

Legal Basement Suite





What if I don't want to keep the suite?

You can decommission the suite by doing the following:

- Remove upper kitchen cabinetry and re-finish the walls.
- Remove both stove and stove electrical outlet. Wiring must be disconnected from the electrical panel by a certified electrician. Proof of the work must be provided.
- Remove separation between suite and principle living area – there may not be two independent living areas. Remove the door between living spaces, framing, interior locking mechanisms, refinishing as walk through style opening.
- If there is no access to the principle living area through the interior of the suite, access must be created in compliance with the BC Building Code.
- Contact the City to arrange for a Building Inspector to conduct an inspection to confirm removal of the suite (\$200 fee may apply) within 12 months.

What if my suite does not meet all the criteria?

If you have a suite in the residence you own, there are steps you can take to conform to the City bylaw. If your current zoning allows for a suite you can do the following:

-  Contact the City to confirm that building permits were issued for the suite.
-  If there is no building permit, staff will work with you to assist you in determining how best to legalize your suite.
-  Book an inspection with a City Building Inspector who will verify the suite meets BC Building Code (\$200 fee may apply).
-  If it does not meet Code, the owner will be responsible to obtain the necessary permits and make the required renovations and arrange for re-inspection.

If current zoning does not allow for a suite, the suite must be decommissioned.



What is a Legal Suite?

Secondary Suites - self contained dwelling located within a principal dwelling

Detached Suites - self contained dwelling located in a separate building from principal dwelling

A legal suite in Fort St. John meets the following criteria:

- The suite is located in a single detached dwelling or duplex, or within an accessory building on the same parcel as a single detached dwelling or duplex.
- There are no more than 4 dwelling units per parcel.
- There is only one suite within a single detached dwelling, and up to two detached suites on the same parcel.
- There can be one suite within each half of a duplex, if there are no detached suites on the same parcel
- There are no boarders or a bed and breakfast being operated.
- The maximum floor area of a secondary suite must not exceed the lesser of 90sqm (approx. 30 feet by 30 feet), or 40% of the gross floor area of the principle building.
- The suite meets BC Building Code requirements for secondary suites.
- One parking space is provided on the parcel per bedroom in each suite, in addition to the spaces provided for the principal dwelling unit.
- Secondary suites are not permitted within detached suites.
- Secondary suites cannot be subdivided or strata titled.

Its about:

- ✓ **Your safety**
- ✓ **Your investment**
- ✓ **Your neighbourhood**
- ✓ **Our community**

Why do I care?

Secondary suites that are not legal could be a concern for owners:

- Suites may not be safe if they do not meet the BC Building Code and if they are not known to emergency personnel. In the event of an emergency everyone needs to get out safely.
- Mortgage insurance may not be valid in illegal suites with significant financial consequences.
- Insurance may not cover all repairs in the event of damage to the dwelling.

Protect your investment and ensure your suite is legal!

Why do my neighbours care?

Secondary Suites impact neighbourhoods:

- Additional residents mean more vehicles.
- Additional vehicles parked on the roads create challenges for snow removal and emergency vehicle access.
- More residents in a house can mean more garbage piled on the curb on garbage day and an unsightly street.
- Over crowded streets also make a neighbourhood appear less desirable and can impact real-estate value.
- Neighbourhood planning involves estimating the number of people using City services. Additional unplanned residents put increased pressures on infrastructure like water and sewer lines.



Reporting a concern

Report an illegal suite:

City of Fort St. John Bylaw

☎ 250 787 8150 or dial 3-1-1

✉ illegal_suite@fortstjohn.ca

More information

City of Fort St. John Bylaw

🔗 fortstjohn.ca/bylaw

Building Permits

🔗 fortstjohn.ca/building-inspection

City of Fort St. John

☎ 250 787 8150

✉ info@fortstjohn.ca

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City of Fort St. John

Secondary Suites



Guide for legal
secondary suites



FORT ST. JOHN
The Energetic City