

# FACT SHEET: SECONDARY SUITES

As part of its Housing Affordability Strategy the Town of Comox is allowing secondary suites in most single family detached homes.

## What is a Secondary Suite?

A secondary suite is a legal suite located within a single family detached house. The building owner must occupy either the primary or secondary suite of the residence. The suite must not have a floor area greater than 90 m<sup>2</sup>, or 40% of the gross floor area of the home, whichever is less. Only one secondary suite is permitted per residential home. The suite must have a separate entrance from the primary dwelling unit, and be located above or below the primary unit. The home must provide two off street parking spaces in tandem.

## Why is the Town of Comox enabling legalizing secondary suites?

The Town of Comox identified secondary suites as a key component of its "[Housing Affordability Strategy](#)". The goal of this strategy is to improve the availability and affordability of a variety of housing types in Comox, while ensuring the housing produced is well-designed and suitable for the community. Secondary suites can benefit different sectors within a community, by providing mortgage help for first time home buyers and young families, and also offering maintenance and income assistance for existing owners who want to age in place.

## Where are secondary suites allowed?

Secondary suites are currently allowed in the following zones: R1.1, R1.2, R1.3, R2.1, R3.1, R3.2, R3.3, R3.5, R3.6, R3.7, CD1.1, CD3, CD5 and CD9. See the [Town of Comox Zoning Map](#) for the location of these zones. For more information regarding the Zoning Bylaw, contact the [Planning Department](#).

## Existing Illegal Secondary Suites

If you have an existing secondary suite, in the zones listed above, the new bylaw does not automatically make your suite legal. In order for your existing suite to be legalized you must obtain a [building permit](#) from the Town of Comox. This is to ensure the suite meets the requirements of the zoning bylaw, conforms to the current BC Building Code (for health and safety requirements).

## New Secondary Suites

If you want to add a new secondary suite to an existing dwelling in the above zones, you are also required to obtain a building permit. The permit must be issued prior to the start of any construction or renovations, as it necessary to ensure the new suite meets the zoning regulations (e.g. owner occupation) and the current BC Building Code and its health and safety requirements. If you are building a new residential home and want to include a secondary suite, the secondary suite is incorporated into the building permit required for the home. Residential fees for water, sewer and garbage collection are levied per residential unit. A secondary suite is a residential unit; as a result the residential fees will double once a suite is constructed regardless of whether the suite is occupied or vacant. Paying for 2 residential units of garbage allows for the pickup of two garbage cans. Switching to metered billing from flat fees can reduce the water fee, depending on water use. For more information regarding the building permit process and adding a new secondary suite, please contact the Town of Comox [Building Inspection Department](#) at 250-339-2250, or by email at [irogers@comox.ca](mailto:irogers@comox.ca).

For more information:

Town of Comox Planning and Building Department: 250-339-1118  
[www.comox.ca/hall/departments/planning-and-building-inspection](http://www.comox.ca/hall/departments/planning-and-building-inspection)

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