

Government Programs and Regulations

Second Suites Legal in Toronto

Recently, the Province of Ontario updated and introduced new policy and legislative changes related to second units. Secondary suites (a type of second unit), have been permitted since 2000, however, previous zoning regulations only permitted the creation of a secondary suite five years after the primary dwelling is constructed, and did not permit secondary suites in all townhouses.

City Council adopted zoning by-law amendments for secondary suites on March 28, 2019. The purpose and effect of [Zoning By-law 549-2019](#) is to permit secondary suites in townhouses city-wide (in addition to detached and semi-detached homes), remove the requirement for the original house to be at least five years old, remove unit size restrictions and reduce parking requirements. These amendments respond to provincial policy changes to the Planning Act which support secondary suites across the province and seeks to simplify the creation of secondary suites.

Following is a list of frequently asked questions regarding the legalization of existing second suites and the creation of new second suites in the City of Toronto. This background information was adapted from information provided by City of Toronto planning staff. For legal and zoning information on second suites in other Greater Toronto Area municipalities, please contact your local planning department.

Frequently Asked Questions:

What is a second suite?

A second suite is a self-contained unit (rental or rent-free) in a single-detached, semi-detached or townhouse. Most second suites are basement apartments. They have also been called granny flats, in-law suites and accessory apartments.

Are second suites new?

No! In the past, second suites were permitted in some areas of the City (York, East York, and parts of former Etobicoke, North York and Toronto).

Some parts of the City have had a long experience with this form of housing. As well, provincial legislation, in force between July 1994 and November 1995, allowed for the creation of second suites in all areas of the province.

Where are second suites permitted in the City?

The amended by-law permits second suites in all single-detached, semi-detached and townhomes throughout the new City of Toronto – with certain conditions.

Second suites are now legal in the City of Toronto in all single family, semi-detached and town homes, providing they meet certain criteria.

For specific zoning, property standards, or fire and building code questions please contact the City of Toronto's Urban Planning and Development Services Department:

East York:	397-4591
Etobicoke:	394-8055
North York:	395-7000
Scarborough:	396-7071
Toronto:	392-7522
York:	394-2535

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What are some of the conditions that apply to second suites?

Some of the conditions include:

- the second suite must be self-contained with its own kitchen and bathroom;
- a maximum of 1 second suite per dwelling (in the R zone, more than 1 second unit may be allowed in a detached or semi-detached house);
- the floor area of the second suite must be smaller than the remaining unit;
- Parking spaces must be provided at a minimum rate of 1.0 for each secondary suite in excess of one (i.e. for dwellings with only 1 secondary suite, no additional parking spaces are required);
- Before planning any changes to the outside appearance of a dwelling the homeowner should contact the City of Toronto's Urban Planning and Development Services Department; and
- all new second suites must comply with the Ontario Building Code and require a building permit. Existing second suites must comply with the Fire Code as well as zoning and property standards.

How can I find out if an existing second suite complies with the regulations?

The unit will have to be inspected by Fire Department staff. There is a fee for the inspection and you may be required to upgrade the suite to meet the code requirements and other standards. Contact the City's Urban Planning and Development

Services Department for more information (see phone numbers below).

Does the City provide grants or loans to encourage the creation of second suites?

There is currently no grant or loan program for second suites.

Will a second suite impact property taxes?

In most cases, there will be little impact on property taxes. A major exception would be where the second suite is created by constructing an addition, thereby significantly adding to the value of a house.

If you have comments or questions on this issue please contact TRREB's Government Relations Department: Mauro Ritacca, Senior Government Relations Manager at (416) 443-8151, via email at mritacca@trebnet.net or fax at (416) 443-9703.

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