

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Secondary Suites



About Secondary Suites

1. What is a secondary suite?

A secondary suite is an approved dwelling unit within a larger one-family or two-family dwelling. Secondary Suites have their own kitchen and living area and may share internal access with the main dwelling unit, but have their own separate external access door.

2. I purchased a home and do not know if my existing suite is legal or not. How can I find out?

Property owners can request an “Approved Use” letter from the City by visiting:
vancouver.ca/home-property-development/request-property-research-and-copies-of-permits.aspx

3. What are the advantages of renting out my secondary suite?

Renting your approved secondary suite long-term is a great way to earn extra income while helping to provide additional housing for the people of Vancouver. See end of brochure for link to more details.

Existing Suites

4. What are the benefits of legalizing my secondary suite?

A suite that has gone through the City’s permitting process will conform to Building Code standards including all relevant safety requirements. Occupants can have a peace of mind that their home is built safely, while homeowners are secure in the knowledge their suite is fully approved by the City.

Homeowners should also be aware that unpermitted work and/or the misrepresentation of a secondary suite’s status (legal or illegal) may void insurance policies, and should consult their homeowner’s insurance company for further information.



5. Do I have to visit the Services Centre to legalize my suite?

If you are required to complete a special inspection, you may book it online at vancouver.ca/home-property-development/special-inspection.aspx

To submit an application or enquiry regarding legalizing a secondary suite, please visit vancouver.ca/building-development-support

6. I have a suite but would like to remove it. How do I do this?

Permit(s) will be required to remove the kitchen and the cooking facilities (i.e. the range and associated wiring up to the supply circuit breaker). If you wish to retain the kitchen, you will be required to legalize the secondary suite. Please contact the Development Services Centre or, if you have been sent a letter from the City, your District Property Use Inspector to discuss your options.

If there is any other existing work that was previously completed to create the suite without permits, a permit will be required to remove or correct that work as well.



Creating a new suite

7. I have an open building permit. Can I create and legalize a new suite under this permit?

Yes, but you must revise the existing permit. Contact your project coordinator to discuss your options.

8. How much will it cost to create and legalize a new suite?

The cost is dependent on the scope of work and contractor fees. In addition to permit fees, you may also need to pay fees for professionals such as designers, architects and structural engineers. See end of brochure for more details.

9. Will the value of my property increase if I have a suite?

Adding a suite may have an impact on your property value assessment. Please contact BC Assessment Authority for more information.

10. Can I strata title my suite?

No, secondary suites cannot be strata titled.

11. Can I add a second or third suite to my home?

One-family dwellings are allowed one suite under the Zoning & Development Bylaw.

If you live in a duplex, each primary dwelling unit is allowed one suite in most zones. You can confirm if your zoning designation allows for suites in duplexes by using the link at the end of the brochure.

Licensing

12. I want my parents or children to live in the suite. Do I still need a business licence?

No, a long-term rental licence is not required if immediate family (parents, children, etc.) will live in the suite.

13. Can I short term rent my legalized suite?

Secondary suites are intended to be used as a long-term rental home. There are two scenarios in which an approved secondary suite can be used as a short-term rental accommodation:

1. The property owner lives in the suite
2. A long-term rental tenant lives in the suite and has received property owner's permission to obtain a short-term rental licence and rent the property for stays of less than 30 days.

Secondary suites that have not been approved through the City's permitting process are not legal dwelling units and not eligible for short-term rentals.

More Information and Links

Zoning and Development Bylaw

vancouver.ca/home-property-development/zoning-and-development-bylaw.aspx

Permit Fees

vancouver.ca/files/cov/vancouver-development-building-permit-fees.pdf

Booking special inspections

vancouver.ca/home-property-development/special-inspection.aspx

Long-Term Rentals

vancouver.ca/long-term-rentals

Service Centre Support

vancouver.ca/building-development-support