

Secondary suites make sense

BY KEVIN VALLELY, NORTH SHORE NEWS MARCH 20, 2013



Incorporating a secondary suite can help ease your mortgage payments while providing affordable rental housing for a tenant.

Photograph by: NEWS photo, Mike Wakefield

NORTH Shore residents are keenly aware on how desirable it is to live here, but are equally conscious of how expensive it is to live in our community too.

Incorporating a secondary suite into your home is a cost-effective way to help pay down a mortgage while providing affordable housing options for people unable, or unwilling, to step into our costly housing market.

A secondary suite in a house describes an independent dwelling unit separate from the principal unit that's housed within the primary dwelling. The basement suite is by far the most common type of secondary suite here on the North Shore. All three North Shore municipalities permit secondary suites provided the secondary suite meets the provisions of the BC Building Code.

A secondary suite allows for densification within a community without the addition of a new building to a site and makes smart sense in a community like ours where land is at a premium.

For those individuals planning to incorporate a suite into their home here are a few specific requirements that will need to be addressed:

? Only one secondary suite is permitted within a single-family residential building and this unit cannot be subdivided from the building and sold.

? The owner of the residence must actually live there, either occupying the primary dwelling unit or the

secondary suite.

? The floor area of the secondary suite cannot exceed 40 per cent of the overall floor space of the home to a maximum of 968 square feet (90 square metres).

? A secondary suite must have its own independent exit to the exterior.

? An additional off-street parking space for the secondary suite must be provided on site.

? Floors and walls between suites and between independent corridors leading to both need to be fire-rated.

? A separate electrical subpanel is required for the secondary suite.

? A minimum ceiling height of six feet and eight inches is to be provided throughout the secondary unit.

? A separate heating/ ventilation system is required for both the primary and secondary suite.

Adding a secondary suite to your home makes good financial sense and readily provides much needed rental accommodation within the existing infrastructure of the North Shore.

If you're considering adding a secondary suite to your home I'd recommend reflecting on the requirements and paying a visit to your specific municipal authority so you can chart the best course forward.

Kevin Vallely is a residential designer in North Vancouver. Follow along Kevin's "small house" design at cliffhangerhouse.com.

© Copyright (c) North Shore News