



# Additional Residential Units

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**BUILDING PERMIT & APPROVALS GUIDE**

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## BUILDING PERMIT & APPROVALS GUIDE

### Introduction

The following guide has been developed by the Town of The Blue Mountains to assist applicants in obtaining a building permit to allow for the development of an Additional Residential Unit (ARU) within The Town of The Blue Mountains.

This guide should not be relied on in place of professional expertise. If you are unfamiliar with building construction procedures, the assistance of a qualified design professional can set you up for success to save you both time and money.

This guide provides a summary of information related to application preparation and the issuance of a building permit. If there is a difference between this reference document and the formal regulations and by-laws, the formal regulations and by-laws will apply.

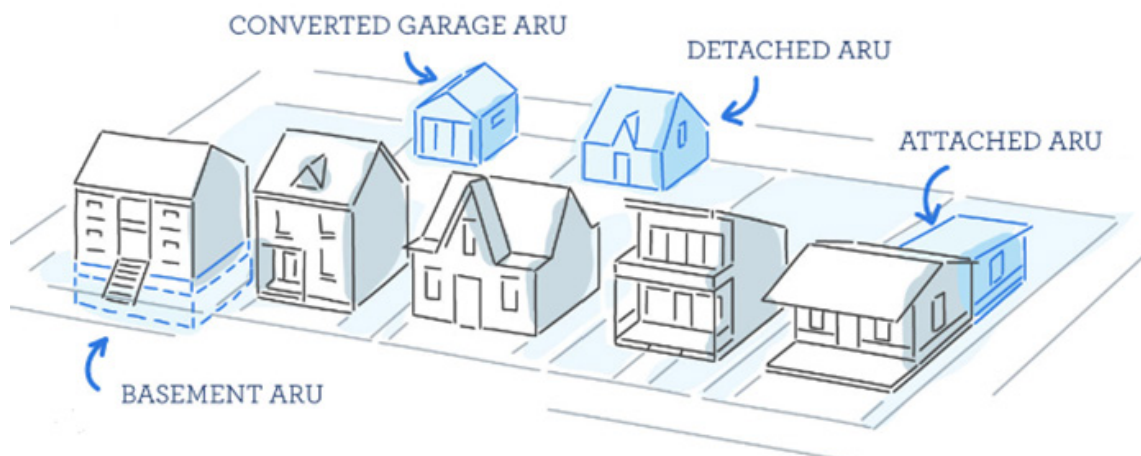
A building permit is required in the Town of The Blue Mountains for creating a new additional residential unit in a dwelling or in a detached accessory structure. This guide walks you through the planning process and notes items that may need to be considered as part of your project. Please refer to the Residential Building Permits page on our website to review the requirements for permit submission.

If you are new to the process or are uncertain of the Town of The Blue Mountains permit application process/ requirements, contact the **Building Services Division** at (519) 599-3131 ext. 290 or email [build@thebluemountains.ca](mailto:build@thebluemountains.ca)

### Definition

“Additional Residential Unit” means a secondary residential unit which is accessory to the principal use on the lot.”  
An additional residential unit may also be called:

- Accessory dwelling unit
- Accessory dwelling
- Secondary suite
- Secondary unit
- Garage suite
- Granny flat
- Basement apartment
- In-law suite



An additional residential unit is a separate living space with a kitchen, bathroom, sleeping, and laundry facilities located on the same property as a principal dwelling (detached, semi-detached or row house). Although Additional Residential Units often take the form of basement apartments, and they may occupy any floor in the house or be located in a detached accessory structure.

The property owner may live in the unit, family members may live in it, or it may be rented out. Note that an additional residential unit is not permitted to be located on a lot used for short term accommodation purposes.

## Zoning By-Law Requirements

The Council of the Corporation of the Town of The Blue Mountains enacted Zoning By-law #2018-65 Office Consolidation in May 2024, and provided that an Owner can meet all requirements of the Zoning By-law, an Additional Residential Unit can be constructed without further approvals from Council.

The following summarizes sections from **Part 4.0** of Zoning By-law #2018-65:

### Zoning By-law #2018-65

#### 4.1 Additional Residential Units

4.1.1. A maximum of two ARUs may be permitted within a main building or in an accessory building on lots containing a single-detached, semi-detached, or rowhouse dwelling, in accordance with the following provisions:

- a. For lots connected to both municipal water and sanitary sewer services, a maximum of two ARUs are permitted.
- b. For lots connected to partial municipal services (either water or sanitary sewer) or that are serviced privately:
  - i. On lots less than 0.8 hectares in area, one ARU is permitted.
  - ii. On lots greater than 0.8 hectares in area, two ARUs are permitted.
- c. Notwithstanding the above provisions, on lots designated under the Niagara Escarpment Plan, a maximum of one ARU is permitted and shall be located within the main building.

#### 4.1.2 All ARUs

ARUs located within a main building or within a detached accessory building shall be subject to the following provisions:

- a. The maximum gross floor area of an ARU shall not exceed 50% of the primary residential unit or 100 square metres, whichever is greater.
  - i. In addition, on lots designated under the Niagara Escarpment Plan, the maximum gross floor area shall be less than that of the primary dwelling unit.
- b. The maximum number of bedrooms shall be 2.
- c. ARUs shall comply with *Minimum Distance Separation* requirements.

### 4.1.3 ARUs in a Detached Accessory Building

Notwithstanding the provisions of Section 4.3, a detached accessory building containing at least one ARU shall be subject to the following provisions:

- a. The minimum rear yard shall be 1.2 metres. All other required yards shall be in accordance with those required for the main building.
- b. The maximum height shall be 5 metres, except where the ARU is located above another accessory use, in which case the maximum height shall be 8 metres.
- c. The maximum lot coverage applicable to the building shall be permitted to exceed that applicable to accessory buildings by 5 percentage points per ARU.
- d. The building shall be located within 50m of the main building.

[ZBA 2024-31]

### 4.2 Accessory Apartment Dwellings in a Commercial Zone

Notwithstanding any provisions of the By-law, where accessory dwellings are permitted in the same building as a permitted commercial use, the following shall apply:

- a. Accessory residential units are only permitted above the first storey or rear of a commercial building.

The full text and interactive mapping for the current Zoning By-law #2018-65 is available for review on the Zoning Information page of the Town's website.

### Calculation for Size of Additional Residential Unit

#### First – calculate the gross floor area of the existing dwelling

This is the total area of each floor of the house, but does not include any garage, carport, porch, sunroom, veranda, balcony, or attics.

#### Second – calculate the maximum floor area of the additional residential unit

Divide the number you calculated in the first step by two. The result is how big the additional residential unit can be.

For an additional residential unit to qualify as authorized unit, it shall comply with:

- Zoning By-law requirements
- Ontario Building Code
- Property Standards By-law
- Electrical code

## Variance or Zoning By-Law Amendment Processes

If your property does not quite meet the basic zoning requirements, you may have the opportunity to apply for a minor variance or a zoning by-law amendment. Note that these processes can take time and may lead to some additional costs.

### Minor Variance Application

- The minor variance process allows a property owner to seek relief from specific provisions of the Town's Zoning By-law. The Town of The Blue Mountains' Committee of Adjustment is an independent body appointed by Council and has authority under the Planning Act to consider approval of a minor variance application. Planning Applications & Forms are located on the Town's website.

### Zoning By-Law Amendment

- If the relief sought from provisions of the Zoning By-law is not determined to be minor, a site-specific zoning by-law amendment may be required, subject to Council approval. Please contact Planning Services for further direction.

Please contact the Town's Planning Services department by email [planning@thebluemountains.ca](mailto:planning@thebluemountains.ca) or by phone to 519-599-3131 ext. 263 to discuss which process would best suit a particular situation.

## Ontario Building Code Requirements

The Ontario Building Code (OBC) requirements vary according to the age of the ARU. Please note you may be required to provide documentation to confirm the age of your dwelling.

No matter what type of unit you are creating, the creation of ARUs requires specialized knowledge. We strongly recommend contacting a design professional who will help explain requirements under the OBC and assist you in creating a layout that works best for you, while meeting all the minimum requirements. Areas to consider include, but are not limited to:

- Minimum room sizes
- Minimum window sizes, for light and possible egress
- Fire separations
- Exits
- Fire safety elements including smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors
- Heating systems
- Septic Systems

Homeowners are permitted to prepare their own ARU design in lieu of a qualified design professional, provided that they:

- Have a thorough understanding of the Ontario Building Code and Zoning requirements
- Are able to draw code-compliant drawings that are to scale
- Are able to provide specific construction details about how the construction will be completed

## **Operating/Maintaining a Rental Unit**

The rights and responsibilities of a landlord are outlined in the Residential Tenancies Act. This information for landlords in Ontario is available from the Landlord and Tenant Board.

All property owners must follow the Town's current Zoning By-law and the Ontario Building Code and Fire Code provisions, as well as the Town's Property Standards By-law. The Property Standards By-law establishes standards for the maintenance of properties and buildings, including snow removal and yard maintenance.

## **Effect on Property Taxes & Insurance Considerations**

Additional Residential Units may impact property tax; however, the Town cannot provide specific information relating as to how a property's current value assessment may be affected. If you would like more information on possible changes to your property tax, please call the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) at 1-866-296-6722.

If you plan to add an additional residential unit to your property, you may want to notify your insurance company or broker as early as possible for guidance. For more detailed information, you can contact the Insurance Bureau of Canada at 1-800-387-2880 or visit Insurance Bureau of Canada.

## **For further information on permit requirements for Additional Residential Units, please contact:**

Planning, Building & Development Services Department  
Building Division

Telephone: (519) 599-3131 ext. 290  
Toll Free: 1-888-258-6867

[build@thebluemountains.ca](mailto:build@thebluemountains.ca)

*This guide has been developed for convenience purposes only.  
The Owner is responsible for ensuring compliance with all Town By-laws and other applicable regulations.*