

# A Guide to Operating a Secondary Suite in the City of Vernon

**This guide is intended to help applicants who want to operate a legal secondary suite in Vernon and represents the first steps in being a responsible tenant manager.**

## GENERAL RULES REGARDING THE OPERATION OF SECONDARY SUITES

1. To operate a secondary suite in Vernon, you must obtain a **Secondary Use Development Permit**, a **Building Permit** and a **Business Licence**. In some zoning districts a Secondary Use Development Permit is not required.
2. The secondary suite must meet the BC Building Code.
3. Where allowed, secondary suites are only permitted in single detached housing and secondary buildings.
4. No more than one secondary suite is permitted on a property.
5. The property owner must reside in the primary dwelling or secondary suite.
6. If the suite is within the primary building, the maximum floor area of the secondary suite may not exceed 90 m<sup>2</sup> or 30% of the total habitable floor area of the primary dwelling, whichever is the lesser. If located in a secondary building, maximum floor area is 90 m<sup>2</sup> or 60% of primary building.
7. One off-street parking spot must be provided and designated for the secondary suite.
8. Secondary suites are only permitted in the following zones: A1 – Agricultural, RR – Rural Residential, R1 – Estate Lot Residential, R2 – Large Lot Residential, R3 – Medium Lot Residential, R4 – Small Lot Residential, R5 – Four-plex Housing Residential, R6 – Lakeshore Residential, HR1 – Hillside Residential Single and Two Family, and RST1 – Residential Single and Two Family.
9. Please note that the municipal utility fee rate for a single family dwelling with a secondary suite is double the rate for a single family dwelling. ( garbage, recycle, sewer and water)  
(Source: City of Vernon Zoning Bylaw 5000 Sec: 4.0 & Sec: 5.0 – Building and Plumbing Bylaw 4900 Sec: 5)

*Secondary suites act as mortgage helpers,*

*Provide needed affordable housing for students, workers and seniors, and*

*Add diversity to neighbourhoods.*

If you are interested in building and operating a secondary suite, please contact the City of Vernon Planning Department at 250.550.3634 or through email at dsb@vernon.ca

## WHAT IS A SECONDARY SUITE?

A secondary suite is a self-contained secondary dwelling unit located within a single detached house or in a secondary building. A secondary suite has its own separate entrance, separate cooking, sleeping and bathing facilities.

(Source: City of Vernon Zoning Bylaw No. 5000 Sec: 2.0)

## HOW DO I REGISTER FOR A BUSINESS LICENCE?

All secondary suite operators are required to obtain a yearly business licence from the City of Vernon. The business licence is required so the City can monitor the operation of the suite. The yearly cost for a business licence to operate a secondary suite is \$60.00.

(Source: City of Vernon Business Bylaw 3272 Sec: 800)

## SECONDARY USE DEVELOPMENT PERMIT PROCESS

### 1. Submit application

Included in application:

- \$200.00 application fee
- Certificate of Title (COT), which is available at Service BC
- Site plan showing parking, landscaping, the entrance to the suite and the designated outdoor space for the use of suite residents
- Floor plans of the suite, primary building and any secondary building
- Photographs of the house and suite

**2. Place Notice of Development Sign on Property:** Once staff receives the complete application package, a letter is sent to the applicant with wording for a Notice of Development sign to be posted on the subject property. It is the applicant's responsibility to post the sign for a period of 10 days. Failure to do so will delay the application process.

**3. Referral Period:** The application package is reviewed by staff and an information mail-out is prepared and sent to all properties within 30m of the subject property. Usually the referral period lasts for two weeks and can be concurrent to the time the development notice sign is posted.

**4. Conditional Approval:** Usually within a month of receiving an application a response letter will be sent. The letter will either deny the application or approve the application based on a number of conditions. Typical conditions for approval will be the owner entering into a Good Neighbour Agreement with the City, having certain plans attached to the Development Permit, possible submission of a security bond to ensure certain works are undertaken on the property and receiving Building Permit approval.

**5. Issuance of Permit:** Once the conditions are satisfactorily completed, staff will issue the Secondary Use Development Permit.

**6. Building Permit and Business Licence Approvals:** These are required prior to occupancy of the Secondary Suite.

### BE ADVISED:

#### ANY SUITE OPERATING WITHOUT A BUSINESS LICENCE IS AN ILLEGAL SUITE

The City conducts a secondary suite enforcement program primarily to ensure that residential units within the City are safe and healthy for occupant use. Enforcement also ensures that suites are located in zones that are acceptable to the community and restricts conflict between neighbours by ensuring parking and other minimum regulations are met. A legal suite may also be held to meet an ongoing standard under the City's Rental Unit Standard of Maintenance bylaw.

Enforcement is normally conducted on a complaint basis, but may be conducted proactively if other issues are occurring on the property (property maintenance, parking complaints, noise complaints, etc...) where the suite may be the root cause. Enforcement may require removal of the cooking facilities including: cabinets, sinks, stoves, venting and electrical infrastructure to run cooking facilities.

**Fines for non-compliance may result in a Maximum fine of \$10,000 by way of Summary Conviction with each day constituting a separate offence.**

## CONFORMING TO THE BC BUILDING CODE

As part of the Secondary Use Development Permit process, you will be required to obtain a Building Permit even if you are not proposing any new construction. The BC Building code has certain provisions that apply to secondary suites. To ensure that all suites in the City are safe, it is up to the applicant to show that their suite meets the minimum requirements of the BC Building Code as it relates to secondary suites.

- For pre-existing suites you can hire a BC Building Code Professional to inspect the suite and endorse the application.
- For new construction, work with a building professional to make sure the proper fire rating and security is installed.
- City Development Cost Charges (DCCs) are not charged for secondary suites. In some cases, Regional District of North Okanagan DCCs apply to secondary suite construction.

City Building officials will inspect the suite before issuing an occupancy permit for the secondary suite. Please note that the inspectors will not inspect any part of the house other than the suite.

- The Building Permit fee for a Secondary Suite is \$100.00

**For more information and access to application forms, please go to the City website at [www.vernon.ca](http://www.vernon.ca) and click on A – Z City Services.**