

Converting Accessory Building to Residential Use

A detached additional dwelling can be constructed on most rural and residential zoned properties. For more information on the zoning regulations, please refer to the District's zoning bylaw. This guide covers the main items to consider when planning to convert an existing accessory building to residential use.

What are the 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) and an architect or engineer to review the building assemblies.

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



Key building code considerations.

Important 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 a structural engineer will be required confirming existing construction is acceptable or provide design details (and related documents) for required improvements.

Construction assemblies*:

- **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 (9.36.2), 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 (9.36.2), 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 dampproofing (9.13).

** Energy Advisor could provide As-Built Compliance Report indication building meets a minimum of Step 3 of the BC Energy Step Code, in lieu of meeting minimum insulation values and continuous air barrier installation in exterior assemblies.*

Building Code Considerations (continued)

Egress Requirements (Subsection 9.9.9.) Confirm that the egress requirements and 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.

Heating and Ventilation (Sections 9.32 and 9.33) If compliant with prescriptive insulation, ventilation may be passive for small, single storey; however, if meeting Step 3, a mechanical ventilation system is required. A permanent cooling system is required to maintain a temperature of not more than 26° C for one living area, in the summer. *Please note that Zero Carbon Step Code is applicable; only electric systems are permitted.*

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.)

What about the required building services?

Water supply may require upgrades to existing water supply to accommodate new fixtures.

Storm (perimeter drain and roof water) to comply with surface water management bylaw, building and plumbing codes.

Sewer connection required 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 District regulations, please refer to the Zoning Bylaw, the OCP and Development Procedures Bylaw. There may be additional provincial regulations as well. Please review:

- **Development permit for Residential Zones**
- Setbacks and height in the zoning bylaw
- Maximum floor area and lot coverage
- Parking and EV charger requirements
- If the building was constructed within the last 10 years, a new home warranty may be required – contact BC Housing for details.

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 detailed on the building permit plans and application package (see also the residential permit guide).

For up-to-date information on building permits, application forms, general requirements, and the submission of online applications, please refer to the District website or contact our office.