

What is small scale multi-unit housing (SSMUH)?

Small-scale multi-unit housing, missing-middle housing, and infill housing are all terms that describe ground-oriented homes with multiple units that can fit into existing single-family neighbourhoods.

Photo of SSMUH from “Homes for People”



What is the new SSMUH law passed by the Province of BC?

It is new legislation that requires all BC municipalities to amend their zoning bylaws to allow infill housing on single-family and duplex parcels. The Province requires that 4 housing units must be allowed on each urban serviced parcel larger than 280m² (~3,000ft²) and 2 units on other lands. It has also set policy that must be considered in zoning, including regulation of: height, setbacks, off road parking, coverage, etc.

Why did the Province make these changes for increased density?

This is just one of several changes to deal with a “housing crisis,” decades in the making and comprising of the following: increasing homeless population; increasing overall population; low rental vacancy rate; homes shifting to short term rentals and/or speculation; chronic lack of affordable housing; and unprecedented post-pandemic price increases.

What changes must the City of Salmon Arm complete by what date?



The City must update its Zoning Bylaw to comply with the legislation by the end of June, 2024. The changes will enable up to 4 units on the vast majority of low density residential parcels, e.g.: a home with a suite and an accessory dwelling unit in the yard or a duplex with a secondary suite in each half. Smaller parcels < 280m² in area will allow up to 3 units.

Will Council hold a public hearing? How do I submit input?

No: under the new BC law, Council is in the difficult position of having to notify the public about the Zoning Bylaw changes and answer to their constituents yet they are prohibited from holding a public hearing or refusing these density increases. While we will collect written input, the process is to “inform” you rather than asking “what do you think.” Kindly note that Salmon Arm is currently engaging with the public on the City’s Official Community Plan update which is related to infill housing. Your input will help with this work.

Will this increase my property taxes or property value?

Since it is up to BC Assessment to set your assessment - which then determines your property taxes - it is unknown at present. BC Assessment has suggested that impact of these types of changes to property value may be minimal because broad zoning changes do not have a discernable impact on land value. For example, when a single property is zoned to allow 4 units, the value may increase as it is the only property with this density. But when almost all residential properties are zoned to allow 4 units, the value increase is minimal as it is universal (minimizing the added value to your specific property).

Will our infrastructure have capacity for the added housing density?

New infill development must be connected to water and sewer. Infrastructure requirements are identified and then resolved during the development permit and/or building permit approval processes. The City Engineering Department undertakes ongoing assessments to determine available capacity in the system and prioritizes plans for future upgrades. There may be parts of Salmon Arm where the system (sewer and/or water) may need to be installed or upgraded to support infill housing. The costs for this are typically paid by the developer. The City then maintains, operates and replaces these works.



If I live in a dwelling on a bare-land strata, will this change my zoning?

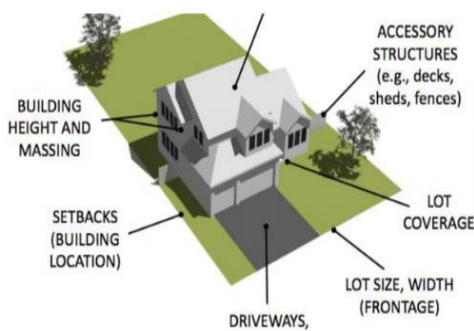
The new zoning will apply to all eligible properties regardless of the type of subdivision that created the parcels in the zone. Strata corporations may make bylaws regarding the type of building that may be constructed on a bare land strata lot, and owners would need to comply with all strata bylaws.

How many housing units can I build on my property? When can I start construction?

At present, and until the Zoning Bylaw is amended, nothing has changed. When the Zoning Bylaw is complete (June 30th, 2024) property owners can then determine the detailed zoning regulations that will apply to their property. A building permit and in some cases development permit as well as registration under the Homeowners Protection Act may also be required.



What about dwelling setbacks, heights, size, lot coverage?



The provisions that regulate or limit “build-out” that are currently in effect in the Zoning Bylaw still apply but these will be examined as a part of the process. Council may or may not revise these.

As a part of the legislation, the Province has established guidelines that the City must consider when regulating build-out via the Zoning Bylaw. The regulations must be reasonable and must support infill housing without effectively precluding it by significantly increasing setbacks or decreasing parcel coverage. Bylaw requirements for off-street parking for each dwelling unit must also be considered. The Province has suggested that these be decreased.

Will the existing size limit of 90m² (968ft²) for secondary suite & accessory dwelling units remain?

The Zoning Bylaw currently caps suite size; however, the unit may be within a much larger accessory building, especially on large parcels. The benefits and drawbacks to increasing this cap will be considered by Council as a part of the process. Neighbours may be concerned about excessively large buildings that block views and reduce greenspace - be they accessory suites or accessory storage buildings. We appreciate that given the mandated increased residential densities, regulating build-out will be even more important.

How could this change my neighbourhood?

With the changes, you are likely to see many more different housing forms other than traditional single family homes. How quickly the changes take place will be dependent on how many of your neighbours choose to take advantage of the new housing options that provincial legislation has enabled.

I have an illegal suite. Is it legal now?

No. Despite that zoning and density may enable your suite, you still require a building permit and occupancy certificate to ensure compliance with the BC Building Code. This protects you and your tenants. Note that this is the case even if you are paying extra for utilities and garbage/recycling.

Where can I find more information?

For Bylaw changes & Council reports go to <https://www.salmonarm.ca/> and search “small scale multi-unit housing”

For more general info & background go to the BC Ministry of Housing:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/organizational-structure/ministries-organizations/ministries/housing>

Or contact City of Salmon Arm Planning Department at 250.803.4000 if you cannot find the information you need.