

District of Saanich

Garden Suites FAQ v.2



Q. What are Garden Suites?

- A. Garden Suites are ground-oriented detached residential dwellings located in the backyard of a property with a single-family home as its primary use.

Q. Are Garden Suites permitted in Saanich?

- A. Garden Suites are currently not permitted in Saanich.

However, on September 11, 2017, Saanich Council adopted a Terms of Reference for a study to explore potential regulatory changes to permit garden suites. The study will take approximately 12 months to complete and will involve lots of opportunities for public input.

Q. Why consider Garden Suites in Saanich?

- A. Having a garden suite can help offset a mortgage, house a family member, enable a senior to age-in-place, or provide an opportunity to build an accessible dwelling unit. Garden suites can add to the housing supply at a time when shortages exist. They are used by many communities as a way to “gently” infill established residential neighbourhoods while retaining form and character. Garden suites add diversity to the choices for housing available in the marketplace.

Q. What is the scope of the study?

- A. The scope of work is to develop proposed regulations for garden suites as an alternative to secondary suites (one or the other, but not both) on single family (RS-zoned) residential lots. The study will include a technical analysis of design and land use requirements, a community engagement process to determine concerns, interests and level of support, and proposed regulatory changes for Council’s consideration.

Key issues for regulation include location, size and height of building, lot size, setbacks from the primary dwelling and property line, design guidelines, and parking requirements.

The focus of the study is to provide the opportunity for permanent long-term rental housing stock, built to BC Building Code standards. Temporary structures that do not meet the BC Building Code, as well as seasonal recreation vehicles are outside the scope of this work.

Q. What about Tiny Homes?

- A. Smaller-sized homes are within the scope of the study, as long as they meet the BC Building Code.

Q. Can I build a new building or renovate an existing accessory building now in anticipation of being allowed to rent it when the regulation comes in?

- A. This is a difficult question for a couple of reasons. First, it is unknown what lots will be eligible for garden suites under the new regulations. Second, it is unknown what regulations will be in place. Third, all structures will be required to meet BC Building Code for residential occupation, which includes such things as insulation values, mechanical ventilation, egress, smoke alarms and security.

Q. Will I be allowed to rent my garden suite as a short-term rental?

- A. Short-term rentals are not permitted in single family (RS) residential zones in Saanich. However, an aspect of this study is to explore public interest in using garden suites for this purpose in the future.

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Garden Suites FAQ cont'd



- Q. Why does the study only include residential properties in the Sewer Service Area and not rural properties outside the Urban Containment Boundary?**
- A.** As directed by Council, the geographic scope of the study includes the area within the Sewer Service Area, which is mostly in alignment with the Urban Containment Boundary. The decision to focus the study in this area is supported by Official Community Plan policy and is generally consistent with the area where secondary suites are permitted.
- Q. Will Broadmead be excluded from the regulations for garden suites?**
- A.** To be consistent with the approach taken for secondary suites, properties in the Broadmead area are not included in the Garden Suite Study. These properties have restrictive covenants on title that prohibit development of secondary suites. Garden suites can be considered a detached form of secondary suite.
- Q. How can I provide input on the potential regulations?**
- A.** You can provide input on the potential regulations by completing a survey and/or attending an open house. If you have questions, please contact Megan Squires in the Planning Department at 250-475-5494 ext. 3452 or megan.squires@saanich.ca.
- Q. How can I get updates?**
- A.** Go to www.saanich.ca/gardensuites to register for our email notification list. You will receive updates on the study including information on Council presentations and opportunities for public input.