

Adaptable Housing: An Update on the Adaptable Unit Provisions in the 2024 BC Building Code

Recommendation:

THAT the report titled “Adaptable Housing: An Update on the Adaptable Unit Provisions in the 2024 BC Building Code”, dated February 4, 2025, be received for information.

Report Purpose and Summary Statement:

Adaptable dwellings better accommodate inclusive housing needs. This report informs Council of the Adaptable Housing standards that will come into effect on March 10, 2025, in compliance with the 2024 BC Building Code and the implementation process for adaptable unit provisions in the City of Maple Ridge.

Previous Council Action:

The implementation of adaptable housing standards was highlighted in the 2024 Proposed Housing Action Plan, which the Council supported on November 12, 2024.

Strategic Alignment:

Liveable Community

Communications:

An information bulletin will be made available to guide in-stream and new building permit applications regarding the implementation timelines of adaptable dwelling unit requirements as the 2024 BC Building Code comes into effect.

Applicable Legislation/Bylaw/Policy:

[2024 BC Building Code](#)

Adaptable Housing: An Update on Adaptable Unit Provisions in the 2024 BC Building Code

BACKGROUND:

Accessible and adaptable housing provides necessary inclusive housing for those with mobility challenges. Prior to the 2024 *BC Building Code*, adaptable housing design was voluntary unless municipalities adopted requirements through their zoning bylaw provisions or through adaptable housing policies applicable within their jurisdictions. Building permit applications submitted before March 10, 2025, are subject to the 2018 *BC Building Code* for adaptable unit provisions. Building permit applications submitted on or after March 10, 2025, will be subject to the adaptable dwelling unit requirements in the 2024 *BC Building Code*. The Province has granted in-stream protection for projects that meet exemption requirements if a building permit application is made before March 8, 2027.

The City of Maple Ridge does not currently have an adaptable housing policy. The inclusion of adaptability requirements in the 2024 *BC Building Code* is a timely and welcomed move that would prepare for the physical needs of an aging population. It is aligned with the City's 2024 Housing Needs Report, addressing the need for suitability of homes for seniors in the immediate and longer term. Making more homes accessible and adaptable increases the options of where seniors can live without restricting them to seniors housing, encouraging more independent living, and multigenerational living in larger-sized units.

As the mandatory requirements for adaptable unit provisions in the *BC Building Code* mark a shift in layout and internal designs for multi-unit developments that the industry would have to comply with, this report provides Council with an overview of the considerations and implementation timelines for adaptable housing in the City, as the provincial building legislation takes effect.

2024 BC Building Code: Adaptable Unit Requirements

What units of what buildings must be adaptable?

Under the 2024 *BC Building Code*, adaptable housing is now applicable to single-storey units that are served by a common accessible interior corridor. This means that all single-storey units in apartment-style buildings will need to be designed and constructed as adaptable. Where an elevator is required, all dwelling units served from the accessible interior corridors must be adaptable. Common building entrances would need to be accessible as well as the common paths of travel on the entry level for apartment-style buildings. First storey dwelling units must therefore be adaptable, but second storey units may not be unless an elevator provides access to that second storey.

Adaptability requirements are currently not mandatory in ground-oriented and small buildings such as detached houses, semi-detached houses, houses with a secondary suite, duplexes, triplexes, townhouses, row houses and boarding houses (Section 3.8.2.1 of 2024 *BC Building Code*).

What is an adaptable dwelling unit?

The 2024 *BC Building Code* defines an adaptable dwelling unit as:

"A dwelling unit designed and constructed with some accessible features, and which accommodates the future modification to provide more accessible features."

This means that the elements and features of a building that are impractical or impossible to renovate are taken into consideration at the initial time of construction to accommodate occupants' physical accessibility needs and preferences over one's life cycle and lifetime of the building. Plumbing and electrical systems, for instance, would need to be located and designed upfront to minimize expensive or impossible renovations at a later stage.

Examples of adaptable features include:

- Larger accessible clearances through doorways and along paths of travel to living space;
- More space in bedrooms, bathrooms and kitchens;
- Switches and other controls at accessible heights;
- Reinforcement of bathroom walls to allow future installation of grab bars.

[See illustrations in Attachment A].

Dwelling units with more than one bedroom or bathroom are only required to designate one of each to be adaptable. The path of travel serving the adaptable bedroom and adaptable bathroom is required to be connected to the unit entry/exit door, a living space, and an adaptable kitchen.

Impact on construction costs

The Provincial Building and Safety Standards Branch estimates that adaptable dwelling unit provisions when incorporated in the design stage, can be achieved with a nominal construction cost increase of approximately \$1,100 per unit. Construction costs to renovate an existing home that has not been designed as adaptable to provide the same features can exceed \$ 100,000.

[\[Provincial Information Bulletin B24-09-R3, 23 Dec 2024\]](#)

Implementation process and extended transition period

The 2024 *BC Building Code* came into effect on March 8, 2024. The new adaptable-dwelling provisions are effective as of March 10, 2025, to provide transition time for local governments, design professionals and builders to implement the new requirements. Building permit applications made on or after March 10, 2025, will be subject to the adaptable dwelling unit requirements. Exceptions are given for in-stream projects that are underway, with the transition period extended up to March 8, 2027.

Projects are identified as underway or in-stream (where the 2018 *BC Building Code* applies) if all 3 of these criteria are met:

1. **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.
2. **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**
3. the **building permit is applied before March 8, 2027.**

DISCUSSION:

Accessible and Adaptable Housing in Metro Vancouver:

Over the last decade, several municipalities in Metro Vancouver have implemented accessible and adaptable housing design standards, requiring that multi-unit developments meet basic accessibility requirements and enhanced features that include adaptable components (Attachment B). These adaptable housing provisions range from an applicability of 20% (City of Burnaby, City of Delta), to 50% (City of Port Moody), to 100% (District of North Vancouver) of all new single-storey multi-unit developments constructed; some of the cities provide incentives (e.g., floor area exemptions).

Some municipalities have gone further than what the 2024 *BC Building Code* now mandates, with policies that require a minimum number of adaptable units in ground-oriented developments. For example, the Township of Langley requires 5% of units in ground-oriented multi-unit developments, and the District of North Vancouver requires 15% of units in ground-oriented multi-unit developments, to comply with accessible design features with a provision for future adaptability. The City of Vancouver also applies adaptable housing requirements to all newly constructed one and two-unit dwellings, laneway houses and row housing.

Considerations for Maple Ridge:

With the implementation of the 2024 *BC Building Code*, adaptable unit provisions will have to be complied with regardless of municipal policies, negating the need for incentives. It will also progressively bring adaptable housing standards in Maple Ridge in step with other municipalities in the region, as the local industry builds its awareness and expertise on accessible and adaptable design guidelines, in compliance with the *BC Building Code*, which will apply to all development applications for single-storey, multi-unit apartments from March 2025.

While the implementation of the 2024 *BC Building Code* would offer some availability of adaptable housing units in time, these units would likely be concentrated in key growth areas in Maple Ridge (such as the Lougheed Transit Corridor and the Town Centre) since the provisions primarily apply to multi-unit apartment buildings. Those wanting to buy into accessible and adaptable homes would potentially have to relocate late in life and adjust to apartment living in new environments, or otherwise incur financial costs to retrofit their existing homes or other ground-oriented dwellings to make them age-friendly and adaptable, if that is possible.

The majority of Maple Ridge’s housing stock continues to be in single-detached homes and other ground-oriented dwellings units with 80% of homes in Maple Ridge in ownership (26,205 units), of which 25% are maintained by those aged over 65 years (6,755 units) and 43% by those aged 45-64 years (11,880 units). As these cohorts age, there could potentially be greater demand for accessible and adaptable housing design.

Looking ahead, providing ground-oriented homes with the possibility of accessible and adaptable housing design would provide people with greater opportunities to age in the neighbourhoods they are already familiar with and in supportive multigenerational living arrangements.

As a pragmatic and stepped approach, it is recommended that the City move in tandem with provincial legislation, fostering awareness and expertise in adaptable unit designs. As the provisions of the 2024 BC Building Code come into effect, builders will have to adjust to ensure that all single storey dwelling units in apartments that are accessed via an interior corridor, be accessible and adaptable.

For ground-oriented developments, the City will continue to encourage and foster awareness around adaptable design but enable it to be market driven and developer-led, taking a balanced approach without imposing undue regulatory and financial burden on the industry. The City will monitor the need to regulate adaptability guidelines for ground-oriented multi-unit forms, if necessary, in the future. With the cascading implementation of various provincial-led housing initiatives, staff believe that a gradually stepped approach consistent with the Provincial timeline will provide builders the necessary time to incorporate these new construction practices more effectively.

Accessible parking provision standards vary across the region and the City’s standards are generally comparable with municipalities like the City of Delta, although lower than others such as the District of North Vancouver. As the implementation of the adaptable housing provisions takes effect over the next few years, it is recommended that the accessible parking standards in Maple Ridge follow the provisions of the proposed draft *Off-Street Parking and Loading Bylaw*, shown in Table 1 below, that was given First Reading in 2023. These proposed revisions to the parking standards have since increased the accessibility parking requirements from the City’s previous version of the bylaw.

Table 1. Accessible Parking Space Minimum Requirements
 ([*Draft Maple Ridge Off-Street Parking and Loading Bylaw No.7970- 2023*](#))

Number of Total Parking Spaces Required	Minimum number of Type 1 Accessible Parking Space	Minimum number of Type 2 Van Accessible Parking Space
0-4	n/a	n/a
5-25	0	1
26-50	1	1
51-75	2	1
76-100	3	1
For each additional increment of 100 spaces or portion thereof	1 Accessible Parking Space	For every 3 accessible parking spaces required, 1 shall be a van accessible parking space

Next Steps:

An information bulletin to provide guidance on the effective dates of adaptable unit provisions in compliance with the 2024 *BC Building Code* has been drafted and will be released (Attachment C). The City will continue to engage with builders to obtain feedback and build awareness around accessible design as the implementation of adaptable unit provisions takes effect in the coming years.

Strategic Alignment:

Adaptable housing is an action item to address the need for seniors housing in the 2024 Proposed Housing Action Plan supported by Council on November 12, 2024, and is also an initiative under the Liveable Community Pillar of the 2023-2026 Council Strategic Plan.

Applicable Legislation/Bylaw/Policy:

- [2024 BC Building Code](#)
 - [B.C. grants in-stream protections to projects underway: Provincial Information Bulletin \(September 18, 2024\)](#)
 - [Transition period for adaptable dwellings in the British Columbia Building Code 2024: Provincial Information Bulletin No. B24-01-R \(September 19, 2024\)](#)
 - [Application of the 2024 BC Building Code: Provincial Information Bulletin No. B24-10-R \(September 20, 2024\)](#)
 - [Adaptable Dwelling Units Frequently Asked Questions: Provincial Information Bulletin No. B24-09-R3 \(December 23, 2024\)](#)

CONCLUSION:

This report provides an overview of the adaptable housing standards of the 2024 *BC Building Code* that will come into effect on March 10, 2025. It is proposed that the City moves in tandem with provincial legislation, to ensure compliance with adaptable unit provisions through the effective implementation dates of the 2024 *BC Building Code*. The City would continue to engage the industry to encourage accessible and adaptable design, wherever possible.

“Louisa-May Khoo”

Prepared by: Louisa-May Khoo, Community Planner 2

- Attachments:**
- (A) Illustrations: Acceptable Accessible and Adaptable Unit Designs
 - (B) Municipal Scan: Accessible and Adaptable Housing Policies in Metro Vancouver
 - (C) Information Bulletin: In-stream Protection for Adaptable Unit Provisions

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Adaptable Housing.docx
Attachments:	- Attachment A - Illustrations.docx - Attachment B - Municipal Scan.docx - Attachment C - Information Bulletin.docx
Final Approval Date:	Jan 17, 2025

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Amanda Grochowich, Manager of Community Planning

Hasib Nadvi, Associate Director of Building, Development and Planning

James Stiver, Director of Building, Development and Planning

Carolyn Mushata, Director of Legislative Services and Corporate Officer

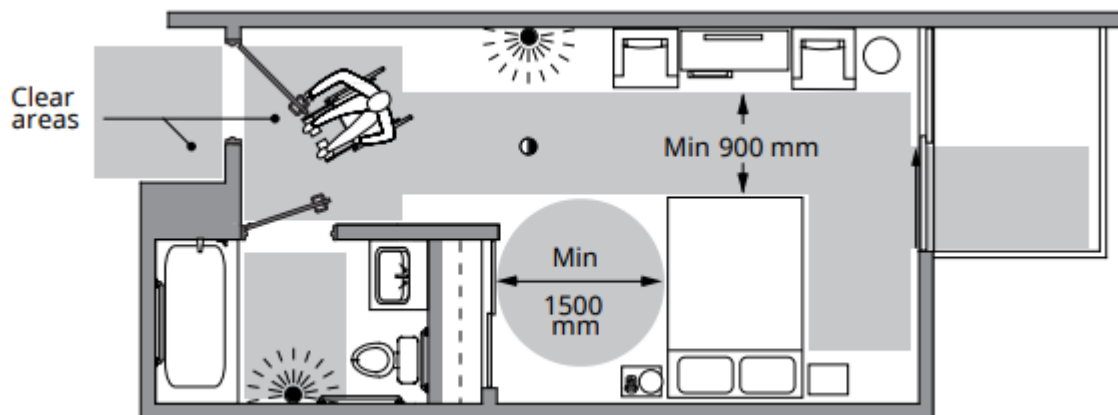
Scott Hartman, Chief Administrative Officer

Illustrations: Acceptable Accessible and Adaptable Unit Designs

Reference:

British Columbia Office of Housing and Construction Standards, Building Accessibility Handbook 2020, [2020_building_accessibility_handbook.pdf](#)

Figure 1. Acceptable layout of an accessible sleeping area



Notes:

- a turning area of not less than 1,500 mm in diameter on one side of a bed,
- a clearance of not less than 900 mm to allow for functional use of the room or space by persons using wheelchairs,
- when a balcony is provided, an accessible balcony,
- at least one closet that provides
 - o a clear opening not less than 900 mm wide,
 - o clothes hanger rods capable of being lowered to a height of 1,200 mm,
 - o at least one shelf capable of being lowered to a height of 1,200 mm,
- e) accessible light switches, thermostats and other controls that are specifically provided for use by the occupant located between 900 mm and 1,200 mm above the finished floor
- f) accessible electrical outlets
- g) an adaptable bathroom, or access to an adaptable bathroom, with a water closet, grab bars, lavatory, mirror, bathtub or a shower conforming to accessibility provision standards.

Adaptable dwelling unit kitchens

- The kitchen in an adaptable dwelling unit shall be designed so that the cooktop and sink are adjacent or have a continuous counter between them

Controls, switches and outlets

- Controls and switches intended for occupant use, including cable and data outlets shall be mounted 455mm to 1,200mm above the floor

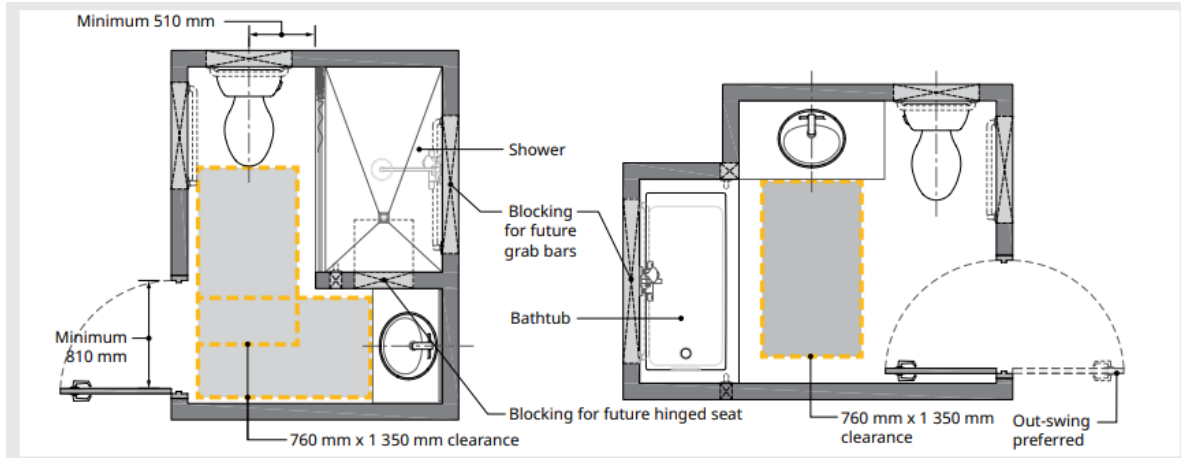
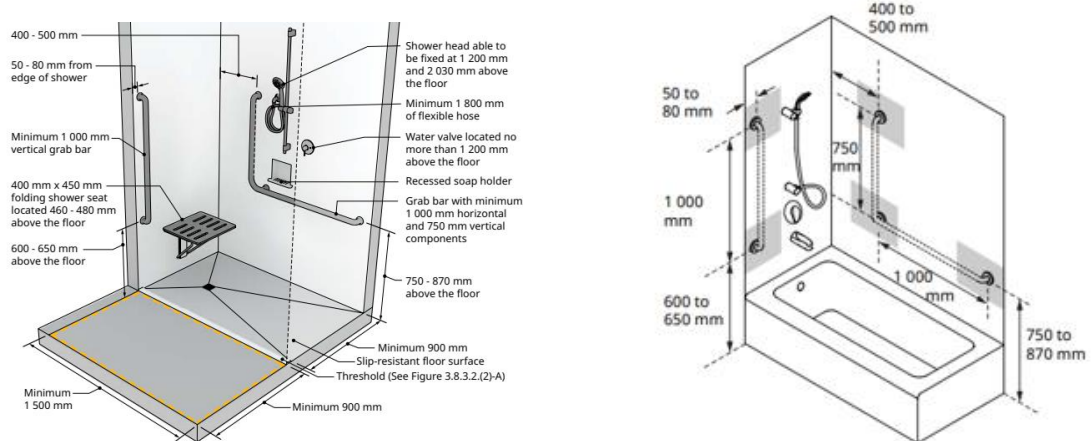


Figure 3: Accessible shower and acceptable grab bar layout of an adaptable dwelling unit bathtub



Notes:

Bathroom designed to be adaptable for use by persons using wheelchairs by providing:

- a) Clear floor space:
 - in front of the lavatory (no less than 760mm wide and 1,350mm deep)
 - exclusive of door swing, connecting to the route through doorway
- b) Walls adjacent to the water closet and bathtub or shower to accommodate the future installation of grab bars, and their acceptable positions.

MUNICIPAL SCAN: ACCESSIBLE AND ADAPTABLE HOUSING POLICIES IN METRO VANCOUVER

City	Policy Application	Date Applicable	Proportion	Incentives offered	Others
City of Burnaby	Adaptable-housing-policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applies to new multi-unit and residential mixed-use developments. Applies to single-level units only. 	2013 Updated 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20% of all single-level units in new multi-unit and residential mixed-use developments 100% for senior oriented housing 	Yes. Floor area exemption <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In RM, C and P Districts only, 1.86 m² (20 sq. ft.) for each adaptable housing unit and 0.93 m² (10 sq. ft.) for each adaptable bedroom in excess of the first adaptable bedroom within an adaptable housing unit, is excluded from gross floor area 	Architectural plans to clearly illustrate the accessible/adaptable features in each of the adaptable unit-types
City of Delta	7600 - Delta Zoning Bylaw.pdf <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applies to any new apartment building 	2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20% of single storey apartment units required to be adaptable. 	Yes Floor area exemption.	
City of New Westminster	Adaptable Housing City of New Westminster Bylaw 7464 2011 Zoning Amendment (Adaptable Housing) Bylaw.pdf <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applies to all new developments with single-storey dwelling units in multi-unit residential occupancy buildings. 	2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 40% of all single-storey dwelling units in multi-unit residential occupancy buildings 	Yes. Floor area exemption <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.85 m² (19.90 sq.ft.) for every one-bedroom adaptable housing unit. 2.80 m² (30.14 sq.ft.) for every two-plus bedroom adaptable housing unit. 	
City of North Vancouver	Adaptable Design Policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applies to all multi-unit buildings. 	2013	The policy outlines three levels of Adaptable Design Guidelines <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level One consists of basic design and features. Required in all multiple unit buildings with common corridors. 	Yes Floor area exemption <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level Two unit, 1.86 m² will be excluded 	

City	Policy Application	Date Applicable	Proportion	Incentives offered	Others
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level Two adaptable design provides access in and out of the building, common areas and individual units. Level Three adaptability provides full access in all unit spaces. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level Three unit, 4.19 m² will be excluded 	
City of Pitt Meadows	<p>Adaptable Housing Zoning Bylaw.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applies to all rezoning applications for new multi-unit apartment dwellings (sharing a common corridor or external passageway). 	2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides design guidelines for adaptable units, such as necessary circulation space and door clearance, locations of some of the windows, switches, etc. to be operable with one hand. Requires at least one full accessible bathroom and one full accessible bedroom, which must be located on the same level. The accessible bathroom toilet must have room for future grab bar installation. 	-	Registration of a restrictive covenant on title to the subject lands ensuring the adaptability of the dwelling units in accordance with this policy is required.
City of Port Coquitlam	Zoning Bylaw	2012	30% of new apartment units	-	
City of Port Moody	Zoning Bylaw	2018	50% of single-storey residential dwelling units	Yes. floor area exemptions	
City of Vancouver	<p>Zoning Bylaw</p> <p>All new dwelling units must meet the adaptable housing requirements.</p>	2019	<p>Adaptable housing requirement applies to the design and construction of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> one and two unit dwellings laneway houses secondary suites row housing multi-unit residential buildings <p>The requirement does not apply to single room accommodation.</p>	-	

City	Policy Application	Date Applicable	Proportion	Incentives offered	Others
District of North Vancouver	Accessible Design Policy for Multi-Family Housing.pdf Applies to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • multi-unit rezoning applications • form and character multi-unit development permit applications proposing 4 or more new multi-units or ground-oriented multi-units. 	2015/17	Sets targets for the percentage of units with basic accessible design features and enhanced accessible design features. Basic accessible design features: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% of multi-units, • 15% for ground-oriented multi units Enhanced accessible design features: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraged in ground-oriented multi-units • 5% for multi-units that are not ground oriented • 100% for multi-unit apartments intended for people with sensory and/or mobility impairments. 		Accessible Design Checklist Floor plans for the accessible units required.
Township of Langley	Adaptable Housing Requirements Bylaw-1842-Official-Community-Plan.pdf	2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5% of single detached, townhouse or rowhouse units • 10% of apartment units in each development 		A covenant shall be placed on title ensuring the adaptability of the dwelling units



INFORMATION BULLETIN

IN-STREAM PROTECTION FOR ADAPTABLE UNIT PROVISIONS

This information bulletin provides guidance on the Province's effective dates for adaptable dwelling unit requirements in the 2024 *BC Building Code*.

Relevant information:

- [Provincial Information Bulletin \(Sep 13, 2024\)](#)
- [Provincial Information Bulletin No. B24-01-R \(Sep 19, 2024\)](#)
- [Provincial Information Bulletin No. B24-10-R \(Sep 20, 2024\)](#)
- [Provincial Information Bulletin No. B24-09-R3 \(Dec 23, 2024\)](#)

Building permit applications made before March 10, 2025, are subject to the adaptable dwelling unit requirements in the *BC Building Code* of 2018. Building permit applications made on or after March 10, 2025, will be subject to the adaptable dwelling unit requirements in the *BC Building Code* of 2024.

The Province of BC has released new effective dates for adaptable dwelling unit requirements for projects that meet in-stream provisions outlined in Bulletin No. B24-10-R (Sep 20, 2024) and B24-01-R (Sep 19, 2024), linked above.

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 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**.

These drawings may not have been submitted to a local authority if there was no application in advance of a building permit application, however the date of these drawings would be used to determine that they were complete before March 8, 2024.

If these three criteria are met, then adaptable dwelling unit requirements in the 2018 *BC Building Code* apply to the project. However, a building permit for the project must be applied for on or before March 8, 2027, AND work must continue to completion without interruption, other than work stoppages considered reasonable to industry. If these three criteria are met but the building permit is applied for on or after March 8, 2027, then the adaptable dwelling unit requirements in the 2024 *BC Building Code* apply to the project.

City of Maple Ridge Information

The City must receive a declaration (signed and sealed by the registered professional that prepared or reviewed the applicable drawings) to certify the required criteria to be in-stream for adaptable unit requirements are met. The declaration will be required as part of the development permit approval and building permit application for a project. Note that designers for in-stream development projects can voluntarily apply the 2024 *BC Building Code* adaptable dwelling unit provisions ahead of March 8, 2027.

Structural and architectural drawings are required to separately clarify which Building Code edition the adaptable dwelling unit requirements, the project is designed to.

For more information, please contact the

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