



Small Scale Multi-Unit Housing FAQs

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Eligibility

Is SSMUH development permitted anywhere within the Urban Containment Boundary (UCB)?

According to Section 5.37 in the [Zoning Bylaw](#), Small-Scale Multi-Unit Housing is permitted only on those lots where *all* of the following conditions are met:

- The lot must be within a zone which includes “Small-Scale Multi-Unit Housing” as a permitted use;
- The lot must be within the Urban Containment Boundary;
- The lot must be within the Sewer Service Area;

- If the lot is within the Primary Growth Area, the lot must be less than 4,050m²;
- The lot must not be within any Transit Oriented Area, as established by the Transit Oriented Area Bylaw, 2024, No. 10015, as may be amended or replaced from time to time.

How do I see a map of the area in Saanich that is eligible for SSMUH?

As noted above, there are several factors that determine SMUHH eligibility, so there is no “one map” to reference. However, on the [SaanichMap \(GIS\)](#) tool, you can toggle on the SSMUH layer and type in your property’s address. When the SSMUH toggle layer is on, several layers are presented together. *None of these layers on their own will determine your eligibility!* Follow the steps outlined in the [SSMUH Application Guide](#) and refer to the [Zoning Bylaw](#) for more information.

Are A-1 Lots eligible for SSMUH?

Some A-zone properties are eligible for SSMUH. Check that SSMUH is listed as a permitted use in your zone, and confirm your property meets all the criteria in Section 5.37 of the [Zoning Bylaw](#).

Note that most (but not all) of our A-zone properties in Saanich are located *outside* the Urban Containment Boundary. To be eligible for SSMUH, you must be *inside* the Urban Containment Boundary and within the sewer service area. See the [Info Sheet](#) to help you determine what is permitted.

What is the difference between a Houseplex and a house with a secondary suite? Is a house with a secondary suite considered SSMUH?

A house with a secondary suite and/or garden suite is two dwelling units, but it is *not* considered a houseplex.

A **houseplex** consists of two or more attached dwelling units. The dwellings may or may not be on the same title. The special provisions in the Building Code for secondary suites cannot be used for houseplexes.

A **secondary suite** is a dwelling unit that is contained within another dwelling (e.g. a single-detached house). Both dwellings are registered under the same title, and the secondary suite *cannot* be strata-titled or otherwise subdivided from the principal dwelling.

Do secondary suites count towards the maximum number of units permitted?

Yes, secondary suites are included in the total number of units permitted on a lot. For example, a duplex where each side has a secondary suite counts as 4 units.

Are pre-manufactured garden suites considered SSMUH?

Pre-manufactured homes are permitted in Saanich and could be considered SSMUH. However, depending on the type of pre-manufactured home, different standards must be met. For example, a CSA A277 home that has full foundations must comply with the BC Building Code. Please contact [Inspections](#) for more information.

Subdivision & Stratification

Can larger SSMUH lots be subdivided to create separate units on each of the new resulting lots?

It is possible to subdivide larger lots, but please note that [subdivision](#) involves a separate approval process. If the resulting lot sizes are not compliant with the zoning on the lot, then you would be required to go through a rezoning process *before* subdividing the property. Contact the subdivision officer at subdivision@saanich.ca.

Can SSMUH be stratified and sold individually? What is the process for stratification?

It is up to the property owner to determine if they would like to stratify the units or maintain them as rental.

If you would like to stratify a new SSMUH build, it is up to the property owner to deposit a strata plan for registration in the [Provincial Land Title Office](#).

If you are bringing an existing unit into a strata, you will engage in a [strata conversion](#) process. It is recommended that you hire a professional who can advise you on the pros and cons of strata conversion.

Please contact our [Subdivision Department](#) to discuss stratification process and estimated timelines for approvals at subdivision@saanich.ca.

Is it required to demonstrate full compliance with the Building Code for a strata conversion of an existing home?

Yes. As part of a [Strata Conversion](#) application, you will be required to provide a Report for a Registered Architect or Engineer confirming how *all buildings* on the site substantially comply with the Building Code. You will be asked to identify what work is required to bring the building up to code.

Driveways & Fire Access Routes

Will each unit need its own driveway, or can multiple units use one driveway?

Generally, there is to be one driveway per legal lot in accordance with the [Driveway Access Bylaw](#). The number of units does *not* equal the number of driveways. If factors such as lot size, topographical features or other constraints render it impossible or impractical to have only one driveway, staff will consider the need for a second driveway on a case-by-case basis.

What are the width requirements for driveways and fire access routes for SSMUH projects?

The driveway should be 3 meters wide or greater to facilitate maneuvering to and from the property. As per the [Driveway Access Bylaw](#), the maximum driveway width permitted is 7 meters. Width requirements apply to the portion of the driveway that falls within municipal land.

Driveways or “access routes” over 45 meters in length must be a minimum of 6-meter-wide. If the access route is less than 45 meters in length, a 6 meter clear width is *not* required for SSMUH. See the [Building Bylaw](#) for more information relating to access routes.

Transportation & Parking

What is the difference between Transit Oriented Area (TOA) vs SSMUH Transit Proximity Area vs SSMUH Regular Transit Area?

TOAs are lands that are suitable for higher densities due to their proximity to transit routes and hubs. Provincial legislation requires Saanich to designate **Transit Oriented Areas (TOAs)** according to certain parameters. SSMUH is *not* permitted in TOAs because those lands are designated for higher density development.

The **SSMUH Transit Proximity Area** is shown on Saanich Map. This area meets the legislated definition and is eligible for SSMUH up to 6 units.

The **SSMUH Regular Transit Area** is used to determine parking requirements. Lots within this area have reduced parking requirements.

What are the parking requirements for SSMUH projects?

It depends on the area in which your property is located. For lots that are *within* the SSMUH Transit Proximity area, there is no off-street parking requirement. In these cases, the amount of parking provided is up to the property owner or developer.

If your property is located *outside* the SSMUH Transit Proximity Area or SSMUH Regular Transit Area, one parking space per dwelling unit is required.

See Page 5 of the [SSMUH Application Guide](#) and **Table 7.1A** in the [Zoning Bylaw](#) for SSMUH parking requirements.

Why do some areas in Saanich permit 6-unit SSMUH developments? How were these areas determined?

Saanich used the definition provided in the provincial legislation. The definition indicates that 6 units must be allowed near frequent bus service on single-family and duplex residential lots that are greater than 280 m². The bus must stop at least every 15 minutes, on average, between certain hours on weekdays and weekends. See the province's website for more details: [Small-scale, multi-unit housing](#).

Why do some high-frequency bus routes (e.g. along Quadra Street) not qualify for 6-unit SSMUH projects?

There are some areas along bus routes that appear to be eligible for 6 units SSMUH, but because they are *split* routes or other criteria are not met, they do not qualify. In the case of Quadra Street, Routes 6A and 6B are two separate variants that disqualifies this route for 6-unit SSMUH.

Saanich staff are in ongoing communication with BC Transit. When a bus route is determined to meet the provincial definition, 6-unit SSMUH will be eligible along the route.

Is a property that is within a primary growth area and a primary corridor automatically eligible for 6-unit SSMUH projects?

No. Follow the steps in the [SSMUH Application Guide](#) to determine what can be built on your property, based on its location, or email zoning@saanich.ca for assistance.

Lot Coverage and Setbacks

Is there a difference between the front and rear setbacks for a single-family home and SSMUH projects? If so, why?

The *front* setbacks for single-family homes and SSMUH projects are indeed different: 6 meters and 4 meters, respectively. SSMUH projects have a smaller front setback to provide a greater buildable area and allow for an increased number of units on the lot.

For the *rear* yard setback, SSMUH projects have similar setbacks as single-family homes to maintain open site space across rear yards in neighbourhood areas.

Schedule G in the Zoning Bylaw identifies 60% lot coverage for 5 or 6 units, 10% Minimum Open Site Space, and 35% Front Yard Open Yard Space. Why do these percentages not add up to 100%?

These percentages do not need to add up to 100% because they are each for separate requirements. We recommend looking up these terms in the Definitions Section (Section 2) of the [Zoning Bylaw](#). You may also refer to the diagrams provided in the [SSMUH Application Guide](#) that explain each of these different terms and requirements, and how to calculate the percentages.

In Schedule G of the Zoning Bylaw, it states that the minimum Front Yard Open Site Space must be 35%. What is the 35% in reference to?

This means the *Front Yard Open Site Space* must be 35% of the *front yard area*. The front yard area is the area from the front property line to the front of the building. See the diagram on Page 17 of [SSMUH Application Guide](#) to help you understand the definition.

SSMUH regulations state that no primary living space can be more than 1.2 m below grade. What rooms are considered "primary living space"?

Primary Living Space means the area of a dwelling unit which supports the majority of a resident's activity during daylight hours, such as kitchen, dining room and living rooms. Bathrooms, storage and utility rooms are *not* considered Primary Living Space. While it is strongly encouraged for all bedrooms to have access to natural daylight and ventilation through an operable window, for the purposes of the SSMUH regulations, they are not considered Primary Living Spaces.

Has Saanich created stock development plans for typical lot scenarios?

Saanich does not have separate stock development plans. You may wish to review the Province's [B.C. Standardized Housing Designs Catalogue](#) to see some examples of SSMUH. Please note that this provincial resource does not include enough information to confirm the designs would meet the BC Building Code, nor are they guaranteed to meet all of Saanich's [Zoning Bylaw](#) regulations.

Since there are many combinations of dwelling units that may suit a specific property, it is recommended that you hire a professional to help you determine the best option for your property while meeting the [Zoning Bylaw](#) regulations.

Site Servicing

Is site servicing infrastructure adequate for all homes on a street to become 4-plexes?

Municipal infrastructure across the District varies in available capacity and condition. As part of your application, staff will review the existing road, storm, sanitary, and water systems for your lot. If any deficiencies are identified, it is the applicant's responsibility to undertake design and construction of the necessary upgrades.

Since SSMUH is a Provincial legislation, is the province paying to upgrade all water, storm drains and sewer lines for the properties being densified?

SSMUH proposals are subject to underground and surface improvements in accordance with the [Subdivision Bylaw](#) and any such improvements are the responsibility of the applicant.

Has BC Hydro confirmed that they can provide enough electricity for new SSMUH?

BC Hydro is outside of the jurisdiction of Saanich, however, we understand that BC Hydro is taking the necessary steps to ensure alignment with SSMUH. You are encouraged to contact [BC Hydro](#) directly to learn more.

Trees

What happens if there is a tree in the way of an access route or parking area?

It is expected that the applicant will present all possible options for site access before a tree is considered for removal. This will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by Parks and Engineering. Note that the [Tree Protection Bylaw](#) does not allow for tree removal where there are alternative locations available for these types of infrastructure.

What if I get conflicting directions from different Saanich departments about whether to retain or remove a tree?

We make every effort to collaborate internally before the release of any comments on development proposals to ensure no conflicting information exists. The District is actively implementing new processes to streamline and improve service delivery across key Departments such as Engineering, Parks, and Planning. In the event you do receive conflicting information, it is recommended that you contact the [Inspections Department](#) where they will engage other Departments as necessary.

Building Code Requirements

Does installing a fire sprinkler system in a garden suite allow for an exception from separation requirements?

A sprinkler system does *not* allow for an exception of separation requirements. Adding a sprinkler is one option for increasing openings in a wall. We recommend hiring a professional code consultant to propose an alternative solution that will meet the BC building code requirements.

Is a fire separation between a living space and the attic above sufficient in place of a fire separation between adjacent attic spaces?

You may opt to do a ceiling fire separation instead of an attic fire separation. However, if fans or light fixtures penetrate the ceiling separation, you may be required to install special fixture protection. Note that the attic access must be a certified rated access. Contact [Inspections](#) for more information.

Application Requirements and Process

What is the current processing time for building permit applications?

Saanich is currently working to digitize the application process. For more efficient processing of your application, please consider the following:

- Ensure you are familiar with all SSMUH requirements by reading the SSMUH Guide, and the applicable sections of the Zoning Bylaw
- Contact planning/engineering prior to submitting your application to ensure you have met all requirements
- Hire the necessary consultants/professionals to assist you with the design and servicing
- Fill out the SSMUH Data Table and include in your application.

In what scenario would it be required to involve a registered architect when building SSMUH?

All applications involving a 5-plex or more dwelling units would require an architect and a Development Permit application.

Building SSMUH involves liaising with multiple municipal departments. How does a non-professional applicant navigate this?

Saanich recommends hiring professionals to assist with the design and the application process.

Quick Links

- [SSMUH Application Guide](#)
- [Info Sheet – I want to add one or more dwelling units to my property](#)
- [SSMUH Project Data Table \(fillable PDF\) // SSMUH Project Data Table \(Word\)](#)
- [SaanichMap GIS](#)
- [Zoning Bylaw](#)
- [Official Community Plan](#)
- [Development Permit Area Guidelines](#)
- [Development Permit Application](#)
- [Subdivision // Subdivision Bylaw](#)
- [Strata Conversion](#)
- [Development Cost Charges Bylaw](#)
- [Development Cost Charges Interpretation Bulletin](#)
- [Building Bylaw](#)
- [Saanich Engineering Specifications](#)
- [Excess Services Bylaw](#)
- [Fire Underwriters FAQ](#)
- [Tree Protection Bylaw](#)

Still have questions about SSMUH?

Planning

Phone: 250-475-5494 x.3411

E-mail: zoning@saanich.ca

Inspection Services

Phone: (250) 475-5457

Email: inspections@saanich.ca

Engineering

Phone: (250) 475-5575

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Parks

Phone: (250) 475-5522

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