



Secondary Suite Construction Requirements

Information Bulletin

Revised: May 2025

What is a Secondary Suite?

A Secondary Suite is a second dwelling unit that includes one or more rooms, is self-contained, and includes one kitchen and at least one bathroom. The suite is intended to be used by one household and is attached to and forms part of the structure that constitutes the single detached dwelling.

Secondary Suites are subject to regulations under the current edition of the British Columbia Building Code (2024), City of West Kelowna **Zoning Bylaw No. 0320**, and other municipal and provincial regulations. Permit(s) may be required from Technical Safety BC for gas and electrical works. Single-family dwellings within strata developments are required to comply with their strata regulations.

These documents are provided as a guideline and are not exhaustive of the requirements that may be applicable to your circumstances. Please contact the Building Department to discuss your project specifically.

Preliminary requirements for a Secondary Suite include:

- It is located only within a principal single detached dwelling. For certainty, a Secondary Suite cannot be connected by a breezeway, garage, or unconditioned space to a single detached dwelling.
- It is located on a parcel that does not contain a Carriage House, except where specifically permitted in the Zoning Bylaw, or a Bed and Breakfast.

It shall have a maximum gross floor area of 100 m² (1076.4 ft²) or 40% of the habitable gross floor

- area of the principal dwelling, whichever is LESS.

There is a connection to city sewer and/or water where available.

Secondary Suite applications must include:

- Completed Building Permit application form.
- Two sets of scaled floor plans (please refer to the following pages for drawing specifications).
- Current state of title (dated within 90 days of the application).
- Copies of any covenant, easement, and right of way documents.
- Owners Authorization of Agent, if applicable.
- Site plan demonstrating adequate parking - 2 parking spaces for the single family dwelling and 1 parking space per bedroom in the suite.
 - Stalls to be a minimum of 2.75m (9.0ft) in width by 6.0m (19.7ft) in length, fully located within the parcel boundaries.
 - Parking may occur where a portion of a vehicle(s) is located on the road right-of-way when the minimum setback of 6.2 m is maintained between garage and back of curb or edge of sidewalk. Tandem parking is permitted.

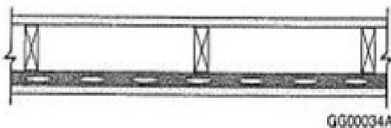
Secondary Suite Construction Drawing Requirements

Clearly indicate the proposed suite area on the floorplans, including the following items:

- Scaled floor plan drawings of the suite area and any common areas.
- Label each room for its intended use, indicating rooms that contain shared facilities.
- All room dimensions (including total square footage of each room and total overall square footage of the suite).
- Identify and label all bathroom fixtures – existing and proposed.
- Provide water service line size, also include number and type of fixtures that are in the rest of the home.
- Indicate the location of the exterior suite door, including the use of either transparent glazing in the door or side-light or a door viewer. The suite's main entry door must be a swing door, sliding doors are not permitted as the main entry door.
- Location and dimensions of all egress windows, including clear openings and window well sizes.
- Location of kitchen facilities – stove, exhaust fan, sink, dishwasher (existing and proposed).

Fire Safety items to include:

- Highlight all fire separation walls. Fire separation is to be continuous through all areas including mechanical rooms and under stairs. Shared facilities, like a laundry room, are required to be fire separated from both living units. Provide details of how fire separation requirements are to be met, including all construction materials, their individual fire separation ratings, and the total of each assembly.

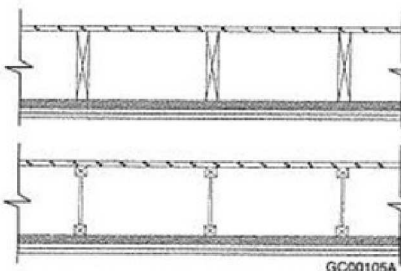


Example: resilient channel on one side of the studs at 16" or 24" o.c. with 1 layer of ½" regular drywall on each side of wood studs with batt insulation in the stud cavity - 15min Fire Resistance Rating (FRR) (BCBC 9.11.1.1.(2)(a))

Example: resilient channel on one side of the studs at 16" or 24" o.c. with 1 layer of ½" regular drywall on each side of wood studs with mineral/rock wool in the stud cavity - 30min FRR (BCBC 9.10.3.1.(3)(c))

Example: resilient channel on one side of the studs @ 16" or 24" o.c. with 1 layer of ½" Type X drywall on each side of wood studs and mineral/rock wool in the stud cavity - 45min FRR ("W3c", BCBC Table 9.10.3.1-A)

- Indicate fire separation ceiling construction materials



Example: Resilient channel @ 16" or 24" o.c with 1 layer of ½" drywall, supporting members spaced not more than 24" o.c. and R20 batt in the joist spaces - 15min FRR (BCBC 9.11.1.1.(2))

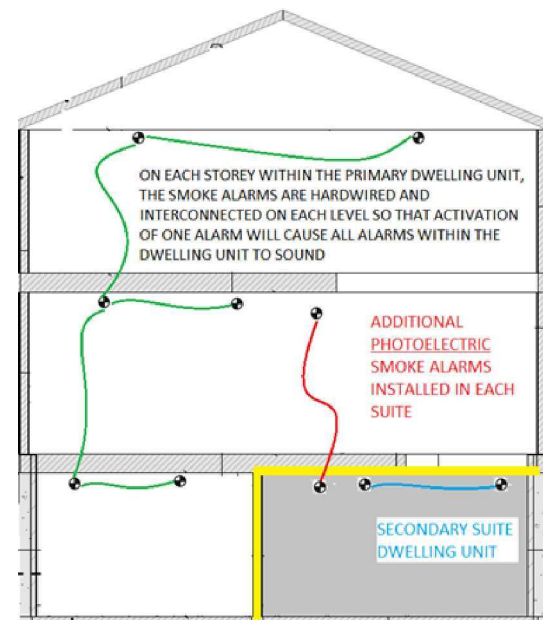
Example: Resilient channel @ 16" or 24" o.c with 1 layer of ½" drywall, supporting members spaced not more than 24" o.c. and mineral/rock wool in the joist spaces - 30min FRR (BCBC 9.10.3.1.(3))

Example: Resilient channel @ 16" or 24" o.c with 2 layers of ½" type "X" drywall, supporting members spaced not more than 24" o.c. and mineral/rock wool in the joist spaces - 45min FRR (BCBC "F6h" Table 9.10.3.1.)

Smoke Alarms

Smoke alarm installation in houses with Secondary Suites vary depending on the rating of the fire separation:

- 15min. FRR – All smoke alarms in both the main unit and secondary suite are photoelectric, located in the hallways outside the bedrooms, in the bedrooms themselves, and in the common areas such as the laundry. All smoke alarms are to be interconnected within each unit and between the main unit and Secondary Suite (entire building).
- 30min. FRR – One additional photoelectric smoke alarm is installed in the main unit, one in the secondary suite and one in the common areas such as a laundry, and all required photoelectric alarms must be interconnected with each other. Standard smoke alarms are also required in the hallway and in each bedroom of each unit and are required to be interconnected inside each unit only, not between units. See side illustration.
- 45min. FRR – Standard smoke alarms are required in the hallway and in each bedroom and are required to be interconnected inside each dwelling unit only, not between units.



Carbon Monoxide (CO) Alarms

- Both the main unit and Secondary Suite require a CO or combination CO/smoke alarm located within 5 m of sleeping room entrances and interconnected between each other and between units.

Egress Windows

Identify egress window in each bedroom:

- Provide egress window dimensions including size of opening. Egress windows must show clear openings of no less than 0.35m² (540sq”) with no dimension less than 380mm (15”) when opened.
- If window opens into a well, note the clearance dimensions of window well (min 760mm)
- A second egress window in addition to the one mentioned above may be required where it is required to ascend or descend more than one storey to an egress door or where it is only possible to exit in one direction from a suite egress door. Please see Articles 9.9.9.1. & 9.9.9.2. in the 2018 BC Building Code for guidance.

Heating and ventilation system

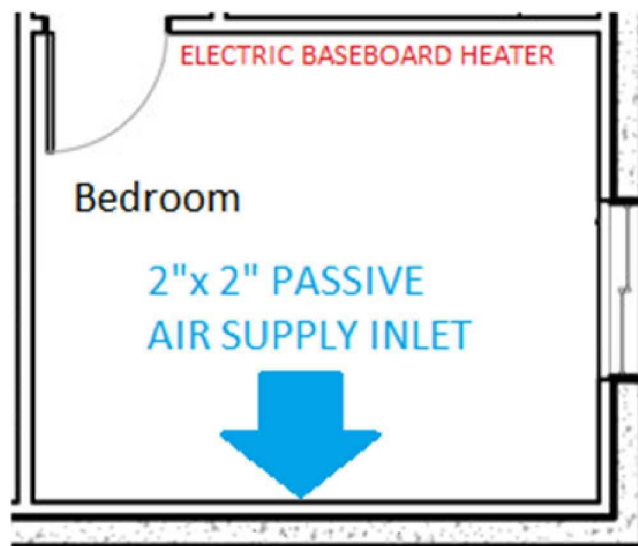
A heating or ventilation systems serving more than one suite must be designed and installed to prevent passage of smoke between the suites. A separate heating system for a Secondary Suite such as an electric baseboard with some additional ventilation openings is typically an easier design alternative. If you want to use one furnace for heating both the primary dwelling and a secondary suite, a competent designer will be required to demonstrate compliance with the BC Building Code.

The options noted below are not intended to limit other building code compliant designs and are for illustration only.

Choose **one** of the following options and make sure your application reflects the requirements in the option.

Option 1: Electric baseboard or radiant heat

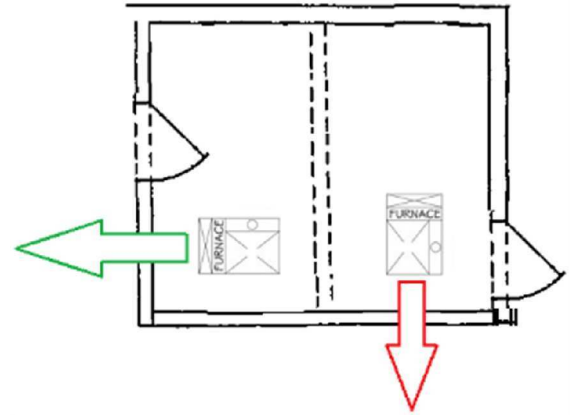
- Note on the drawing “suite heated by electric baseboards”.
- If a dedicated Heat Recovery Ventilator (HRV) or Central Recirculating Ventilator (CRV) is used for the suite, note on the drawing and the passive air inlets will not be required.
- If an exhaust fan and passive inlets are the selected method for ventilation, show the fan location (often a bathroom fan), and
 - Show passive air supply inlets in each bedroom.
 - Show passive air supply inlet in common/living areas.



Note: Ducts serving the primary dwelling unit cannot open into the suite. Ducts can only have openings into one fire compartment.

Option 2: Separate furnaces with separate ductwork

- Identify location for each furnace.
- Draw ductwork going from furnace to secondary suite.
- Draw ductwork going from furnace to primary dwelling.
- Show that all ducts serving individual fire compartments do not open into the other fire compartments.



Option 3: Using one furnace for both the secondary suite and primary dwelling unit (very difficult to achieve in existing homes)

- Identify where the ducts are going.
- Identify the required fire separation around and over the furnace room.
- Identify where ducts penetrate fire separation.
- Draw location of the fire damper(s).
- As each unit must be capable of controlling heat supply to their unit, separate thermostats will be required, and zone control dampers installed in the heating system.
- Show in-duct smoke detector locations.
- Explicitly indicate on the drawing that all duct work is non-combustible, including the return air ducts, should you wish to not install fire dampers.
- Combination ventilation/forced air heating systems are not permitted.

Note: Fire dampers are not zone control dampers. Zone control dampers are required.
Central Vacuum's cannot be shared between units.