

Secondary Dwellings on Rural and Agricultural Properties

In 2025, Central Saanich amended the Zoning bylaw to allow a detached accessory dwelling use in Rural and Agricultural zones, in addition to the principal house (and secondary suite if applicable), if your lot area is 1 hectare (ha) or more. For those parcels less than 1 ha, either a secondary suite or a detached dwelling is permitted, but not both.

Building permits are required to construct a cottage or carriage house (or convert an existing building), demonstrating compliance with bylaws and the BC Building Code, and if on agricultural property, a Development Permit is required as well (refer to page 2). This guide provides a summary only, so check out the Official Community Plan (OCP) section 10 of Schedule D (for agricultural property) and the Zoning Bylaw for specifics.



Key Considerations

- Septic systems may require upgrades
- Short-term vacation rentals and basements are not permitted
- Maximum 15m² combined area of balconies, porches, decks and similar outdoor areas not included in floor area
- In a building with other uses, no interconnection is permitted
- In Rural zones, the maximum building height for a detached dwelling is 6.5m (to highest mid-point) with no portion over 7.5m
- In Agricultural zones, a detached accessory dwelling is only permitted if:
 - main dwelling (with/without suite) is 500m² max. floor area
 - accessory dwelling max. floor area of 90m²
 - no mobile homes already on property
- New construction will need to meet all building code regulations for a new house (step code, seismic, etc). If converting an existing building, the majority of the building code for residential use is still applicable. Check out the conversion guide for details!

HELPFUL LINKS

www.CentralSaanich.ca/ZoningBylaw

www.CentralSaanich.ca/DPGuidelines

www.CentralSaanich.ca/ConvertAccessoryBuilding

Scan the QR codes
here for quick access.

Zoning Bylaw



OCP - DP Guidelines



Conversion Guide



Development Permit for Agricultural Properties

An Agricultural Development Permit Area has been established for those properties zoned A-1 to protect and support farming while minimizing the impacts from residential uses. The construction or alteration of a detached accessory dwelling will require a Development Permit (DP), unless otherwise exempt (refer to Schedule A: Farm Protection Guidelines for details). When preparing your DP application and considering the siting and design of a detached accessory dwelling, please review the following General Guidelines.

1

Mitigate conflict with farm operations:

- with current and future farm operations, and both on the property and adjacent farm lands
- surrounding livestock operations, exhaust fans, manure storage, other odor sources and predominate wind direction
- buffer farm (and adjacent farm uses) from residential use with landscaping, fencing, hedgerows and natural topography
- orient outdoor living away from farm operations and buffer accordingly

2

Protect soils:

- locate dwelling in an area previously authorized for removal or placement of fill where possible
- avoid placement in areas with highest agricultural capability (as per classification, agrologist etc.)
- minimize impervious surfaces and provide stormwater runoff management details
- a Notice of Intent is required to the Agricultural Land Commission for any placement of fill regardless of volume

3

Cluster development and residential uses:

- Residential uses and residential accessory buildings, parking areas should be close to roadway and services, such that the total Residential Footprint area is no more than 3,000 m²
- Use shared driveway or existing access
- Maximum separation from principal dwellings is 30m if parcel less than 1 ha, or 50m if over 1ha.
- Avoid placement within Development Permit Areas for natural environment (such as riparian, marine and sensitive areas)
- Retain existing trees and vegetation to buffer farm operations (wind, heat, dust, noise, odours)



What if I want to convert an existing building?

If constructed in 2024 or earlier:

- confirm setbacks/height comply with residential use
- no size increase permitted, other than 3m² for protected entry
- no internal connection between residential and other uses
- if applicable, approved by the ALC
- review the CONVERSION guide for Building Code requirements.