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Small-Scale Housing: Frequently Asked Questions

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A. General:

1. What are the new small-scale housing rules?	In December of 2023, the Provincial Government passed small-scale, multi-unit housing (SSMUH) legislation that applies across the province and impacts the City of Chilliwack. Based on this legislation, the City must allow up to 4 units on all single detached or duplex zoned lots that are greater than 280m^2 in area and located within the urban growth boundary. These changes affect approximately 11,000 properties.
2. What is small-scale housing?	The Provincial Government defines SSMUH as a range of buildings and housing units that can provide more affordable and attainable housing for middle-income families. Examples of SSMUH may include, but are not limited to: • Secondary suites in single detached dwellings or duplexes • Detached accessory dwelling units, such as garden suites or coach houses • Duplexes, triplexes and fourplexes See Q8 for more examples of small-scale housing.
3. Do the small-scale housing rules mean my property will be redeveloped?	No. If a property owner does not pursue redevelopment of their property, it will not be redeveloped.

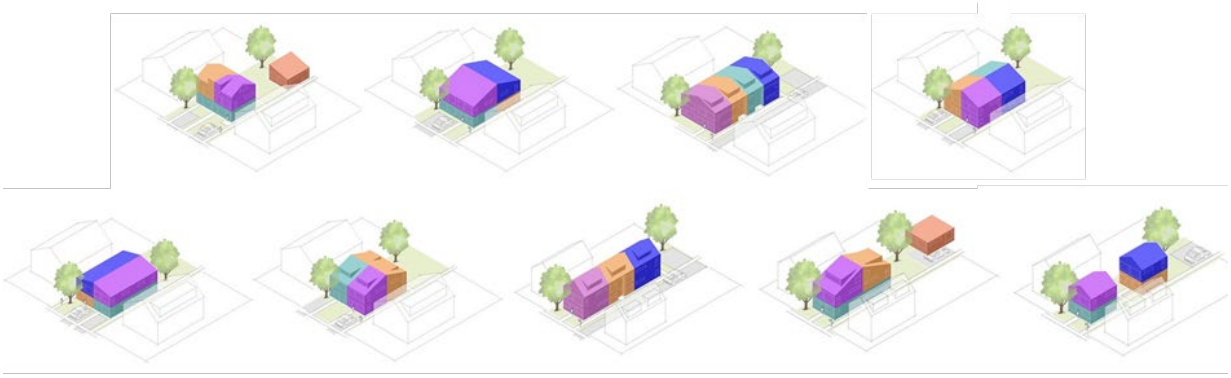
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4. Do I need to rezone my property if I want to construct small-scale housing?	No. Under the new zoning regulations, if your property meets the criteria you are eligible for small-scale housing and do not need to rezone your property.
5. My property might be in an Extension Area. Can I have small-scale housing?	Confirm with the Planning Department whether the property is in an Extension Area. Small- scale housing is temporarily not permitted on properties in an Extension Area until whichever of the following occurs first: • The City completes infrastructure upgrades for the area; • December 31, 2030.
6. Can I remove my property from an Extension Area in order to have small-scale housing?	No. The Province granted the Extension Areas because infrastructure upgrades are needed to accommodate the extra units small-scale housing would introduce. Without these upgrades, there would be risk to public health, safety, or the environment brought on by the additional units.

B. Building:

7. How many units can I build on my property?	If your property meets zoning criteria for small-scale housing, you are permitted: • Up to 3 units on lots less than or equal to 280m^2 • Up to 4 units on lots greater than 280m^2 The property's size and shape will likely impact the housing type and number of units.
8. What types of small-scale housing can I build?	The Zoning Bylaw allows for a combination of housing options, including the following examples: • secondary suites, coach houses or garden suites, • single detached dwellings (may contain 1 secondary suite per single detached dwelling), • duplexes, (may contain 1 secondary suite per side-by-side/ front-back duplex unit), • triplexes or fourplexes, also known as townhouse or apartment buildings. The illustration on the next page provides general examples of different 4-unit housing layout possibilities.

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Source: https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2023HOUS0158-001798

9. What is the difference between a townhouse and apartment?	Townhouse units each have a separate access from the outside, while apartment units have a shared access from a hallway inside a building. The requirements may differ between townhouses and apartments – including, but are not limited to, the Zoning Bylaw (Sections 4 and 5: garbage enclosures, home-based businesses, and parking requirements), BC Building Code, and Development Cost Charges.
10. I don't want to construct small-scale housing. Will constructing a new single detached dwelling still be allowed?	Yes, if your property's zoning permits a single detached dwelling. Alternatively, some zones permit a duplex instead of a single detached dwelling, which can be confirmed by the Planning Department.
11. What are the zoning regulations for small-scale housing?	The regulations of your property's current zone apply for lot coverage, setbacks, siting, and building height requirements. The maximum permitted floor area ratio is 0.75. For example, if your property is in the R1-A (Urban Residential) Zone, these regulations (except floor area ratio) apply to small-scale housing and are found in the R1-A Zone section of the Zoning Bylaw.

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12. What are the parking requirements for small-scale housing?

The minimum number of resident parking spaces are calculated based on the type and number of dwelling units:

Dwelling Type	# space(s)/unit
Single-detached house, duplex, & townhouse	2
Secondary suite, coach house, garden suite	1
Apartment	1.5
Small unit apartment	.75

+ 1 visitor parking space for: 2 duplexes, townhouses, and apartments

Two parking spaces may be provided in a garage, provided the garage width is no less than 6.2m and the spaces are side-by-side (not tandem). EV charging and bicycle parking may also be required, depending on the proposed housing type. Refer to "Section 5 – Parking Requirements" of the Zoning Bylaw for more information about parking regulations.

13. How many driveways can I build?

In most cases, you are permitted only 1 driveway. However, if your property is *wider than* 20m and your proposal includes a duplex or 2 or more single detached dwellings, you may have up to 2 driveways. All access must be from a lane if one is available.

Refer to "Section 4.08(7) – Small-Scale, Multi-Unit Housing" of the Zoning Bylaw for more information.

14. What are the screening requirements?

At least 2m tall screening must be provided where a townhouse or apartment is beside a duplex or single detached dwelling, and at least 1.5m tall screening is required between a coach house or garden suite and the neighbouring properties.

Screening may be a view obstructing fence, wall, compact evergreen hedge, or a combination of these. Refer to "Section 4.09 – Fencing, Landscaping, Screening" of the Zoning Bylaw for more information.

15. What are the landscaping requirements?

The minimum frontage and overall site landscaping requirements are outlined in the Zoning Bylaw. Also, the Tree Management (Land Development) Bylaw requires at least 2 trees to be planted per lot.

Refer to "Section 4.09 – Fencing, Landscaping, Screening" of the Zoning Bylaw for more information.

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16. What are the amenity area requirements?	All small-scale housing units must each have at least 15m^2 of private amenity space on the ground-level located adjacent to the unit and designed for the exclusive use of the unit itself. Refer to "Section 4.08(6) – Amenity Area Standards" of the Zoning Bylaw for more information.
17. What other development regulations are required for small-scale housing?	The BC Building Code and all relevant City development permit approvals and regulations apply. This includes the Building Regulation, Development Cost Charge, Floodplain Management, Land Development, Solid Waste, Tree Management Bylaws. A Development Permit (DP) for form and character is required for all small-scale housing (DPA 8 - Residential). The issuance of this permit may be processed in an expedited manner with a reduced fee if design guidelines are met. Additional Development Permit(s) for technical matters may be required (e.g., aquifer, hillside, riparian). Any departures to Zoning Bylaw standards (e.g., setbacks, building height, etc.) may be requested through a Development Variance Permit application.

C. Secondary Suites & Detached Accessory Dwellings:

18. Do the new regulations mean that I can have any type of accessory dwelling on my property?

No. The opportunity to take advantage of any combination of built forms occurs at 3 or 4 units. In all situations with less than 3 units, the limits of the property's current zoning apply, as illustrated below.

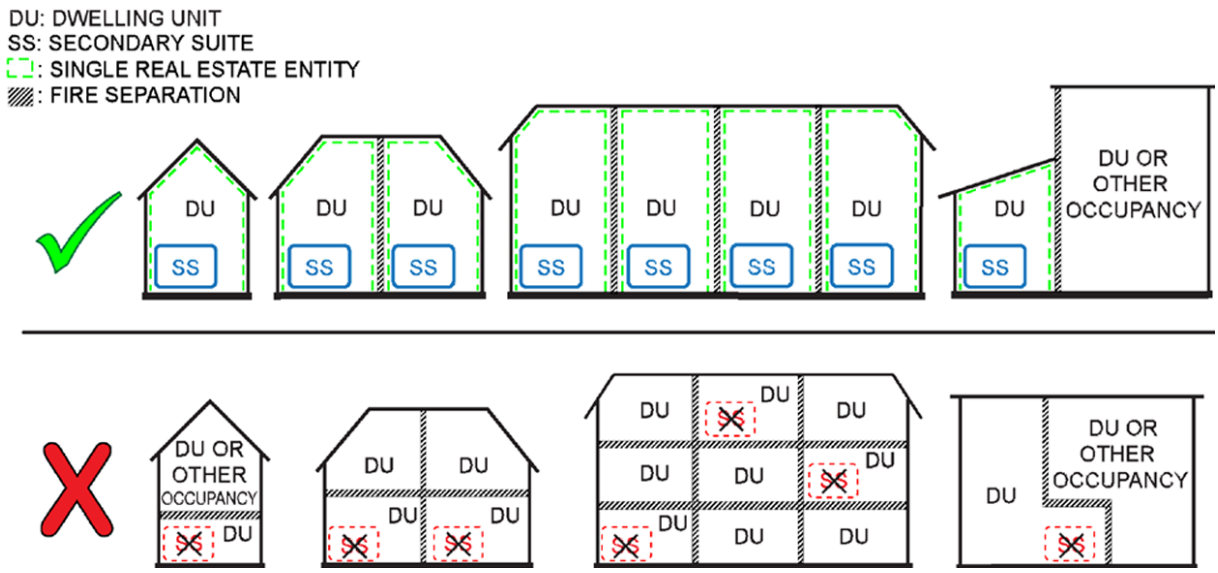
Zone	2 units only	3-4 units
R1-A	House + secondary suite/ coach house/garden suite	Any combination of built forms (subject to other regulations)
R1-C or R3	House + suite	
R1-B	Duplex (no suites)	
*Confirm with Planning staff for all other zones		

19. My property is in the protected floodplain. Can I build a basement or ground-level secondary suite?

No. New secondary suites are not permitted below the flood construction level. Refer to the Floodplain Regulation Bylaw for more information.

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20. Do the new small-scale housing rules legalize my existing suite built without a permit?	No. The new rules do not legalize suites built without a building permit. In this case, you will need to work with the City to bring it into compliance with the BC Building Code and other City regulations (secondary suites are not permitted below the flood construction level, see Q19).
21. Can I build 2 secondary suites in a single detached dwelling?	No. A single detached dwelling with 2 secondary suites in the same building is not permitted under the BC Building Code. The BC Building Code illustration below provides examples of the types of buildings and configurations that allow secondary suites:



Source: BC Building Code Information Bulletin: No. B19-05.

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D. Subdividing:

22. Is subdivision allowed?	Possibly. The general process to subdivide land has not changed. To subdivide, your property must meet the minimum lot area requirements of the zone. Other considerations may limit your potential to subdivide land such as buildable area, servicing, and environmental and other site constraints. If the zone permits small-scale housing, and it is an "infill" zone (e.g. R1-C or R3), a covenant limiting density to a single detached dwelling and a secondary suite on each new property will be required (other zones such as R1-A, with a larger lot size, do not require a covenant limiting density). The covenant is required for the creation of new infill lots where small-scale regulations apply.
23. Can I stratify SSMUH units and have multiple PIDs?	Only units that meet necessary BC Building Code requirements can be stratified (secondary suites, coach houses, and garden suites cannot be stratified). Stratification must occur at the time of construction, before the units are occupied. It is important to confirm with City staff to ensure all necessary requirements are met if stratified units are planned.
24. Do I have to stratify?	No. All units can remain under the same ownership and be used as long-term rental units. Short-term rental is only permitted in accordance with Provincial regulations and the City's Short-Term Rental Bylaw.
25. Can I stratify the units on my property if 1 (or more) is an existing dwelling (e.g., previously occupied)?	Possibly. This process would require a Strata Conversion application with the City. Previously occupied units must comply with current BC Building Code standards, which may be difficult to achieve.

E. Miscellaneous:

26. Will I need to upgrade utilities?	Possibly. All properties need a service connection to water and sewer for development. To support the construction of small-scale housing on your property, you may need to upgrade existing sanitary capacity, drainage facilities and fire-flow (water). These upgrades are typically determined and confirmed at the time of Building Permit review, but preliminary comments can be provided during the Development Permit process.

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27. When are Development Cost Charges (DCCs) required?	DCCs may be required depending on the built form. Payment of DCCs is required at subdivision approval or building permit issuance. Refer to the Development Cost Charge Bylaw for more information.
28. My property has an existing covenant that limits density. Does it still apply under the new small-scale housing rules?	Yes. Existing covenants made under section 219 of the *Land Title Act* continue to apply. These covenants can be confirmed through a Land Title Certificate search online at www.ltsa.ca.
29. If I live in a single detached dwelling or duplex on a bareland strata, can I build 3 or 4 units on my strata lot?	Possibly. If your property meets zoning criteria for small-scale housing, you will need to confirm that your strata corporation also permits additional units. The City requires written permission from the strata corporation as part of the development application package.
30. How do I use the City webmap tool to find out information about my property?	Step 1: Go to maps.chilliwack.com Step 2: On the top right side of the map, click to show a list of layers. Step 3: Under Land Use / Zoning select the following layers: • Zoning • Urban Growth Boundary • Small-Scale Extension Step 4: Pan and zoom to find your property, and click on the property. The pop-up information box will list your lot area, and sewer and water connection status.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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