

WHAT IS A SECONDARY SUITE?

A secondary suite is an area of a single family dwelling that is separate from the rest of the house. It can include common areas with the rest of the house (such as a laundry room) but must contain certain facilities that are completely separated from the rest of the house, including a bathroom and a kitchen. The kitchen must have cooking facilities.

The Town formally defines a secondary suite as an accessory dwelling unit that:

- * is located within a single-family home;
- * has a gross floor area less than 40% of that of the home; and
- * is rented for periods not shorter than 1 month, and on a year-round basis.

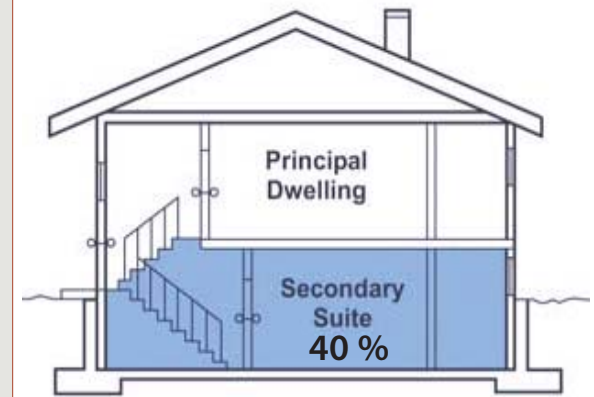
In addition, the Building Code states that a suite must:

- * be located in and part of a building which is a single real estate entity (i.e. it cannot be a strata unit separately owned from the principal home);
- * have a total floor space of not more than 90 m² in area.

TO FIND OUT MORE OR SUGGEST IMPROVEMENTS

The Town plans to review the program annually and make adjustments to ensure it continues to meet the needs of the community. To suggest improvements or for more information, contact Jeff Paleczny, the Planning Assistant, at 604-866-2274.

www.gibsons.ca



Secondary Suites Program



The Town of Gibsons recently decided to legalize secondary suites. The Town designed the program to maintain the stock of affordable housing, promote health and safety, make sure property owners are fairly treated, and manage impacts on neighbours.

This information brochure has been prepared to provide homeowners with an overview of the Town's secondary suites program, including:

- * Definition of a secondary suite
- * Associated regulations
- * Legalization process and incentives

The brochure provides general information about the program, but does not replace legal documents such as the Town's Zoning Bylaw or the BC Building Code.

Where can a legal secondary suite be located?

Secondary suites will be legal in all single-family residential zones.

What are the new regulations?

- * Homes with secondary suites cannot be located on the same property as home occupations, bed and breakfast operations, nor boarding uses. This avoids impacts on neighbours and ensures suites are used for housing rather than tourist accommodation.
- * Only one suite is permitted per property.
- * No additional parking is required for a suite.
- * Where the property has an on-site sewage system (e.g. it is on septic), the licencing body for the system must confirm in writing that there is enough capacity for the additional unit without compromising its performance.

What building standards will apply?

- * For new construction, defined as construction for which a Building Permit is issued after suites are permitted by the Town of Gibsons, the BC Building Code will apply.
- * For suites in existing buildings, the BC Building Code will apply until the Town adopts a set of Alternative Life Safety Standards. The alternative standards will apply thereafter. These are intended to provide for safety while recognizing the difficulty of upgrading older buildings to the current Code.

What about fees?

- * Water and sewer rates will be increased for buildings with secondary suites, to reflect typical levels of use.
- * Annual registration fees will apply for all secondary suites. Until Alternative Life Safety Standards are adopted, all suites will pay \$100. Once they are adopted, fees will be \$300 for suites that do not meet life safety standards, and \$100 for suites that do. A phase-in period will be used to enable homeowners to upgrade before the higher fees come into effect.

What is the range of incentives to Register?

- * Lower utility rates for legalized suites: For buildings with registered, legal suites, water and sewer rates will be 50% higher than those for single-family.

For buildings with unregistered suites, water and sewer rates will be 100% higher.

- * Lower registration fees for legalized suites: As noted above, suites that meet applicable life safety standards will pay a lower annual registration fee than those that do not.
- * Fee waiver for affordable units: For suites that prove that the suite was rented at affordable rates (set annually by the Town), registration fees will be refunded in full.
- * Fee waiver for early legalization: Owners who upgrade voluntarily within the first 5 years of the program will be given a 2-year reprieve on all fees.
- * Town registry to advertise legalized suites: The Town will list all registered, legalized suites on its website.
- * Disincentives: For suites not meeting safety standards, and suites that have been subdivided as a strata, Council may place a Notice on Title.

How can I legalize my suite?

- * You can fill out a registration form, and pay the registration fee. A Town inspector will then check the building to determine if it meets applicable standards. If not, you must complete the required upgrades in order to legalize the suite. (The registration fee covers inspection and administrative costs)

How will this affect my suite?

If you register your suite and upgrade quickly to the applicable standard, you will pay a small annual registration fee and a fair rate for water and sewer. Your suite will be safer and will be listed on the Town's website. If you are slow to register and/or upgrade, you will face higher fees and possibly enforced upgrades.

I'm a renter. How will this affect me?

- * Minimal disruption: The phase-in period will help owners time upgrades when tenants turn over or another convenient time. Also, many upgrade items are relatively minor.
- * Better safety: Suites will become safer, and the Fire Department will have better information about building occupants.
- * Continued affordability: The affordability of units will be maintained as much as possible by adopting safety standards appropriate to existing buildings.