



CBO Technical Directive

#CBO-04 – Window Areas for Interior Bedrooms

Date Amended: May 15, 2024

Objective:

The Building Department will accept proposed “interior bedrooms” without windows directly adjacent to the exterior in a “multi-residential building”. This directive will address natural lighting, view to the outdoors and applicable design parameters which must be met to approve suite layouts with “interior bedrooms”.

Definition(s):

For this directive, the following definitions shall apply:

Bedroom: as the term bedroom is not defined in the OBC, for the purpose of this directive, a bedroom is a room used primarily for sleeping and meets the area requirements as outlined in OBC, Div. B, 9.5.7.1. and contains built-in cabinets (i.e., closet).

Interior bedroom(s): adheres to the definition for bedroom above and is a bedroom that is not adjacent to an exterior building wall and/or does not contain any windows directly/adjacent to the exterior.

Multi-residential building: means a building, other than a single-family dwelling, semi-detached dwelling and/or townhouse, containing more than one dwelling unit.

Clear glass/glazing: means glass that is free from darkness, obscurity, or cloudiness. Glass blocks are considered opaque glass.

Authority having jurisdiction: means the governing body responsible for the interpretation and enforcement of the OBC and BCA, in this case the Chief Building Official appointed by the City of Burlington.

Directive:

“Interior bedrooms” in a “multi-residential building” suite will be accepted provided the following design characteristics are present in the proposed suite layout:

- Indirect lighting and a view to the outdoors must be provided to the room(s) through an opening in an interior wall of the “interior bedroom” that runs parallel or up to a maximum of a 30-degree deviation, to an exterior wall containing windows;

- The larger of 40% of the interior wall area, or 3.0m², must be open or have non-opaque “clear glass/glazing”;
- The required window glass area in the exterior wall must be greater than 10% of the combined area of the rooms (note: areas adjacent to the interior bedroom may be omitted in the combined area calculation, provided the area can only be practicably used and serve as a means of egress leading to an egress door – see diagram below);
- “Interior bedroom(s)” must be provided with mechanical ventilation or supply of air from an HVAC unit; and
- There shall be no permanent/fixed obstructions between the exterior opening and the “interior bedroom” opening (such as partition walls, ceiling hung cupboards or counters higher than 1.0 m (40 in.)

An example of an acceptable “interior bedroom” layout is referenced in the diagram in Figure A below.

Background:

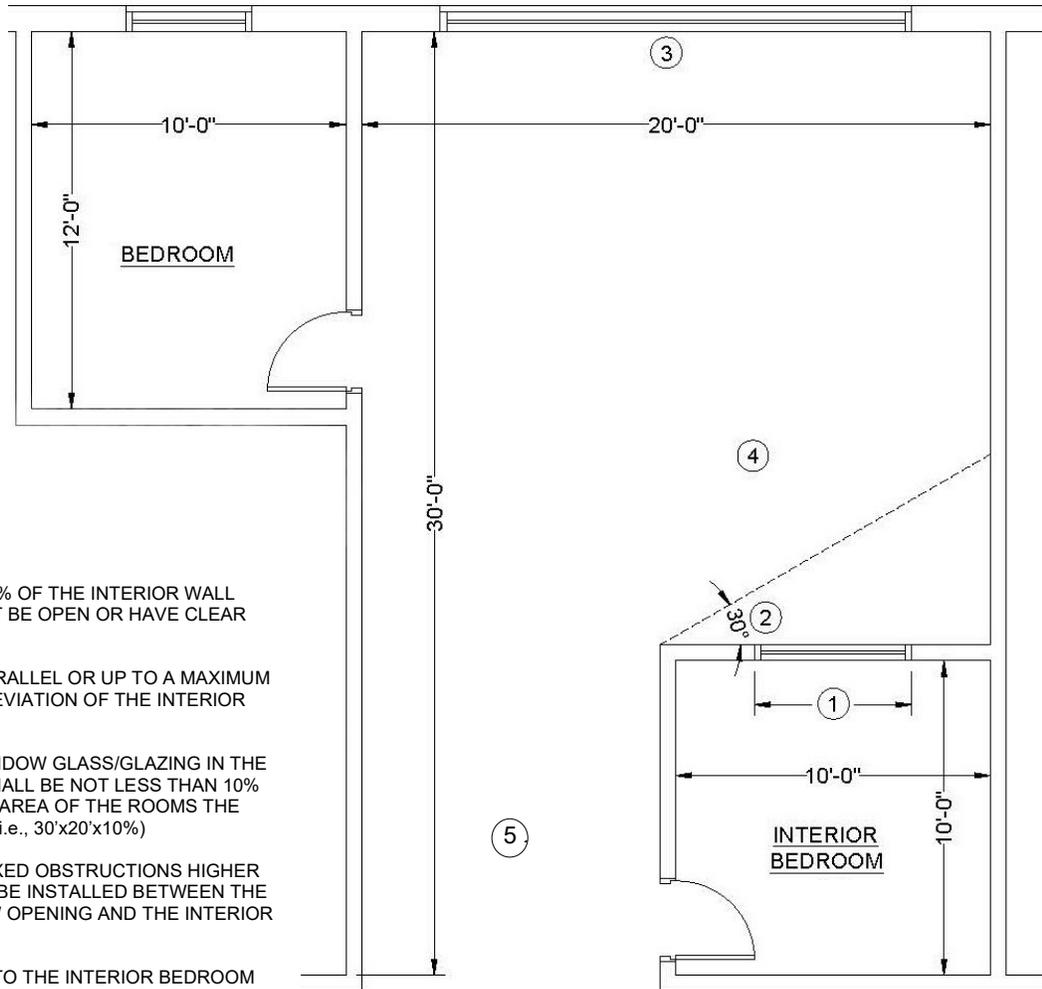
The Ontario Building Code (“OBC”) is a provincial regulation authorized under the Building Code Act, 1992 (“BCA”). The purpose of the OBC is to establish minimum health and safety standards for the construction of buildings in the province and addresses other objectives. In the OBC 2012, Div. B, 3.7.2.1.(1) requires that every room used for sleeping in any building be provided with windows. The OBC sets out that the minimum unobstructed glass area for rooms used for sleeping be 5% of the area served. Further to that the OBC does not require that bedroom windows be on the exterior of a building, nor does it prohibit “interior bedrooms”.

Since 2006, the OBC has been written in an objective-based format, which provides designers, builders and building officials with greater understanding of the underlying objectives of OBC requirements. Under the category of “Health – View to the Outdoors”, the objective-based code provision of 3.7.2.1.(1) is “to limit the probability that, as a result of the design or construction of a building, a person in the building will be unable to experience a view to the outdoors”. This statement describes in qualitative terms the required outcome – a view to the outdoors – but does not provide direction or specification on how to achieve that outcome. Therefore, it is up to the “authority having jurisdiction” to determine the intent of this objective and contemplate all means available to achieve the intent. Considerations must be made for the health and well-being of the building occupants, the privacy of the bedroom occupants and the economic pressures felt by the development industry wanting to provide varied suite layouts.

Review and approval:

This interpretation has been reviewed and approved by the City of Burlington’s Chief Building Official and serves as the City’s final interpretation on this subject matter.

Figure A – Interior Bedroom in Proposed Residential Suite



- ① THE LARGER OF 40% OF THE INTERIOR WALL AREA OR 3M² MUST BE OPEN OR HAVE CLEAR GLASS/GLAZING.
- ② OPENING RUNS PARALLEL OR UP TO A MAXIMUM OF A 30 DEGREE DEVIATION OF THE INTERIOR BEDROOM WALL.
- ③ THE REQUIRED WINDOW GLASS/GLAZING IN THE EXTERIOR WALL SHALL BE NOT LESS THAN 10% OF THE COMBINED AREA OF THE ROOMS THE WINDOW SERVES. (i.e., 30'x20'x10%)
- ④ NO PERMANENT/FIXED OBSTRUCTIONS HIGHER THAN 1.00M SHALL BE INSTALLED BETWEEN THE EXTERIOR WINDOW OPENING AND THE INTERIOR BEDROOM.
- ⑤ AREAS ADJACENT TO THE INTERIOR BEDROOM MAY BE OMITTED IN THE COMBINED AREA CALCULATION, PROVIDED THE AREA CAN ONLY BE PRACTICABLY USED AND SERVE AS A MEANS OF EGRESS LEADING TO AN EGRESS DOOR.

*MECHANICAL VENTILATION OR A SUPPLY OF AIR FROM HVAC UNIT IS REQUIRED IN ALL BEDROOMS
*AREA OF BEDROOMS SHALL COMPLY WITH DIV. B, 9.5.7.1. AND 9.5.7.2. OBC 2012