

Adding housing units to your property



Small-Scale Housing (which permits up to four units per lot) is permitted in most low-density neighbourhoods across the city. Small-Scale Housing can take many shapes and forms, including single-detached houses, accessory dwelling units such as secondary suites, garden cottages, and carriage houses, duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes and multiplexes. For simplicity, the City defines all of these housing types as **Small-Scale Residential**.

The City of Coquitlam has developed this guide to help property owners who are interested in adding units to a property that already has a home built on it.

Why add units to your property?

There are many reasons to add units to your existing property. You may want to add a suite/unit for family members or for additional income, or you may be interested in adding a separate building with additional dwelling units to rent or stratify and sell.

What approvals do I need?

Development Permit

When adding units to an existing property or building, you may need a development permit. Please reach out to the Development Planning Division by email (devinfo@coquitlam.ca), calling 604-927-3430, or in-person at City Hall for more information.

Building Permit

A building permit is needed to make sure your building complies with the BC Building Code. The BC Building Code is the provincial regulation that governs new construction, building alterations, repairs and demolitions. It has different requirements depending on what type of unit(s) or buildings you want to add to your property, including separation distances between buildings (that could go beyond zoning requirements for separation distance), structural and ventilation requirements, etc.

Additional costs may be required to retrofit an existing house to add dwelling units. Understanding what the building requirements are beforehand can help you decide what and if you want to build. Consulting with a qualified architect or building professional can help you understand what is needed to retrofit your existing building.

Check out Coquitlam's [Building Permit Application Requirements Guide](#)

[Optional] Strata Conversion

Stratification involves the subdivision of land or buildings. In strata housing, owners own their individual strata lots and share ownership of any common property and common assets as a strata corporation. Strata housing can include apartment condominiums, townhouses, and small-scale residential unit types.

In Coquitlam, a property owner can choose to add units to an existing home or property and stratify them so they can be sold as a way to add gentle density to neighbourhoods. To stratify additional units, you will need to apply for a Strata Title Conversion. You can find more information in the [Strata Title Conversion Guidelines](#).

Other things to think about

There are a few other important considerations you will need to think about when adding units to your existing property:

- *Asbestos removal*: If your home was built before 1990, you may be required to hire a remediation professional to assess and dispose of asbestos or other hazardous construction materials before beginning any renovations.
- *Solid waste collection and billing*: Will each unit have its own waste bins, or will you have shared bins? Where will they be stored? Who will put the bins out on collection day? If the strata corporation is billed for shared waste collection, how will the cost be allocated to each unit? Please also see the City's Zoning Bylaw for waste enclosure space requirements and the City's Solid Waste Management Bylaw for information on bin allocation and waste collection.
- *Common property maintenance*: How will maintenance of shared spaces be handled? Will the unit owners be responsible for landscaping and maintenance, or will the strata corporation (if applicable) hire a company to handle this?
- *Access to the property*: How will people access the new units and property? Is the existing driveway wide enough? Please see Part 7 of the City's [Zoning Bylaw](#) for access driveway width requirements.
- *Amenity space*: There may be amenity space requirements if you choose to add more units. This can be either private amenity space or common amenity space. Please see the City's Zoning Bylaw for amenity space requirements.
- *Parking*: The City's Zoning Bylaw requires a certain amount of parking spaces per unit to be provided on the property. Depending on your proposed design, you may need to add more space for parking for the new unit(s).
- *Utilities*: You may need to run utility or communication infrastructure from the property line for the additional unit(s), and may have separate metering and billing arrangements depending on how the new unit(s) are built. In some cases, upgrades to electrical, water or sanitary infrastructure may be needed.
- *Mail*: How will mail be handled? If you want to stratify the new unit(s), you will need to register the new address with Canada Post and the City of Coquitlam.

Interested in adding units to your property? Consult a building professional/qualified architect to discuss your plans and set up an [Enquiry Meeting](#) with the City to find out more about the rules and requirements.

Want to learn more about Small-Scale Housing? Check out the City's Small-Scale Housing Summary Guide.