



City of Langley

Secondary Suites Program

Information Brochure

Langley City Council has recently decided to legalize secondary suites in all single family residential zones in the City.

This information brochure has been prepared to provide homeowners in the City of Langley with an overview of the City's requirements for secondary suites and the steps required to legalize an existing secondary suite. This guide provides general information about the City's secondary suites program, but does not replace legal documents such as the City's Zoning Bylaw or the BC Building Code.

What is a secondary suite?

The BC Building Code defines a secondary suite as an additional dwelling unit which:

- has a total floor space of not more than 90 m² in area;
- has a floor space less than 40% of the habitable floor space of the building;
- is located within a building of residential occupancy containing only one other dwelling unit; and
- is located in and part of a building which is a single real estate entity.

In simpler terms, a secondary suite is an area of a single family dwelling that is separate from the rest of the house. A secondary suite 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 at least one bedroom, a bathroom, and a kitchen. The kitchen must have cooking facilities (usually a stove or microwave, but a stove plug of 220 volts or a gas line into the kitchen is also considered a cooking facility, since either of these hook-ups would enable quick and easy installation of a stove).

What are the City's requirements for secondary suites?

The City has amended its Zoning Bylaw to allow secondary suites in principal buildings in both the *RS1 – Single Family Residential Zone* and the *RS2 – Single Family Estate Residential Zone*, provided that there is no more than one secondary suite per lot.

What this means is that secondary suites are permitted in single family homes in all single family residential zones. The City has placed a number of conditions on the legalization of secondary suites, including:

- **Maximum of one (1) secondary suite per lot.** This helps to ensure the preservation of the character of single family residential neighbourhoods. No separate address will be assigned for secondary suites.
- **One (1) additional parking space is required.** All single family homes must have at least 2 off-street parking spaces. This requirement means that all single family homes *with a secondary*

suite must have at least 3 off-street parking spaces.

- **Owner occupancy requirement.** The registered owner of the property must live in either the primary unit (the main area of the house) or the secondary suite. Owner occupancy status will be confirmed by verifying information from Home Owner Grant applications.
- **Home occupations permitted except Child Care Centres.** All home occupations, as defined in the City's Zoning Bylaw, are permitted in conjunction with a secondary suite, with the exception of child care centres, which are to be prohibited where a secondary suite is present. Additional parking may be required for home occupations.
- **Must meet BC Building Code requirements.** All buildings in British Columbia are subject to the British Columbia Building Code, which sets out minimum provisions for public health, fire protection, and structural sufficiency. Section 9.36 of the BC Building Code outlines specific requirements for secondary suites, including requirements for fire separation, smoke alarms, access and egress, and other safety standards as defined by the Code. All secondary suites in the City of Langley must meet the requirements of the BC Building Code, including the maximum size requirement of 90 m². A copy of this section of the BC Building Code may be obtained from City Hall. No equivalencies to the BC Building Code will be considered.

For further information about the secondary suites program, contact:

City of Langley 20399 Douglas Crescent, Langley, BC V3A 4B3
Development Services & Economic Tel: (604) 514-2800 Fax: (604) 514-2322
Development Department Website: www.city.langley.bc.ca



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How do I legalize my secondary suite?

1

Property Title Search. You will need to determine whether there are any restrictions registered on the title of your property that may not allow you to have a secondary suite. These restrictions could include a restrictive covenant or a Land Use Contract. If there are any restrictions registered on your property, please contact City staff to determine the process to remove these restrictions.

2

Obtain Construction Estimate. You may need to obtain the services of a professional contractor to provide an estimate of the work required to legalize your secondary suite. This estimate should include the construction value required to legalize your secondary suite.

3

Apply For Permits. If there are no secondary suite restrictions registered on the title of your property, you can proceed to complete the City of Langley's *Building Permit Application* form which can be obtained at City Hall. On this form, you are asked whether the application for permit is for new construction, renovation, addition, tenant improvements, demolition of building, or other. You should check the box marked "Other" and indicate in the Project Description field: "Legalization"

of Secondary Suite." You will also be required to provide the estimated construction value obtained in Step 2 in order to determine the appropriate building permit fees that you will need to pay. Building Permit fees are outlined in the City's Building and Plumbing Bylaw, which can be downloaded from the City's website or obtained from City Hall. Building permit fees must be submitted with the Building Permit Application.

4

Inspection. Once the City has processed your Building Permit application, the City will set up an appointment to conduct an inspection of the secondary suite. The Building Inspector and the Fire Prevention Officer will check your secondary suite to confirm that it meets all legal requirements, including the requirements of City of Langley's Zoning Bylaw and the BC Building Code. If the inspection reveals that additional work needs to be done to meet all legal requirements, a re-inspection will be required. There is a \$40 re-inspection fee.

5

Registration. Once the Building Inspector and Fire Prevention Officer are satisfied that your secondary suite meets all legal requirements, the City will issue a final occupancy certificate and add the information about your

secondary suite to its Secondary Suite Registry. All secondary suites that are included on this registry will be considered to be legal suites. The City will also notify BC Assessment that your home contains a registered secondary suite.

Are there incentives to legalize my suite?

The City has developed an incentive program to encourage homeowners to legalize their secondary suites. **If you apply to legalize your suite between January 1 and December 31, 2007, you will not be charged any building permit or inspection fees to legalize your suite.** In addition, the application fee for discharging a land use contract (where applicable) will also be waived during this period. Applications submitted after December 31, 2007 will be subject to building permit and inspection fees. Land use contract application fees will also apply in 2008.

What happens after the transition period?

After the transition period, the City will take a proactive approach to enforcement. When the City becomes aware of an existing illegal secondary suite, the homeowner will be directed to either have their suite inspected and registered with the City or to remove the secondary suite. If homeowners choose not to legalize their secondary suite, they will be required to remove the suite and may also be subject to daily fines.

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