



Development CITY OF AUSTIN
SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Code Amendments for Bedroom Window Requirements

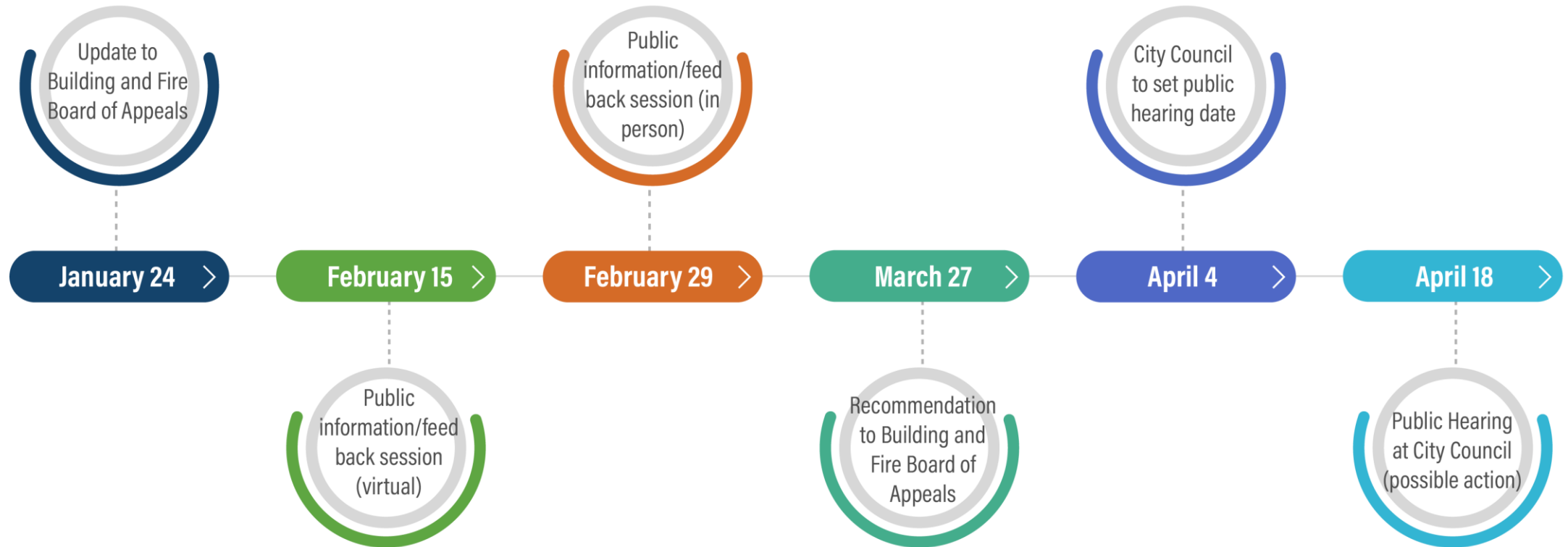
What Prompted the Proposed Changes?

- Concerns about UT student housing were shared with Council Member Zo Qadri's office.
- The concerns focused on the code compliance of windowless bedrooms.
- This led to conversations with DSD and AIA Austin about amending code related to windowless bedrooms and resulted in the creation of an Austin City Council Resolution.

Austin City Council Resolution – Sept. 2023

- Initiated Code amendments to require access to natural light for all sleeping rooms in **new buildings**
 - The intent of the amendment is to provide natural light to all sleeping rooms in commercial construction, whether it be borrowed or direct light to the outside through a window.
- Included proposed language for the Code amendments
- Directed the City Manager to bring a proposed ordinance to Council before August 2024

Timeline for Bedroom Window Code Amendment Process*



* Dates subject to change

Code Adoption Timeline*

- If approved in April 2024, the bedroom window amendments will go into effect on May 1, 2024*.
- Upon approval these amendments will be carried over to the 2024 Code
- If the 2024 code amendments are approved by City Council, it is anticipated that they will go into effect in 2025.*

* Dates subject to change

A background image showing a dense city skyline with various skyscrapers and buildings under a clear blue sky.

2021 International Bldg Code (IBC)

Chapter 2 Definitions

Dwelling Unit – A single unit providing complete, independent living facilities for one or more persons, including permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking and sanitation.

Sleeping Unit - A single unit that provides rooms or spaces for one or more persons, includes permanent provisions for sleeping and can include provisions for living, eating and either sanitation or kitchen facilities but not both. Such rooms and spaces that are also part of a dwelling unit are not sleeping units.



2021 International Bldg Code (IBC)

Section 1204 Lighting

1204.1 General

Every space intended for human occupancy shall be provided with natural light by means of exterior glazed openings in accordance with Section 1204.2 **and** shall be provided with artificial light in accordance with Section 1204.3. Exterior glazed openings shall open directly onto a public way or onto a yard or court in accordance with Section 1205.



2021 International Bldg Code (IBC)

Section 1204.1 General

Exceptions:

1. Any room or space that is not within a dwelling unit or sleeping unit shall not be required to provide natural light in accordance with Section 1204.2.
2. Any room or space with an area of 70 square feet, or less and is not a sleeping room shall not be required to provide natural light in accordance with Section 1204.2.



2021 International Bldg Code (IBC)

Section 1204.1 General

Exceptions (continued):

3. Sleeping rooms within an existing dwelling unit shall not be required to provide natural light in accordance with Section 1204.2 when alterations do not increase the total number of sleeping rooms within the dwelling unit.



2021 International Bldg Code (IBC) Section 1204.2 Natural Light

The minimum net **exterior** glazed **opening** area shall be not less than 8 percent of the floor area of the room**(s)** served.

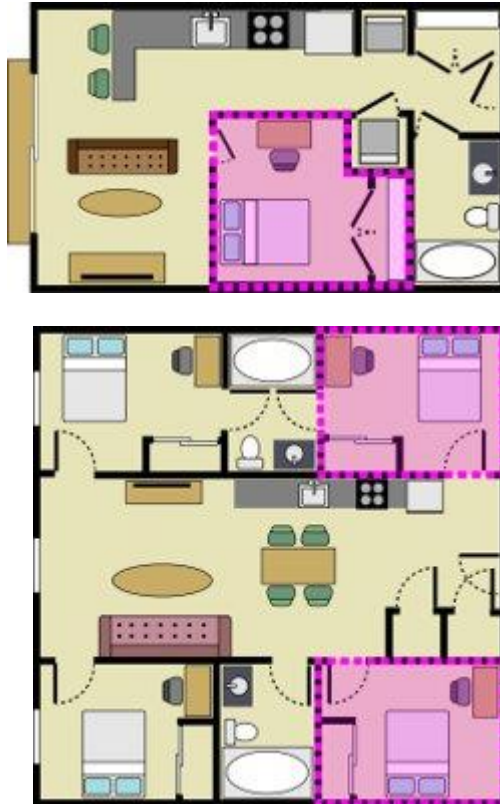


2021 International Bldg Code (IBC)

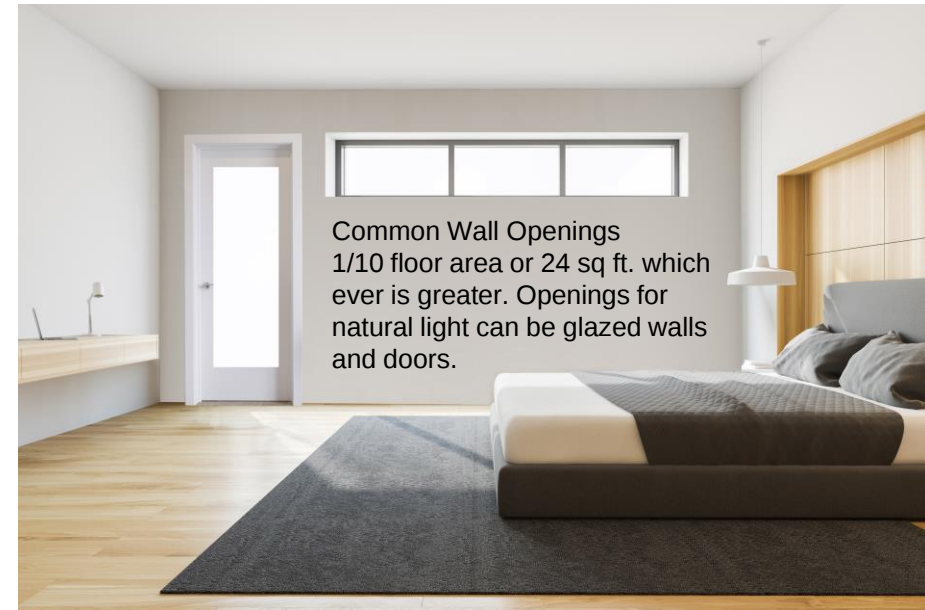
Section 1204.2.1 Adjoining Spaces

For the purpose of natural lighting, any room is permitted to be considered as a portion of an adjoining room where ~~one half of the area~~ the common wall ~~is open and obstructed and~~ provides an opening of not less than one-tenth of the floor area of the interior room or ~~25~~ 24 square feet, whichever is greater. ~~Openings required for natural light in common walls can be windows and glazed doors.~~

2021 International Bldg Code (IBC) Section 1204.2.1



Plan Examples



Common Wall Openings
1/10 floor area or 24 sq ft. which
ever is greater. Openings for
natural light can be glazed walls
and doors.

Common Wall Openings – Borrowed Light



2021 International Bldg Code (IBC)

Section 1204.2.1 Adjoining Spaces

Exception:

Openings required for natural light shall be permitted to open into a sunroom with thermal isolation or a patio cover where the common wall provides a glazed area of not less than one-tenth of the floor area of the interior room. ~~or 20 square feet (1.86 m²), whichever is greater.~~



2021 International Bldg Code (IBC)

Section 1204.2.2 Exterior Openings

Exterior openings required by Section 1204.2 for natural light shall open directly onto *a public way, yard, or court*, as set forth in Section 1205.

Exceptions:

1. Required exterior openings are permitted to open into a roofed porch where the porch meets all of the following criteria:
 - 1.1 Abuts a *public way, yard, or court*
 - 1.2 Has a ceiling height of not less than 7 feet
 - 1.3 Has a longer side at least 65 % open and unobstructed

Clarifications

- The changes would NOT apply to residential projects
 - This amendment refers to dwelling units and sleeping units, which are commercial in nature, not International Residential Code (IRC) but IBC. IRC is not part of the changes discussed this evening.
- The changes would NOT impact projects submitted for plan review prior to the effective amendment date.
- The changes are NOT retroactive and would not apply to a previously approved building.

A background image of a city skyline with various skyscrapers under a clear blue sky.

Common questions: sky lights/ light tubes

Q: Do skylights and light tubes fulfill the natural lighting requirements?

A: Yes, skylights or light tubes can be utilized for natural light requirements.

Common questions: borrowed light

Q: Can you have a bedroom, for example, in a one-bedroom dwelling unit that has glazed openings or is completely open to a living room that has the required natural light and meet the proposed amendment requirements?

A: Yes, with borrowed light, not every bedroom is required to have a window directly outside. The proposed amendment states natural light can be “borrowed” from room to room through common walls by using windows and glazed doors. This allows sleeping rooms to “borrow light” from adjacent rooms that have direct access to natural light.

Common questions: AMOC

Q: When implemented, will the code amendment be subject to conversations about alternative methods of compliance (AMOC) and AMOC procedure, similar to other code sections?

A: Yes, the building code amendment will still give the COA authority to allow alternate methods of compliance. The building code does state that the department cannot effectively eliminate a portion of the code, so we cannot remove the requirement, just consider other means for achieving the same ends.

A background image of a city skyline with various skyscrapers under a clear blue sky.

Common questions: 2024 IBC local amendments

Q: Is there a timeframe when the local amendments for the 2024 IBC will be available?

A: We are going to start stakeholder engagement at the end of March 2024. It will go through this same process. We will have stakeholder engagement for the 2024 amendments before we go to council in September 2024.