

# Home Suite Home

## Secondary Suites in Nanaimo



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## *City of Nanaimo Building Inspections*

*Working with the community  
promoting liveability, fire, health  
and life-safety standards*

# Home Suite Home . . . . .

**H**aving a secondary suite to help offset a mortgage or as a way of keeping family close is becoming more and more appealing to homeowners in Nanaimo. A secondary suite is designed to be a self-contained living unit, whether built into an existing dwelling or as a separate building. As such, suites have unique requirements to ensure the safety of all residents.

**T**his guide is designed to help you understand the different types of suites allowed in our city and what the general process is for construction.



*\*Note that this is a general guideline intended to provide an overview of the construction or modification of secondary suites. For more details, please contact our office at 250-755-4429.*

*Secondary suites in Nanaimo . . . the addition of suites to homes in Nanaimo is an important part of the fabric of our city. There are specific regulations that govern the existence of suites and it's important to understand these requirements before you begin your project. Suites are allowed in specific circumstances and on certain lots; important things to know before you invest your money.*

### Background

Prior to 2005-FEB-07, suites were not legally allowed to be a part of a dwelling in Nanaimo. In 2005, the Zoning Bylaw was amended to allow for secondary suites in most single residential dwellings. Any suites constructed under a building permit from the point of this bylaw amendment would be considered "legal" suites. Still to be addressed, however, were the many suites already in existence that were not constructed under a Building Permit. Some of these existing suites the City was aware of, but many were unknown. As well, even after the establishment of the Secondary Suite Policy, some homeowners constructed suites without the required Building Permits, in contravention of existing bylaws.



### Tip!

A great tool to help you quickly determine the zoning for your lot is to check out the [NanaimoMap](http://www.nanaimo.ca/NanaimoMap) on our website at [www.nanaimo.ca/NanaimoMap](http://www.nanaimo.ca/NanaimoMap)

Going forward, the City now has a number of suites of differing legal standing, which can be broken down as follows:

#### **Existing suites constructed prior to 2005-FEB-07:**

- "Illegal" if not upgraded through a building permit
- "Authorized with a Notice on Title" if the suite existed prior to 2005 and was upgraded through a building permit to address life-safety issues (a notice will be placed on the property Title to advise interested parties that the suite was not fully constructed under a Building Permit)
- For an existing suite to become "Legal" (aka "Legalized"), the suite may need to be deconstructed and reconstructed under a current Building Permit – talk to our staff for more information.

#### **Suites constructed after 2005-FEB-07:**

- "Illegal" if constructed without a Building Permit
- "Legal" if constructed with a Building Permit
- "Authorized with Notice on Title" if a suite is constructed with a Building Permit within a finished area (e.g., basement) that was finished without a previous Building Permit

### **February 7, 2005**

Suites in place prior to this date can be "Authorized"

Suites constructed after this date must be "Legal"

## "Authorized Suites"

Secondary suites that were constructed prior to Council's resolution in 2005 allowing suites are considered to be illegal by the City. In order to change this status to "authorized", which is only possible if the suite is in a zone that allows for suites (refer to the [Zoning Bylaw](#) or check with Current Planning staff to verify your zone and situation), the homeowner would need to apply for a [Building Permit](#). This will allow the City Building Inspector to perform necessary inspections and confirm that visible work meets BC Building Code standards and/or that life-safety issues have been addressed, including fire safety factors, such as fire detection, fire spread and safe exiting. As the suite would have existing construction in place preventing the Building Inspector from seeing whether or not underlying work conforms to the Building Code, a notice (as per [Section 57 of the Community Charter](#)) would be placed on the property title.



## Notice on Title (Section 57)

Once registered at the Land Title Office, the notice will serve to advise anyone with interest in the land of the regulations contravened, provide disclosure to future owners, and protect taxpayers from potential claims with regard to the contravention, as per [Section 57 of the Community Charter](#).

## Removal of a Notice on Title

Where a notice has been registered on the property title and the property owner has rectified the issues and is of the opinion that the notice can be removed, the owner must apply in writing to the Building Inspector requesting consideration for removal of the notice. Upon receipt of a written request, the Building Inspector will review the records pertaining to the condition that gave rise to the filing of the notice to determine if the request is feasible. Should staff concur with the request, an inspection of the land, building, or structure will be scheduled in order to verify the contravention has been rectified. If all requirements are met, the fee for removal of the legal notice from the land title is \$300.

### Tip!

Currently, [Section 57 of the Community Charter](#) is the regulation referenced for registration of a Notice on Title. Previously, Section 750.1 or Section 700 of the *Local Government Act* was the regulating legislation for registration of a Notice on Title.

## Safety Compliance

As part of the process to authorize a pre-existing suite, a review for basic safety compliance is performed, including (but not limited to):

- Heating systems (interconnection permitted only where a Mechanical Engineer is involved in the design and installation)
- Smoke alarms (additional interconnected smoke alarms, photo-electric smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms required)
- Ceiling heights 1.95m (76-3/4") generally between rooms with minimum 1.85m (72-3/4") under beams and ducting; 2m minimum in exit corridors
- Minimum window areas and windows in bedrooms that allow for an exit
- Means of egress
- Fire separations between suite and principal unit
- Exit stairs
- Review of electrical system for adequacy and/or proof of [Electrical Permit](#) upgrades
- Other obvious safety concerns.

## "Legalized Suites"

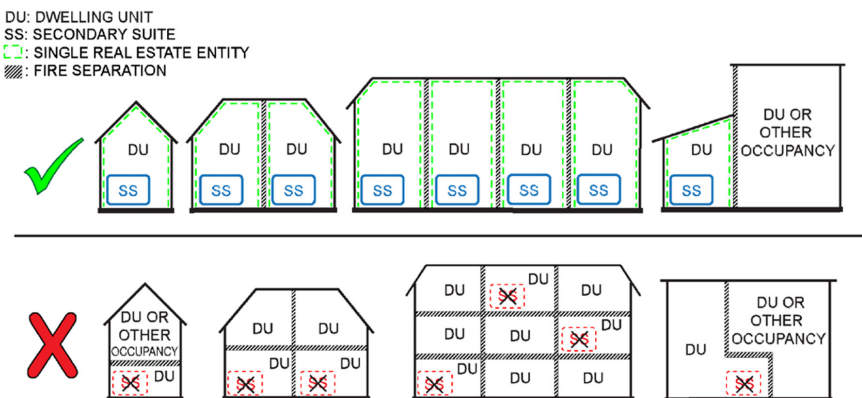
In order for a suite to be considered a legal suite, all suite construction must comply with the [Zoning Bylaw](#) and the *BC Building Code*. All suites constructed after 2005-FEB-07 must be legalized.

### Existing Regulations

Secondary Suites are subject to the requirements of "[Zoning Bylaw No. 4500](#)", "[Building Bylaw No. 7224](#)" and the *BC Building Code*. Secondary suites have been established as a permitted use in all zones where the following uses are permitted as a principal use and where such use is present on the lot:

- single residential dwelling
- duplex
- row house
- multiple family dwelling where the principal dwelling unit is in a separate building from any other principal dwelling unit or the principal dwelling unit is adjoined to another principal dwelling unit on either side and no other principal dwelling unit is above or below

See the [Zoning Bylaw](#) for more information.



### Tip!

Yes! Suites built prior to 2005 can be legalized. This process may require deconstruction of all or a portion of the suite to enable the inspector to review all components. Talk to staff to find out more about your options.

## “Legalized Suites” cont’d

Secondary suites are defined in the Zoning Bylaw as: “One or more habitable rooms, but not more than three bedrooms and one cooking facility, constituting a self-contained unit with a separate entrance, but which is clearly subordinate to the principal dwelling, for the residential accommodation of: one or more individuals who are related through marriage or common law, blood relationship, legal adoption, or legal guardianship; or a group of not more than three unrelated persons.”

As specified in the Zoning Bylaw, a secondary suite is not permitted in mobile homes, or commercial/ industrial buildings, and is limited to an accessory use to a single residential dwelling unit or principal dwelling unit on the lot. When located within the principal dwelling, the size of the suite is limited to 40% of the habitable floor space, to a maximum of 100m<sup>2</sup>. Where accessory to a dwelling unit in a duplex, row house, or multiple family dwelling residential use, the gross floor area of a secondary suite shall not exceed the gross floor area of the principal dwelling unit up to a maximum of 100m<sup>2</sup>. In 2024, the Zoning Bylaw was amended to increase the number of secondary suites permitted; where the principal use is a single residential dwelling up to two secondary suites are permitted provided that:

- no other principal uses exist on the lot
- the lot is not zoned R2 or R3
- exactly one of the two secondary suites is contained within an accessory building as per the regulations under Subsection 6.15.3.



### Tip!

Did you know that double user rate charges do not signify a suite is legal? Double user rate charges can be applied even to illegal suites by the City Finance department as a way of recovering costs associated with additional dwelling units, regardless of status (illegal, legal or authorized).

### Secondary Suites & The Building Code

The British Columbia Building Code (BCBC) regulates the health and safety requirements related to secondary suites. A December 2019 amendment to the 2018 BCBC substantially changed the secondary suites regulations.

As part of the amendment and the BC government's desire to encourage secondary suites as a method to increase available housing, an Alternate Compliance Method was adopted to accommodate secondary suites in existing dwelling construction. The Alternate Compliance Method may only be used where the existing construction acts as a barrier to compliance with the requirements for suites in the BCBC. All other requirements of the BCBC relating to secondary suites in dwelling units apply to the installation of a suite in an existing dwelling unit.

To assist you in determining the BCBC requirements for your secondary suite, we have the following guides:

[Secondary Suites - Building Code and Zoning Requirements](#)

[Secondary Suites in Existing Dwelling Units - Alternate Compliance Methods](#)



### "Secondary Suite in an Accessory Building"

On 2008-AUG-11, the Zoning Bylaw was amended to permit secondary suites within accessory buildings (referred to in this publication as "carriage house"). A secondary suite is allowed within an accessory building provided that the accessory building is located on any of the following:

- a lot zoned R5 or R14;
- a corner lot;
- a lot whose side or rear lot line abuts a lane;
- a through lot; or,
- a lot that is 500m<sup>2</sup> in area or greater.

#### **Tip!**

Whether you live in the main dwelling or in the dwelling suite, privacy is valuable. By planning ahead and using the right materials, you can increase the sound separation beyond the basic sound transmission requirements of the building code. Materials such as insulating drywall and certain types of insulation can assist with the objective. Contact your local building supplier for more information.



## "Secondary Suite in an Accessory Building" cont'd

Additional Zoning Bylaw considerations for suites within an accessory building are:

- The total size of all accessory buildings on the lot shall not exceed 100m<sup>2</sup>.
- The accessory building foundation may not be closer than 3m to the principal building foundation.
- 42m<sup>2</sup> of floor area used exclusively for parking may be excluded from the gross floor area allowed for an accessory building where a garage or carport does not exist within the principal building.
- The height of an accessory building varies depending on the roof pitch. An accessory building can be up to 7m in height if:
  - the accessory building has a roof pitch of 6:12 or greater, a suite exists in the roof structure, and the floor area with a 2.1m ceiling height on the second storey is not greater than 80% of the area of the first storey; or,
  - the building is located outside of the required yard setback area for a principal dwelling; or,
  - is located in Zone R8, R9 or CC3.

Please refer to the Zoning Bylaw or contact staff to confirm the regulations that apply in your situation.



### *Stratification*

It is important to note that secondary suites included in carriage houses **cannot** be stratified from the principal dwelling unit to which the suite is an accessory. Secondary suites are intended as rental units or as an independent housing option for family members.



### Other Things to Consider

#### *Other Uses*

Homeowners with dwellings that contain secondary suites with other uses, such as a short-term rental, daycare, home-based business, etc., should consult "Zoning Bylaw No. 4500" to take into consideration how that use will be affected by the existence of the secondary suite.

#### *Parking*

In accordance with "[Off-Street Parking Regulations Bylaw No. 7266](#)", each dwelling with a suite is required to provide an additional off-street parking space. Two parking spaces are required for the principal dwelling, plus one additional space for every additional suite. Note that if you have a home-based business, an additional parking space must be provided for that use as well.

#### *Addressing*

In order to properly direct mail when a secondary suite is added to a main dwelling, Canada Post requires proof be provided that a permitted suite exists in order to allow for a second mailbox for the property. This can be provided in the form of proof of permit from our website or the final inspection report. Be sure to contact [Canada Post](#) to verify their requirements and regulations regarding mail delivery.

#### *User Rates*

Additional user rates will be charged with the existence of each secondary suite. The rates for sewer and garbage pickup will be doubled or tripled depending on the number of suites; water is metered.

#### *Hydro Connections*

When constructing a new carriage house along laneways, be aware of the power lines nearby. The height or location of the building should not interfere with the power lines nor with access to the power lines by BC Hydro. Contact BC Hydro for more information.

#### *Service Connections (Sanitary/Storm/Water)*

In most cases, the existing service connections to the principal dwelling can be used by a carriage house; however, where the project includes a secondary suite in the dwelling and in an accessory building, adequacy of the services should be carefully assessed. Be sure to check the location and depth of the service connections as part of your design process.



*Designing Your Suite . . . . design can play an important role in comfort, privacy, and economic advantage. A good design can be a positive impact for years to come.*

## Selecting a Design

In the construction of a home, the services of a design professional can be indispensable in navigating through all the requirements and regulations involved in building a home. This is also true in the construction of a secondary suite, especially if you are building a new carriage house. When having two households living in such close proximity, an experienced design professional can be advantageous in creating a sense of privacy or in making the most use of smaller spaces.



### Tip!

To ensure emergency personnel don't get waylaid in coming for assistance, be sure to clearly identify/address the suite on your property. Precious time could be wasted while emergency personnel are knocking on the front door of the main dwelling (especially if no one is home to answer the door!) because they are not aware where the suite entrance is located.

## Design Checklist for Carriage Houses

While no formal approval of the style or visual design of a carriage house is required, in order to ensure detached suites are constructed in a manner that provides for a safe and comfortable living environment for tenants, while respecting the privacy of neighbouring residents, staff recommends the following be considered during the design and construction of a detached suite:

- The exterior materials and colours of the suite should complement the overall character of the existing dwelling and neighbourhood.
- Emergency personnel must be able to easily find and access the suites.
- The detached suite should be oriented and sited in a manner that protects the privacy of neighbours.
- The suite should be screened from the neighbouring yards in a manner most suited to the character of the neighbourhood.
- Provision for parking spaces must be considered; two for the principal dwelling and one for each suite on the parcel.
- Private, 30 m<sup>2</sup> outdoor space shall be provided for the occupants.

## Providing Space

With the construction of a carriage house, homeowners are required by the [Zoning Bylaw](#) to provide a minimum area of 30m<sup>2</sup> of private open space for the tenants, as well as an off-street parking area. The private open space can be included in the required yard setback area, but is not to include space provided for parking. The open space must be identified and submitted on the site plan.

### Green Living

A 'green' building is a structure that is designed, built, and operated in an ecological and resource-efficient manner. A green building may cost more to build, but saves through lower operating costs over the life of the building.

As with the construction of a new home, the orientation of a carriage house on your property can determine how much natural light the building will receive, affecting the need for unnecessary lighting or minimizing heating requirements through the maximization of solar energy use. As well, landscaping can be used to cool a home during summer or allow for more natural light in the winter.

The City of Nanaimo is committed to climate action and has established an action plan to move towards community sustainability. As part of this plan, the City adopted the [BC Building Code's Energy Step Code](#) in an amendment to the Building Bylaw in 2019. The requirements of the Energy Step Code are now in alignment with the Provincial requirements and are outlined in the BC Building Code in Subsections 9.36 and 10.2.3.

Continuing the City's commitment towards community sustainability, City Council adopted the Zero Carbon Step Code in Building Bylaw Amendment 7224.05, on 2023-OCT-16. As of 2024-JUL-01, all applicable buildings will require the operation of the building to meet the requirements of GHG Emission Level 4.

The Energy Step Code and Zero Carbon Step Code requirements apply to all new residential buildings, including new accessory buildings accommodating a secondary suite. Builders will need to work with an Energy Advisor to ensure the building's energy performance conforms to the required Energy and Carbon Step Codes through submission of Energy Efficiency Compliance Reports and air-tightness testing. For more information about the Energy and Carbon Step Codes and how they could affect your project, see our guide [Energy Step Code & Zero Carbon Step Code](#).

The inclusion of a secondary suite into the principal dwelling can be an opportune time to engage the services of a certified [Energy Advisor](#), even when not required by bylaw. An Energy Advisor can make recommendations to improve energy efficiency within the dwelling. The inclusion of a grey-water system, a heat exchange unit, solar hot water, low-flush toilets, or low-flow shower heads can go a long way in improving a home's efficiency.

#### Tip!

The City offers rebate programs such as a [toilet rebate](#) or a [woodstove change-out rebate](#), as funds are available, when changing out existing units. Visit our [website](#) for more detailed information.



## Measuring Performance

Whether renovating or building new, using established performance criteria to measure how green your home is can help ensure your home has met specific standards in energy and water efficiency. When selling your home, this can be a great selling feature. The federal Office of Energy Efficiency of Natural Resources Canada has developed an [EnerGuide Rating Service](#) that can assist homebuyers/home builders in measuring a home's energy performance. A highly energy-efficient new house should target a rating of 80 to 90 (on a scale of 0 to 100).

## Taking Advantage of Incentives

When building green, remember that there are a number of incentive programs available that can help cover some costs. The [BC Hydro Power Smart](#) program ([www.bchydro.com](http://www.bchydro.com)) offers home renovation rebates and rebates for solar panels and battery storage. Some great tips for making your home energy efficient can also be found on the [Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation](#) (CMHC) website ([www.cmhc.ca](http://www.cmhc.ca)). Other incentives are available through [FortisBC](#) ([www.fortisbc.com](http://www.fortisbc.com)) and the provincial [CleanBC](#) program ([www.betterhomesbc.ca](http://www.betterhomesbc.ca)).



## Variances

When renovating a home or constructing a carriage house, there may be situations where the building does not, or cannot, comply with current zoning requirements. Should this be the case, it is possible to apply for a variance. It is important to note that the permitted use or density of the lot cannot be varied. If the existing regulations result in an undue hardship, it may be possible to receive a variance from the Board of Variance (BOV). In cases where there is no hardship, it may be possible to request a [Development Variance Permit](#) (DVP). A DVP requires the approval of City Council. Service Centre staff can advise and provide direction with respect to proposed variances. Refer to the [Development Applications](#) section of our website for DVP and BOV information.

## What's Building in my Neighbourhood?

Residents interested in knowing what is happening in their neighbourhood or anywhere in the City can access current information on Building Permits, Development Permits, subdivision, rezoning and several other types of development applications on our [What's Building in my Neighbourhood?](#) page. You can browse the site or create an account and customize which neighbourhoods and application types that interest you. With an account, you can also subscribe to our notification system and automatically be notified through email.

### Taking All Costs into Consideration

Sometimes, all the costs associated with a project aren't readily apparent until the project gets underway. We have identified some of the more common items and issues that you would need to take into consideration when doing your calculations:

#### **Ceiling Height**

Ceiling height - the minimum ceiling height is 2.1m over a required minimum area indicated in BCBC Table 9.5.3.1 (i.e., 10m<sup>2</sup> in living room, etc.). There are exceptions for existing dwellings under the Alternate Compliance Methods, which would allow a 1.95m ceiling height with a 1.85m ceiling height under beams, duct work, and stairs, if it is possible to travel from room to room without reduction in height of 1.95m. Where ceilings are lower than this, the house may need to be lifted or the floor be lowered.

#### **Electrical**

Changes to accommodate a suite will require hiring a licensed electrician and proof of Electrical Permit.

#### **Tip!**

The Province, through [Technical Safety BC](#), prohibits home owners from performing any electrical work in a house containing a suite. The home owner must employ a licensed electrician, working under an Electrical Permit, to do any electrical work in the dwelling.

Contact [Technical Safety BC](#) for complete details.

#### **Windows**

Bedroom window openings must be the minimum size for egress.

#### **Fire Safety**

The main dwelling cannot share a common forced-air furnace with a suite or areas common to both the main dwelling unit and the suite unless a Mechanical Engineer is involved in the design and installation.

- Unprotected openings into the suite (i.e., a door) must be addressed.
- Fire and sound separation for walls and floor/ceilings is required between the suite and any adjacent areas (i.e., furnace room, common laundry room, remainder of the building).

#### **Ventilation**

The suite must have minimum ventilation (by window or mechanical means).

- A principal exhaust fan and fans for the bathroom and kitchen are required.

#### **Hazardous Materials**

If hazardous materials exist and will be distributed by the construction proposed, a Hazardous Materials Assessment Report will be required prior to issuance of a building permit. Depending on the report, this may result in the required removal of materials by a company specializing in hazardous material removal.



***Obtaining Your Permits . . . . before construction can begin on your new suite, you need to obtain the necessary permits.***

## Building Permit

A Building Permit must be obtained prior to commencing the construction of your built-in suite or carriage house. Applications are made online through our [application portal](#). To ensure that your application is processed as quickly as possible, it is important to have all the required documentation submitted along with your application. Review our [Residential Building Permit Application Guide](#).

Required documentation includes:

- [Building Permit Application](#)
- [Appointment of Agent](#) (needed if the applicant is not the owner of the property; to be completed prior to, and uploaded with the online application)
- Plans, complete set to scale (see [Plan Requirements Checklist](#))
- Site Plan to scale
- Truss and engineered floor and beam layout (if used, see [Manufactured Floor Joist, Beam and Truss Roof System](#))
- [Ventilation Checklist](#) (where an Energy Advisor is not involved)
- [Hazardous Materials Form](#) (for renovations to existing construction)
- [BC Housing Licensing and Consumer Services registration documents](#) (for new carriage houses only)
- Energy Efficiency Compliance Report (Pre-Construction, for new carriage houses only)
- New carriage houses built at the same time as a new house on the same lot will require a Section 219 covenant (see staff for details)

## Fees

The fee for authorizing a pre-existing suite constructed prior to 2005-FEB-07 is \$500. For new construction, regular permit fees apply. Refer to the [Development Services Fees and Charges Bylaw](#) for a detailed list, and the [Building Permit Fee Calculator](#) page.

Visit our website at [www.nanaimo.ca](http://www.nanaimo.ca) where you can find more information in the [Building Inspections Publications and Forms](#) page. Note that if you engage the services of a professional builder, the builder must have a valid business licence to operate within the City of Nanaimo.

Once your Building Permit application is submitted, our Building Inspections staff will review your application and ensure all the documentation is in order. If your application is complete, you will be contacted with a request for an application fee (if the value of construction is over \$20,000). When the permit review has been successfully completed, you will be contacted for payment of the fees and your Building Permit will then be issued. Permits are of varying complexity, resulting in varying amounts of time for processing; therefore, staff are unable to provide specific dates or timelines for permit issuance. You can refer to the [Building Permit Processing Times](#) on our website to see how many applications are waiting for review.

### Tip!

Be sure to clearly identify all smoke and carbon monoxide alarms on your plans and indicate window size for egress windows to avoid delay in processing your application. Note that a sliding glass door cannot be used as a main entrance door. A main entrance door must be a hinged door not less than 34" wide to accommodate the required 32" clear width.

### Deposit

If you are constructing a carriage house, a \$750 refundable deposit will be required at the time you obtain your Building Permit to cover the cost of any necessary repairs to public property, such as roads, sidewalks and utilities. Once your construction is complete, City staff will visit your jobsite to ensure that no damage has been done during the course of construction.

Should City staff find that everything is in order, the bond will be refunded to you.

### Access Permit

Should the construction of a carriage house require the addition or a modification of a driveway, a driveway Access Permit will be required. The fee for this permit is \$25. The Access Permit application can be made at the same time as the online building permit application.



### Development Permits

In the case of a carriage house, a [Development Permit](#) may be required in certain circumstances (if there is an environmental concern or hazardous condition). If required, the [Development Permit](#) must be obtained before the Building Permit can be issued.

More information relating to Development Permits can be found in the [Development Applications](#) section of our website.

### Homeowner Protection

Prior to constructing a new carriage house, The BC Housing (BCH) [Licensing & Consumer Services](#) branch requires all property owners to either:

1. Pay the required fee, pass the [required exam](#), and obtain an Owner Builder Authorization from BCH prior to applying for a Building Permit and constructing that dwelling unit, or
2. Hire a builder who is licensed by BCH as a registered builder and can provide proof of warranty coverage required by BCH.

The BCH website at [www.bchousing.org](http://www.bchousing.org) contains the information needed to begin this process, or call their office at 1-800-407-7757. A BCH authorization form is required by the City of Nanaimo prior to issuance of a Building Permit for a carriage house.



## Electrical & Gas Inspections

While the City of Nanaimo will perform most of the building inspections related to home construction and/or renovation, [Technical Safety BC](http://www.technicalsaftybc.ca) is responsible to perform inspections for electrical- and gas-related work. Information on requirements for taking out a permit are located on their website at [www.technicalsaftybc.ca/permits](http://www.technicalsaftybc.ca/permits), or by calling 1-866-566-7233.

### Tip!

#### *Call Before You Dig!*

Before starting any excavations, call [BC One Call](http://www.bc1c.ca), a central agency to help identify where underground cables or pipes may be located on your property. Call toll-free 1-800-474-6886 or visit their website for more information at [www.bc1c.ca](http://www.bc1c.ca).



## Tree Protection or Removal

If your site contains a tree, as defined by the "[Management and Protection of Trees Bylaw 2013 No. 7126](#)", a Tree Removal Permit may be required prior to tree cutting, major pruning, or undertaking activities that may damage the tree(s). Details can be found in the Tree Protection Bylaw or by contacting the Urban Forestry Coordinator in our office. If a permit is required, a [Tree Removal Application](#) must be completed and submitted for review by City staff prior to any work being performed in this regard. The City Arborist will visit the site to make their analysis before a Tree Removal Permit is issued. It is also important to be aware of the location of trees in proximity to your proposed excavation. An excavation within 5m of significant trees, even if on a neighbouring property, must be reviewed with the City Arborist.



**Construction . . . . . now that you have obtained your permits, it's time to get the construction of your suite underway!**

### Erosion & Sediment Control

Erosion is a natural process, but when land is disturbed by construction activities, erosion increases by 2 - 40,000 times the pre-construction rate. Erosion creates sediment, which is transported by flowing water, wind or gravity (slumping). To avoid erosion and associated impacts, it is important to have an Erosion Control Plan in place. There are a number of ways to help control this problem, and the City has a [brochure](#) available on this topic that may be of assistance to you; however, depending on the project site (especially if the site is a steep slope), it may be advisable to hire a Geotechnical Professional to assist in this area. Depending on the location of your lot, it is important to keep in mind that the *Fisheries Act* considers sediment to be a "deleterious substance" and its deposit in fish habitat is subject to fines of up to \$1 million per offence. The City encourages Erosion Control Plans as part of all development applications.



### Inspections

#### Constructing a Legal Suite in a Residential Dwelling

In order to construct a legal suite in a residential dwelling, it must be possible for the Building Inspector to complete a series of visual inspections at specific intervals of work completed. Constructing a legal suite is best suited where the residential dwelling incorporates an unfinished basement (or basement finished under the issuance of a previous Building Permit) as all work performed can be visually inspected prior to the covering of the work. While it is possible to construct a legal suite in a basement that was previously finished without the issuance of a Building Permit and required inspections, some demolition of existing work will be required to reveal covered work and enable visual inspections to be done of that work. If all the work is unable to be visually inspected, a notice may still need to be registered on the property title.

#### Tip!

By booking your inspection online on our [Building Permit Inspections Request](#) page at [www.nanaimo.ca](http://www.nanaimo.ca), you can print off your request for verification. Whether you book online or by calling 250-755-4420, please be sure to include both your permit number and civic address, as well as the inspection required. Note that 4pm is the cutoff time to ensure you get a next-business-day inspection (keeping in mind weekends and statutory holidays are not a business day).



### ***Constructing a New Carriage House***

The *Building Code* requirements for the construction of a new carriage house are not substantially different than those for the construction of a single residential dwelling. [Zoning Bylaw 4500](#) contains regulations that outline the size and scale of carriage homes. [Home Protection Warranty](#) is required to be provided in the same manner that warranty is required to be provided when constructing a single residential dwelling. Refer to our [Residential Construction Guide](#), “Welcome Home” for further inspection information for constructing a new carriage house.

### ***Authorizing a Secondary Suite within a Residential Dwelling***

If the suite was constructed prior to 2005-FEB-07, there may be opportunity to authorize the suite. The ability to perform the required inspections of existing illegally-constructed suites is limited as the work has already been completed and most of the work that required inspections, as outlined in the [Building Bylaw](#), has been covered either behind drywall or under concrete. Inspections are undertaken that focus on the visual life safety items pertaining to fire detection (smoke alarms), fire spread (drywall) and exits (a safe way out). These three items form the basis for the upgrade work of an illegally-constructed secondary suite to “authorized”. In most cases, it is not possible to construct a new legal carriage house within an existing accessory building unless the existing accessory building has been constructed with a Building Permit in compliance with the requirements for a single family residential building.

Upon applying for a Building Permit to “authorize” your existing secondary suite, the Building Inspector will attend the property at a pre-arranged time to review the existing construction. This inspection will result in a preliminary list of deficiencies that will need to be corrected in order to attain an “authorized” suite status. Once the Building Inspector has attended the property and completed the inspection, the property owner must continue with the correction of the items identified, through the issuance of a Building Permit. Through the detailed review of the submitted plans, additional items may be required. If the property owner wishes not to proceed with the work, the only remaining option is for the removal of the suite components from within the residential dwelling.

The issuance of the Building Permit contains conditions/explanations that pertain to the work required to be completed. Once all of the required work is completed, a final inspection must be requested in order to complete the Building Permit and attain the “Authorized” status.

***Important!*** As part of the “Authorization” process, staff will prepare a report to Council for the placement of a notice on the property title. If this is a concern to you, you may want to consider “Legalizing” the suite instead of Authorizing.

### ***Tip!***

Your project is underway and you realize you want to make a change on your plan! Be sure to submit any plan changes through our online [Building Permit Revision](#) portal. The revised plans will need to be approved before any further inspections can be performed. Note the revised plans will be subject to a re-stamping fee, additional plumbing fees, etc., as applicable.



## Typical inspections for construction of a Legal suite in an existing single residential dwelling:



*Underslab Plumbing & Radon Piping*



*Underslab Insulation*



*Paper/Flashing/Waterproofing*



*Rough-in Plumbing*



*Framing*



*Insulation*



*Final*

## Typical inspections for constructing a new carriage house:



*Footings*



*Service Connections*



*Perimeter Drain*



*Underslab Plumbing & Radon Piping*



*Underslab Insulation*



*Paper/Flashing/Waterproofing*



*Rough-in Plumbing*



*Framing*



*Insulation*



*Occupancy*

# Summary

Adding a secondary suite to your dwelling may seem uncomplicated at first, but as you can see, there is a lot to consider. Zoning requirements and other various bylaws and regulations can affect everything from size to location of your suite. Our Building Officials can help you navigate these regulations.

In addition to your Building Permit, the following is a summary list of other permits to consider:

- [Electrical Permit](#)
- [Gas Permit](#)
- [Tree Removal Permit](#)
- [Access Permit](#) (for driveway)
- [Development Permit](#)
- [Development Variance Permit](#)



## More Questions?

If you have any questions or if you require further information about suites or suite construction, phone or stop by the Service & Resource Centre. Our knowledgeable staff are available as a resource to assist you with your inquiry or project.

**Phone Inquiries: 250-755-4429**

## Links & Contact Info

For online viewers of this publication, below is a quick list of links that may assist you in the permitting process:

City of Nanaimo - [www.nanaimo.ca](http://www.nanaimo.ca) / 250-755-4429

- [Fire/Sound Separation for Dwellings with a Secondary Suite](#)
- [Secondary Suite/Main Dwelling Alarms Installation Guide](#)
- [Residential Construction Guide](#)
- [Building Inspections Publications and Forms](#) page for a listing of documents related to a residential Building Permit Application, Secondary Suites, and plumbing information
- [Development Applications](#) page to access applications for Board of Variance, Development Permit, Development Variance Permit, and Zoning regulations
- [Building Permit Inspection Request](#)
- [MyCity](#) (utility program for tracking City of Nanaimo accounts/permits)

BC Housing Licensing & Consumer Services - [www.bchousing.org](http://www.bchousing.org) / 1-800-407-7757

- [Owner Builder information](#) page
- [Secondary Suite Housing Assistance](#) - BC Housing Secondary Suite Incentive Program

Province of British Columbia

- [Home Suite Home](#) - Provincial guide to secondary suite development
- [British Columbia Building Code](#)

Technical Safety BC (Electrical & Gas Permits) - [www.safetyauthority.ca](http://www.safetyauthority.ca) / 250-716-5200

- Search for a [licensed contractor](#) for the [Electrical Permit](#) and [Gas Permit](#) requirement

Land Title Office - [www.ltsa.ca](http://www.ltsa.ca) / 1-877-577-5872

- Search for a [Land Title](#)

Ministry of Transportation

- [Highway Use Permits](#)
- [Highway Use Permit - Access](#)

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation - [www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca](http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca)

- [Energy Efficiency and Cost Savings](#) page

Canada Post - [www.canadapost-postescanada.ca](http://www.canadapost-postescanada.ca)

BC Hydro - [www.bchydro.com](http://www.bchydro.com)

- [Power Smart](#) program

Office of Energy Efficiency of Natural Resources Canada - <https://www.nrcan.gc.ca/home>

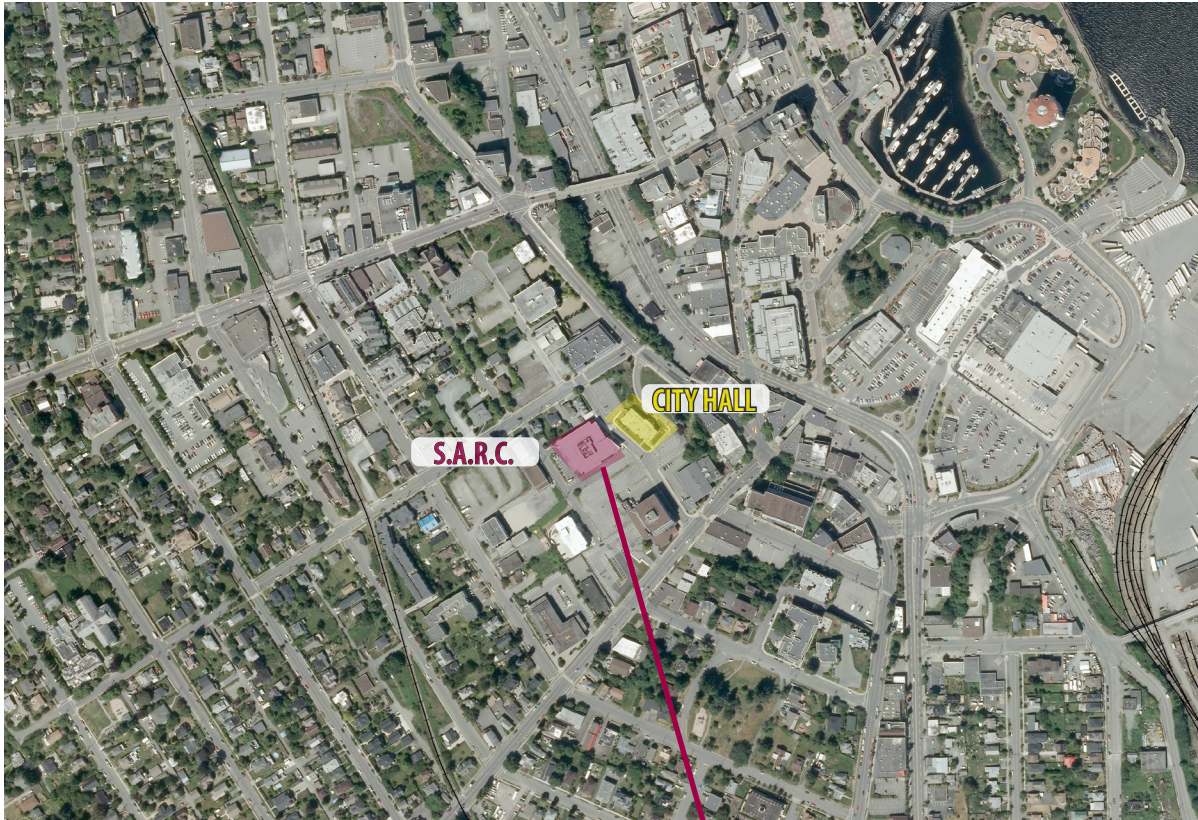
- [EnerGuide Rating System](#) for new homes
- [Energy Advisor](#) listing
- [Energy Step Code](#)

[Canadian Home Builders' Association of Vancouver Island](#) - [www.chbacvi.ca](http://www.chbacvi.ca)

[Community Charter, Sections 57 and 58](#)

# Where Are We Located?

The City of Nanaimo Service & Resource Centre (S.A.R.C.) is located at 411 Dunsmuir Street, which is across the street behind the main City Hall building.





# Resident Worksheet

The following worksheet is intended to assist you in organizing your preparations for submitting a Building Permit application:

Copy of Land Title - anything to note? (easements/ right-of-way/ covenant, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

The Zoning for my lot is: \_\_\_\_\_

According to the Official Community Plan, is there anything about my lot that may require me to obtain a Development Permit? \_\_\_\_\_

Have I had a Site/Height Survey done for my lot? (required if the suite proposed is a carriage house) \_\_\_\_\_

Has BC Housing Licensing & Consumer Services branch authorization been given? (required for carriage houses) Authorization number: \_\_\_\_\_

Have I engaged the services of an Energy Advisor? (required for new carriage houses) \_\_\_\_\_

Will existing services be adequate for my lot or do I need to consult with City staff? \_\_\_\_\_

Is my lot located in a hazard area that may require a geotechnical report? \_\_\_\_\_

Have I/my contractor arranged with Technical Safety BC for Electrical or Gas Permits? \_\_\_\_\_

Have I made provision for erosion and sediment control during construction? \_\_\_\_\_

Will I be disturbing hazardous materials during my proposed renovations? If my home is built prior to 1990, I may need the services of a Hazardous Materials Consultant. \_\_\_\_\_

Do I require a Tree Removal Permit (applies to tree cutting, some pruning, etc.)? \_\_\_\_\_

Do I have all my documentation and fees organized to submit my Building Permit application?

- [Building Permit Application](#) (online)
- [Appointment of Agent](#) (if required, completed online before starting permit application)
- Plans to scale
- Site Plan to scale (for carriage houses)
- [BCH registration documents](#) (for new carriage houses)
- Energy Efficiency Compliance Report (Pre-Construction, for new carriage houses)
- Truss and engineered floor and beam layout (if required)
- [Ventilation Checklist](#) (where an Energy Advisor is not involved)
- [Hazardous Materials Form](#) (for renovations to existing construction)
- Associated fees