

PUBLIC INFORMATION REGARDING THE NEW EMPLOYEE HOUSING INITIATIVES IN RESIDENTIAL AREAS

What changes have been made to the Zoning Bylaw?

The Zoning Bylaw has recently been amended by way of "Zoning Amendment Bylaw (Employee Housing Initiatives) No. 1621, 2003". Bylaw 1621, made a number of changes in order to encourage the construction of employee housing within existing neighbourhoods. These changes are noted as follows:

Density Bonussing

The RS 1, RS 2 and RS 3 Zones are now permitted a density bonus of up to 56 square metres (about 600 square feet) for a restricted employee suite. This bonus density is allowed only when the owner registers an employee housing covenant regulating rental and resale restrictions as per Whistler Housing Authority requirements. To protect neighbourhood character, this would only be permitted where a 0.35 FSR (floor space ratio) is possible. This means that in practicality, the density bonus will only be possible where a lot exceeds about 11,000 square feet. A covenant is only required for floor area that exceeds 325 square metres (about 3,500 square feet) on a lot.

For example:

Lot size = 11,200 square feet
35% site coverage = 3,920 square feet buildable

IF the owner has a 3,500 square foot house on the lot:
This 420 square feet (39 square metres) in excess of the allowable 325 square metres (3,500 square feet) would be considered "bonus" density. An owner could therefore build an attached or detached 39 square metre suite in addition to their house, but would need to enter into an employee housing agreement in order to do so.

IF the owner has a 2,000 square foot house on the lot:
They could build an attached or detached suite of up to 90 square metres but would not need to enter into a housing agreement. If in the future, they wished to "max out" their density to a .35 fsr, they would need to enter into a housing agreement for the space in excess of 325 square metres, to a maximum of 56 square metres.

Detached Garages With Suites

Employee suites in association with detached garages are now allowed in the RS1, RS2, RS3 and RSE1 zones. The maximum height is set at 5 metres and no less than 2 stories to prevent excessive site coverage. B.C. Building Code requirements apply.

Detached Suites

Detached employee suites or cottages in either a front or back yard are allowed. This change is proposed for the RS1, RS2, RS3 and RS-E1 zones. The maximum size of a detached suite is 90 square metres. B.C. Building Code requirements apply.

Increased Suite Size

Suites can now be up to 90 square metres or up to 40% of the total density on a parcel in the RS1, RS2, RS3 and RSE1 zones.

What is the maximum size of a detached building?

The maximum size of a building containing both a suite and parking is 110 square metres.

Can I have a detached suite and a detached garage?

No. Bylaw 1621 expressly prohibits having both a detached suite and a detached garage. This was done to prevent too many buildings and excessive site coverage on a lot.

May I subdivide my suite from my house?

This is likely difficult for existing construction due to the current lot size restrictions in the RS1, RS2, RS3 and RSE1 zones. If zoning and building code requirements can be met, the bylaw states that “no auxiliary residential dwelling unit shall be subdivided from the dwelling unit to which it is auxiliary, unless the owner enters into an employee housing agreement with the Municipality for the auxiliary residential dwelling unit, the terms of which shall be the Municipality's standard charge terms for employee housing covenants as of the date on which the subdivision application is made.”

How do B.C. Building Code requirements apply?

Your plans will need to meet with the requirements of the B.C. Building Code. Your drawing submission should address all code issues.

What if I have other questions?

These changes are noted in the updated RS1, RS2, RS3 and RSE1 zones contained in the Zoning Bylaw. You may also discuss your plans with the Planning Department by phoning 935-8170, or with the Building Department at 935-8150.