A3 zone & on ALR lands.*

### Other Code Requirements for Secondary Suites Include:

- Interconnected smoke alarms, carbon monoxide alarms, mechanical ventilation (rangehood, bath fan, bedroom supply air), adequate ceiling heights, openable bedroom windows, and safety of exits.

### What about building an addition for a suite alongside an existing dwelling?

Where the dwelling footprint is expanded, the suite addition must meet all requirements of the BC Building Code. That said, exits, ventilation and a vertical wall between the principal dwelling and suite can more readily achieve the required fire and sound transmission separation. Also, ducts and plumbing vents/cleanouts etc. are less likely to be noncompliant.



### What about utilities to serve the secondary suite?

Suites cannot be strata titled and must share water and sewer connections/services with the principal dwelling. Through the building permit review process, infrastructure requirements are identified by the City Engineering Department which undertake ongoing assessments to determine capacity in our systems and prioritize future upgrades. There may be parts of Salmon Arm where the sewer and/or water system may need to be installed or upgraded to support infill accessory dwelling units and subdivisions; however, secondary suites can generally be accommodated. Private septic systems may need to be reviewed by a Registered Onsite Wastewater Practitioner. For hydro and gas permits, including when separate meters are sought, you will need to contact the appropriate service provider directly.

### If I live in a dwelling in a strata, can I add a secondary suite?

It depends. While, City of Salmon Arm zoning now allows most duplexes across the City to add a secondary suite, strata corporations and strata councils also pass bylaws and register restrictive covenants limiting what may be constructed on a bare land strata lot. Strata lot owners are always advised to review their property titles for building schemes and covenants and confirm what the rules are with their strata councils and bylaws. The City does not review these as a part of an application process.

### Where can I find more information?

For a link to the Province's "Home-Suite-Home" Guidebook: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/housing-and-tenancy/building-or-renovating/secondary-suites/home-suite-home-2023-sept-6.pdf>

For City Zoning and Planning information, and Building Permit Applications, visit: <https://www.salmonarm.ca/110/Development-Services>

For BC Building Code: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/construction-industry/building-codes-standards/bc-codes>

**Contact City of Salmon Arm Building Department at 250.803.4000 for general info.  
Kindly be aware that City staff cannot serve as your individual design consultant.**