

The following information is provided for the development of a New Secondary Suite (suite).

For questions regarding legitimizing an existing suite see Guide to Legitimizing a Non-Compliant Secondary Suite.

The definition of a secondary suite is provided below.

### **Definition:**

“secondary suite” means an additional dwelling unit which is accessory to a single-family dwelling, and meets the requirements set out in section 40.4;

### Secondary Suite

40.4 A secondary suite must have

- a) A gross floor area that is no greater than 90 m<sup>2</sup> or 40% of the habitable gross floor area of the building in which it is located, whichever is less,
- b) No more than 2 bedrooms, and
- c) Driveway access that is shared with the access to the single family dwelling, unless the lot fronts two streets or a lane, in which case a secondary suite may have a separate access onto the second street or lane. *(Please contact the Engineering Department if requesting an additional access.)*

### **Considerations when Developing a Suite**

- BC Assessment Authority may reassess your home and increase the value.
- Development Cost Charges may apply at the Building Permit stage if the value of the construction meets or exceeds \$50,000.
- Service fees for garbage collection, water and sanitary sewer may apply.
- If water and septic are provided onsite, verification may be necessary to confirm it is adequate for the additional people.
- A Hazardous Materials Report will be required if alterations are to be made to a home constructed prior to 1990.

### **Zoning Requirements**

The first step when considering adding a suite is to confirm that the current zoning of the property allows for a suite within its permitted uses.

To determine the zoning of the property, go to the map on the North Cowichan website and type in the civic address in the search box and hit the search icon. The property address will appear on the left side of the screen, a single click on the address and the property will appear on the map, click within the property boundary and you will be provided with the property details, including the property zoning (Example - R1). In the information box you can view the zoning bylaw and permitted uses by clicking beside Zoning Bylaw to determine if a suite is permitted. If secondary suite is not listed under the permitted uses for your zone, but Duplex is listed, you are permitted a secondary suite **if your building is a single family dwelling and not a duplex.**

Note: Currently the North Cowichan Zoning Bylaw does not permit a suite in duplex.

# GUIDE TO DEVELOPING A NEW SECONDARY SUITE

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If a suite is not a permitted use, you may contact the North Cowichan Planning Department to discuss the possibility of rezoning the property at [planning@northcowichan.ca](mailto:planning@northcowichan.ca).

## **Suite Design**

The purpose of a suite is to utilize a portion of a single-family dwelling to accommodate a safe and healthy residential unit within the dwelling. To accomplish this, the suite design requirements are found in the BC Building Code. The BC Building Code provides the parameters for the design, including: ventilation, egress, fire safety, ceiling height, living area, sound transmission and heating.

Suites, although typically developed within a single-family dwelling, can also be attached to an existing dwelling, but must share a common wall that provides living space on both sides. The suite maximum living area must still meet the area limits set out in the Zoning Bylaw. *(Planning Department staff can provide you with the requirements for a suite to be considered attached.)*

The design of a suite will typically require the knowledge of a building designer. Please refer to the Secondary Suite Sample Plan and the Secondary Suite Sample Site Plan.

## **Suite Building Permit**

A Building Permit is required when developing a suite. A New Secondary Suite Building Permit Application Checklist and resources can be found on the North Cowichan Building Department webpage.

