

## Secondary Suite

A building permit is required to construct a new secondary suite or to 'legalize' an existing suite. Refer to the Town of Oliver Secondary Suite Bulletin.

All work creating a new suite or making an existing suite legal is regulated by the current **BC Building Code**, which sets minimum standards for occupant health and safety. Examples of health and safety items include: supplying fresh air, maintaining a minimum level of heat, providing a minimum level of resistance to sound transmission, alerts to smoke and carbon monoxide, and, ensuring a safe means of egress in the event of an emergency. The Building Code has some relaxations for secondary suites as noted throughout the code and there are a few relaxations to construct a secondary suite in an existing finished space as noted in Division A, Table 1.1.1.1.(6), Alternative Compliance Methods. (ACM)

Below are listed the most common items with code references for consideration when designing and constructing a secondary suite. The listed items must all be shown or noted on the construction drawings submitted with the application. Drawings should be ¼" scale (no graph paper) and include an existing floor plan, exterior elevation drawings of the exterior of the house, cross-section(s).

Provide a 1/8" scale site plan showing suite parking and suite access route from the parking to the entrance door.

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Suite Entrance Requirements</b>	<p>Door opening directly to the exterior Entry door shall swing on the vertical axis 9.9.6.4.(1) Door viewer or transparent glazing required 9.7.2.1 (2) Deadbolt required 9.7.5.2 (4) Exterior light fixture controlled by interior switch 9.34.2.1.(1)</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Egress Windows</b>	<p>Bedrooms must have egress windows; they have 2 size requirements, 1). Unobstructed opening of 0.35 m<sup>2</sup>, 2) no dimension less than 380 mm. The window must maintain the required opening without support 9.9.10.1.(2) Min 760 mm clearance required in front of window opening into a window well 9.9.10.1.(4)</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Means of Egress</b>	<p>If the path of travel from a suite exit door to the road requires going up or down a flight of stairs that are not fire protected (enclosed), windows that belong to the main dwelling that are within 3m horizontally to, less than 5m below vertically to, or less than 10m above vertically to the stairs, must be protected by wired glass or glass block, or, be removed 9.9.4.4.(1) (see also relaxation for ACM Div A, Table 1.1.1.1.(6))</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Fire Separation (FRR) and Noise Protection (STC) (assemblies must provide both)</b>	<p>A fire separation with a fire resistance rating (FRR), and noise protection with a sound transmission class rating (STC) are required between the suite, common areas, the main house and garages. There are 3 basic options: <b>15 minute fire resistance rating</b> – assembly construction per Clause 9.11.1.1.(2)(a) is used – joist spaces filled with min 150mm sound absorbing material, studs spaces filled with sound absorbing material, resilient channel spaced 400 or 600mm on one side of separation, min 12.7mm gypsum on ceilings and both sides of walls (see also Smoke alarm requirement) This assembly complies with min STC requirements. <b>30 minute fire resistance rating</b> – assembly per Article 9.10.3.1.(3) wood construction with joist spaces filled with mineral wool batt insulation, loadbearing walls filled mineral wool batt insulation, non-loadbearing walls may</p>

	<p>be filled with fiberglass batt insulation, resilient channel spaced 400 or 600mm on one side of fire separation, and not less than 12.7 mm gypsum wallboard on ceilings and both sides of fire separation. This assembly complies with min STC requirements.</p> <p><b>45 minute fire resistance rating</b> – see Tables 9.10.3.1.A and 9.10.3.1.B.</p> <p><b>**When choosing assemblies from the Tables, in addition to the required FRR, they must also have a minimum STC 43 rating. Note, STC 43 is a minimum and may be below performance expectations</b></p> <p><b>Assemblies from Fire and Sound Resistance Tables, 9.10.3.1(A) and 9.10.3.1.(B)</b> – these tested assemblies must be constructed as described (see also Smoke alarm requirements)</p> <p><b>1 Hour FRR</b> is required between a dwelling unit and a garage which does not exclusively serve the dwelling.</p> <p><b>Fire Separations:</b> Electrical &amp; media panels, washer boxes, shower valves, open backed outlets, etc. must not be installed into fire separation walls. Built in vacuums cannot serve both dwellings</p> <p><b>All assembly ratings are to be in conjunction with the required smoke alarm types and interconnections for the proposed FRR</b></p>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Smoke Alarms</b>	<p><b>15 minute FRR</b> – smoke alarms must all be the photo-electric type with all units hard-wired and interconnected. 9.10.19.5.(2)(a)</p> <p><b>30 minute FRR</b> – Hard-wired (Ionization) smoke alarms must be interconnected within each of the new suite and, the main dwelling unit, independent of each other. Then, a photo-electric smoke alarm is installed in the suite and the main dwelling, and ONLY these two are connected to sound together 9.10.19.5.(2)(b)</p> <p>Smoke alarms are required in each bedroom, in the hallway outside the bedroom, and at least one per floor area with no bedrooms 9.10.19.3.(1)</p> <p><b>45 minute FRR</b> - no smoke alarm interconnection between dwellings is required</p> <p>NOTE: The addition of a suite requires all smoke alarms in the house to be located and installed per 9.10.19. Adding additional smoke alarms to an existing house may be required. Smoke alarms may use wireless technology for interconnection.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Heating</b>	<p>A separate heating system is recommended for the suite. This may be advantageous in reducing sound and odour transmission.</p> <p>Forced air systems can heat both dwellings: the suite supply ducts must be from a dedicated zone, with all ducts non combustible, openings into the suite only; If the supply ducts are from a mixed supply trunk with outlets in the ceiling or more than 1.2 m above the floor, then fire dampers are required. The return air must be a separate non combustible duct returning to the furnace. See Article 9.10.13.13</p> <p>Combined forced air systems require a duct mounted smoke detector be installed in the return air plenum on the furnace, designed to operate to shut down the furnace to prevent circulation of smoke. See Article 9.32.3.2.(4)</p> <p>Individual temperature controls are required in each dwelling unit to control and maintain heat independently in each dwelling. 9.33.4.3.(1)</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Mechanical ventilation</b>	<p>All suites require a mechanical ventilation system. This CANNOT be provided by a furnace system that heats both dwelling units. Per Sub-Section 9.32, there are 3 options for the suite:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>HRV</b> (heat recovery ventilator) can be installed. Fresh air is supplied to each bedroom with one exhaust outlet 1.8m above the floor.</li> <li>2. <b>CRV</b> (central recirculating ventilator) can be installed. It brings in outdoor air and mixes it with air drawn from the living area and distributes it to the bedroom(s) or mixes the air with air from the bedrooms and supplies</li> </ol>

	<p>it to the living area. A continuous running exhaust fan is required with the CRV.</p> <p>3. A 'passive' system can be used to supply air directly from the outdoors into each bedroom and to the main living area, with inlets 1.8 m above the floor and must use a continuous running exhaust fan (bathroom fan can be used) This option can only be used where the suite has one level only and is less than 168 m<sup>2</sup>.</p> <p>Continuous running fans must have a sound rating of 1.0 Sone or less, and have an on/off switch in a remote location (mechanical room)</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Radon Gas</b>	Radon gas is a health hazard to occupants. For new additions, or where carports and garages will be converted to living space, protection from soil gas is required. A sub-floor depressurization system is required as prescribed in Article 9.13.4.3
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Exhaust fans</b>	Exhaust fans are required for bathrooms and kitchens, they must exhaust directly to the exterior. The minimum size of a kitchen range hood exhaust duct is 125 mm in diameter, and must be non combustible. Dryer exhaust ducts must be smooth and non combustible.
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Stairs, landings, hand and guardrails and headroom</b>	All stairs, landings, handrails, headroom, and guard rails must comply with Section 9.8. Stairs along the path of travel from a suite entry door to the road must also comply – this includes 'landscape' stairs if they are the primary access Stair headroom must be min 1950 mm. In existing spaces, the stair headroom may be reduced to 1850 mm per ACM Div. A Table 1.1.1.1.(6)
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Carbon monoxide alarms</b>	A carbon monoxide alarm is required either inside or within 5 m of each bedroom if there are fuel burning appliances (gas or wood) in the house or there is an attached garage 9.32.4.2.(1)(a)(b) 9.32.4.2.(4)(a)(b) CO alarms in a main dwelling and suite must be interconnected 9.32.4.2.(7). Adding alarms to the main dwelling may be required.
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Headroom</b>	Minimum headroom is 2.1 m in all rooms and spaces, per Table 9.5.3.1. In existing homes, the headroom may be reduced by the ACM in Div. A Table 1.1.1.1.(6) to 1.95 m.
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Doorway opening sizes</b>	Entrance door - 810 mm (32 inches) Bedroom - 760 mm ( 30 inches) Bathroom door 760 mm
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Other requirements</b>	The building code applies to all components of construction a secondary suite and many may not be listed here. Where a carport or garage is proposed to be converted to living space, additional foundation work, under slab and slab edge insulation, vapor barrier and other related work will be required. Note the minimum excavation depth is 600 mm (24") for frost protection.
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Other Permits</b>	Plumbing permits are included with the building permit. Plumbing work is regulated and must be done by a licensed plumber with proof of a valid Tradesman's Qualification (TQ number required) Electrical and gas work is regulated by Technical Safety BC. Confirmation of these permits is required by providing an accepted final inspection notice prior to the building permit final inspection.

The 2018 BC Building Code is available free online at [bcpublications.ca](http://bcpublications.ca). It is recommended to arrange a pre-application meeting to determine permit application and building code requirements.

For further information on secondary suites, please contact the Development Services Department  
**Phone:** 250-485-6200  
**Email:** [admin@oliver.ca](mailto:admin@oliver.ca)