

Secondary Suites Made Easier



The City of Victoria is making it easier for homeowners to install secondary suites. Secondary suites offer homeowners a variety of benefits and increase the amount of safe, affordable housing in Victoria. They can serve as a mortgage helper, provide a sense of security and increase the value of a home.

What is a secondary suite?

A secondary suite is a legal rental suite, located within a single family detached house. A secondary suite cannot be strata-titled.

How do I get started?

If you are planning to construct a secondary suite, your first step should be to ensure that your property complies with all necessary zoning and other requirements for the construction of a secondary suite. The City of Victoria's Planning and Development Department, located on the second floor of Victoria City Hall, can assist you with these inquiries. Office hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday.

Once you have confirmed that your property complies, you must apply for a Building Permit at Victoria City Hall. To learn more about the process and to have your specific questions answered, contact: Zoning at **250.361.0316** and/or Permits and Inspections at **250.361.0342**.

A Building Permit requires that a homeowner comply with the secondary suites standards in the BC Building Code.

Secondary Suite Grant Program

As a homeowner, you may wish to look into the City of Victoria's Secondary Suite Grant Program. This program will offer homeowners a grant equal to 25% of construction costs of new secondary suites, up to a maximum grant of \$5,000.

Who is eligible to apply for the grant?

You must be the owner and occupant of the single family detached house within the City of Victoria boundaries (not the Greater Victoria region) for which the grant is requested. The grant applies only to construction of a new secondary suite and does not apply to renovation or upgrading of a legal or illegal existing suite.

Your property must be in compliance with the City of Victoria's Building Bylaw and Zoning Regulation Bylaw at the time of application, and construction must comply with all permits and bylaws related to secondary suites. You must be current in your payment of taxes and utilities for the property.

What does the grant cover?

Each individual grant will equal 25% of construction costs, to a maximum grant of \$5,000. Eligible construction costs are defined as the value of the actual building materials and contracted services. **Ineligible costs** include volunteer and owner's labour, tools, appliances, and related permit fees.

What are the steps I need to take in order to receive this grant?

- Confirm your property meets the zoning and regulatory requirements
- Apply for your Building Permit
- Submit your completed grant application forms. Grant application forms are available at City Hall, or at www.victoria.ca by clicking on *Secondary Suites*.
- Do not assume approval of grant monies until receiving notice of eligibility.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

City of Victoria

General Inquiries 250.361.0224

www.victoria.ca and click on *Secondary Suites*

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- Pick up your approved Building Permit and complete all necessary construction and applicable inspections to build a legal secondary suite.
- Apply for your Occupancy Permit.
- After your Occupancy Permit has been issued submit your eligible receipts to the City of Victoria in order to receive the grant. In addition you must enter into a Partnering Agreement with the City of Victoria which will be registered on the property's title for a period of five years. The Partnering Agreement is a written agreement between the City of Victoria and the homeowner detailing the terms and conditions of the grant.

This grant program is a one-time incentive offered on a "first-come, first-served" basis.

For more information on the City's Secondary Suite Grant Program, including a full list of questions and answers, please visit www.victoria.ca and click on *Secondary Suites*.

What financing is available for putting in a secondary suite?

Current and prospective homeowners can contact a bank or financial institution to determine if they are eligible for financing.

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's (CMHC) Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program – Secondary/Garden Suite, provides forgivable loans to homeowners to create an affordable secondary suite in an existing single family house for low-income seniors or adults with a disability. For more information, call **1.800.639.3938** and ask to speak with CMHC's Assisted Housing Centre, or visit www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca. In addition, you may be eligible for a federal Home Renovation Tax Credit. For more information visit www.cra-arc.gc.ca.

What zoning allows for a secondary suite?

Typically secondary suites are permitted in single family detached houses in R1-B, R1-A and R1-G zones; however they may also be permitted in other zones. A City of Victoria zoning map is available from the Planning and Development Department, or visit www.victoria.ca/zoning.

Do I have to provide parking for my secondary suite?

No. A homeowner is not required to provide additional parking for a secondary suite.

Does a house have to be a specific size or age to install a secondary suite?

Houses must have a minimum of 150 square metres (1615 square feet) of floor area with an existing, or potential, ceiling clearance of 2 metres (6'7"). The age of a single family detached house does not preclude it from having a secondary suite installed.

What is the maximum size allowed for a secondary suite?

A secondary suite must not exceed the lesser of 90 square metres (968 square feet) or 40% of the total floor area of a home.

Can I change the exterior of my home when I put in a secondary suite?

Yes, limited changes to the exterior are allowed in the five years prior to, and after, installing a secondary suite with some exceptions, e.g. an addition that creates more than 20 square metres (215 ft²) of floor area. Contact the Planning and Development Department for guidance on the type and scope of changes you are considering.

Can I install a secondary suite after I have put on an addition to my house, or vice versa?

There are some regulations that determine the changes a homeowner can make in the five years prior to, and after, installing a secondary suite. For example, adding up 20 square metres of floor space is acceptable, but anything more than that would likely require a development variance permit. Contact the City of Victoria's Planning and Development Department for more information on what additions are allowed.

When installing a secondary suite, do I need to upgrade the electrical and plumbing in my home?

Depending on the age and maintenance of an existing home and its services, a homeowner can expect that some upgrading will be required to comply with building, plumbing and electrical codes.

Do I need to hire a building designer to install a secondary suite?

It is highly recommended that a building designer be involved as zoning, building, plumbing and electrical code requirements are not common knowledge and can have a significant impact on the installation of a secondary suite. A building designer may help streamline the process and may also help homeowners save money.

Once I install a secondary suite, do I have any legal responsibilities as a landlord?

Yes. For information on the role and responsibilities of a landlord, contact the Rental Owners and Managers Society of BC (ROMS BC) at **250.382.6324** or visit www.suites-bc.com

When is a suite considered legal?

A suite is considered legal when all the required building, plumbing and electrical permits have been applied for and approved, and where all work has been completed, inspected and final Occupancy Permit issued by the City of Victoria.

A Building Permit requires that a homeowner comply with the secondary suites standards in the BC Building Code.

The first step to legalizing an existing suite is to contact the City of Victoria's Zoning Division at City Hall at **250.361.0316**.

Greening Your Suite

The City of Victoria is committed to being a sustainable community. There are a number of resources you can access in order to construct an energy-efficient suite:

- www.citygreen.ca
- www.bchydro.com/powersmart
- www.livesmartbc.ca