



## Frequently Asked Questions About Secondary Suites

### What is a secondary suite?

A secondary suite is defined in the Zoning Bylaw as a dwelling unit accessory to a single family or two family dwelling use.

Only one secondary suite is permitted per lot and cannot be detached from the principal building. Other requirements include:

1. meet the zoning requirements
2. meet safety and building standards
3. apply for business licence
4. be a minimum size of 20m<sup>2</sup>(215 sq. ft.) and maximum of either 90m<sup>2</sup> (968 sq. ft.) or 40% of the total floor area of the building excluding garage space, whichever is less.

### How do I make my existing suite legal?

West Vancouver has a simple program to help homeowners complete all the life/safety requirements to legalize their suite in a way that is affordable. Depending on the home, the suite may need modifications to meet the life/safety considerations.

### What is the process to legalize my suite?

Submit an application for a Business Licence along with:

1. A general plan of the site, the existing floor plan of the house showing the suite.
2. Application fee of \$450.00.
3. An inspector will review the submitted plans and visit the suite to ensure compliance with life/safety requirements.
4. A report will be provided to homeowner indicating what is necessary to meet the requirements.
5. Follow-up inspection, if necessary.
6. For owner-occupied homes, the homeowner will be required to sign a document stating so. For non-owner occupied homes, the homeowner will be required to appoint a property manager who resides on the North Shore and provide appropriate documentation. Please call 604-925-7152 for further details

### What if I don't legalize or decommission my suite?

An unregistered secondary suite is in violation of the zoning bylaw, which may result in warnings, fines or other enforcement measures.

### **What are the required safety and building standards?**

The primary considerations relate to ensuring the existing fire prevention, plumbing and electrical systems can support an additional suite. With respect to fire prevention, hard-wired smoke and CO2 detectors are required as well as exit routes. From building standards perspectives, minimum ceiling heights and window sizes will be required. All of these factors contribute to ensuring the suite is safe for tenants and homeowners.

After November 30, 2011 owners will need to comply with full BC Building Code standards, which may require renovations at the owner's expense.

### **What does a licence cost?**

A Business Licence will be required for all secondary suites. The fee paid in the first year of \$450 covers the required inspection costs and the first year licence fee. There will be an annual renewal fee of \$350 for owner-occupied homes, \$450 for non-owner occupied homes and \$85 for unoccupied or family use homes per year.

### **What if I don't use my suite anymore?**

Homeowners can decommission unused suites by completing the following steps:

- An electrical permit needs to be obtained by a qualified electrician to remove stove wiring from wall outlet and from electrical panel.
- All cooking facilities need to be removed from suite, which means equipment, devices or appliances that can be utilized to prepare a meal. i.e. stove, hot plate, microwave, etc.
- Submit a declaration once the work has been completed.