



Coach Houses in the Town of Comox

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**For more information please contact:
Town of Comox Planning Department at 250-339-1118,
or in person at 1809 Beaufort Avenue, Comox BC**

<http://comox.ca/hall/departments/planning-and-building-inspection>

BACKGROUND

The need to address housing affordability was affirmed and formalized with the adoption of the Town's Housing Affordability Strategy in November of 2007. A key component of the Strategy is the removal of regulatory barriers to the development of more affordable market housing, including small sized rental suites.

Coach Houses address sustainability by making better use of existing municipal infrastructure (roads, sewer and waterlines etc.) which means reduced servicing costs and less GHG emissions. Such infill development also increases the viability of public transit, local commercial and public service deliverability.

Households are getting smaller and older. Currently, the average Comox household size is 2.3 persons and the Comox Valley population's median age is approaching 50. This age coincides with the time when children leave the family and establish their own households. It also coincides with the period when parents are approaching their retirement and often wish to downsize but remain within the same communities. For both young and old, provision of appropriate housing forms and sizes could solve some affordability and accessibility issues.

Coach Houses respond to the changing residential market by:

- providing wider housing choice within the same community;
- accommodating different needs for different household situations;
- allowing downsizing or upsizing within the same neighbourhood;
- promoting affordability via "mortgage helpers" for owners, and more housing options for renters;
- presenting opportunities for infill within the established neighbourhoods; and
- encouraging the retention of existing neighbourhood character.

COACH HOUSE REGULATIONS

The Town's Official Community Plan sets out the community objectives and broad statements of policy to guide decisions about future land use, zoning, development and servicing. Official Community Plan, Residential: Detached Policy 2.1.1.4(b) supports development of Coach Houses on a site by site basis. The Town's Zoning Bylaw regulates current land use. Rezoning is required to enable Coach House construction.

To ensure Coach Houses are compatible with neighbourhood character, a new Development Permit Area #17 regulates form and character specifically for Coach Houses. The development permit process works well for those who want more flexibility in design, although this involves additional permitting costs and processing time. For those who don't need this flexibility, development permit exemption criteria are in place to avoid the increased costs and timelines of the development permit process.

The key concerns addressed in the Development Permit Area #17 exemptions and guidelines are as follows:

- tree retention;
- provision of a minimum of 15 square metres of usable open space per dwelling unit for livability considerations; and
- limiting window size on building elevations which are closer than 7.5 metres to any property line, to address privacy implications.

REZONING PROCEDURES

Streamlined Coach House rezoning procedures and a set of zoning standards, contained in Coach House Zoning Strategy on page 4, have been reviewed in advance by Council, which establishes a simplified approval process.

For Coach Houses, changes to the standard rezoning procedures include:

- the Rezoning fee is reduced to \$270 to attract early adopters. Once the program is established and becomes routine, this fee may be increased to recover a higher proportion of costs, e.g. \$500, as was previously charged for secondary suite rezoning;
- processing time is expedited by having a rezoning bylaw presented for Council consideration in conjunction with the Introductory Planning Report;
- there is no requirement to erect a development sign on the subject property; and
- mail-out notification is to all adjacent property owners and tenants only, instead of a notification radius of 75 metres.

COACH HOUSE ZONING STRATEGY AND CONDITIONS OF USE

Either the principal dwelling or a Coach House shall be owner occupied.

(see Zoning Bylaw No. 1850 Couch House definition for further criteria)

Permitted uses:	Either a Coach House or a Secondary Suite; Bed and Breakfast is not permitted within a Coach House.
Minimum Parcel Area:	500 m ²
Minimum Parcel Frontage:	As applicable under current zoning
Parcel Rear Yard:	Minimum width 15.0 m Minimum depth 10.0 m Coach House shall be located in rear yard.
Coach House Required Setbacks:	
Rear:	Minimum 2.0 m
Interior Side:	Minimum 2.0 m
Front and Exterior Side:	as applicable under current zoning
Maximum Total Parcel Coverage:	No increase in the maximum allowable parcel coverage under current zoning (typically 30-35%, for single-family zones)
Coach House Parcel Coverage:	maximum 10%, which is included in the total Parcel Coverage
Size of Coach House	is relative to Parcel Area
Parcel Area:	Maximum Coach House Gross Floor Area, in combination with accessory buildings, carports (>20m²) and garages which are attached to the coach home:
500 – 650 m ²	50 m ²
>650 – 1000 m ²	60 m ²
>1000 m ²	70 m ² , or up to 90 m ² may be considered if proposed environmental protection is beyond that required by existing regulations (i.e. land donation to Nature Trust or Land Conservancy).
Maximum Building Height	
Gross Floor Area:	Coach House Height:
Up to 50 m ²	4.5 m
>50 m ²	5.5 m
Distance to principal building:	Minimum 4.0 m
Access driveway, parking and carport:	Maximum one 6.0m driveway per lot. At least 6.2m aggregate width of parking area to accommodate at least 2 off-street parking spaces per parcel (the same as for secondary suites).
Green space and patio, or deck:	Up to 10 m ² roofed patio and deck floor area.
Screening requirements:	Where a Coach House is located closer than 7.5 metres to a lot line, screening is required as per Section 8 of Zoning Bylaw.
Adaptable Housing Standards:	A Coach House must conform to the existing Zoning Bylaw Adaptable Housing Standards (Section 5.20)