Are you planning a residential project in Greater Nanaimo?

What builders should know about small-scale multi-unit housing before plans are finalized

Location: Greater Nanaimo, BC
Project Type: Small-Scale Multi-Unit Housing / Residential Infill (SSMUH)
Typical Projects: Duplexes with suites, fourplexes, secondary suites and residential redevelopment
Services: Civil site servicing, parking and access design, water servicing and stormwater design
Key Team Member: Brayden Hughes

Why it helps to look at the civil side early

Small-scale multi-unit housing has created more opportunities to add homes to residential properties across B.C. In Greater Nanaimo, that can mean adding secondary suites, developing a duplex with suites, building a fourplex, or redeveloping an existing residential lot.

Before the building plans are finalized, it is important to understand what the entire site can support. Parking, driveway access, water servicing, stormwater management and fire-protection requirements can all affect the design, and these items are often connected. Finding a constraint late can mean redesigning work that has already been completed, adding cost, delaying permitting and leaving fewer options for resolving the issue.

Bringing Newcastle in before the building permit application is submitted gives the project team an opportunity to review the site for civil feasibility and identify issues that could affect the design. That may include existing water infrastructure, fire-protection requirements, parking, access or stormwater. Talk to the Newcastle Engineering team early in your project to understand what needs to be considered before plans are finalized.

Existing neighbourhoods bring different constraints

Greater Nanaimo includes established neighbourhoods where infrastructure was built long before today's residential densities were being considered. Existing water mains, service connections, hydrants and driveway layouts may have been designed around much lower-density development, so those existing conditions need to be reviewed against what the proposed development requires.

Newer neighbourhoods can present different challenges. Servicing may be more recent, while limited site area, parking and driveway access become the bigger constraints. The same building type can therefore require a different civil approach from one property to the next. On one site, parking and access may drive the design. On another, the existing water main or servicing capacity may be the key consideration.

Examples: parking, access and servicing

A duplex with secondary suites, for example, may require additional parking. More parking can affect the driveway layout, landscaping and the usable area of the site, while the building configuration can also affect water servicing and fire-protection requirements.

A design that fits within the lot still needs to work with the infrastructure already serving the property. Reviewing parking, access, servicing and site conditions together gives the builder a clearer picture of what is practical before significant time and money have been committed to the design.

Before you start: questions worth asking

If you are considering adding units to a residential property in Greater Nanaimo, these are some questions worth answering early:

- What type of building and unit configuration is being proposed?
- Where will the required parking go?
- Will the existing driveway and access work with the proposed development?
- What water and stormwater infrastructure currently serves the property?
- Could the building configuration affect servicing or fire-protection requirements?
- Are there site constraints that should influence the design?

How Newcastle can help

Newcastle Engineering works with residential builders across Greater Nanaimo on duplexes with suites, fourplexes, secondary suites and other residential redevelopment projects. We review parking, access, servicing and existing infrastructure so builders understand the civil requirements before moving further into design and permitting.

Talk to the Newcastle Engineering team about your project. We can help identify the site requirements that should be addressed before the project moves toward permitting.