

New Housing Options on Denman

There's good news for Denman Islanders who have been wanting to see more housing opportunities on the Island: Denman Island Bylaws 210 and 211, which legalize secondary suites and cottages, have been adopted by the Denman Island Local Trust Committee. This means that if you want to turn your basement into a secondary suite for an aging relative, transform an unused cabin into a rental space for a young family, or build a modest cottage to house your grown-up kid, you can do so -- legally.

There are a number of conditions and limitations on these options, created to safeguard the environment, our rural character, neighbourhood harmony, and broad community goals. I'll do my best here to outline how it all works by answering the classic "5-W" questions. Please be aware that the information here is general in nature; if you are interested in pursuing these options you will need to look at the Bylaw and, ideally, contact an Islands Trust planner.

Where?

All lots in the R2 (Rural Residential), A (Agriculture), F (Forestry), and RE (Resource) zones are now allowed a secondary suite and, with a Temporary Use Permit, a secondary dwelling (aka a cottage or cabin, or a moveable home such as a caravan or trailer).

What?

A **secondary suite** is a self-contained dwelling unit located within a single family home.

The new regulations have the following limitations and requirements for suites:

- Either the suite or the main part of the home must be occupied by the property owner or someone responsible for managing the property.
- The suite must have its own entrance from the outdoors.
- Floor area can be no more than 40% of the floor area of the main dwelling unit, to a maximum of 90 sq metres (approx. 970 sq ft).
- There must be adequate water supply, without endangering the water supply of adjacent land owners.
- Note that although Denman Island does not have building inspection services, all secondary suites must meet the BC Building Code to be considered suites.

A **secondary dwelling** is a freestanding home that shares property with the main house.

Limitations/requirements:

- Floor area can be no more than 140 sq metres (1507 sq ft).
- Distance from main house can be no more than 60 metres (196 ft), although the applicant can ask to have this requirement waived if there is good reason.
- The secondary dwelling must be connected to an approved septic system.
- A written plan for the supply of water, showing that there will not be negative impacts on existing water sources, must be provided.
- A cistern of at least 1000 gallons for rainwater catchment and storage must be installed. (Note that Vancouver Island Health has regulations about the domestic use of rainwater.)

Neither of these options -- suites or secondary dwellings -- are permitted to be used for short term vacation rental or for the accommodation of paying guests, as per existing regulations.

How?

For **suites**: If you are working within the existing footprint of your building, no permit is needed. If the suite is being created as part of a renovation, you will need a Siting and Use Permit.

For **secondary dwellings**: You need to apply for a Temporary Use Permit (TUP), which involves a relatively simple process and a fee of \$440. The TUP will be valid for three years, at which point it can be renewed.

Note that if your property is in the Agricultural Land Reserve, you will not need a Temporary Use Permit for a secondary dwelling if it is to be used for farm help or to house a relative.

Why?

The idea is to give Denman Islanders the power to create more housing on the Island, thus, ideally, strengthening our social fabric. The new regulations for secondary dwellings state that TUPs can be issued "to address housing objectives as defined in the Official Community Plan." These objectives include accommodating "the needs of a variety of families and individuals while protecting the natural environment, the social fabric and the rural character of the community," preserving "human diversity in the community," supporting "rental opportunities and special needs housing," and "providing the opportunity for Island seniors to remain in the community."

Who?

Perhaps you! I like to think of the new regulations as an invitation to Denman Islanders to help realize our Community Plan goals, referenced in the paragraph above.

The full text of the new Bylaws, as well as application forms and guidelines are available on the Islands Trust website, www.islandstrust.bc.ca. **For more info**, contact our Island Planner Rob Milne at rmilne@islandstrust.bc.ca or 250-247-2203.