

No. B25-01

March 10, 2025

Application of Adaptable Dwelling Unit Provisions in the 2024 BC Building Code

Effective March 10, 2025, the British Columbia Building Code 2024 (Building Code) is phasing in adaptable dwelling unit provisions. [Ministerial Order No. BA 2025 01](#) requires one of every five dwelling units in large apartment buildings and one of every five dwelling units on the first floor of small apartment buildings to be adaptable.

This bulletin provides information about the revised application for adaptable dwelling unit provisions in the Building Code¹. Information on the transition period and Building Code effective dates for projects can be found in [Bulletin B24-01-R2](#) and [Bulletin B24-10-R2](#). [Bulletin B24-09-R4](#) provides answers to frequently asked questions about adaptable dwelling units.

This bulletin does not address local authority bylaws² that may set their own adaptable dwelling unit requirements. Designers should review all relevant local bylaws to determine if there are specific requirements that apply to their projects.

Application of Subsection 3.8.5. of Division B

Subsection 3.8.5. of Division B contains the Building Code application and design and construction rules for adaptable dwelling units. Article 3.8.5.1. says that one storey dwelling units that are accessed by an accessible common building entrance and accessible interior public corridor need to be adaptable. Section 3.8. establishes which building entrances and corridors need to be accessible; this means that if the Building Code already requires an accessible path of travel right to the (single storey) dwelling unit entry door, the dwelling unit needs to be adaptable. [Ministerial Order No. BC 2025 01](#) revises the application so that at least one for every five, or part thereof, of those units needs to be adaptable.

¹ Adaptable dwelling unit requirements are found in Subsection 3.8.5. of Division B.

² The Building Act General Regulation prescribes adaptable dwelling units as a time-limited unrestricted matter.

To calculate, the designer shall take the number of units that meets the criteria of Clause 3.8.5.1.(1)(a)³ and then design not less than 20 percent of those units to be adaptable. “Or part thereof” means, for example, that if there are two units that meet the criteria of Clause 3.8.5.1.(1)(a) that one of them must be designed to be adaptable and that if there are six units that meet the criteria of Clause 3.8.5.1.(1)(a) that two of them must be designed to be adaptable.

Application of Subsection 3.8.5. of Division B to Part 9 Buildings

For residential buildings designed to Part 9 of Division B, Article 9.5.2.1. establishes what buildings are required to be designed and constructed in conformance with Section 3.8. Accessibility (which includes adaptable dwelling unit provisions). Article 9.5.2.3. determines where in the building accessible design and features are required.

For example, an apartment building designed to Part 9 may not have a ramp or other elevating device to second or third storeys and may have no common facilities on those storeys that would require access. As such, such a building may only have access on the first (entrance) storey and only those first storey dwelling units served by the accessible public corridor would be considered when applying the one for every five ratio. If there are five units on that first storey, one unit in that building would need to be adaptable. Other Part 9 archetypes such as townhouses and row houses would not typically have the features of a common building entrance or common interior public corridor so the adaptable provisions would not be applied to them (and multi-storey units are out of scope anyway).

Distribution

Adaptable dwelling unit distribution throughout a building is the designer’s choice. Designers can choose the mix of studio, one-bedroom, two-bedroom, and so on, as it suits the project. Designers also choose the floor spaces and features allocated to units as it suits the project. Although the Code does not regulate allocation and pricing of units, builders and developers should consider the availability of adaptable units that buyers may require. It is the designer’s choice which units are adaptable, and which are not, as long as not less than one for every five units is adaptable.

³ Clause 3.8.5.1.(1)(a) states: “one storey dwelling units served by an accessible interior public corridor and an accessible common building entrance, as required to be accessible by Articles 3.8.2.2. and 3.8.2.3.”

How are adaptable dwelling units identified?

On the building plans, adaptable units can be identified by their design features and specifications. Once built however, adaptable units can look and feel the same as other units. There is no requirement that adaptable or non-adaptable dwelling units be disclosed as such. Anyone in the market for an adaptable unit is encouraged to retain the seek expert advice on the potential for renovations for a given unit and the scale, scope, and cost, of such renovations.

How does this affect projects that have already designed 100 percent of dwelling units to be adaptable?

There is no impact on projects that have designed 100 percent of dwelling units to be adaptable as far as Building Code compliance. Adaptable dwelling units conforming to the version of the Building Code established by [Ministerial Order No. BA 2023-10](#) are still compliant to the revised version. (The Building Code is a minimum standard so dwelling units can be designed with accessible and adaptable features that exceed the minimum requirements.) However, local bylaws may apply differently to dwelling units that the Building Code does not require to be adaptable. As stated earlier in this bulletin, designers should review all relevant local bylaws to determine if there are specific requirements that apply to their projects.

Does this change the requirements for accessibility in residential buildings?

No. There are no changes to the requirements for accessibility. For example, a fourth storey of an apartment building still requires access via an elevator and an accessible public corridor to serve the dwelling units on that storey. The difference is that some of those dwelling units served by the accessible public corridor may not be required to be adaptable.

Does changing from 100 percent to 20 percent mean adaptable dwelling units will be required to have more accessible and adaptable features?

[Ministerial Order No. BC 2025 01](#) does not add any required features to the required adaptable dwelling units. The Building Code is a minimum standard so designers can add additional accessible and adaptable features into adaptable dwelling units as it suits the project.