



# ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT HOW-TO GUIDE

Including Secondary Suites, Carriage Homes &  
Secondary Dwellings

**THE CITY OF QUESNEL**

Development Services Department, 2021



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## What Are ADUs?

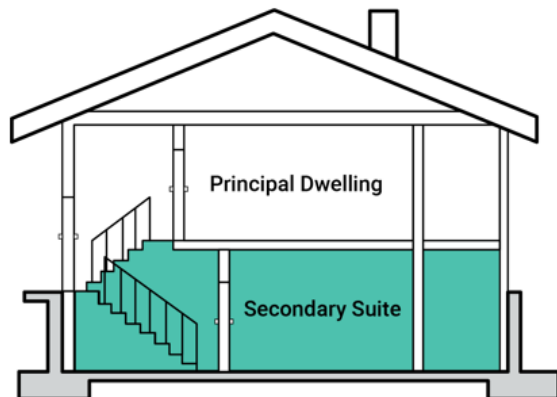
Accessory Dwelling Units (“ADU” as the short acronym) help to create a variety of housing options within our community. ADU’s include secondary suites, carriage houses, and secondary dwellings. This guide is designed to help you understand the different types of ADUs allowed in our City, where they are permitted, and what you need for your building permit application.

If you have any questions and are interested in discussing the possibility of an ADU on your property, please contact the Development Services department at 250.992.2111. You need a building permit to construct an ADU.

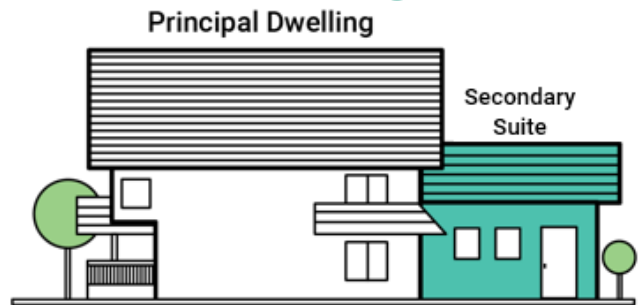
## What is a Secondary Suite?

A secondary suite is a separate living area contained within single-detached dwellings, row houses, or duplexes. It is a self-contained living unit with a kitchen, bathroom, and at least one bedroom. The suite must have at least one access door leading directly outside the suite.

**Secondary Suite below Main Floor of a Single-Detached Dwelling**

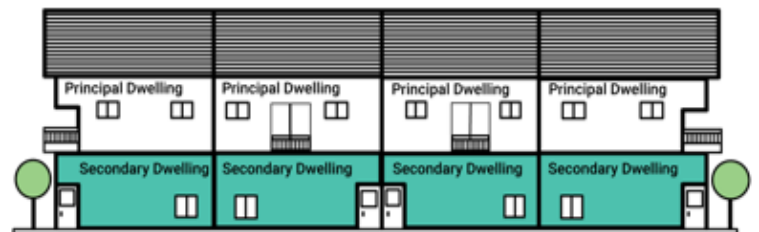


**Secondary Suite Attached to Principal Dwelling**

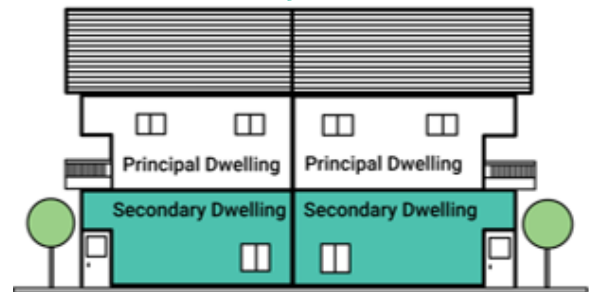


When a building contains more than one principal dwelling unit, they must be horizontally adjacent for the addition of a secondary suite.

**Secondary Suites at Grade of a Row House**



**Secondary Suites at Grade of a Duplex**



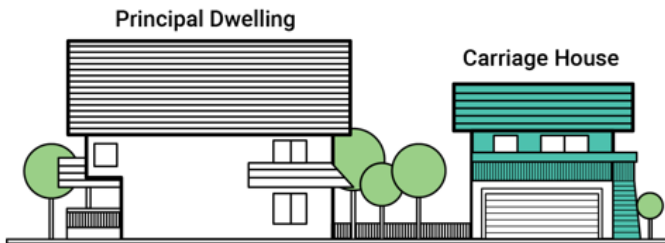
The secondary suite and the other dwelling unit in a building constitutes as a single real estate entity; the secondary suite may not be separately strata-titled or otherwise subdivided from the other dwelling unit. A secondary suite will be assigned a separate address during the building permit process.

## What is a Carriage House?

A carriage house is an attached house located in conjunction with an accessory building (e.g. a garage). A carriage home is located on the same property as the principal dwelling.

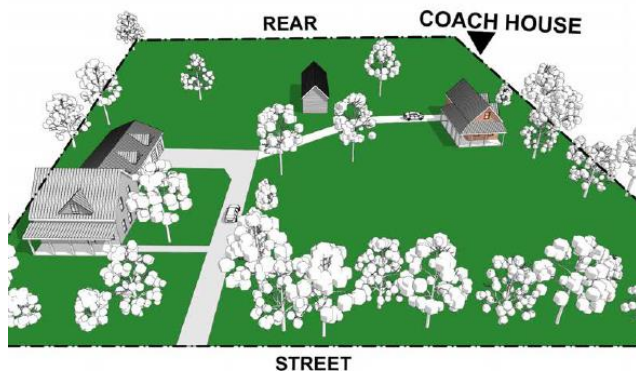
A carriage home requires access to a main street. It does not have its own Certificate of Title, cannot be strata titled, and requires a separate address.

### Carriage House above Grade, Attached to an Accessory Building (e.g. a Garage)

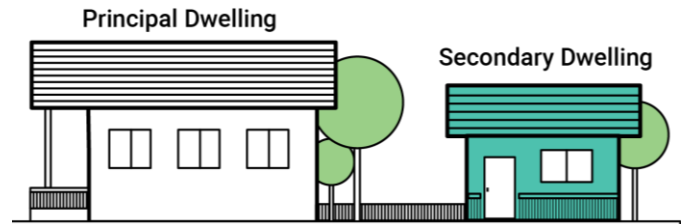


## What is a Secondary Dwelling?

A secondary dwelling is a freestanding detached single-detached dwelling located on the same parcel as the principal dwelling. (Sometimes called a coach house in other municipalities). The secondary dwelling must be smaller than the principal home.



Secondary dwellings differ from carriage homes because they are freestanding and not attached to an accessory building, like a garage.



## What Are The Benefits?

Quesnel residents listed several reasons why accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are beneficial for our community:

- ✓ An ADU provides rental income for the homeowner, acting as a mortgage helper to make owning a home more attainable.
- ✓ The number of affordable housing units will increase, providing more options for residents looking to rent.
- ✓ An ADU can provide a safe, affordable home for seniors and students looking for appropriate, independent living.
- ✓ Quesnel has few small dwelling units. As households and family size decreases, ADUs provide additional housing options for residents.
- ✓ Leading on the path to sustainability, ADUs create more housing without requiring more land, helping to control sprawl into the rural areas.



## Pre-Planning Considerations

### What Steps Are Involved?

Before deciding on the steps to construct an accessory dwelling unit, you and your family should ask the following questions:

- Do I want an accessory dwelling unit?
- Am I able to pay for upfront costs, knowing that I will receive a return in my investment in the future?

The Government of British Columbia has online information regarding landlord and tenant tips, tenancy agreement templates, and information about the [Residential Tenancy Act](#) [here](#).

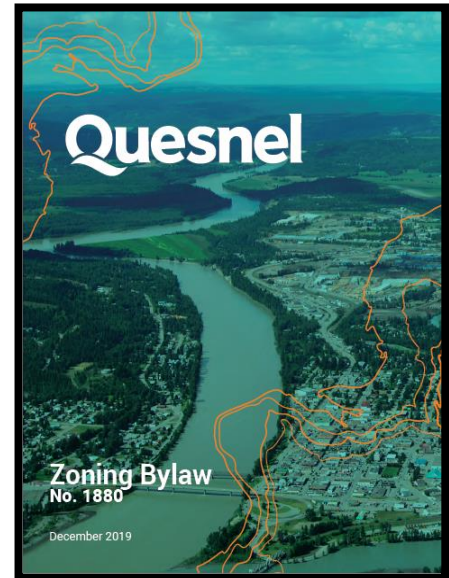
- After you and your family have discussed the above, you can move into planning and logistics. An overview of the steps, which will be covered in this guide include:
- Reach out to the City's Development Services Department at any time during your planning process for more information and clarity at 250.992.2111

- Find out what type of ADU you are allowed to have based on the City's Zoning Bylaw.
- Investigate the potential costs associated for servicing your lot.
- Design your ADU, ensuring to meet the regulations in the Zoning Bylaw.
- Come into the City and apply for your Building Permit. Staff will identify any missing pieces or things that need to be edited.
- After you have your permits, start construction!
- Set up inspections with the Building Inspector as required throughout the process at 250.991.7461. Contact the Building department at [buildinginspection@quesnel.ca](mailto:buildinginspection@quesnel.ca) if you have any questions.
- Once the Building Inspector signs off on your final inspection, you are ready to rent! Make sure to investigate your rights as landlord and your future tenant's rights, and sign a clear, fair lease agreement.



## What Does The Zoning Bylaw Say About ADUs?

- Regulations for accessory dwelling units are found in the Zoning Bylaw. ADUs are also subject to the bylaws in the residential zone that your property is located in (e.g. RS-1, RS-2, etc.)
- Specifically, secondary dwellings; secondary suites; and carriage homes. Consider the following during your design:



Type of ADU	Regulations to Consider
<b>Secondary Dwelling</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must be on a lot with a single detached dwelling</li> <li>• Size: Must be smaller than the principal dwelling with a max. floor area of 130m<sup>2</sup> (1,400 ft<sup>2</sup>)</li> <li>• Height: 2 storeys max</li> <li>• Accessible from the frontage (main) road</li> <li>• Any home occupation that may take place cannot exceed 40% of the total living floor space</li> </ul>
<b>Secondary Suites</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must be in a single detached dwelling, duplex, or row house</li> <li>• Max of one secondary suite per principal dwelling unit</li> <li>• Size: no limit to the percentage distribution of the secondary suite to the habitable space of the building</li> <li>• Must have direct access to the unit without passing through the principal home</li> <li>• Not permissible in conjunction with a carriage house or secondary dwelling</li> <li>• Not permitted in conjunction with a B&amp;B or lodging house</li> </ul>
<b>Carriage Home</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must be on a lot with a single detached dwelling</li> <li>• Size: Max size is either 90m<sup>2</sup> or 40% of the principal dwellings' gross floor area</li> <li>• Height: 1.5 storeys max; allowable up to 2 storeys if above a 1-storey non-residential accessory building (e.g. a garage). Shall not exceed height of the principal dwelling</li> <li>• Upper storeys limited to 60% of the gross floor area beneath it</li> <li>• Accessible from the frontage (main) road</li> <li>• Not located closer than 6m from the principal dwelling</li> <li>• Must be located in the rear or side yard (unless the property has a lane, then it must be in the rear yard)</li> </ul>

## Am I Ready To Be A Landlord?

Having an accessory dwelling unit means you are becoming a landlord. You should understand the legal obligations involved with becoming a landlord. You have the right to collect rent on time, not have your property damaged and not be harassed or disturbed by your tenant. You also have legal responsibilities. Most important, you are responsible for providing a safe home to your tenants.

The relationship between landlord and tenant is governed by the Government of British Columbia's *Residential Tenancy Act*. The Government provides a variety of resources for landlords and tenants, such as tenancy agreements, deposit and pet info, moving in, condition inspections, etc. Take the time to research your rights and the rights of your future tenant so that you may contribute to Quesnel's rental market responsibly. For more information:

### **Housing & Tenancy:**

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/housing-tenancy>

### **Renting a Home:**

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/housing-tenancy/residential-tenancies>

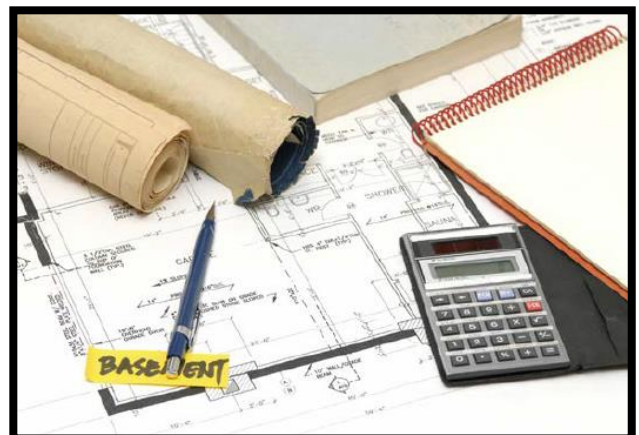
- *Starting a Tenancy* is an excellent page to begin.



## Servicing Feasibility

A homeowner should investigate the potential costs associated with servicing, particularly for carriage homes and secondary dwellings on large lots near the rural areas.

**SEWER & WATER:** An accessory dwelling unit must be connected to municipal water and sewer services. The existing water and sewer are required to meet the BC Plumbing Code for sizing and must be extended to reach the secondary dwelling / carriage house. Reach out to the City's Development Services Department (250.992.2111) to determine if you require additional private construction plans (e.g. a Site Servicing Plan) for your property.



**ELECTRICAL, GAS & INTERNET:** Depending on the age and servicing of your home, you may require an upgrade to your service. If you are doing any work yourself, you will need a homeowner permit; [see Technical Safety BC](#) for details or call 1.866.566.7233. If you hire a contractor they will apply for the permits for you. For information on your current servicing:

**ELECTRICAL SERVICING:** For electrical servicing inquiries, reach out to BC Hydro (1.877.520.1355) to determine requirements and get an estimate connection cost.

**GAS INSTALLATION AND GAS LINE**

**LOCATION:** Contact Fortis BC for information regarding gas installation and line locations (1.888.224.2710). Call before you dig hotline (1.800.474.6886).

**INTERNET:** Call your current provider (TELUS, ABC Communications, etc.) to ensure your future tenants will be able to access internet.

remove any negative impacts on your neighbours' privacy. This may include placing windows in areas that do not look into a neighbours' home or using trees as screening.



## Time to Design

After you have determined that (1) you are zoned for an Accessory Dwelling Unit and (2) servicing is feasible for an ADU, the next step is to design it. The services of a professional can be useful to ensure you meet the bylaw regulations required for the new home.

## Location on Your Property

Like main houses, accessory dwelling units are subject to regulations set out in the Zoning Bylaw for setbacks, size, height, and parking. **Your ADU must follow the setback requirements that your property is zoned in, as well as the regulations in the table above.**

Keep in mind how you may design your secondary dwelling or carriage house to

## Getting Your Permits

### Building Permit Process

A building permit must be obtained prior to starting construction of your accessory dwelling unit. An application can be made at City Hall. If you have any questions, please give the City's Building Department a call at 250.991.7461 or City Hall at 250.992.2111.

**You can access a Building Permit on the City's website here.**

Ensure your plans show the entrance location(s) and where your tenant will park their vehicle.

After you submit a building permit, our application will reviewed for compliance. If they have any questions or require changes so that you may meet the Zoning Bylaw or Building Code, they will contact you.





## Inspection

After your building permit is approved, you may begin construction of your accessory dwelling unit. To make sure the work complies with the Building Code, you are required to book on-going inspections with the City's Building Department as listed on your permit. Building inspections are to be booked with at least 24 hours notice. The date and time will be confirmed upon request. The following page demonstrates the typical inspections that will occur during your construction. You can book inspections by calling the Building Department at 250.991.7461, emailing the Building Department at [buildinginspection@quesnel.ca](mailto:buildinginspection@quesnel.ca)

## Is My Existing Suite Legal?

A suit must have been built with a building permit to be a legal suit. If you have a pre-existing suite, you should contact the building department to confirm if it was built with a building permit. If it was not, you should book a pre-inspection with the Building Department

to determine what is needed to bring your suite in compliance with the Building Code. You can contact the Building Department at 250.991.7461 or City Hall at 250.992.1512. Starting in 2020 there will be a grace period of two years on building permit fees to convert an illegal suite to a legal suite. Following the two year grace period, there will be a surcharge added to permits for illegal suites which have not complied.

## Why Should I Bring My Pre-Existing Suite Up To Code?

There are a number of advantages to bring your suite up to Code and legalizing it in your home. Most advantages relate to the protection of your financial investment, and most importantly, the safety of your home's occupants – both your family and your tenants.

Ensure:

- ✓ **Safety of occupants:** when you bring your suite up to Code, you comply with a variety of safety standards.
- ✓ **Ensure adequate property and home insurance coverage:** if your suite is legal, you can obtain the proper insurance coverage that will protect you in cases of emergencies and/or disasters caused by either a tenant or a member of your family.
- ✓ **Reduce neighbours complaints:** You can provide adequately for your tenants so that any potential neighbourhood impact is removed, such as on-site parking.
- ✓ **Maintain the value of your home:** The work undertaken to legalize a suite is often seen as providing more value

because all work has been completed and inspected and has the potential for supplemental income.

✓ **Avoid penalties:** Upon complaint, the

✓ City will investigate and may request you decommission your illegal suite, and convert it as an extension of the principal dwelling. Follow-up inspections will be required.

## Appendix

### Contact Information

City of Quesnel Planning and Development Services	250.992.2111 for City Hall to be transferred; or <a href="mailto:developmentervices@quesnel.ca">developmentervices@quesnel.ca</a>
City of Quesnel Building Inspections	250.991.7461, <a href="mailto:buildinginspection@quesnel.ca">buildinginspection@quesnel.ca</a>
City of Quesnel Building Permit	<a href="https://www.quesnel.ca/building-development/permits-applications/building-permits">https://www.quesnel.ca/building-development/permits-applications/building-permits</a>
City of Quesnel Zoning Bylaw & Official Community Plan	<a href="https://www.quesnel.ca/building-development/planning-zoning/zoning-land-use">https://www.quesnel.ca/building-development/planning-zoning/zoning-land-use</a>
Technical Safety BC – Gas and Electrical	<a href="http://technicalsaftybc.ca">technicalsaftybc.ca</a>
BC Hydro	Bchydro.com ; 1.877.520.1355
FortisBC	Fortisbc.com ; Natural Gas: 1.888.224.2710 Electricity: 1.866.436.7847
BC One Call – Call before you dig	Bconecall.bc.ca ; 1.800.474.6886
Homeowner Protection Office (HPO)	Hpo.bc.ca ; 1.800.407.7757



### Who is Responsible?

The homeowner is ultimately responsible for the maintenance, upkeep and condition of a home. This means that all building permits are a form of contract between the City and the owner.

## FAQs

### Does having an ADU affect my property taxes?

The British Columbia Assessment Authority is responsible for determining the value of your property for tax purposes. Property taxes are divided into two parts – the value of the land and the value of the improvements. ADUs may increase the value of the improvements on the property and therefore may result in an increase in taxes for this part of the assessment. Please contact the British Columbia Assessment Authority for further information on potential property tax implications.

### Will property owners with suites pay their share of utilities and taxes?

Yes. The City charges water, sewer, and garbage rates for all known suites at the same rate as all other dwelling units. A house with a secondary suite will pay the same utility fees as a duplex. Taxes are charged based on assessed value. If BC Assessment determines a house with a suite has an increased

assessed value, the property owner will pay more taxes.

### What opportunity will there be for neighbours to provide feedback on an ADU proposal?

The process to build an ADU does not require public consultation, however, it is recommended you discuss your proposal with your neighbours.

### My neighbour has an existing suite I think is illegal. What do I do?

It is difficult to tell if an existing suite is 'illegal' or not. Complaints would have to be investigated on a case-by-case basis. Contact the Development Services Department at 250.992.2111

### Is the owner of a residence with an accessory dwelling unit required to live on-site?

No - The owner is not required to live in either the secondary suite or the principal residence.

### Can I add two suites to my duplex?

If a duplex is oriented side-by-side (horizontally adjacent), then a secondary suite may be added to each principal dwelling, provided that other regulations are met; however, secondary suites cannot be added to up-down duplexes.

### Is a secondary suite permitted if there are other uses at the residences?

No - A secondary suite is not permitted in a residence with uses that include a bed & breakfast, community care facility, boarding or lodging house, or an agri-tourist accommodation.

**I'm worried that accessory dwelling units in my neighbourhood would make my street too busy and there will be cars parked all over the street.**

Traffic and parking are common concerns for residents. All secondary suites will be required to provide one additional off-street parking space when a suite is created.

**Can an accessory dwelling unit be sold separately?**

No, an ADU (including all 3 – secondary dwelling, carriage home, and secondary suite) cannot be strata-titled or have their own Certificate of Title. It must remain part of the principal dwelling's property.

**Does an accessory dwelling unit get a separate address?**

Yes. A separate address will be designated during the building permit stage.

**Will accessory dwelling units have to be registered or licensed with the City?**

The building permitting process is the primary 'ADU registration' process. All constructed ADUs will have to obtain a building permit. Tenants and home buyers are welcome to inquire with the City if a building permit was obtained. A separate registration process for existing secondary suites would be costly. The advantages of such a process are unclear as the City is unable to inspect or assess the safety of pre-existing suites under its existing bylaws.

**Will there be waste pickup available for an accessory dwelling unit?**

When you create a legal accessory dwelling unit, your property is billed for providing services (water/sewer/garbage) to 2 separate homes. This means that your tenant will receive their own garbage and recycling bins for City pickup services.

**What do I do if my lot is not eligible?**

Unfortunately you will not be able to construct an accessory dwelling unit.