

Public Review

British Columbia Building Code 2023

Planned changes to increase accessibility in new buildings

Why are we updating the BC Building Code?

In 2020, the B.C. Government pledged to include changes in the BC Building Code to make new buildings more accessible for all people.

What changes are planned?

The B.C. Government is proposing BC Building Code changes to increase accessibility in more buildings.

Some accessibility changes will be adopted from the National Building Code 2020, while others will be new, and specific to B.C.

Combining leading national standards with B.C. specific building accessibility rules will make more buildings more inclusive to meet peoples' differing needs.

New BC Building Code accessibility rules

Key changes proposed for commercial and public buildings and in large multi-unit new buildings, like condos and apartments include:

- Inclusive entrances to provide power-operated doors for all building entrances and entrances to accessible washrooms
- Increased access to common spaces and facilities in buildings
- Accessible paths of travel to enable safe and useable paths of travel, turning spaces, doorways, ramps, seating, and more elevators
- Inclusive washrooms to provide full-sized changing space and space for care givers, universal dressing and shower facilities, and emergency lighting
- Improved signage and prompts to provide information through hearing or touch to guide people throughout buildings

- Updating adaptable dwelling¹ rules in large buildings for 100% of residential suites and in small buildings for first floor suites to require:
 - Accessible clearances through doorways and along paths of travel to living spaces
 - Space in a bedroom, bathroom and kitchen
 - Switches and other controls at an accessible height
 - Reinforcement of bathroom walls to allow future installation of grab bars
- Assistive listening systems at service counters to support communication
- Visible alarms in more hotel and motel rooms

Key changes proposed for single-detached homes, townhomes, and row homes include updating adaptable dwelling rules to require:

- An accessible clearance at the entry door
- Reinforcement of bathroom walls to allow future installation of grab bars

Why these changes?

The proposed changes represent an important first move toward greater accessibility. Focusing on making buildings more accessible and adaptable aims to help reduce future upgrade costs and helps people to stay in their homes through illness, injury, and/or aging. These changes require greater accessibility in larger buildings where costs can be split amongst a larger number of units and modest increases to smaller housing types. The aim is to increase accessibility while safeguarding housing affordability and availability, and respect industry capacity.

Adaptable dwellings provide accessible entrances, more clearance space to support mobility, accessible controls, switches, and features to suit occupants' needs, thereby offering greater accessibility.

Given the proposals to increase accessibility and adaptability requirements, an amendment to the Building Act General Regulation is anticipated.

Additional work with national code and standards development organizations is ongoing to make buildings more accessible.

¹ Adaptable dwellings are designed and built to be more easily changed to meet people's specific needs, thereby providing greater accessibility.