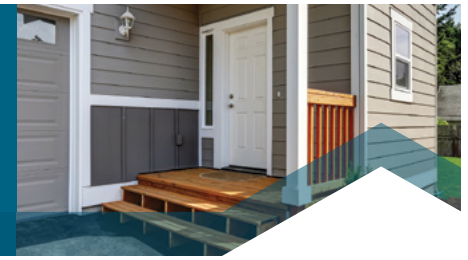


# Secondary Suites – Municipal Case Study



## VILLAGE OF MERRICKVILLE-WOLFORD

This section provides an overview of the Village of Merrickville-Wolford's current second unit policy based on the 2016 survey response, a follow-up interview with staff, and information from the Village's current Official Plan and Zoning By-law.

Second units are often utilized as housing for aging parents but there is currently not a large demand for them in the village. There are concerns that second units could alter the current neighbourhood structure/character. The Village of Merrickville-Wolford plans to undertake a review of its Official Plan.

### Secondary Suite Policy

Currently, accessory apartment dwelling units (second units), are permitted as-of-right in all zones that permit single dwellings as the primary use except within Residential Limited Services (LSR) Zones. The policy is limited to single-detached dwellings and not for semis or townhomes in the community.

Second units have been permitted in single-detached dwellings in the Village since 2008. At the time the policy was being developed, there was some concern regarding permitting a second unit in dwellings situated on private rights of way and consideration was given to increased risk in an emergency situation. This resulted in the prohibition of secondary apartments within LSR Zones.

The Village of Merrickville-Wolford's current Zoning By-law (2008) defines an accessory apartment dwelling as a unit located in a single-detached dwelling house that does not occupy the whole of a storey within the dwelling, and that shares at least two of the following with the principal dwelling unit:

- building entrance
- parking area and/or
- private amenity area



### Regulations

The Village Official Plan (OP) states that up to one accessory apartment unit is permitted in a single-detached dwelling, subject to the following policies:

1. The physical character of the dwelling shall not be substantially altered. Pursuant to this policy, the implementing Zoning By-law shall contain regulations to define an accessory apartment unit and to restrict them so that a duplex or semi-detached dwelling cannot be constructed under this policy.
2. An accessory apartment unit shall only be permitted in a permanent single-detached dwelling which is permitted as a principal use in the land use designation in which it is located. An accessory apartment unit shall not be permitted in a seasonal dwelling, an accessory dwelling to a non-residential use or a residential dwelling in the Limited Services Residential zone.
3. Where an accessory apartment is to be located in a dwelling which is serviced by a private sewage disposal system, the applicant shall obtain a Certificate of Approval from the Health Unit prior to the issuance of a building permit for an accessory apartment unit.

The main motivation for the above regulations was to ensure that second units would not alter the current character of the existing neighbourhood. The limitation on seasonal dwellings was developed to mitigate risk where such properties have limited access for emergency vehicles.

In the case where a dwelling was on septic and an application for a second unit was made, the homeowner/developer was encouraged to contact the Public Health Department at the onset to determine whether a second unit was feasible on that particular lot.

## Implementation

As noted, the Village of Merrickville-Wolford has permitted second units in single-detached homes since 2008, with the Zoning By-law regulations in effect since 2008. Since this time, there have been limited barriers experienced with the current policy. Through discussions with Village of Merrickville-Wolford staff, the main challenge that arises is community neighbourhood resistance. Concerns seem to centre on homes moving from solely homeownership to providing rental accommodation and the perception that this will alter the overall character of the neighbourhood. Addressing such concerns seems to be mainly on a case-by-case basis. While these concerns do come up, the current as-of-right policy permitting second units in single-detached homes is upheld.

*“The majority of second units are developed to accommodate an aging parent”*

- Municipal staff, Village of Merrickville-Wolford

## Concerns re: ancillary structure/challenges

In the case, however, of applications for a second unit within an ancillary structure within a Rural Zone, these have all been turned down as they do not conform to the existing Official Plan or Zoning By-law. The main concern is that two dwellings on a property is seen to alter the current neighbourhood structure/character.

## Community Impact

Based on discussions with local staff, the municipality considers approximately 50 building permit applications per year, of which up to 1 or 2 per year may be for second units. The majority, if not all, of these units are built with the purpose of providing a home to an aging parent(s). There is concern that seniors are finding it more and more difficult to live on their own due to financial, physical, or mental health issues and second units might be one option to help address this trend.

The municipality does not have an official licensing and/or registration process but would be tracked through the building permit process.

## Next Steps

The County of Leeds and Grenville Official Plan (2016) requires that “local municipalities develop policies in accordance with the Planning Act, to permit second residential units within single-detached, semi-detached, and townhouse dwelling units, where an accessory residential unit is currently not permitted in a structure which is accessory to those dwelling units, subject to appropriate servicing”.

The Policy also requires that local municipalities permit second units within a residential accessory structure, subject to the policies and regulations of the local municipal Official Plan and zoning by-law. Municipalities are further encouraged to establish policies related to garden suites where appropriate.

The Village of Merrickville-Wolford will be undertaking a review of its Official Plan and will ensure conformity with both County and provincial legislation with respect to second units. It is not anticipated, however, that the existing policy will change substantially.

### Resources:

[Village of Merrickville-Wolford Official Plan \(2006\)](#)

[Village of Merrickville-Wolford Comprehensive Zoning By-law \(2008\)](#)

[County of Leeds and Grenville Official Plan \(2016\)](#)

### Further reading:

[Ontario Secondary Suites Research Study](#)

[Accessible and Adaptable Housing](#)



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