

# Richmond VisitAbility Task Force

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting

*March 26, 2014*

An environmental scan of  
Accessibility & Visitability – BC Building Standards

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# Basic Definition - Visitability

Visitable housing has:

1. An accessible **zero step entrance** on an accessible path – this can be to any entrance (front, side, back)
2. **Wider doors/halls/maneuvering space** for a person in a wheelchair
3. **Bathroom on entry floor** which allows a person using a wheelchair to get into the bathroom, use the toilet and sink with a closed door

**Anyone can visit the home comfortably.**

# Basic Definition - Adaptability

**“ADAPTABLE”** housing is designed to adapt to people’s changing needs.

Adaptable housing includes the three visitable conditions described above.

Adaptable design anticipates changing needs of occupants.

## **Features include:**

- Counters that can be adjusted to different heights
- Reinforcements in bathroom walls so that grab bars can be easily installed
- An accessible shower drain so that a curb-less shower can be installed later on
- Stacked closets so that an elevator can easily be installed later on

# Basic Definition - Adaptability

- It is inexpensive to build dwellings that easily adapt to changing needs.
- It is cost effective, and wise, because as the occupants age, their needs change.
- **ADAPTABILITY** isn't one size fits all, **its one size adapts to all.**
- There are many building standards for adaptable housing.
- Each is slightly different in what is considered important to adapt and what dimensions to use.
- Among the design models of adaptable housing are:  
Vancouver city bylaw, Flex Homes (CMHC Canada), SAFER homes (BC), Easy Living Homes (Georgia), Lifemark Homes (Australia), Lifetime Homes (England), Lifespan Homes (Norway).
- What is meant by visitable housing is usually more consistent.

# Basic Definition - Accessibility

**“ACCESSIBLE”** housing already has the features needed by a person who uses a wheelchair.

- Kitchen and bathroom counters are low enough for a person using a wheelchair;
- Curb-less shower that is already built so that a person using a wheelchair can wheel in & use the shower;
- Grab bars are already installed in the bathroom;
- Vertical access is provided

There are also standards for accessible housing in many different jurisdictions.

**“UNIVERSAL DESIGN” INTERCHANGEABLE WITH “ACCESSIBLE”**

This idea is not strictly defined – so a model of a universally designed house might be very different in different locations.

# Why Focus on “Visitability”?

All families have members with physical disabilities.

Adaptability, Accessibility and Universal design – start with **“VISITABILITY”**.

That is, they all include the 3 essential elements of visitability:

1. A **zero-step entrance** at the front, back or side of the house (located on an accessible path from the street)
2. An accessible **path of travel inside the house**– wider doors and hallway (36”)
3. **Accessible bathroom on main floor** – minimum requirements include a sink, toilet and a wide doorway

**All friends and all family can visit!**

# Environmental Review – Building Standards

- Illustrated Commentary on Access Requirements in the 2006 British Columbia Building Code (BC BC)
- New “ADAPTABLE” Housing Standards in the BC BC
- Richmond Zoning Bylaw: Amendment of 8500 to 8736 – Basic Universal Housing features for “Adaptable Housing”
- Vancouver New Bylaw on Adaptable Housing
- Ottawa Draft Visitability Bylaw
- Visitability & Adaptability Standards Paper – A Comparison of the Ottawa proposal to standards in Vancouver, England, Lifetime Homes (UK), Bolinbrook, Pima County SAFER (Canada) and FLEX (Canada)

# *Environmental Review – Building Standards*

## **Illustrated Commentary on Access Requirements in the British Columbia Building Code**

- 1) Except as provided in Sentence (2) – *access* shall be provided to all *storeys* of *buildings* of *new construction*.
- 2) This subsection does **NOT APPLY TO MANY BUILDINGS INCLUDING**
  - in Group C, *dwelling units*, **row houses, boarding houses and lodging houses,**
  - in Group C, **apartment *buildings* and condominiums** except to the extent described in Article 3.8.2.27., [p. 12]



# *New ADAPTABLE Housing Standards in the BC Building Code*

This table summarizes the standards for adaptable housing. The standards are a combination of existing accessibility requirements in the BC Building Code and the highlighted Code requirements, which has come into effect on December 31, 2009.

- [Access](#) – Building Access and Corridors
- [Suite Doors and Doorways](#) – Door Width, Door Hardware, Door Thresholds, Door Clearance
- [Bathrooms](#) – Space, Grab Bars
- [Kitchen](#) – Kitchen Counter, Kitchen Faucets
- [Outlets / Switches / Other Environmental Controls](#)
- [Patios and Balconies](#)

# *Richmond Zoning Bylaw Amendment 8500 to 8736*

## Basic Universal Housing Features for “Adaptable Housing”

City of Richmond’s Basic Universal Housing Features have been harmonized with the Provincial Adaptable Housing Standards in the BC Building code, in Amendment Bylaw 9736 on April 2011.

The features/dimensions are to be used in dwellings described as “adaptable”, **NOT mandatory**.

# *Vancouver New Bylaw on Adaptable Housing*

(2013) Table 4 – Summary of Significant Accessibility Requirements (Adaptable Housing)

Description of Proposed Requirement:

## **1) Apartment Buildings / Main Entrance**

- Ban the use of mechanical lifts for access to building entrance unless acceptable to Chief Building Official due to a hardship.
- Require automatic door openers at the main entry to apartment buildings.

## **2) Apartment Building / Public Areas**

- Require accessible signage for persons with visual disabilities (size, colour, contrast).

## **3) All Homes / Kitchens**

- Require lever faucets on sinks; require waste pipe below kitchen sink to be located to allow future lowering of the kitchen counter.

## **4. All Homes / All Rooms**

- Require electrical outlets to be at least 450 mm above the finish floor, except for locations where floor to ceiling windows are provided.

<http://former.vancouver.ca/ctyclerk/cclerk/20130924/documents/rr1.pdf>



# *Ottawa Draft Visitability Bylaw*

## **“VisitAble Housing Standards”**

The purpose of this document is to establish basic accessibility requirements for the design and construction of newly built dwellings, by providing reasonable criteria for VisitAbility. The primary goal is to make one level of the home (the VisitAble floor) usable by all individuals, regardless of age or ability. VisitAbility is defined as: one step-free entrance, wider doors and hallways, and at least a two-piece washroom on this same level.

# *Visitability & Adaptability Standards*

A Comparison of the proposal for Ottawa: Compared to existing standards in Vancouver, England, Bolingbrook, Pima County, Lifetime Homes (UK), SAFER (Canada), & FLEX (Canada)

## **This file compares:**

- Ottawa suggested visitability standard
- Vancouver adaptable housing bylaw (mandatory for all new dwellings)
- England Document M: visitability (mandatory for all new dwellings)
- Bolingbrook visitability (mandatory for all new dwellings)
- Pima County visitability (mandatory for all new dwellings)
- Lifetime Homes Adaptability model (Mandatory for all new dwellings in London, England; voluntary but heavily incentivized for rest of England)
- SAFERhome Adaptability model (Voluntary; private model/BC)
- FLEX Housing adaptable model (Voluntary: CMHC)

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## **Questions & Discussion**