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## Transition period for adaptable dwellings in the British Columbia Building Code 2024

BC Building Code 2024 adaptable dwelling unit changes will help to increase new housing inventory to meet more people's needs.

Adaptable dwellings benefit all people, not only those living with permanent or temporary disabilities, but also those who wish to age in place, and parents with young children.

Adaptable dwellings include features that enable inclusive and safe homes that foster greater independence, enriching the lives of all occupants throughout the lifetime of the building.

This bulletin provides information about the effective date for adaptable dwelling unit requirements in the British Columbia Building Code (BC Building Code) 2024<sup>1</sup>.

The transition period for adaptable dwellings has been extended for in-stream projects with substantial design work completed in accordance with the BC Building Code 2018. This means that, provided that specific criteria are met, projects with building permits applied for **before March 8, 2027**, will be exempt from the 2024 BC Building Code's adaptable dwelling unit requirements.

[Bulletin B24-10-R Application of the 2024 BC Building Code](#) provides the criteria on what constitutes an in-stream project.

### Why did the Province create a transition period for effective dates?

The Province recognizes that the effective date of the BC Codes (Building, Plumbing, and Fire Codes) represents a point-in-time for building projects that can be many years in the making. Providing industry with a reasonable transition period to comply with the new requirements helps minimize construction delays and cost increases for in-stream projects. During the transition period, training and education on the new requirements builds knowledge and capacity before the new requirements come into force.

Following engagements on BC Building Code changes, industry continued to raise concerns regarding costs, impact on projects with a rezoning or redevelopment applications, and the

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<sup>1</sup> Adaptable dwelling unit requirements are found in Subsection 3.8.5. of Division B.

impacts on projects' feasibility if projects need to be redesigned to meet the 2024 edition's requirements. This additional extension helps avoid potential construction delays, additional costs, and the impact on projects' feasibility that are already considered in-stream.

Extending the BC Building Code 2024 adaptable dwelling unit requirements effective date to March 8, 2027, provides a measured approach to balance accessibility and housing supply priorities and considers human rights, equity for all people, engagement feedback, product availability and affordability, and impacts for the building industry.

During this period, the Ministry of Housing will continue work with interested parties and local governments to develop strategies, guidance, and tools to implement the new requirements.

### What accessibility/adaptability BC Building Code requirements apply, when?

The 2018 edition of the BC Building Code continues to apply to building projects for which substantial design work has been completed according to the 2018 BC Building Code. In-stream projects designed to the 2018 BC Building Code will be exempt from the application of the 2024 BC Building Code's adaptable dwelling unit requirements if the building permit is applied for **before March 8, 2027**<sup>2</sup>. Any project that does not meet criteria for an exemption and for which a building permit is applied **on or after March 10, 2025**, must comply with the entire BC Building Code 2024, including the adaptable dwelling unit requirements.

Except for the requirements for adaptable dwelling units in Subsection 3.8.5. of Division B, and except for seismic requirements discussed in Bulletin B24-02-R, all other provisions of the BC Building Code 2024 came into force for projects with a building permit application received **on or after March 8, 2024**. For example, an in-stream project for which a building permit is applied for **after March 8, 2024**, shall comply with the BC Building Code 2024 requirements for accessibility in Section 3.8. of Division B.

Building projects with adaptable dwelling units for which building permits are applied for between March 8, 2024, and March 9, 2025, must follow the 2024 BC Building Code's accessibility requirements for all common areas of the building, but the 2018 edition of the BC Building Code applies to the adaptable dwelling units themselves. Subsection 3.8.5. of the 2018 edition of the BC Building Code is voluntary unless the local authority requires it by bylaw. This means the adaptable dwelling unit doorway and all features within the unit continue to follow the 2018 BC Building Code when done voluntarily or required by bylaw—even though the building's common entrances, common hallways, and common amenity spaces (as examples) are designed to the 2024 BC Building Code.

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<sup>2</sup> This assumes the building permit applied for is issued and that work begins and continues to completion. See [Ministerial Order No. BA 2024 04](#) for the application of the Building Code.

The transition period means, for projects that are in-stream, adaptable dwelling units and the features within those units can continue to follow the BC Building Code 2018 design requirements if the:

- drawings for the project include information on any of the following:
  - the number of dwelling units in a residential occupancy,
  - the dimensions of dwelling units in a residential occupancy, or
  - the dimensions of structural components or assemblies that are designed to resist seismic or lateral forces
- drawings were prepared **before March 8, 2024**,
- drawings have been prepared by, or prepared under the supervision of, a registered professional or registrant of the Applied Science Technologists & Technicians of BC **before March 8, 2024**, and
- the building permit is applied for **before March 8, 2027**.

Designers are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the new adaptable dwelling unit requirements in the 2024 Building Code and information and education materials made available during this period. Owners and designers may follow the 2024 BC Building Code's adaptable dwelling unit requirements even **before March 8, 2027**, as there have been updates to benefit the occupants.

All projects for which building permits are applied for **on and after March 8, 2027**, will be required to comply with the BC Building Code 2024 adaptable dwelling unit requirements.

### How do the codes' cross-references apply?

The intention is that when designing adaptable dwellings during this transition period, designers will use the 2018 BC Building Code for all technical requirements within the adaptable dwelling unit, until the full provisions come into effect for all buildings March 8, 2027. The suite entry door from the common corridor is considered part of that adaptable dwelling unit.

When designing features within the adaptable dwelling unit to the provisions in Subsection 3.8.5. of the BC Building Code 2018, any references to other provisions outside Subsection 3.8.5. are to be those that coordinate with the 2018 edition. It is not intended that designers search for a comparable provision elsewhere in the 2024 edition when conforming to Subsection 3.8.5. of the 2018 edition. Should Subsection 3.8.5. of the 2018 edition reference a provision outside Subsection 3.8.5., that reference is to be followed in the 2018 edition as it was intended and coordinated as such.

*The contents of this Bulletin are not intended to be provided as legal advice and should not be relied upon as legal advice. The Building and Safety Standards Branch does not enforce compliance with the British Columbia Building Code. Local authorities are authorized to enforce the British Columbia Building Code through the Local Government Act and the Community Charter.*

For example, Sentence 3.8.5.4. (2) of the BC Building Code 2018 defines floor space on both sides of a bathroom and bedroom doors inside adaptable dwelling units; however, it references provisions in Article 3.8.3.6 Doorways and Doors.

Since this floor space is inside the adaptable dwelling unit, it is permitted to apply the BC Building Code 2018 Article 3.8.3.6. provisions to inform that clear floor space. This allows BC Building Code 2018 adaptable dwelling units to continue unchanged in their interior layout and design until March 8, 2027.

The transition period only applies inside the adaptable dwelling unit. During this period, when following Subsection 3.8.5. of the 2018 edition, any reference that concerns a matter outside the dwelling unit, such as common spaces, shall follow the provisions of the 2024 edition. Meaning, any requirements to common areas of the building in Subsection 3.8.5. of the 2018 edition are superseded by the requirements in the 2024 edition.

For example, Article 3.8.5.3. Building Access Requirements in the BC Building Code 2018 edition essentially says common paths of travel, both interior and exterior, are to conform to Subsection 3.8.3.

Since this article refers to the shared or common parts of the building and property (not inside private dwelling units); those shared/common paths of travel are to comply with the design requirements in Subsection 3.8.3. of the 2024 edition for accessible paths of travel. This aligns with the intention that the Building Code 2024 accessibility provisions come into effect March 8, 2024.

## **How can designers use this transition period?**

Training and education materials are being developed for designers. The Ministry of Housing will be releasing guidance material on what the new adaptable dwelling unit requirements are, as well as how they contribute to a safe, healthy, and functional home over the lifecycle of occupants and their various needs.

Not all designers may be experienced with designing accessible or adaptable spaces, so this transition period affords designers time to become familiar with the requirements and apply them in a functional and economical manner. Designers are encouraged to become familiar with accessible and adaptable technologies, materials, and products, as well as spatial design.

Designers should review any relevant local bylaws to determine how a local authority may apply the BC Building Code's adaptable dwelling unit requirements and if there are any specific local requirements that may apply.<sup>3</sup>

The transition period is not intended to preclude owners and designers from applying the BC Building Code 2024 adaptable requirements. Designers can apply the BC Building Code 2024 adaptable dwelling unit provisions ahead of March 8, 2027, as there may be accessibility and/or economical reasons for incorporating the new requirements ahead of effective date. Designers are encouraged to work with the local authority on proposed solutions that differ from Subsection 3.8.5. of the BC Building Code 2018. Although the BC Building Code 2024 provisions were developed based on recent data and analysis and represent current policy intent, any alternative solution proposal to the 2018 acceptable solutions is to follow the evaluation procedure described in Division C.

## **How can local authorities use this transition period?**

Many local authorities have been leaders in increasing the supply of adaptable dwelling units through a combination of requiring certain units to be built as adaptable and establishing technical requirements for what it means to be 'adaptable'. During engagements, respondents highlighted the benefits of consistent building requirements between jurisdictions. Local authorities are encouraged to review existing bylaws. In some instances, the BC Building Code 2024 requirements may be considered to 'replace' those enacted in bylaws. Some local authorities incentivize supply of adaptable dwelling units through floor area ratio calculations, and continuing this practice may help transition to the new requirements.

With the BC Building Code 2024 provisions for all adaptable dwelling units now further extended and coming into force March 8, 2027, local authorities are encouraged to use the transition period to look at what tools they have to foster the creation of adaptable dwelling units, and housing options generally.

Local authorities are encouraged to work with owners and designers who may be interested in applying the Building Code 2024 adaptable dwelling unit provisions before they become effective. Early uptake helps build familiarity and capacity ahead of effective date.

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<sup>3</sup> The Building Act General Regulation prescribes adaptable dwelling units as a time-limited unrestricted matter.