

Converting Accessory Building to Residential Use

Instead of having a secondary suite within the principal dwelling, a detached additional dwelling can be constructed on most rural and residential zoned properties (R or RE). This could be in the form of either a cottage (single storey) or a carriage house (two storey in Rural zones only).

What are the building code implications of converting an existing accessory building?

A building code assessment must be completed when converting an existing accessory building to a residential dwelling. Where existing construction assemblies are covered and cannot be confirmed visually, you must complete sufficient investigation to confirm that the Building Code requirements have been met. This will require involvement from registered professionals, such as a structural engineer to confirm or design building to resist lateral loads (seismic event) or an architect or engineer to review the building assemblies.

The extent of the building code assessment would be based on confirmation of the accessory building constructed with a building permit and inspections. If previously unauthorized, there would be additional requirements

Some key building code aspects are listed here, but please note there may be additional items required that are not listed and applicable to your specific situation.

Seismic Design (Subsection 9.23.13.) sealed approval from structural engineer will be required confirming existing construction acceptable or provide design details (and related documents) for required improvements.

Construction assemblies* to meet BC Building

Code:

- **Foundation/footing design** to comply with BC Building Code or sign off by structural engineer. Dampproofing (9.13.), Footing depth (9.12.2.), Drainage (9.14.)
- **Exterior Wall Assembly:** cladding type, flashing, moisture barrier (9.27.3.), insulation, air barrier (9.25.3.), vapour barrier (9.25.4.) and GWB. (45 minute FRR if within 1.2 m of property line or imaginary line used for spatial separation)
- **Roof / Ceiling Assembly:** roofing type, insulation, air Barrier (9.25.3.), vapour barrier (9.25.4.), ventilation (9.19.1.) and GWB. (no soffit projections within 0.45 m of property line or imaginary line used for spatial separation)
- **Slab Assembly:** thickness of slab, insulation, air barrier and vapour barrier.

** Energy Advisory could provide As-Built Compliance Report indication building meets a minimum of Step 1 of the BC Energy Step Code, in lieu of meeting BCBC minimum insulation values and air barrier installation in exterior assemblies.*



Building Code implications (continued)

Egress Requirements (Subsection 9.9.10.) Confirm that the egress requirements of 9.9.10.1. will be met in each room that is intended to be a bedroom/sleeping area. Additionally, all exit doors, stairs, landing, guard and handrails to be code compliant.

Spatial Separation (Subsection 9.10.15) Spatial separation requirements must be met between the Detached Accessory Dwelling and any other buildings on the same property. The limiting distance is measured to an imaginary line between the two buildings and/or to property lines and affects wall construction and amount of glazing (windows/doors))

Fire and Sound Separation if multiple uses (Sections 9.10 and 9.11) If dwelling is located in an accessory building with other uses, like garage or workshop, the construction between the uses will need to meet a minimum rating for fire and sound.

Smoke Alarms (Subsection 9.10.19) Hardwired and interconnected smoke alarms are required at least one on each storey, one in each sleeping room and one in the hallway serving the sleeping rooms.

Carbon Monoxide Alarms (Article 9.32.4.2) If the Accessory Dwelling with an attached garage or a fuel-burning appliance, require carbon monoxide alarms in either one of the following locations inside each bedroom, or outside each bedroom within 5 m of each bedroom.

Ventilation (Section 9.32.) system complies with BCBC requirements for a small dwelling; if prescriptive insulation, air barrier, ventilation could be passive, however, if meeting Step 1, would require a mechanical ventilation system (forced air furnace, HRV or CRV).

Plumbing Facilities (Section 9.31.) Confirm that the required fixtures are compliant with and installed to the relevant CSA standards as well as the BC Plumbing Code. (Note: Camera inspection may be required if fixtures were installed without a plumbing permit.)

For up-to-date information on building permits, application forms, and general requirements, please refer to the District website or contact our office.
centralsaanich.ca/building
 250-544-4217

Services

- **Water supply** may require upgrades to existing water supply on property to accommodate new fixtures.
- **Storm (perimeter drain and roof water)** to comply with surface water management bylaw, building and plumbing codes.
- **Sewer** connect to existing lateral for property or design septic system with registered practitioner for authorization by Island Health.
- **Electrical** permit through Technical Safety BC for existing electrical or to authorize new.



Any other considerations?

For specific regulations, please refer to the District's Land Use Bylaw and Building Bylaw, and/or the guide to Cottages and Carriage houses – which covers items such as:

- Parking and EV chargers
- Maximum floor area and lot coverage
- Setbacks, height
- Development permit for Residential zones

What is the approval process?

A building permit is required for any change of use, to demonstrate compliance with District bylaws as well as the BC Building Code. The items listed in this guide will need to be demonstrated and detailed on the building permit plans and application package (see also residential permit guide and District website).