

Q&A from Jul. 30, 2025, Builder Forum Series (Small Scale Multi-Unit Housing and Step Code)

Presented by the Township of Langley, Small Housing BC, and Mark Bernhardt Contracting

Township of Langley: [TOL](#)

Small Housing BC: [SHBC](#)

Mark Bernhardt: [MB](#)

BC Hydro: BCH

Q:	Will the number of units allowed depend on zoning?
TOL:	The number of units is determined by more than zoning alone. A property must be located within the Urban Containment Boundary to be eligible, and many lots in the Township are not – particularly those in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), which are excluded from SSMUH. In addition, both sewer and water servicing must be available, and these requirements; for example, SR2 zones, which have a minimum lot size of over one acre, are exempt under provincial provisions. Many other zones within the Urban Containment Boundary that meet servicing requirements are eligible. Because site-specific conditions vary, it is best to confirm eligibility for a specific lot by contacting cdinfo@tol.ca . More information can be found on the TOL SSMUH website: https://www.tol.ca/en/the-township/small-scale-multi-unit-housing.aspx
Q:	Will fourplexes use a central HVAC system or individual systems?
SHBC:	For a Part 9 fourplex, like most gentle density housing, you can use individual HVAC systems for each unit – there's no requirement for a central system
MB:	Either is fine. What ever fits the project best. Many small spaces are avoiding systems with large ducting, but this is a space and cost issue, not a requirement
Q:	Can fourplexes be sold to multiple buyers or just one?
TOL:	Ownership and stratification are permitted in the Township, so units can be sold to separate buyers or retained under a single owner
Q:	Does the Township of Langley's infrastructure (sewage, water, and electrical load) support a fourplexes on single-family lots?
TOL:	This depends on the lot. Some areas do have issues with fire flow. Contact cdinfo@tol.ca so they can review any servicing considerations.

Q:	There seems to be multiple cuts going into roadways to service these laneway or row home units. Can servicing be done with one straw into lot for each service i.e sewer, water, electrical and still achieve NON-STRATA?
SHBC:	The main consideration with using a single connection for each service (water, sewer, electrical) is whether the units will need to be individually metered or managed. If the units are intended – now or in the future – to be sold under separate ownership, it becomes much more challenging to coordinate utility billing without separate connections for each unit. However, if the units are intended to remain under a single ownership, a shared connection can be possible. There are nuances to this – such as local servicing bylaws and utility provider requirements – so it's important to confirm with the municipality or utility provider early in the design process.
MB:	That would be more efficient. There are limits on how close some services can be to each other. This would be coordinated by the contractor where possible. We have done this with water and sewer but never succeeding in coordinating the power along with it.
Q:	What are the parking requirements for SSMUH
TOL:	1 spot per unit in the Township of Langley
Q:	When dealing with DCC cost, what type of housing category will these fourplexes charges fall under?
TOL:	DCC rates for SSMUH are under review and will likely be similar to those for apartments. Builders should confirm the most up to date rates with cdinfo@tol.ca
Q:	Is integrated design “easier” for spec builders vs unique builds which tend to not fully engage trades until the permit is issued?
MB:	In my experience, spec building is easier because you avoid client driven changes, which often disrupt timelines and increase costs. With spec builds, specifications remained fixed – the specs are the specs – and we can work with our preferred trades without frequent scope changes or bidding processes. This predictability also allows for more accurate scheduling and budgeting. In our case, building high-performance home as spec builds has been financially beneficial, as we can sell them for more without increasing construction costs. Custom builds also work well with integrated design, but client engagement from the earliest stages is essential. When clients participate in early design meetings, they gain trust in the trades and understand the reasoning behind certain design decisions, which reduce the likelihood of mid-project changes.

Q:	Is integrated design another way of saying, getting a construction manager (CCDC5A)? What are the contracts associated with it?
MB:	<p>There is a CDC contract specifically for integrated design and delivery, but we've never successfully used it – CHMC, for example, won't allow it. In practice, we typically use a simple design services agreement during pre-construction. Depending on the project's size and complexity, trades may also sign one. The builder always does.</p> <p>In the CDCC framework, we might start with CCDC5A (construction management for services) and move to 5B (for services and construction) during the build. For smaller projects, we keep things simple: just a design services agreement with the builder, and side agreements with trades if needed. Trades often invest time up front because they know the job is theirs. On larger projects, especially out east, we've used the full CCDC structure from pre-design through construction.</p>
Q:	Can modular or factory-built units meet Step Code requirements?
MB:	Yes. Most BC prefabbers already meet Step Code requirements. The challenge is not with the prefabricated components themselves but with the detailing of the joints – especially where wall panels meet or where modules connect to the foundation. For example, in a recent project, panelized walls with integrated weather and air barriers were simply taped together at the joins, which worked well. In another project involving large modules, the module-to-module joints were done properly, but extra attention was needed where the modules met the foundation. That issue was solved with caulking and tape. Out of province prefab, such as from Alberta, can be more challenging because manufacturers there often build for multiple provincial codes, which may not align perfectly with BC requirements.
Q:	What about some of these prefab that arrive fully built? Such as a garden suite? Do they still need energy modeling?
MB:	Yes, unless the unit is classified as a Z240 manufactured home, which is like a trailer home and follows its own standards. These are exempt from energy modelling. However, if the unit is built to A277 standards and placed on a permanent foundation, it is considered a code-compliant home and must be energy modelled.
Q:	Would you say you are in favour of heat pumps or are you accepting the direction that the province is going? In regard to gas over electrification. There's no doubt that it's eventually the way to go (heat pumps) but our Province at this time is not set up for the amount of electricity will need to power these heating and cooling units. We're going to have to tear down communities to build enough sub stations or build more site C dams which most likely will not happen.
MB:	This is a myth. There are some small street level issues. There are also some issues with very large very fast development areas such as Surrey. However, these are distribution issues, not total capacity. These problems are also being

Commented [ST1]: Originally a question for Mark but open for anyone to answer

	quickly resolved, and the vast majority of the province is totally fine. The total capacity of the province is also in very good shape. Long term planning is happening which is why we see the new calls for power from BC hydro.
Q:	Mark what is your preferred exterior air barrier these days, taking into account cost optimization?
MB:	I prefer higher tech membranes and smart vapour retarders. But there is nothing wrong with Poly and Tyvek, it has its downfalls but we're still able to reach 1-1.5 ACH quite easily with it. The key is quality control.
Q:	How it possible to divide 200amp into four different owners, if I'm not mistaken minimum BC hydro connection is 100amp.
BCH:	BC Hydro typically requires a minimum 100A service for residential connections. But it is possible to divide a 200 Amp service among 4 owners under specific conditions. Under this, you can share loads per unit (e.g. Unit A 60 Amp, Unit B, 40 Amp, Unit C 50 Amp, Unit D 50 Amp). Those loads can be determined and calculated by a certified electrician and code compliance with the Electrical Code needs to be ensured. The Electrical Code allows for load sharing devices (currently for EVs but we are working with Technical Safety BC and the Province to support load sharing / load management devices for broader application), so these seemingly low loads are absolutely possible
Q:	Is it possible to have load calculation less than 100A?
BCH:	You would be surprised! Load calculations under the electrical code are actually often oversized. Historical load data shows that the majority of people use much less power at any given time than what their panels are sized for (panels are sized to accommodate a load that occurs if every single device and system you have in your home runs at the same time). Lots of work going on with Electrical Code committees to acknowledge that and adjust the code. It would make many things a lot easier (and cheaper).
Q:	I agree that using actual load usage is preferable, but the regulatory requirements for submitting a formal load calculation still take precedence?
BCH:	That's what we are trying to advocate for with the Electrical Code. For new construction, there isn't much guidance out there yet (other than the PED guide I mentioned earlier). On the retrofit side, Technical Safety BC officially accepts historic load data to be used to calculate panel sizing needs and adjust existing panel space for electrification purposes. This is a great question to put back to your electrician, they should be familiar with these practices. BC Hydro only responds to connection applications we receive, we have no authority to push

	back on applications we get, we simply connect to what is being submitted to us by electricians/ engineers.
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