

SECONDARY SUITE REQUIREMENTS

A Guide to Secondary Suite Requirements to meet Zoning & BC Building Code

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Requirements for the construction/creation of a Secondary Suite are found throughout the 2024 British Columbia Building Code (BCBC) Part 9. The term "Secondary Suite" is a defined term in both the 2024 BCBC and City of Kamloops Zoning Bylaw No. 55. It is a specific type of dwelling unit and is subject to specific requirements. The Zoning Bylaw limits the size of Secondary Suites to a maximum residential living area of 90 m² and regulates other matters such as the number of dwelling units (including Secondary Suites) permitted on a property, parking, and landscaping. Suite construction may also be subject to Development Permit Area guidelines.

A "legal" Secondary Suite is one that complies with zoning regulations and has been constructed, **and** approved, under a valid Building Permit.

SECONDARY SUITES – BUILDING PERMIT APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

1. Completed Building Permit application;
2. A building permit application fee of \$50;
3. Construction value for the work, which includes materials and labour;
4. A site plan showing the parking provisions for the additional dwelling unit;
5. A site plan showing the access (stairs) to the Secondary Suite;
6. Floor plans drawn to scale showing:
 - a. The overall floor plans for the existing building with dimensions;
 - b. Fire separation location, rating, and construction details;
 - c. Fire resistance rating and details of loadbearing elements (walls, beams, columns);
 - d. Proposed sound rating assemblies and details;
 - e. Heating and ventilation details;
 - f. Suite layout showing room uses, door sizes and swing, bedrooms, etc., with dimensions;
 - g. Bedroom window sizes, including location and dimensions of window wells;
 - h. Smoke alarm locations and type;
 - i. Mechanical room location and separation.

The following construction requirements are a summary and **GUIDE ONLY**. The following should not be relied upon for a comprehensive list of Code provisions. There may be requirements that are not specified as every project has its own unique characteristics. The 2024 BC Building Code, City of Kamloops Zoning Bylaw No. 55 and City of Kamloops Development Permit Area guidelines within the Official Community Plan should be reviewed.

CODE ITEM	REQUIREMENT	NOTES
Separation of Residential Suites 9.10.9.16.	A fire separation with a minimum 45 minute fire resistance rating (FRR) is required between dwelling units. A reduction to a 30 minute rating is permitted with the installation of additional interconnected photo-electric (PE) smoke alarms. A further reduction to a 15 minute rating is permitted where ALL smoke alarms in the building are interconnected photo-electric (PE) type.	A fire separation without a FRR is permitted where the building is sprinklered.
Fire-Resistance and Fire-Protection Ratings 9.10.3.1.	15 Minute Fire Separation – 9.11.1.1.(2)(a) - Joists filled with 150mm sound absorbing material (insulation) - Studs filled with sound absorbing material (insulation) - Resilient metal channel one side at 400mm or 600mm o/c - Minimum ½" GWB on ceilings and both sides of walls 30 Minute Fire Separation - Walls and floors of wood construction - Joists filled with rock/slag insulation or wet-blown cellulose - Non-loadbearing studs filled with fiberglass insulation - Loadbearing studs filled with rock/slag or cellulose - Resilient metal channel one side at 400mm or 600mm o/c - Minimum ½" GWB on ceilings and both sides of walls 45 Minute Fire Separation - Per Tables 9.10.3.1.-A. and 9.10.3.1.-B.	The construction requirements noted are an example of how to achieve the required FRR. There may be other assemblies that could achieve the required FRR, but need to be appropriately referenced and detailed. Ceilings are rated from the underside, and walls are rated from <u>each</u> side.
Fire Separation Continuity 9.10.5.1. and 9.10.9.2.	The continuity of the separation is typically achieved by a gypsum wallboard membrane. Penetrations of the membrane by bathroom fans, kitchen fans, or principal exhaust fans require the joist space to be lined with gypsum board. Vertical separation continuity is required behind tubs, laundry boxes, and off-set electrical outlets. Fire separations are typically obtained by the use of fire-resistant membranes and typically incorporate rated gypsum board (Type X or Type C). 9.10.9.9.(6) Ducts penetrating fire separations may not require a fire damper provided they are non-combustible with all openings in the duct system serving only one fire compartment. Non-combustible is a defined term in the BCBC, and means the material meets the acceptance criteria of CAN/ULC S114. It is the responsibility of the builder/owner to provide information on duct material showing this compliance.	
Fire Separation of Mechanical Room 9.10.10.3. and 9.10.10.4.	The mechanical (service) room will typically serve both suites and requires the common wall to be constructed as a fire separation with the same fire resistance rating as the assembly separating dwelling units. This means walls shall be rated from <u>each side</u> .	When planning your Secondary Suite, consider fire separation continuity and ratings which are required from each side.
FRR of loadbearing elements 9.10.8.3.(1)	Loadbearing walls, columns, and arches in the storey below shall have a fire resistance rating not less than the supported assembly. 30 minute FRR requires ½" Type X 45 minute FRR requires ⅝" Type X	
Plumbing penetrations 9.10.9.7.	Combustible (plastic) drain, waste, and vent piping can be located within, or penetrate, a fire separation provided the piping is sealed at the penetration by a firestop (i.e. fire donut).	The rating shall be based on CAN/ULC S115 "Fire Tests of Firestop Systems."
Headroom 9.5.3.1.	The minimum height of rooms and spaces, and access to rooms and spaces, is 2.1m (6'-11").	The minimum height at stairs serving a single dwelling unit is

		permitted to be 1.95m (6'-5") (9.8.2.2.).
Entrance Door 9.9.6.4. and 9.7.2.1.	Doors shall swing on a vertical axis. Entrance doors shall be provided with a door viewer, transparent glazing in the door, or a sidelight.	This means that the use of a sliding glass door as the entrance to a Secondary Suite is not permitted.
Exit Stairs 9.8.2.1.	Exit stairs shall have a minimum width between wall faces or guards of not less than 860mm (34"). A Secondary Suite is typically served by its own exterior exit door. Additional information on fire separations for exits, protection at unenclosed exit stairs, and shared egress can be found in 9.9.4.2.(2), 9.9.4.4., and 9.9.9.3.(2) and (3).	
Stairs, Landings, Handrails, and Guards 9.8.	The dimensional requirements for stairs, landings, handrails, and guards shall comply with 9.8.7. and 9.8.8. of the BCBC.	The 2024 BCBC requires a minimum 10" <u>run</u> .
Means of Egress 9.9.3.3.	The means of egress for a Secondary Suite shall be a minimum of 860mm (34") wide.	Consideration should be given to the means of egress from the parking area and/or street to the Secondary Suite. This means that pathways and stairways need to meet the egress route requirements, which also includes appropriate addressing.
Ventilation (PEF) 9.32.1.2 and 9.32.3.1. and 9.32.3.5.	9.32 of the BCBC requires every dwelling unit be provided with a mechanical ventilation system, which includes a Principal Exhaust Fan (PEF). The PEF shall be designed to run continuously, and be sized according to the area of the dwelling unit and number of bedrooms.	There are several ways to satisfy the ventilation requirements for suites. In all cases this includes ducting to or from bedrooms. This can be achieved by a shared heating system, an HRV, or CRV system.
Heating & Cooling System 9.32.3.2.	9.32.3.2.(4) Where a heating or ventilation system serves more than one suite, the system shall be designed to prevent circulation of smoke upon a signal from a <u>duct-type</u> smoke detector. 9.32.3.2.(5) Any duct penetration of the fire separation requires the installation of a fire damper. 9.33.3.1.(2) cooling facilities capable of maintaining an indoor air temp of not more than 26°C 9.33.4.3.(1) Where a single heating system serves a house with a Secondary Suite, individual temperature controls shall be provided in each dwelling unit served by the system.	
Bedroom Windows 9.9.10.1.	Bedroom windows shall meet 9.9.10. This means an openable window with a minimum area of 0.35m ² (3.77ft ²) with no dimension less than 380mm (15").	A bedroom egress window is not required in a sprinklered building, consideration should be given to

		natural ventilation requirements of 9.32.2.2.
Window Wells 9.9.10.1.(3).	Bedroom windows opening into a window well shall maintain a minimum 760mm (30") clearance for egress.	
Kitchen and Bathroom Fans 9.32.3.6.	Dwelling units require the installation of both kitchen and bathroom fans that exhaust directly to the outdoors.	
Smoke Alarms 9.10.19.1.(1)	<u>Each</u> suite requires installation of interconnected smoke alarms in each bedroom and hallway serving the bedroom. An additional photo-electric smoke alarm is required where the fire separation between suites has a 30 minute FRR. All smoke alarms shall be interconnected photo-electric type where the fire separation between suites has a 15 minute FRR. 9.10.19.1.(1)(c) Smoke alarms shall be provided in ancillary and common spaces.	Smoke alarms are typically ionization type and are interconnected within <u>each</u> suite. Where photoelectric smoke alarms are installed, they are interconnected <u>between</u> suites.
Carbon Monoxide Alarms 9.32.4.2.	Where a building contains a fuel fired appliance or attached garage, a CO alarm shall be installed in each bedroom or within 5m of a bedroom, and interconnected throughout.	
Plumbing 2.6.1.3.(5) of BCPC	A Secondary Suite water service shall be provided with a separate shut-off valve serving the suite.	Shut-offs for dwelling units shall be arranged to ensure that the water service to one unit is not interrupted when the other is shut-off.
Sound Rating 9.11.1.1.(2)	A sound rating is required separating the principal dwelling from a Secondary Suite as follows: a) Construction having: 1) Joists filled with 150mm sound absorbing material (insulation) 2) Studs filled with sound absorbing material (insulation) 3) Resilient metal channel one side at 400mm or 600mm o/c, 4) Minimum ½" GWB on ceilings and both sides of walls, or b) Minimum STC rating of not less than 43, or c) Separating assembly and adjoining construction with an ASTC rating of not less than 40	
Alternate Compliance Methods	The BCBC now includes provisions for the design and construction of <u>alterations to existing buildings</u> to add a Secondary Suite, not including the design and construction of new additions or new buildings. The provisions of Table 1.1.1.1.(6) may be substituted for requirements contained elsewhere in the Code.	
Parking (Div. 4 CoK Zoning Bylaw)	City of Kamloops Zoning Bylaw No. 55 typically requires the provision of one unstacked parking stall per dwelling unit, unless otherwise specified. Each stall must be, at minimum, 2.7m (8'-10") in width and 5.7m (18'-9") in length. Typically, a maximum driveway width is allowed to be 8.1 m	
Carriage and Garden Suites	<i>The BCBC does not define carriage and garden suites, and these housing types are not considered to be, or constructed as, Secondary Suites. They are simply dwelling units. In the case of carriage suites, the City considers the "garage" as serving the principal dwelling. As such, a 45min fire separation is required between the "garage" and "suite."</i>	

	<i>Although the BCBC does not apply spatial separation between the garage and the dwelling it serves, it would apply between dwelling units and adjacent to property lines under 9.10.15.</i> <i>Carriage and garden suites are defined terms in the City of Kamloops Zoning Bylaw No. 55. Please refer to Division Two – Definitions, “Secondary Suite”, Division Three - General Regulations, Section 3.4, and to the regulations within the applicable zone.</i> <i>KAMPLAN (the City of Kamloops Official Community Plan) regulates the form and character of garden and carriage suites under the Intensive Residential Development Permit Area guidelines. This requires the issuance of a Development Permit (DP) prior to the issuance of a Building Permit.</i> <i>Carriage and garden suites are independent structures, and the construction of these dwelling units requires BC Housing (previously HPO) registration and warranty coverage.</i> <i>The habitable area of carriage and garden suites are subject to Development Cost Charges (DCCs) in accordance with Development Cost Charges Bylaw No. 48-100.</i>
Small-Scale Multi-Unit Development	<i>As of June, 2025, up to 4 residential units per lot are permitted in the Zoning Bylaw in the R1, R2, and R3, subject to compliance with zoning regulations including maximum lot coverage, building height and impermeable area, and minimum parking, maneuvering, and landscape requirements; Development Permit Area guidelines, access and servicing requirements in the Subdivision and Development Control Bylaw, and the BCBC. The 4 units may be accommodated a variety of ways such as a two-unit dwelling (duplex) with Secondary Suites, or two Single Detached homes on a lot, each with a secondary suite.</i>
Strata Titling	<i>A secondary is not permitted to be strata titled.</i>

Have questions? We’re here to help. Please contact the Building Inspection Section at 250-828-3554 or building@kamloops.ca for more information.