Town of CANMORE

INFORMATION GUIDE:
Accessory Dwelling Units

AUGUST 2020

Town of CANMORE

INFO GUIDE for ADUs

Are you considering building a new Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) or legalizing an existing suite? The following outlines regulations specific to both Canmore and the Alberta Building Code for you to consider before you begin to design or construct an ADU. If you require further clarification, please contact the Planning and Development Department at planning@canmore.ca

How to Use This Guide

Refer to ***Section 1: ADUs 101*** if you are mostly new to the process and could benefit from some foundational information.

Refer to ***Section 2: ADUs & The Alberta Building Code*** if you are somewhat familiar with the process, but have specific safety- and/or construction-related questions.

Key Terms

Before reviewing this guide, you may wish to familiarize yourself with the following terms which appear throughout this document and are foundational to the discussion of ADUs:

Accessory Dwelling Unit, Attached means an accessory dwelling unit that is located within the principal building containing the principal dwelling unit, and is subordinate to and under one title with the principal dwelling unit.

Accessory Dwelling Unit, Detached means an accessory dwelling unit, that may include a garage, located on the same property as, and in a separate building from the principal residential dwelling unit, and is under one title with the principal residential use.

Amenity Space means an area comprised of on-site, communal or private, indoor or outdoor space designated for social gathering or active or passive recreational use.

Dwelling Unit means a self-contained room or suite of rooms not available for public use, which normally provide sleeping, washing, sanitary and kitchen facilities, and which is intended for residential use, as opposed to vacation use. A dwelling unit shall not include more than one room which, due to its design, plumbing, equipment, and furnishings is or may be used primarily as a kitchen. Examples of this include upper cupboards, a full size fridge, a stove using 220V, and other aspects that may define a kitchen. A dwelling unit is characterized as a place in which a person or persons may reside as their primary or secondary residence, with the intent and ability to arrive and leave at their discretion, with the intent to remain for an undetermined or indefinite period (except in accordance with a tenancy agreement under the Residential Tenancies Act or the Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Act) and with the intent to return to the dwelling unit following absences for such reasons as vacations. A dwelling unit does not include a Shared Ownership Accommodation.

Gross Floor Area means the sum of the areas of all habitable spaces of a building measured to the outermost surface of the exterior walls, and excludes garages up to a maximum of 60 m2. For accessory dwelling units, apartments, townhouses or other dwelling units partially enclosed by common walls, the GFA shall be determined by measuring from the interior wall.

Landscaped Area means that portion of a site which is to be landscaped pursuant to a development permit, and excludes areas used for parking and driveways.

Lane means a public thoroughfare with a right of way width of not greater than 9.0 m and not less than 6.0 m as defined in the Engineering Design and Construction Guidelines.

Loft means the floor space above the eaveline and within the pitch of the roof of a building. The floor area of a loft measured to the walls or where the rooflines meet the floor, shall not exceed 60% of the area of the floor below the loft.

Long-Term Bicycle Parking means a variety of facility types and site plan layouts, and includes but is not limited to garages, storage rooms, covered bicycle parking, and lockers located either indoors or outdoors. These facilities are to be located in low pedestrian traffic areas with site design focused on ensuring the safety of users while maintaining high security with preference for exclusive access to these areas.

Principal Dwelling means a dwelling that is the primary use on a residential property and is larger in GFA than any accessory dwelling unit that may also exist on a property.

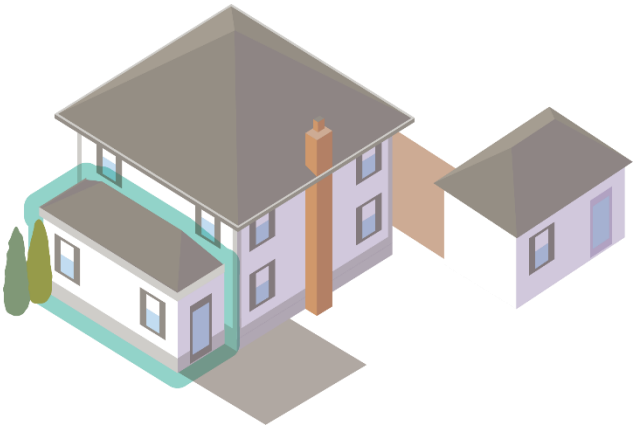
Section 1
ADUs 101

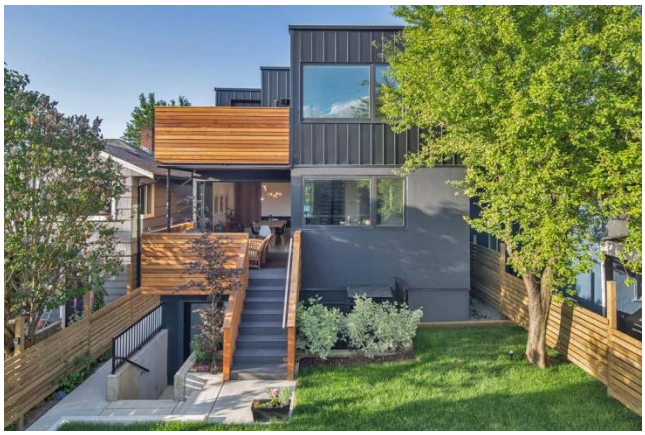
Step One: Understand the Differences Between Attached & Detached ADUs

Accessory Dwelling Unit is a collective term used for various types of suites. To be considered a legal suite, it must have its own entrance, kitchen, sleeping, and bathroom facilities. ADUs can be attached or detached, as illustrated below.

ATTACHED

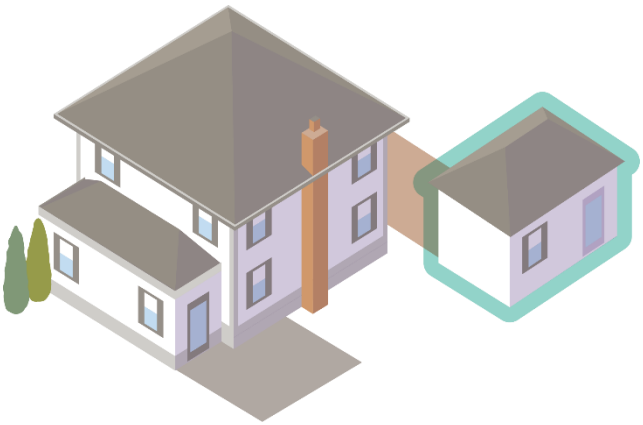
Suite attached to or contained within a principal dwelling unit. (Example: Secondary suite within the basement of the principal dwelling unit.)





DETACHED

Suite in a building that is separate from the principal dwelling unit. (Example: Garage suite or garden suite.)



Step Two: Review the Land Use Bylaw Requirements

All new ADU's are to comply with the following requirements of Canmore's Land Use Bylaw 2018-22. Some of the following regulations apply to both attached and detached ADUs while some are unique to each individual type.

Regulation Requirements for Attached and Detached ADUs	
Landscaping	40% of the Front Yard must be landscaped.
Number of ADU's	Only one ADU per primary dwelling unit is allowed.
Servicing	ADU must be serviced by the municipal water and sanitary system from the principal dwelling's connection.
Automobile Parking	One automobile parking stall must be provided in addition to the automobile parking stalls required for the principal dwelling unit. A parking stall for the ADU must be accessed from the lane, where the property has direct access to a lane.
Bicycle Parking	Two long-term bicycle parking stalls must be provided. The bike parking must be easily accessible to the ADU (not located in a private garage) and if located outside be sheltered and be able to be locked securely.

Design Requirements for Attached ADUs	
Entrance to ADU	Entrance to the ADU must be secondary to the building from either a shared landing or directly from the exterior of the building.
Size	Is limited to 40% of the total gross floor area of the building, or 80m^2, whichever is less. When located in a basement of a one-storey detached dwelling, the unit may occupy a maximum of 50% of the total gross floor area.
Additional Height	New developments that include an Attached ADU development *may* be granted an extra 0.3m in building height to account for the additional height required to accommodate a basement ADU. Contact the Planning Department for more information if you feel this applies to your project.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Design Requirements for Detached ADUs</th></tr>
<tr><td>Setbacks</td><td>Rear yard setback – 1.5m
Side yard setback – 1.0m
Units are not permitted to be in a front yard.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Size</td><td>Gross floor area for the portion of the building dedicated to the ADU is limited to 60 m^2, unless otherwise stated in the applicable Land Use District.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Loft</td><td>Only permitted on lots with access to both a lane and a street, or two streets.
Limited to 40m^2 gross floor area.
Cannot be larger than 80% of the lower storey.
Note: Loft height is limited to 3.0m as measured from the floor to the lowest point of the ceiling on the top floor.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Height</td><td>Maximum building height is dependent on the roof pitch of the ADU
<table><tr><td></td><td>Roof Slope is 2:12 or Greater</td><td>Roof Slope is Less than 2:12</td></tr><tr><td>One Storey</td><td>5.50 m</td><td>4.0 m</td></tr><tr><td>One Storey + Loft</td><td>6.0 m</td><td>5.5 m</td></tr></table>
Some districts may have unique height regulations. Please review the LUB district to confirm if this applies to your property or contact the Planning Department for more information.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Outdoor Amenity Space</td><td>Where an amenity space is provided, and is 1.0m or more above grade, the maximum area of the amenity space shall be 4.5m^2, unless it is located a minimum of 4.0m from any side or rear property line, in which case the maximum area of the amenity space can be up to 6.5m^2.

Decks associated with an ADU may not exceed the floor elevation of the highest floor of the ADU.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Windows</td><td>To help maintain privacy, when located within 4.0m of a side or rear property line, windows shall be designed and located to minimize the potential for overlooking onto adjacent properties.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Dormers</td><td>Limited to 70% of the length of the wall located immediately below the dormers.</td></tr>
</table>

Step Three: Verify What Your District Allows

While most residential land use districts allow for an Attached ADUs, not all districts allow for a Detached ADU. The table below provides a summary of which land use districts allow for ADUs by type, attached or detached.

Land Use District	Attached ADU		Detached ADU	
	Permitted	Discretionary	Permitted	Discretionary
R1 - Residential Detached District	Yes		Yes	
R1A - Residential Detached Small-Lot District	Yes		Yes	
R1N-M - Residential Moraine Road Detached Narrow Lot District	Yes			
R1B - Residential Detached Plus District	Yes		Yes	
R1B-E - Residential Detached Plus Entry Level Lot District	Yes			Yes
R1B-W - Residential Detached Plus Wide Lot District	Yes		Yes	
R2 - Residential Two-Unit District	Yes		Yes	
R2A - Residential Low-Density District	Yes			Yes
R3 SC - Residential Comprehensive Multiple Unit District, Stewart Creek District		Yes		
R3 SC1 - Residential Comprehensive Multiple Unit, Stewart Creek District		Yes		
R4 - Residential Medium Density District			Yes	Yes
MHR - Residential Manufactured Dwelling District			Yes	
STR-1 - Silvertip Residential Low-Density District	Yes		Yes	
STR-2 - Silvertip comprehensive Residential District	Yes		Yes	
TPT-CR - Teepee Town Comprehensive Redevelopment District (For all sub districts)	Yes		Yes	
R1B-SC - Residential Detached, Stewart Creek District	Yes		Yes	
R2A-SC - Residential Low Density, Stewart Creek District	Yes			Yes
Woodside Lane Residential Single Family Detached Plus DC District	Yes[1]			
Old Daycare Lands DC District		Yes		Yes
Peaks Landing DC District	Yes[2]			

[1] Attached accessory dwelling units are permitted within detached dwellings.
[2] Attached accessory dwelling units are permitted within duplex dwellings.

Step Four: Refer to the FAQ For More Information

Can I rent out my ADU as a vacation rental (e.g. airbnb or VRBO) or a bed and breakfast?

No. ADU's are intended to be rented by long term tenants and are not permitted to be rented for short-term stays. Short term vacation style rentals or operations of a bed and breakfast in an ADU, will be subject to enforcement penalties/fines as per the most current version of the Town of Canmore Land Use Bylaw.

Can a business (home occupation) be operated in an ADU?

It depends. New Home Occupations are not permitted to be operated within ADU's unless they are a *Class One Home Occupation*. A Class One Home Occupation is a home business that is unnoticeable to adjacent properties and the street. Typically, Class One Home Occupations do not have deliveries nor generate an increase in traffic, noise or other nuisances. Most Class One home occupations are desk related.

How do I get approval for a new ADU or legalize an existing one?

You must apply for and receive a building permit in order to build a new ADU or legalize an existing ADU. Information on building permit applications and process can be found on the Town of Canmore website.

Please note that ADU's must also meet the current regulations of the Land Use Bylaw (LUB), which include installing an on-site vehicle parking stall and secure bicycle stalls. Your Building Permit application will be reviewed for conformance with the regulations of the LUB before it can be approved. You can review the key relevant information on our Accessory Dwelling Unit requirements below.

If it is determined that a variance to the regulations of the LUB is required for a ADU, a development permit application will be required in addition to a building permit. Information on development permit applications and process can be found on the Town of Canmore website. A development permit must be approved prior to issuance of a building permit and typically takes up to 5-7 weeks before a decision is issued.

Where do I go with questions about the construction of an ADU and requirements specific to the Alberta Building Code?

Please refer to Section 2 of this guide titled, *ADUs & The Alberta Building Code* for more.

Section 2
ADUs & The Alberta Building Code

Alberta Building Code Requirements

These requirements apply to the construction of a secondary suite in a dwelling unit that will result in a total of not more than two dwelling units, and the alteration of an existing dwelling unit to accommodate a new secondary suite. The following list of requirements are minimum construction guidelines that apply to most conventional construction.

NOTE: All code references are to Division B of the updated 2019 National Building Code – Alberta Edition unless otherwise stated.

Suite Separations

- Dwelling units are to be separated from each other by not less than one layer of 12.7 mm (1/2”), thick gypsum wallboard or equivalent material on the ceiling and on each side of the walls.
- A wall or floor assembly is required to be a smoke-tight barrier and is to be constructed as a continuous barrier against the spread of smoke.
- The continuity of the fire/smoke tight barrier is to be maintained where it abuts another smoke-tight barrier, a floor, a ceiling, or an exterior wall assembly.
- A furnace room is to be separated from the remainder of the building by not less than one layer of 12.7 mm (1/2”) thick gypsum wallboard or equivalent material on the ceiling and on each side of the walls.

  The furnace room is to be provided with a solid core wooden door not less than 810 mm (32”) wide, equipped with a self-closing device and totally weather stripped around the perimeter.
- A corridor that is common to both suites is to be separated from the remainder of the building by not less than one layer of 12.7 mm thick gypsum wallboard or equivalent material on each side of the walls and the underside of the floor/ceiling framing separating the corridor from the remainder of the unit.
- The gypsum wall joints are to be properly finished (taped and mudded), with all service penetrations tightly fitted or sealed with an appropriate gypsum board finishing compound.

Alarms & Emergency Egress

- Each bedroom is to have at least one outside window openable from the inside that provides an unobstructed opening of not less than 380 mm (15") in height and width and 0.35 m^2 (3.75 ft^2) in area, unless the bedroom has a door which opens directly to the exterior.

  Where a bedroom window opens into a window-well, a clearance of not less than 760 mm (30") is to be provided in front of the window.

  Where the sash of a window swings towards the window well, the operation of the sash is not to reduce the clearance in a manner that would restrict escape in an emergency.

- Bedroom windows are to be openable from the inside without the use of keys, special devices or specialized knowledge of the opening mechanism.

  If the bedroom window is provided with security bars, the security bars are to be openable from the inside without the use of keys, tools or special knowledge.

- Smoke alarms, installed by permanent connections to an electrical circuit, are to be provided:
  a) in each bedroom,
  b) on each storey, including basements, and
  c) in each hallway serving the sleeping room, or between the sleeping room and the rest of the storey.

  As more than one is required, they are to be interconnected so that the activation of one alarm will cause all smoke detectors in the house to sound.

- Where fuel burning appliances are installed, or any dwelling unit with an attached garage, a carbon monoxide detector is to be installed inside each bedroom, or outside each bedroom within 5 m (16') of each bedroom door.

  As more than one is required, they are to be interconnected so that the activation of one alarm will cause all carbon monoxide detectors in the house to sound.

- Where a carbon monoxide alarm is directly wired to the dwellings electrical system, there is to be no disconnect switch between the overcurrent device and the carbon monoxide alarm.

  The detectors are to be mechanically fixed at a height recommended by the manufacturer.

Exits

- Each dwelling unit is to be provided with at least one exit that leads directly to the outside.
- The clear width of every public/common corridor, exit corridors, and exit stairs is not to be less than 860 mm (34").

- Exterior doors are to be openable from the inside without the use of keys, special devices or specialized knowledge of the opening mechanism.
- Where an unenclosed exterior exit stair or ramp provides the only means of egress from a secondary suite and is exposed to the hazards of fire from an unprotected opening in the exterior wall of the primary dwelling unit, the openings are to be protected by wired glass in a fixed steel frame, or glass block tested and rated as a fire closure.
- Dwelling units may share a common exit provided each exit, other than the exit doorway, is separated from adjacent floor areas by not less than one layer of 12.7 mm (1/2"), thick gypsum wallboard or equivalent material on each side of the walls.
- Every exit door or door that provides access to exit from a secondary suite is to be:

  a) not less than 1,980 mm (6.5') high,
  b) not less than 810 mm (32") wide, and
  c) is permitted to swing inward.
- Solid blocking for entry door security may be omitted where the interior wall finish adjacent to the door is in place prior to the construction of the secondary suite.
- Except for exit doors (see above), doors within the dwelling units are to conform to:

At Entrance to:	**Minimum Width mm (inches)**	**Minimum Height mm (feet)**
Stairs to a floor area that contains a finished space All doors in at least one line of passage from the exterior to the basement Utility rooms	810 (32)	1,980 (6½)
Walk-in closet	810 (32)	1,980 (6½)
Bathroom, water-closet room, shower room*	610 (24)	1,980 (6½)
Rooms not mentioned above, exterior balconies/decks	760 (30)	1,980 (6½)

*** Where one or more bathrooms are served by a hallway of not less than 860 mm (34"), at least one bathroom is to accommodate a door not less than 760 mm (30") wide**.

Insulation

- Insulation is to be provided in assemblies between heated and unheated spaces and the building exterior.

- A continuous 0.15 mm (6 mil) vapour barrier, CGSB approved, is to be provided on the warm side of the insulation.
- Insulation is to have the following minimum thermal resistance ($m^2.^oC/W$ ($ft.^2hr.^oF/Btu$)).
  a) R-12 for exterior wall assemblies above grade (i.e., pony walls on a concrete foundation), or
  b) R-8 for perimeter basement walls to 600 mm (24") below grade.
- Foamed plastic insulation is to be protected by an approved thermal barrier (i.e., 12 mm (1/2") gypsum wallboard) which is to be installed at the warm side of the insulation.

Stairs, Guards & Handrails

- Stairs are to have a maximum rise of 200 mm (7 7/8"), minimum run of 210 mm (8 1/4"), minimum tread width of 235 mm (9 1/4"), a stair width of least 860 mm (34") and a headroom clearance of at least 1.95 m (6' 4"). A spiral stair not required as part of a means of egress may be used in a dwelling unit if another separate proper stair is provided between the first and second floors.
- Stairs may contain winders provided the winders meet at a centre point through an angle of not more than 90° and the individual treads turn through a 30° angle, or a 45° angle, with no deviations above or below those angles. Only one set of winders is permitted between each floor level.
- At least one stair between each floor level within a dwelling unit and exterior stairs serving the dwelling unit is to have a width of not less than 800 mm (31")
- Interior and/or exterior stairs with more than 3 risers are to have a handrail mounted between 800mm (32") and 920 mm (36") above the line of stair nosing.
- Landings are not required to secondary entrances (including attached garages), provided:
  1) the stairs have less than 3 risers,
  2) the door swings away from the stairs or is a sliding door, or
  3) a storm or screen door opening over the stair has a hold-open device.
- Landings for stairs are to be at least as wide as the stairs and not less than 900 mm (36") in length.
- A guard for stairs is to be not less than 900 mm (36") high measured vertically from a line drawn through the outside edges of the stair nosing, and 900 mm (36") in height at landings.
- An exterior raised deck or balcony is to be protected on all open sides that are between 600 mm (24") and 1.8 m (6') above adjacent ground level by guards 900 mm (36") in height. If the adjacent ground level is more than 1.8 m (6') a 1,070 mm (42") high guard is required.

Heating and Ventilation Systems

- Each dwelling unit is to have an independent heating and ventilation system including thermostatic control.

  The intent is to ensure that each dwelling unit has an independent ductwork system where the building is heated and ventilated by a forced-air furnace. If the heating system does not include ductwork, i.e., hydronics, fan coils, electric baseboards, etc., it would be anticipated that each dwelling unit would have its own control system for the heating system. It is not expected that homeowners would be required to install a second boiler and piping system in the case of a radiant floor heating system. It would be necessary, however, to ensure that each dwelling unit would have its own independent ventilation system.

- The dwelling unit is to incorporate provisions for the non-heating season ventilation. Ventilation is to be supplied by the heating appliance such as a furnace interconnected with sufficient Principal and Supplementary exhaust fans, or be ventilated by using a HRV (Heat Recovery Ventilator).
- The principal ventilation fan control is to be wired so that the activation of the principal ventilation fan automatically activates the forced air heating system's circulation fan to provide an airflow not greater than the space-heating airflow.
- Dwellings are to be equipped with high efficiency appliances or have sufficient make-up/combustion air for protection against depressurization.
- Clothes dryer vents are to be ducted to the outside.
- Exhaust from kitchen or washroom fans is to be ducted directly to the outside and the duct is to be insulated to not less than RSI 0.5 (R-2.85), where passing through an unheated space.
- Dwelling units intended for use in the winter months on a continuing basis must be equipped with heating facilities capable of maintaining an indoor air temperature of 22° C (72° F).
- Combustion air is required for all fuel fired appliances, including fireplaces/stoves; introduced by air intakes other than a door or window.
- The combustion air inlet is not to be located within an attic or roof space, nor within a crawl space.
- If the home is heated wholly or partially by hydronic radiant floor heating, engineered drawings are to be submitted of the specific layout.

  Bedrooms in hydronically heated areas are to be provided with a source of fresh air other than opening a window. The fresh air is to be preheated in the winter.

Fireplaces / Wood Burning Stoves / Space Heaters

- Wood stoves, ranges and space heaters which are certified and have a label, are to be installed as per the manual supplied.

  The installation manual is to be on site at the time of the inspection.

- Uncertified wood stoves, ranges and space heaters are to be installed with clearances of at least 1.2 m (4') on all sides and front, plus 1.5 m (5') at the top unless otherwise approved; and on a non-combustible floor surface.
- Factory-built fireplaces and their chimneys are to have a label showing that they conform to ULC S610, "Standard for Factory Built Fireplaces".
- Factory-built chimneys serving solid-fuel burning appliances, and their installation, shall conform to CAN/ULC-S629-M, "650°C Factory-Built Chimneys."
- Combustion air is required for all fuel fired appliances, including fireplaces; introduced by air intakes other than a door or window. The bottom of the combustion air duct shall be a minimum of 450 mm (18") above the adjacent grade.
- The combustion air inlet is not to be located within an attic or roof space, nor within a crawl space.
- Chimneys are to extend at least 900 mm (36") above any connecting roof surface and 600 mm (24") above any roof surface within 3 m (10') and they are to be equipped with a waterproof cap.

General

- Every window well is to be drained to the footing level or other suitable location.

DISCLAIMER:
The list of Specific/General Requirements outlined above is a condensed version of essential construction guidelines and may not cover all the requirements in your construction or changes to be made on site.

Frequently Asked Questions

Where do I go with questions about the construction of a new suite relating to the Alberta Building Code (ABC) requirements?

Questions relating to specific building code elements of new suites must be answered by a Safety Codes Officer who is trained in the building code. The Safety Codes Council has helpful guides to assist property owners with building code requirements. A Safety Tip information sheet can be found for Secondary Suites by accessing the ABC Safety Tips webpage.

Should you still have questions, you can reach out to the Planning Department for assistance. The Planning Department can then forward your questions to a Safety Codes Officer.

I have an existing home and want to add or legalize an existing suite, but I don't think that I can meet the current ABC requirements. What can I do to retrofit my home or to legalize my existing suite?

It is not intended that the Alberta Building Code be used to enforce the retrospective application of new requirements to existing buildings. Existing/older buildings which do not meet the current ABC requirements are at the discretion of the Safety Codes Officer to ensure life and building safety that reaches a level equivalent to the intent of the building code.

With the introduction of a suite in to an existing building, careful consideration of the level of safety needed for the building is required. The increased cost of implementing the most current ABC requirements to legalize an existing suite, may incur a significant expense depending on the scale of the renovation required. It should be noted that alternative solutions to code requirements may be acceptable, as long as it can be demonstrated how it addresses the same issues/requirements related to Division B in the ABC.

It is important to note, that each retrofit suite design can have unique situations and considerations the Safety Codes Officer must work directly with residents on. Should you have any questions about the requirements that may be specific to your retrofit, please contact the Planning Department who will then forward your questions to a Safety Codes Officer.