CITY OF VANCOUVER

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
By-Law Compliance & Administration

SECONDARY SUITE PROGRAM

The Process
The following steps are designed to help a homeowner through the various stages involved in installing a new suite to an existing house, or retaining an existing suite that has no prior permits or inspection approval.

STEP 1: Apply for a Special Inspection and book an appointment for this inspection.
A Special Inspection is a coordinated inspection carried out by the Building, Electrical and Plumbing Inspectors. Its purpose is to determine what upgrading work would be required to legalize a suite.

STEP 2: Review Upgrading Letter.
You will receive a letter listing the permits, plans, and upgrading requirements. Please read the upgrading letter carefully and prepare any documents that are required to obtain permits (e.g., Plans).

STEP 3: Obtain Permits.
Bring the letter to City Hall (515 West 10th Avenue – Ground Floor) with the necessary plans as indicated on the upgrading letter and apply for a Combined Development and Building Permit.

> **NOTE**: A Combined Development and Building Permit can be obtained by the homeowner or his/her representative. However, Electrical, Plumbing, Gas, and Sprinkler Permits, if required, will only be issued to licensed contractors.

STEP 4: Call for Inspections.
Progress inspections are required during the course of the upgrading. Several inspections may be required before a job can be finalized. To book a progress inspection or final inspection for a secondary suite, you or your contractor may phone 3-1-1 (or 604.873.7000 outside of Vancouver).

STEP 5: Suite Approval.
If the work meets all requirements, your suite will be approved. Staff in the Secondary Suite Office will send you a letter confirming this.

STEP 6: Annual Business License.
An annual Business License will be required for rental suites. Please see staff in the License Office or phone 3-1-1.

Permits, Plans & Upgrading Requirements
The information below has been prepared as a guide to homeowners only. The relevant City By-Law and/or Code requirements will take precedence.

Permits
A Development & Building Permit will be required to carry out upgrading work and to formally change the use of your house from a one-family dwelling to a one-family dwelling with a secondary suite. The homeowner or his/her representative can apply for this permit.

If the upgrading letter identifies any required trades permits (i.e., Electrical, Plumbing or Gas Permits), these permits can only be obtained by licensed contractors.

Plan Requirements
Plans are required at the time you apply for a Development & Building Permit. In most cases, two sets of floor plans and site plans will be acceptable. These plans do not need to be prepared by a professional; however, the information on the drawings must be drawn to scale, clearly labelled and include dimensions.

The floor plan must include the location and dimensions of all secondary suite rooms (bedrooms/ kitchen/bath room/living room, etc.), stairs, windows, doors, and the location of electrical outlets and plumbing fixtures in the suite.

The site plan must include the location and dimensions of (a) on-site parking, (b) the access path from the street to the suite entry and any protrusions encroaching onto the access path, and (c) the location of the lane and the street.

If additions or alterations are proposed or required in other parts of the building, or if the building is raised or lowered, further plans will be required. For further information regarding plan submission and requirements, please contact the Enquiry Centre at 604.873.7611.

Upgrading Requirements

The following are general requirements for a secondary suite, identified through a Special Inspection of the building, where Building, Electrical and Plumbing/Gas inspectors attend the property together. The focus of the inspection is the suite area; however, any hazards throughout the building that are identified during the inspection, must be corrected whether or not a suite is retained or installed.

Parking

- Houses built before April 20, 2004 – one on-site parking space will be accepted.
- Houses built on or after April 20, 2004 – require two on-site parking spaces (one for the primary dwelling unit and one for the secondary suite).
- A parking space is 8' x 18'. In some cases, a site peculiarity may allow a relaxation.
- A durable surface is required for parking spaces.

Ceiling Height

A minimum existing ceiling height of 6'6" is required over 80% of the suite area and all exit routes.

Grade Level/Minimum Floor Area

- The secondary suite cannot be over 1.83 meters (6 ft.) below finished grade level.
- A minimum floor area of $37m^2$ (400 sq. ft.) is required; however it cannot exceed the size of the principle dwelling unit.

Fire Separation

- Existing lath and plaster in good condition, or minimum ½ inch gypsum wallboard is required on walls and/or ceilings between the primary dwelling unit and the secondary suite.
- Self-closing devices are required on any interconnecting doors between the principal dwelling unit and the secondary suite.

Electrical

- For sprinklered buildings, interconnected, hard-wired smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detection with battery back-up and silencing feature installed with a permanent connection to an electrical circuit, are required in every bedroom and one every floor which must located in the hallway when the bedrooms are served by a hallway. Note: carbon monoxide detection alarm is not required when there is no gas furnace in your house.
- For unsprinklered suites, in addition to the above, these smoke alarms must be equipped with carbon monoxide detection, battery backup and manual silencing devices which will silence the alarm for a period of 10 minutes, after which the alarm will continue to function.
- The proper number of receptacles/appliance circuits will be required in the suite.
- The main electrical service must be sized to accommodate all electrical loads (e.g., usually two electric ranges and two electric dryers will require a minimum 100 amp service).

Plumbing & Gas

- Existing plumbing and gas fixtures must be properly installed with approved traps and vents.
- Furnace and hot water tank vents require proper clearance from combustible materials.
- Gas appliances must be installed in an approved manner.

Fees for a secondary suite (2015 rates)

One time inspection and permit fees as follows:

Special Inspection	$171.15 (includes GST)
Combined Development & Building Permit	from $694
Electrical Permit	from $ 61
Plumbing Permit	from $163
Gas Permit	from $163

Annual Business License fee	$ 64
*One-time fee for new licence applications	$ 52

(Please see staff in the License Office or phone 3-1-1.)

There will be additional fees for Water, Sewer, Garbage and Recycling Flat Rates.
For more information, please contact the Utility Billing Office or 3-1-1.

For more information on secondary suites and to book inspections, please phone 3-1-1.

Note: This guide has been prepared for information only. Rates are subject to change without notice. The Relevant City By-Law and/or Code requirements will take precedence.