GRAVENHURST
GATEWAY TO MUSKOKA

Secondary Suites

in Existing Homes

Town of Gravenhurst Building Department Information Package

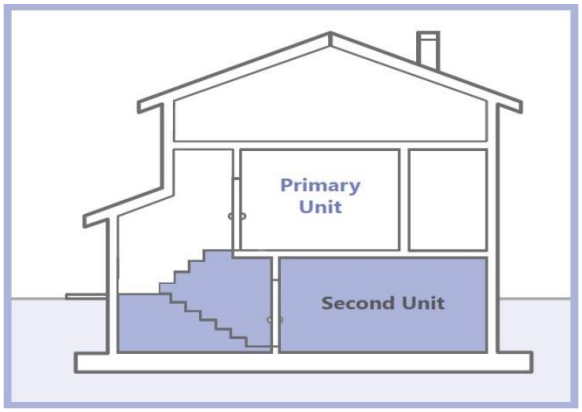
This document is to help assist homeowners along with the general public to better their knowledge in means of what secondary suites are, why they are important, the legality behind the subject and general requirements that should be considered during the planning/design phase. This document is intended to be a general information package and shall have all requirements verified prior to design and permit application.

As per Volume 1 & 2 of the 2012 Ontario Building Code

Table of Contents

About Secondary Suites

What are Secondary Suites?



Secondary suites are an additional self-contained unit located on a single property which is typically found in basements or other detached accessory buildings. These suites provide occupants with their own kitchen and bathroom along with other living areas and shall be accessible through a separate entrance from the main dwelling unit.

Why create a Secondary Suite?

Secondary suites provide affordable living space as well as help assist home owners with the cost of home ownership.

Conformance

Secondary Suites shall conform to all applicable requirements outlined in the latest volumes of the Ontario Building Code along with all necessary municipal By-Laws and Regulations required by the Building, Planning and By-Law Department. Before drawings are prepared, the applicant shall ensure their proposal of work will comply with the municipality and the Zoning regulations. Zoning By-Laws state minimum setbacks, maximum lot coverage and other standards that could potential limit your proposed construction. Existing houses may be applicable to be exempt to certain requirements, or to conform to additional Building Code requirements which can be found later in this document. Secondary suites in existing homes older than 5 years may qualify for some relief under Part 11 of the Ontario Building Code. It is recommended to talk to your designer about what is required to ensure conformance with all applicable sections of the code.

Permits

All secondary suites are required to obtain a building permit through the municipality prior to construction. The requirements for a completed permit application can be seen later on in this document. All drawings shall be completed by a competent person(s) in order to ensure minimum code and life safety requirements are met.

Considerations for Secondary Suites

Parking

Each secondary unit is required to be provided with at least one parking space. Tandem parking (parking spaces that are only accessible by passing through another parking space) shall be permitted.

Services

In areas where municipal services are provided, secondary suites shall be permitted without a requirement in means of sewer and water capacity unless previously documented otherwise. For areas where municipal services are not provided, private wells and sewage treatment systems will require the capacity to be satisfied by the municipality based on number of bedrooms and fixture units in order to ensure it is sufficient.

Egress

Means of egress in secondary suites have requirements set by the Ontario Building Code which can be found later in this document. Essentially, a secondary suite can share an entrance with the main unit provided it has a proper fire separation with a fire resistance rating along with a minimum of two means of egress which can be provided by a door or a window of appropriate size.

Illegal Secondary Suites

Illegal secondary suites will be investigated by the municipality upon receipt of a complaint or a suspicion. If a building permit for a secondary suite was not applied for it is considered an illegal secondary suite. Illegal suites are required to be removed *or* require a building permit and to be constructed to conform to all applicable requirements. If the owner is not willing to comply, further steps will be taken to resolve the issue.

Zoning

There is permitted to be one secondary suite in a Residential Zone (R-1, R-2, R-3, RM-1 or RM-2 only) subject to the accessory apartment being located within a Single Detached Dwelling or a Semi-Detached Dwelling only.

Heating

When a secondary suite is provided, the indoor design temperature needs to be considered. Required heating facilities shall be capable of maintaining an indoor air temperature of not less than 22^{o}C in all living spaces.

Interconnection of Systems

In a residential occupancy, air from one suite shall not be circulated to any other suite or to a public corridor or public stairway. See **Smoke Detectors (p.6)** for Part 11 compliance.

Fire Separations

Separation of Residential Suites

Floor assemblies in buildings of residential occupancies shall be separated from adjacent rooms and suites by a fire separation having a fire-resistance rating of not less than 45 mins as per **9.10.8.1.** and **9.10.9.14.(1)** with sentences **(2)** to **(5)** being considered if applicable.

Fire Rating for Structural Elements

All loadbearing walls, columns and arches in a storey located immediately below a floor or roof assembly shall have a fire-resistance rating of not less than that required for the supported floor or roof assembly as per **9.10.8.3.** unless otherwise stated.

Separation of Common Areas

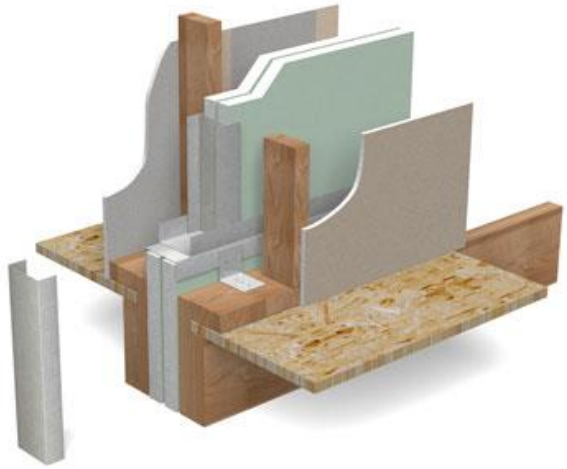
Wall assemblies around the furnace and other common areas such as a public corridor, common laundry room etc… is to be protected by a 45 min fire separation as per **9.10.9.14.** and **9.10.9.15.** There are exceptions for common areas to be exempt from requiring a fire separation if the house is sprinklered.

Exit Enclosures

Except as provided from sentence **(5)** and Article **9.9.8.5.** every exit other than an exit doorway shall be separated from each adjacent floor area or from another exit by a fire separation having a fire-resistance rating not less than that required for the floor assembly above the floor area as per **9.9.4.2.(1)**

Sound Transmission Rating

All wall and floor assemblies separating two dwelling units shall be provided with a minimum sound transmission class rating of 50 as per **9.11.2.1.(1)** provided assemblies are not adjacent to an elevator shaft or refuse chute.



Rooms & Exits

Required Exits

At least two exits shall be provided from every floor area as per **9.9.8.2.(1)** unless otherwise stated in sentences **(2)** and **(3)** and Subsection **9.9.9.** When an egress door from a unit opens into a public corridor or exterior passageway it shall be possible from the location where the egress door opens into the corridor or exterior passageway to go in opposite directions to two separate exits unless the dwelling unit has a second and separate means of egress as per **9.9.9.2.**

Room Sizes and Dimensions

All sizes of rooms are required to conform to Section **9.5.** Ceiling heights shall conform to **Table 9.5.3.1.** as following:

- A living room, dining room and kitchen area shall be a minimum of 2300 mm over at least 75% of the area with a clear height of 2100 mm at any point
- A bedroom area shall be a minimum of 2300 mm over at least 50% of the area, or 2100 mm over all of the required floor area. Any part of the floor having a clear height of less than 1400 mm shall not be included for the calculation of required floor area
- Basement spaces are to be a minimum of 2100 mm over at least 75% of the area with exceptions the clear height under beams and ducts are permitted to be reduced to 1950 mm.
- A bathroom or laundry area above grade shall be provided with 2100 mm in any area where a person would normally be in a standing position
- A passage, hall or main entrance area and finished rooms not mentioned elsewhere shall be a minimum of 2100 mm clear height.

Natural Light

Except as required in other parts of the Ontario Building Code Section **9.7.2.3.** shall apply. When electrical lighting is provided, at least 10% of living and dining areas shall be served by natural light. In bedrooms and other finished rooms other than in a laundry room, basement recreation room, unfinished basement, water closet room and kitchen, at least 5% of the area should be served by natural light.

Egress Windows

Except where a door on the same floor level as the bedroom provides direct access to the exterior, every floor level containing a bedroom in a suite shall be provided with at least one outside window that is openable without the use of tools and provides a minimum area of $0.35m^2$ with no dimension less than 380 mm as per **9.9.10.1.** The window is required to conform to the minimum area requirements without the need for addition support that would fall in the path of travel.

Spatial Separation

Maximum area of the exposing building face and glazed openings in houses and secondary suites shall conform to the regulations of spatial separation between houses outlined in **9.10.15.**, specifically **Table 9.10.15.4.** which provides requirements regarding the maximum area of glazed openings in exterior walls of houses.

Smoke/Carbon Monoxide Alarms

Smoke Alarms

Smoke alarms under **9.10.19** are required to conform to **CAN/ULC-S531** and shall be installed in each dwelling unit on or near the ceiling. Smoke alarms are required to have a visual signaling component conforming to the requirements in **18.5.3.** of **NFPA 72** and a sound pattern conforming to **9.10.19.2**. Smoke alarms are required to be installed so that:

- There is at least one smoke alarm installed on each storey, including basements
- There is a smoke alarm installed in each sleeping room and location between the sleeping room and the remainder of the storey throughout any storey of a dwelling unit to contain sleeping rooms (if the sleeping rooms are served by a hallway, the smoke alarm shall be located in the hallway)
- Within a house that contains an interior shared means of egress or common area, a smoke alarm shall be installed in each shared means of egress and common area

All of the smoke alarms mentioned above are required to be wired so that they are interconnected in means that activation of one alarm will cause all alarms within the dwelling to sound.

Carbon Monoxide Alarms

Where a fuel-burning appliance is installed in a suite of residential occupancy, a carbon monoxide alarm is required to be installed adjacent to each sleeping area in the suite as per **9.33.4.2.(1)**. If the fuel-burning appliance is installed in a service room that is not in a suite of residential occupancy, a carbon monoxide alarm is required to be installed adjacent to each sleeping area in every suite in which is adjacent to the service room, as well as an alarm installed in the service room as per **9.33.4.2.(2)**. All carbon monoxide alarms shall be mechanically fixed at the manufactures recommended height or in absence of the specific instructions, on or near the ceiling as per **9.33.4.2.(5)**.

Smoke Detectors in Ducts

Part 11 can be utilized for residential occupancies serving air from one suite to another suite, public corridor or public stair way provided it does not have more than four dwelling units and that a smoke detector is installed in the supply or return air duct system serving the entire building which would turn off the fuel supply and electrical power to the heating system upon activation of such detector as per **Table 11.5.1.1.C. C195**.

See latest version of OBC for code references

Electrical Facilities

Lighting of Entrances

An exterior lighting outlet controllable through a wall switch located inside of the building is to be provided at every entrance of a residential building as per **9.34.2.1.(1)**.

Lighting Outlets in Houses and Dwelling Units

A lighting outlet fixture controlled by a wall switch is to be provided in kitchens, bedrooms, living rooms, utility rooms, laundry rooms, dining rooms, bathrooms, water closet rooms, vestibules and hallways in a house or individual dwelling unit (suite) as per **9.34.2.2.(1)**. A lighting outlet fixture is not required in bedrooms or living rooms where a receptacle controlled by a wall switch is provided as per **9.34.2.2.(2)**. Every stairway is required to be provided with light as per **9.34.2.3**.