

FAQ

Implementation of RDCO Zoning Bylaws for Secondary Suites

Background

In 2023, the Government of British Columbia passed several new pieces of legislation intended to help fulfill the [Homes for People](#) plan and address housing needs for residents across the province. These changes include the [Bill 44: Housing Statutes Amendment Act](#), which aims to improve housing supply and affordability, expedite approval processes for residential projects, and allow greater density than traditionally permitted. Under the new legislation, all local governments must review and amend land use bylaws to allow housing at the prescribed density by June 30, 2024.

What does Bill 44 mean for the RDCO?

Bill 44 requires that a secondary suite be permitted on properties in all single-family residential zones within the two RDCO electoral areas; Electoral Area East and Electoral Area West.

Do I still need to apply for a rezoning to allow a secondary suite?

No, a site-specific zoning amendment will no longer be required. Once approved, the new regulations will allow for one suite within the principal dwelling in all residential zones that allow single family dwellings.

It is important to note that this does not outright allow secondary suites on ALL properties. Properties must still apply for a Building Permit to ensure adequate site servicing and building code compliance can be achieved for the property. Site-specific constraints may mean that it will not be feasible to develop a suite on all lots.

How large can a suite be?

The maximum gross floor area of a secondary suite is 100m² (1076sq. ft.)

How much does an application for a permit for a secondary suite cost?

A \$520 Building permit application fee + 1.2% of the total construction cost is required for proposals to add a suite to an existing single-family dwelling, or for new builds that incorporate a suite. There may also be costs associated with determining whether your onsite wastewater disposal system and water supply is suitably designed for an additional dwelling unit.

Can I add a secondary suite in my primary residence as well as a bed and breakfast on my property?

No, the intent of the new legislation is to create additional stable/long-term housing opportunities throughout the province. A bed and breakfast is not permitted if a secondary suite exists, and suites may not be used as a short-term vacation rental.



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Can I add a secondary suite in my primary residence if I have an accessory home on my property?

No, under the legislation the RDCO may choose to permit a suite or an accessory home. Although accessory homes are permitted on A1, RU1 and RU2 properties that are over 3.8ha in size, a secondary suite is not permitted if an accessory home exists.

Does this amendment apply to RDCO Joe Rich Rural Land Use bylaw?

No, rural land use bylaw areas such as Joe Rich are exempt from the legislation's requirements. Joe Rich residents who wish to develop a secondary suite may apply for a land use designation amendment.

Can I add or build a secondary suite without a building permit?

No, a building permit must be obtained to build a secondary suite. Property owners with suites that were not previously permitted should contact RDCO Inspection Services for guidance on how to legalize the dwelling.

What design requirements should be considered for suites?

A secondary suite must;

- Be within a single detached house and not connected by a breezeway or carport
- Be a self-contained dwelling unit that has its own separate kitchen, sleeping and bathing facilities
- Have a gross floor area of less than 100m² (1076 sq. ft.).
- Have one dedicated parking space that is accessible via a driveway with a maximum gradient of not more than 12%
- Comply with the BC Building Code requirements including;
 - Smoke and Carbon Monoxide detectors
 - Unobstructed openings from all rooms
 - Fire separation between the suite and principal dwelling
 - Ventilation requirements
- Be able to meet water supply and wastewater servicing requirements as defined in section 3.26 of Zoning Bylaw No. 871. This will require written confirmation that the suite (and home) can be connected to community services, or confirmation of professionally designed and installed systems if the lot requires a private water source and/or an onsite wastewater disposal system.

Please note: Site-specific constraints may mean that it will not be feasible to develop a suite on all lots.