City of Kenora

Secondary Dwelling Unit Guide

Lake of the Woods
KENORA

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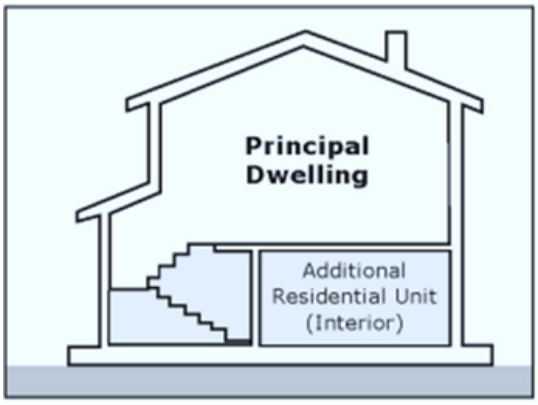
What is a Secondary Dwelling Unit (SDU)?

A Secondary Dwelling Unit is generally a self-contained residential unit with private kitchen, bathroom facilities, sleeping areas, and a separate entrance. SDU's are also known as Additional Residential Units (ARUs). They can be built into an existing dwelling, onto an existing dwelling, or in a separate building. Depending on your property, a SDU is allowed on most residential properties.

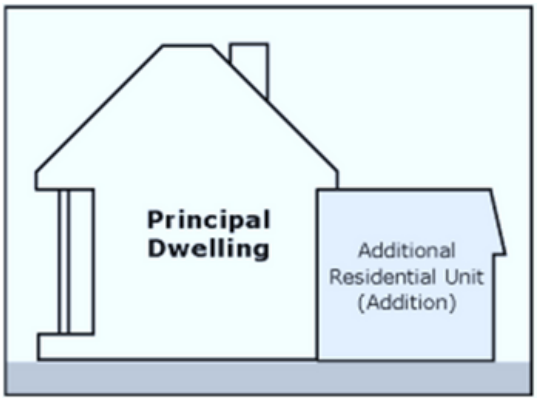
Types of Secondary Dwelling Units

There are three types of SDUs:



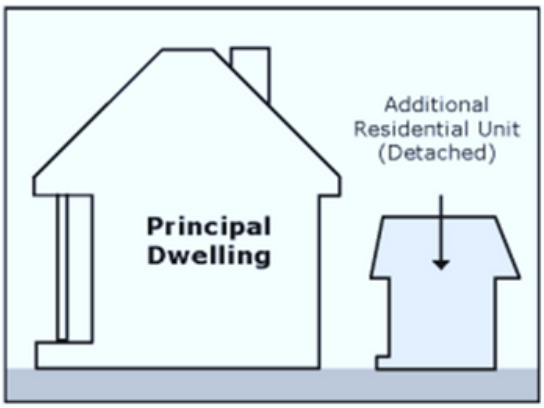
Type A: Interior Alteration (Build IN)

These homes are built inside the existing building. An example would be a basement apartment, but they can also be on the main or upper floors.



Type B: Addition (Build ON)

These homes are built as an attached addition to an existing building.



Type C: Accessory Building (Build OFF)

These homes are completely separate from the existing house or main building on the property. They also go by "Backyard Homes" or "Laneway Houses".

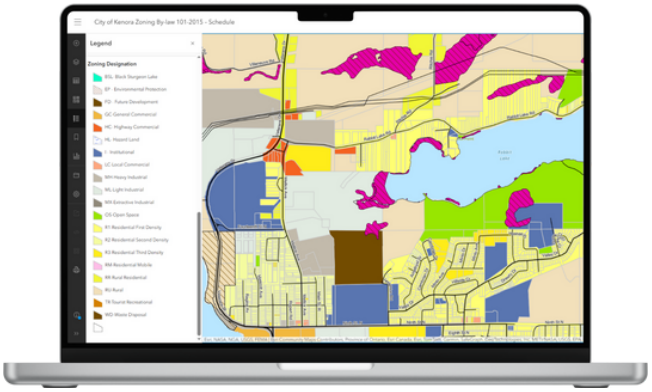
Step 1: Is your lot suitable for an SDU?

Does the zoning of my property allow for a Secondary Dwelling Unit?

Properties in the Residential - First Density Zone (R1), Residential - Second Density Zone (R2) and Residential - Third Density Zone (R3) with municipal services are permitted two SDUs. Properties in the Rural Zone (RU) and Rural Residential Zone (RR) are permitted one SDU subject to servicing requirements.

How can I check my zoning?

- Use the Interactive Zoning Map to see what your property is zoned, or
- Contact the Planning Department for more information.



Does the zoning of my property allow for a Secondary Dwelling Unit?

Depending on what kind of SDU (Type A, Type B or Type C) you are interested in, other zoning rules could impact how you design the project. Examples of these rules are:

- Maximum lot coverage
- Minimum parking
- Building setbacks
- Maximum building height

You can check the relevant zoning rules for your property using the Zoning By-law available online here.

What to do if you can't meet a zoning requirement?

If the project you would like to do does not meet one or more Zoning rules, you can apply for a Minor Variance to the Committee of Adjustment. If the Committee approves your application, you can gain relief from those parts of the Zoning By-law. You can find out more by visiting the Minor Variance page on the City of Kenora website.

If you are not allowed to have an SDU in your zone, you may need to apply for planning approval. You can do this by setting up a pre-consultation with the Planning Department for more information. They may also help you learn if there are other approvals you may need as part of your SDU project.

Step 2: Decide what kind of SDU you would like to build

Once you have confirmed that your property is suitable for a SDU, you should figure out what type (or types) you would like to build. If you plan to build ON or OFF (Type B or C), zoning regulations will need to be considered such as how far the build would be from the lot lines. If you plan on doing a renovation to add a unit inside your existing house, there are other construction and Building Code requirements that you must meet.

What you need to know no matter what SDU you build

All SDUs have parking requirements. Each SDU requires one parking space. One required parking space for a SDU may be stacked behind the required parking of the main dwelling in a driveway. The parking spaces for both the main dwelling and any SDU must be located wholly on the property and meet the requirements in Section 3.23 of the Zoning By-law. Parking on the street or boulevard does not count towards meeting your parking requirements. If your property has a travelled back lane, you can use it to access parking.

Lot Coverage

If you want to build ON or OFF your existing main dwelling, you need to know how much space your lot has to build based on what is already there. The key thing to know is the maximum lot coverage for your zone.

The maximum lot coverage is the amount of space that the existing buildings/structures and the building you would like to build take up on your lot, divided by the area of your lot. To change that number into the percentage, just multiply by 100.

Maximum lot coverage is found in the Zone Regulations table for the zone your property is in.

For example
If your property is 1000 m2 in size and if your lot has 120 m2 of existing buildings, and you want to build a 80 m2 detached SDU, you will have a total of 200 m2 of buildings.
Your lot coverage would be 200 m2 / 1000 m2 x 100 = 20% lot coverage.

Building Setbacks

If you want to build ON or OFF your existing main dwelling, you will need to consider the distance buildings must be from property lines. This information can be found in the Zone Regulations table for the zone your property is in.

Step 3: Getting your project ready

A great general resource is the Building Permit Guides page on the City's website.

Locate your Property Lines

The best way to confirm the boundary of your property is by using a survey prepared by an Ontario Land Surveyor or by seeking a surveyor's assistance of a survey relocation. You may have received a copy of legal survey or surveyor's Real Property Report when you purchased your property. You may need to rely on other features such as an iron survey bar. Your neighbours may also be able to help with locating shared property lines and to find surveyor established iron bars.

Be aware of any easements

An easement is a defined area where someone else has the right to cross or otherwise use your land for a specified purpose. These typically allow the City or a utility provider to maintain and repair their infrastructure above or below ground. You cannot place a permanent structure on any part of an easement - this includes underground portions of foundations and roof overhangs. You can get this information by accessing the land registry database provincial ONLAND application.

Note the location of any overhead wires

If your current house gets power from overhead electrical lines, you should make note of their location. There are minimum distances between overhead electrical lines and structures. Review the following Building Code provisions for more information: Division B - 9.1.1.5 and 3.1.19.

Step 4: Building Permit Applications

All SDUs require a building permit and must comply with the Ontario Building Code. What is needed to obtain a building permit will depend on several things such as: the size and location of servicing for the lot, whether it is a renovation, addition or newly constructed building as well as many other considerations. Please continue to the Building Code Considerations section of this guide (Page 8).

The property owner or authorized agent for the owner is responsible for obtaining a building permit and can apply using our online service, Cloudpermit.

The time required for the processing of a building permit application is prescribed in the Ontario Building Code. The time frames fall between 10 to 30 business days, depending on the class and size of the building.

10 working days	Houses and semi-detached houses including additions, renovations, decks, attached and detached garages and carports.
15 working days	Townhomes or row houses. Building where Part 9 of the OBC is applicable that are less than 3-storeys in height, less than 600 m2 in building area and occupancies classified as: residential, business or personal services, mercantile and medium or low hazard industrial.
20 working days	Buildings where Part 3 of the OBC is applicable and are more than 3-storeys in height, more than 600 m2 in building area and occupancies classified as: assembly, care or detention, residential, business and personal services, mercantile, high, medium or low hazard industrial and farm building exceeding 600 m2.
30 working days	Post disaster building. High building to which 3.2.6 of the OBC applies. Building with interconnected floor areas to which OBC 3.2.8.3 thru 3.2.8.11 applies.

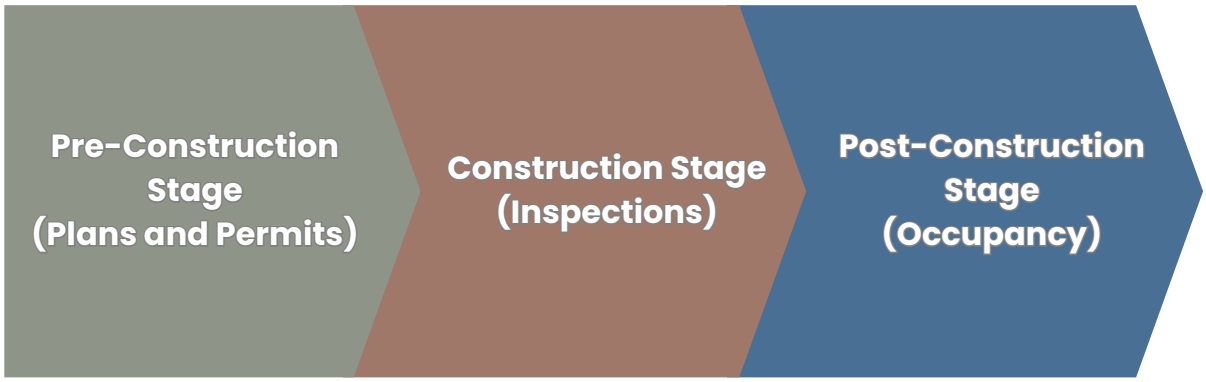
If any prescribed information is missing from the application, the above time limits may not apply, and delays are to be expected.

Step 5: Building Inspections

Once the building permit has been issued, building inspectors from the municipality must review work at various stages during construction. Inspectors will need to check framing, insulation, plumbing, fire separations and other items as outlined in the Building Code. The inspections required are listed in the building permit documents. Make sure to contact an inspector with any questions regarding what needs to be inspected, request an inspection - City of Kenora.

The property owner or assigned agent is responsible for informing the building department when various stages of construction are ready for inspection. Please give 48 hours notice to the building department for an inspection.

Any additional unit, whether it is new or existing, must be a safe place to live. If you already have an existing additional unit and have concerns about its design, you are encouraged to contact the building department via email: building@kenora.ca.



Appendix A: Building Code Considerations

The Ontario Building Code sets out minimum construction standards for how to build an SDU. These standards exist to ensure public health and safety, fire protection and the structural integrity of buildings. While the minimums are what MUST happen, you may want to build higher than the minimum requirements to ensure better accessibility, higher energy efficiency and amenities.

Info
Hiring a professional (registered) designer to prepare the required documentation can expedite the permit approval process. The property owner is responsible for making sure all Building Code requirements are met, and the steps of the permit process are followed.

Age of the Building

Different Building Code rules apply depending on the age of the building. If the building is more than five years old, it is classified as an existing building, and you have more flexibility under the building code when you renovate. If the building is less than five years old, then it is classified as a new building and under the Building Code, it must meet new construction requirements.

Location of a Secondary Dwelling Unit

You can add an SDU to any area of a building if it meets the Ontario Building Code requirements regarding ceiling height, room size, fire safety and other conditions.

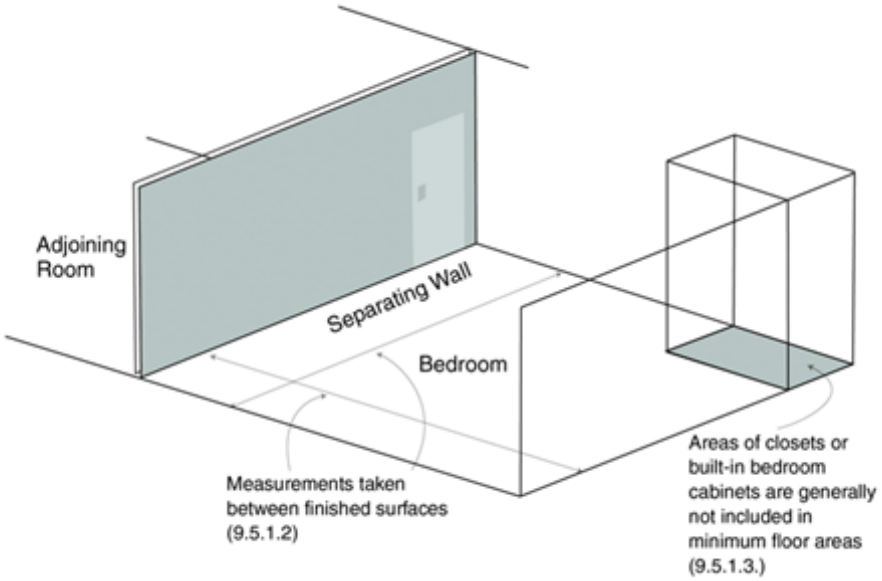
Room Size and Floor Area

There are minimum acceptable room sizes for dwelling units. The size differs depending on whether the space is open concept or divided by interior walls. For example, the minimum area of an open concept unit combining sleeping, living, dining and kitchen space is permitted to be 13.5 m2 (145 ft2). The general minimum size for room and spaces is described in the table below.

Table 1: General Minimum Sizes for Rooms and Spaces

Room/Space	Minimum required floor area
Living area	13.5 m2 (145 ft2)
Dining area	7 m2 (75 ft2)
Kitchen	4.2 m2 (45.2 f2)
Combined living, dining kitchen areas	11 m2 (118.4 f2)
Principal bedroom (without built-in closet)	9.8 m2 (95 ft2)
Other bedrooms (without built-in closet)	7 m2 (75 ft2)
Bathroom	Sufficient space for sink, toilet and shower stall or bath
Combined sleeping, living and dining areas and kitchen space	13.5 m2 (145 ft2)

Relevant Building Code Provisions: Division B, Subsection 9.5.3A through 9.5.4.1.

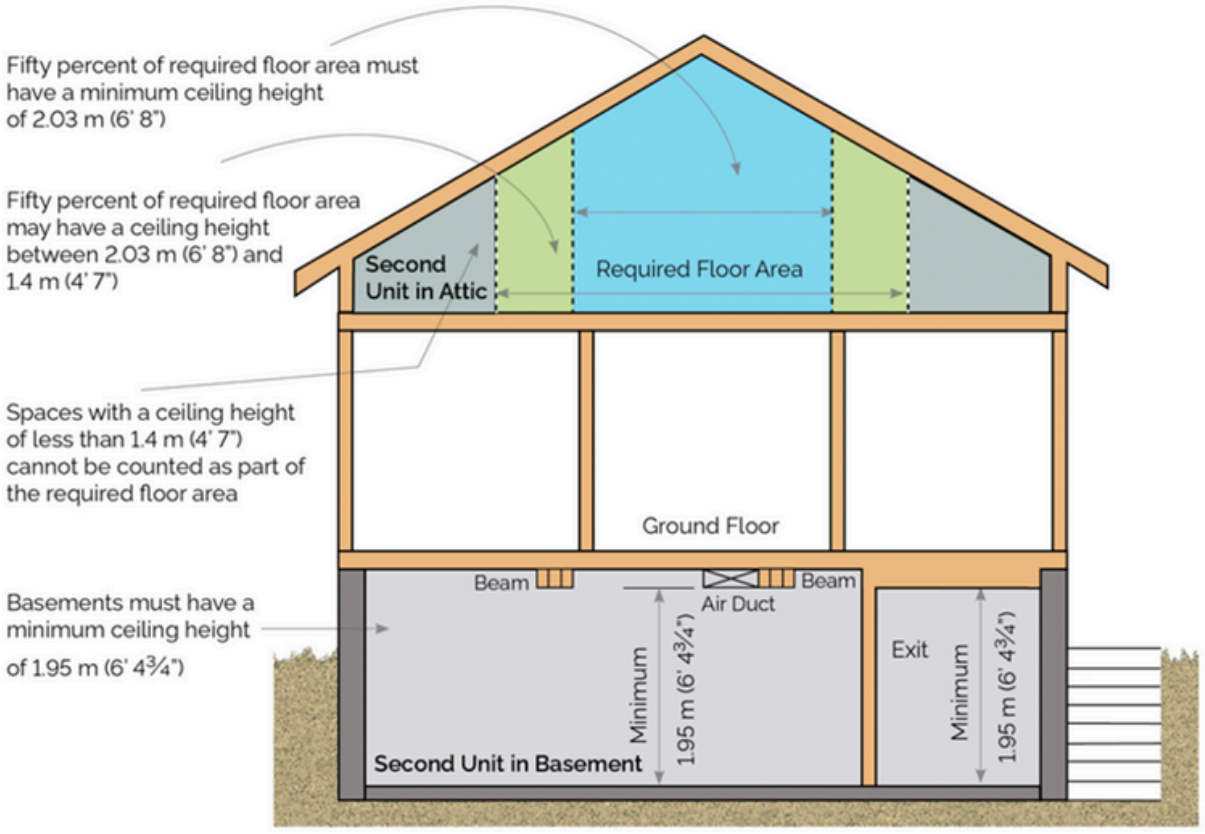


Ceiling Height

The ceiling inside a dwelling unit has requirements for how high it needs to be. The height requirements are different for different parts of a building such as in attics and basements.

- A basement additional unit is permitted to have ceiling height of 1.95 m (6'4 ¾") over the entire required floor area, including the route inside the unit leading to the exit.
- Ceiling height under beams and ducting in a secondary suite can be reduced to 1.85 m (6'1").
- An attic additional unit - which may have sloped ceilings - would meet the Building Code if at least 50% of the required floor area has a ceiling height of 2.03 m (6'8"), but this does not include areas with low ceilings less than 1.4 m (4'7") high.

Relevant Building Code Provision: Division B, Article 9.5.3.1.



Doors

All units need safe exists. To be considered a safe exit, the door must swing on hinges around a vertical axis, for example, a sliding door would not be allowed to be an exit. Doors also must meet a minimum size according to the Building Code.

Safe Exits (Access/Egress)

Exits have different rules depending on where the SDU is located within the building. A separate exit is best; however, it may not be possible depending on the layout of the units. Fire separations may be needed along with egress windows.

- A common exit for multiple units in the building is allowed if the exit area has a 30-minute fire separation and contains smoke alarms that are interconnected to all units.
- In cases where the exit from one unit leads through another unit, a second means of escape must be provided by using a window.
- Windows that may be needed in an emergency as a second means of escape must be large enough for a person to get through and be easy to open without the use of tools.
- There are different requirements for means of escape windows depending on whether they are in the basement or upper floors.

Relevant Building Code Provisions: Division B, Articles 9.9.9.3 & 9.9.10.1. as modified by table 11.5.1.1.C, Compliance Alternative 139.

Windows

Windows are required in all units and the size of the SDU plays a large role in the size and number of windows needed. The size of the window also depends on the type of room they are in. In basements the windows need to be large enough to allow a person to exit the unit in an emergency. The windows must also be operable without the use of tools.

Table 2: Minimum Window Sizes

Room/Space	Minimum Required Window Area with No Electric Lighting	Minimum Required Window Area with Electric Lighting
Living and Dining Rooms	10% of the floor area	10% of the floor area
Bedrooms	5% of the floor area	5% of the floor area
Kitchen	10% of the floor area	Windows not required
Laundry	4% of the floor area	Windows not required
Bathroom	0.37 m2	Windows not required

Relevant Building Code Provision: Division B, Article 9.7.2.3.

Fire Safety and Sound Transmission

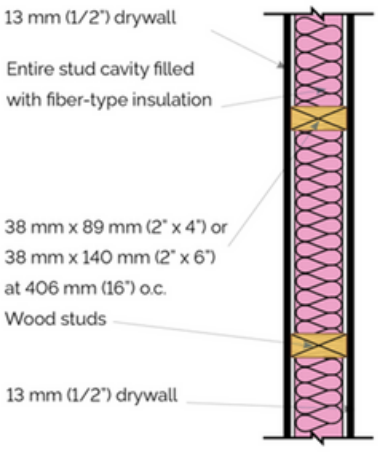
You will need a fire separation between dwelling units. Fire separations function as a physical barrier to slow the spread of fire from one part of the building to another. Fire separations must be continuous and include protected openings, if necessary, to work properly (For example, fire dampers). Adding sound damping insulation to the fire separations also helps to meet the needed protection from noise transfer between units. There are different rules based on the type of renovation or addition planned and a registered designer can help ensure the project meets them all.

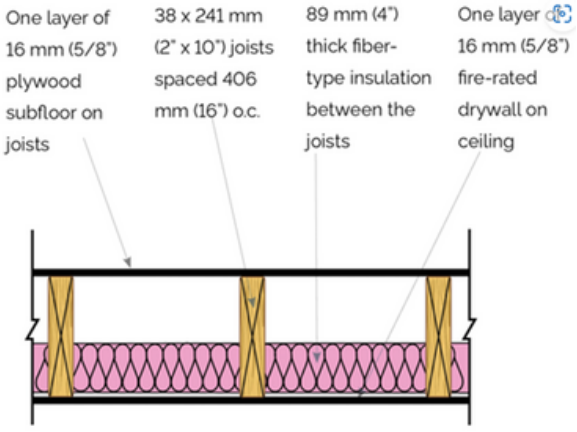
What is a fire separation?

A fire separation can be the floor, a wall, a door with a self-closing device, or a combination of these things. It can be built using typical building materials such as lumber and drywall. For example, a 30-minute fire separation can be built using 38 mm x 89 mm (2" x4") wood studs, 13 mm (1/2") drywall on both sides, and a fiber-type insulation between the studs. Lath and plaster construction typically found in older buildings is an example of a 15-minute fire separation.

When adding a SDU, the Building Code requires 30-minute fire separations between units, and between the units and the shared areas. If the addition of a dwelling unit requires the alteration of an existing floor or ceiling, you are required to make that a 30-minute fire separation. A fire separation can be reduced 15 minutes if the entire building has interconnected smoke alarms.

Relevant Building Code Provision: Division B, Subsection 9.9.9.





Good to know

A wall built to meet the Building Code's fire separation requirements will help to reduce noise between units.

Smoke Alarms and Caron Monoxide Detectors

Smoke alarms must meet the CAN/ULC S531 performance standard and this should be indicated on the label on the alarm. The alarms must have a flashing light when activated and must be placed according to the Building Code provisions.

Proper placement of smoke alarms is important. They must be located:

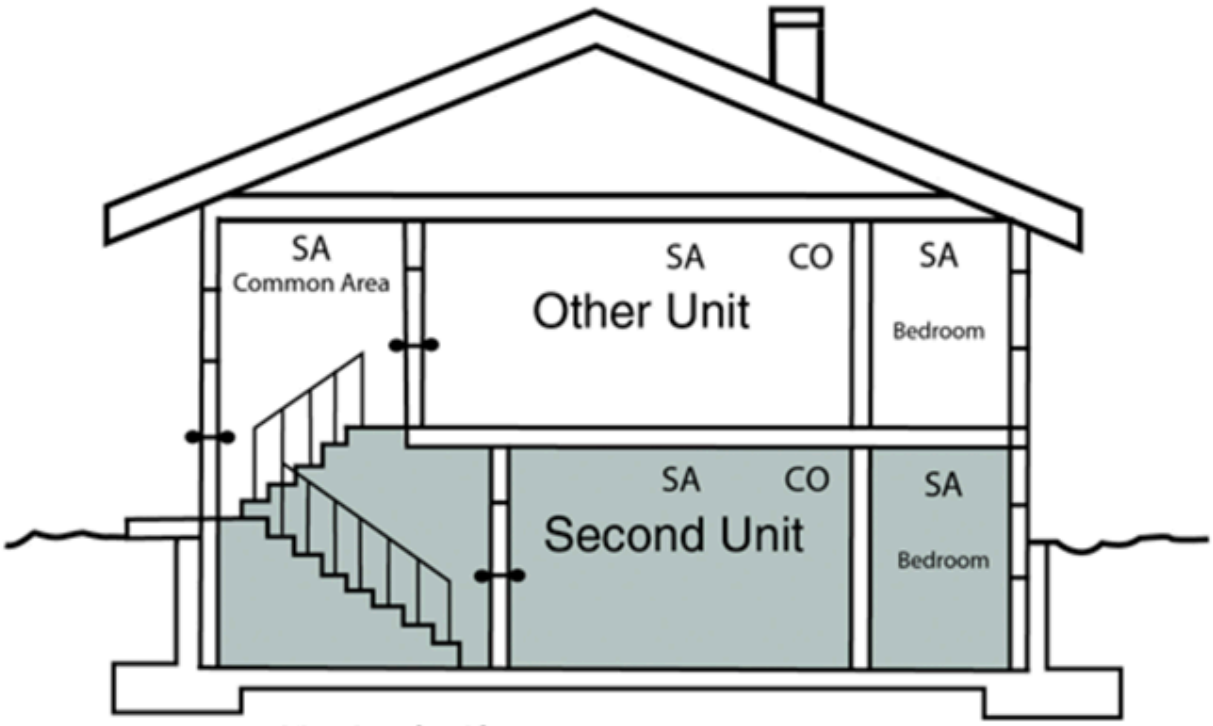
- On every level of a house
- Outside sleeping areas (depending on the layout of a floor, can also count as the smoke alarm for that level)
- In each bedroom in additional units
- In areas of the building shared by the occupants of all units, such as entrances and laundry rooms.

Relevant Building Code Provision: Division B, Subsection 9.10.19.

Carbon Monoxide alarms are required if the building has a furnace that burns natural gas, propane, or other similar fuels. They are also required if the building has an attached garage. Carbon monoxide alarms can be either electronically powered or battery operated and must be located:

- Near bedrooms and sleeping areas in all dwelling units
- In the furnace room, if the furnace room is a separate space from the residential units.

Relevant Building Code Provisions: Division B, Article 9.32.3.9.



SA – Smoke Alarm
CO – Carbon Monoxide Alarm

Heating and Ventilation

The Building Code allows a building with multiple dwelling units to share a single furnace and common system of air ducts. If the units are sharing duct work, a duct-type smoke detector that will shut the furnace off to prevent the spread of smoke is needed. Duct-type smoke detectors must meet a specific performance standard known as UL 268A.

Relevant Building Code Provision: Division B, Table 11.5.1.1.C., Compliance Alternative 200

Ventilation is also required for the bathroom and kitchen of a dwelling unit. This can be provided by natural means or adequate mechanical ventilation.

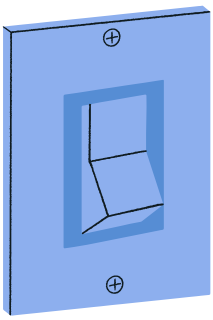
Relevant Building Code Provision: Division B, Article 9.32.1.2., as modified by Table 11.5.1.1.C., Compliance Alternative 199

Although sharing a furnace and duct work is allowed you may choose to add a separate system per unit to reduce the transfer of odors and noise throughout the building. Another benefit of separating heating and ventilation systems is separate temperature controls for each dwelling unit.

Electrical Facilities and Lighting

Dwelling units must have adequate lighting. The Building Code requires additional units to have the following:

- A light and switch in every room and space of the dwelling unit.
- A switch at both the top and bottom of all stairs.
- Exterior lighting at all exits.



Relevant Building Code Provisions: Division B, Article 9.34.2.2 and 9.34.2.3.

The Electrical Safety Code, produced by Ontario's Electrical Safety Authority (ESA), has further requirements when additional residential units are built.

You will need a separate electrical permit, and the ESA will need to inspect the electrical work. It is recommended that a licensed electrician is hired to complete the work.

For further information you can contact ESA directly at 1-877-ESA-SAFE (372-7233) or esasafe.com.

Plumbing

Additional units will have to meet the plumbing requirements of the Building Code. At a minimum you will need:

- Hot and cold-water supply
- A sink, a toilet and a bathtub or shower
- A kitchen sink
- Access to laundry facilities, which may be provided in a shared laundry room.

Relevant Building Code Provision: Division B, Article 9.31.3.2. to 9.31.4.2.

Additional units must have their own separate water shut-off valves. This allows plumbing work and repairs to be done in one unit without affecting water in the other units.

Relevant Building Code Provision: Division B, Sentences 7.6.1.3.(5).

If your building is in an area that is subject to flooding or sewer backup, you may need to install a backwater valve when you add additional units. Backwater valves help prevent sewage in municipal drainpipes from entering floor drains and plumbing fixtures in the lower levels of your building.

Relevant Building Code Provision: Division B, Article 7.4.6.4.

Septic Systems

Adding a second unit to a house served by a septic system is permitted if the septic system has the capacity to handle the increase in sewage.

Check with the Northwestern Health Unit to make sure your existing septic system is sized properly. If not, you will need to upgrade your septic system so that it can safely treat the extra sewage flow.

Relevant Building Code Provision: Division B, Sentence 11.4.2.5.(3).

Factory Built Buildings

Manufactured buildings must comply with all appropriate Ontario Building Code requirements. Only building components that are designed and constructed in manufacturing plants in accordance with the specified standards (CSA Z240.2.1 and CSA A277) are deemed to comply with the Code.

Relevant Building Code Provision: Division B, Sentences 9.1.1.9.(1), 9.12.2.2.(6), 9.15.1.3.(1).

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Please contact Development Services for additional information:
Planning Department email:
planning@kenora.ca
Building Department email:
building@kenora.ca

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