
BULLETIN 2000-062-BU

APRIL 19, 2007

HEADROOM IN DWELLING UNITS

Heights of rooms and spaces in new dwelling units and new residential occupancies are required to conform to Table 9.5.3.1. of Division B (See over). In addition, the minimum height of exits and corridors which provide access to exit is required to be 2.1 m.

When existing residential occupancies are being renovated and/or altered, these minimum headroom height requirements can present problems, particularly with existing basements. The following provides a clarification of the City's policy on headroom height for existing residential buildings:

1. Where the proposed renovation is a *minor addition* and its cost is less than 200% of the BCAA's assessed value for the building (excluding land), headroom requirements will only be triggered for the project area, exits, and corridors providing access to exits. Existing headroom may remain unchanged in unrenovated or non-habitable areas provided no new non-conformities are created and no new access to exit from other floor areas is routed through floor areas with headroom below 2100 mm (6'-10").
2. Where a *major addition* is proposed or where the cost of the renovations exceeds 200% of the BCAA's assessed value for the building, headroom clearances shall be brought into conformance with the following criteria:
 - Existing rooms may be utilised for habitable space with a minimum headroom of 2100 mm (6'-10") except that headroom under beams not obstructing access to exit from other areas may be reduced to 1980 mm (6'-6"). Habitable space includes living, dining, sleeping and kitchen areas.
 - Existing rooms may be utilized for non-habitable space with a minimum headroom of 2030 mm (6'-8") except that headroom under beams not obstructing access to exit from other areas may be reduced to 1950 mm (6'-4³/₄"). Non-habitable space includes laundry, workshop, storage or games rooms, but not sitting rooms.
 - Where no changes are proposed to the use or construction of an existing basement, the existing basement headroom may be retained provided the basement is used solely for non-habitable space and does not provide access to exit from other floor areas.

In accordance with Subsection 10.1.1. of Division B, *minor additions* are defined as additions which do not add more than 10% to the building area, do not exceed 200 m² in floor area and do not create a non-conformity or add further non-conformities to the building. If the addition does not meet this criteria it is classified as a major addition in accordance with Part 10 of the VBBL.

No further relaxations will be available on the above headroom requirements except that District Building Inspectors may accept localised minor deviations in non-critical areas.

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Table 9.5.3.1.
 Room Heights
 Forming Part of Sentence 9.5.3.1.(1)

Room or Space	Minimum Heights, m	Minimum Area over which Minimum Height shall be Provided ⁽¹⁾
Living room or space	2.1	Lesser of area of the space or 10.0 m ²
Dining room or space	2.1	Lesser of 100% of actual floor area or 5.2 m ²
Kitchen or kitchen space	2.1	Lesser of 100% of actual floor area or 3.2 m ²
Master bedroom or bedroom space	2.1	Lesser of 100% of actual floor area or 4.9 m ²
Other bedroom or sleeping space	2.1	Lesser of 100% of actual floor area or 3.5 m ²
Unfinished <i>basement</i> including laundry area therein*	2.0	Area under beams in laundry areas and in any location that would normally be used for passage to laundry and storage areas
Bathroom, water-closet room or laundry area above <i>grade</i>	2.1	Lesser of 100% of actual floor area or 2.2 m ²
Passage, hall or main entrance vestibule and finished rooms not specifically mentioned above	2.1	Area of the space

Notes to Table 9.5.3.1.:

⁽¹⁾ Area of the space shall be measured at floor level.

* **PLEASE NOTE:** In order to avoid future problems should unfinished basements areas be converted to habitable space (ie. recreation rooms, secondary suites etc.) an increased ceiling height should be considered.