

FACTSHEET ON ACCESSIBILITY AND USER-FRIENDLINESS OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

1. Approximately 25% of the Singapore population will be aged 65 or older by 2030.¹ It is therefore important to make Singapore an inclusive and age-friendly city, where people of all ages and abilities can move freely and participate in all aspects of life. Accessibility in the Built Environment (BE) is a key enabler, through the following key strategies:

- a. Ensure minimum accessibility standards;
- b. Drive accessibility upgrading for existing buildings;
- c. Improve accessibility of public spaces; and
- d. Promote universal design (UD)² adoption.

A. Ensuring Minimum Standards through Code on Accessibility

2. BCA introduced the Code on Barrier-free Accessibility in Buildings in 1990 to promote the development of barrier-free buildings for wheelchair users. Since then, all new buildings and existing buildings that undertake addition and alteration (A&A) works are required to meet the requirements of the prevailing Code.³ The Code has undergone several reviews (about once every 5 years), with its scope progressively expanded to include UD principles to better meet the changing needs of the population. For instance, the recent versions of the Code take into consideration the needs of other persons with disabilities (PwDs) beyond wheelchair users.

3. The Code on Accessibility in the Built Environment 2019 is the latest version of the Code. It was launched in July 2019, and took effect in January 2020 after a 6-month grace period. The needs of the elderly and PwDs are the primary focus in the 2019 Code. The key changes include new requirements for:

- a. Accessible changing room for selected building types, to support adults with disabilities and elderly persons who may need the help of caregivers;⁴
- b. Larger accessible toilet for selected building types, to cater to users of motorised wheelchairs which require larger manoeuvring spaces;
- c. More accessible parking lots in hospitals;
- d. Provision of non-breakable mirror/mirror-like finishes at the back of the lift car to allow visual feedback for wheelchair users when reversing into the lift lobby; and
- e. Lactation room to be provided in more building types.

¹ Source: Singapore Department of Statistics), Population in Brief 2021.

² UD refers to “design for all”. In the context of the built environment, it seeks to create more inclusive building infrastructure that addresses the needs of all age groups (e.g. families with young children and infants, elderly persons) and persons with varying abilities (e.g. wheelchair users, ambulant disabled, those with visual/hearing impairments) to the greatest extent possible.

³ Currently, for existing buildings, the Code requirements only apply to areas of the building undergoing major A&A works.

⁴ The purpose of an accessible changing room is to facilitate the cleaning up and changing of adult diapers.

4. As the law does not apply retrospectively, accessibility upgrading for pre-1990 buildings that do not undergo A&A works is currently carried out on a voluntary basis.

B. Driving Accessibility Upgrading for Existing Buildings

Incentivising Voluntary Upgrading of Private Sector Buildings

5. To improve the accessibility of pre-1990 privately-owned buildings, BCA introduced the \$40 million Accessibility Fund (AF) in 2007 to incentivise building owners to carry out voluntary upgrading. **The AF co-funds up to 80% of the construction cost for basic accessibility features⁵, and up to 60% of the construction cost for UD features⁶.**

6. As of June 2022, more than 150 private building owners have tapped on the AF to retrofit their buildings with accessibility features, with about \$20 million still available. BCA will continue to accept applications till 31 March 2027 to incentivise pre-1990 building owners to carry out basic accessibility upgrading works. **The AF co-funds up to 80% of the construction cost for basic accessibility features, capped at \$300,000 per development.**

7. An interim payment option⁷ is now available for projects with a minimum value of \$200,000 and involving lift installation works. This one-time interim payment can be claimed at any point during the project, which will help building owners address cashflow challenges for costlier accessibility upgrading works.

8. In addition, the AF was **enhanced** to allow more building owners, with buildings that already have basic accessibility features and which were built before the implementation of 2013's Code on Accessibility in the Built Environment (i.e. after 1990 and before 2013), to tap on the fund to put in more UD features. For this group of buildings, **the AF co-funds up to 60% of the construction cost for UD features, capped at \$100,000 per development.**

Requiring Existing Buildings Undergoing A&A to Provide Basic Accessibility

9. To accelerate accessibility upgrading in older buildings, BCA will require existing commercial and institutional (C&I) buildings without basic accessibility features to provide these when undertaking A&A works, regardless of where such works are carried out in the building.⁸ These features generally refer to an

⁵ Basic accessibility features include (i) ramps/lifts to provide entry into the building and within the entrance level, (ii) accessible toilet, and (iii) signage to provide directions to the accessibility features.

⁶ Universal Design features include (i) elder-friendly features such as additional grab bars, (ii) family-friendly features such as child-friendly sanitary facilities, lactation rooms, diaper-changing stations, and (iii) features for persons with visual/hearing impairment such as hearing enhancement systems, braille/tactile features.

⁷This is applicable only for pre-1990 private buildings that are not affected by the basic accessibility requirements under the Building Control Act 1989.

⁸ Buildings that are not subject to this requirement can still tap on the Accessibility Fund for the installation of basic accessibility features, if they meet the eligibility criteria for funding. This will include buildings of other types (e.g. residential, industrial).

accessible building entrance, an accessible route within the entrance level and an accessible toilet. The requirement will apply to C&I buildings with Gross Floor Area (GFA) of more than 500 sqm.

10. The requirement will take effect from early 2023.

C. Improving Accessibility of Public Spaces

Improving Accessibility through Community Partnerships

11. Our Accessible City @ Raffles Place is a pilot community partnership that aims to improve accessibility at the Raffles Place precinct and facilitate inclusive employment⁹. The community partnership, which started in January 2020, is co-led by Ar. Michael Ngu (CE of Architects 61 Pte Ltd, who is also a practising architect and a PwD) and BCA, with members comprising representatives from the BE sector, public sector and social service agencies (SSAs) (see [Appendix A](#)). Through a community-driven, 3P approach, the community partnership will identify challenges with accessibility and inter-connectivity, prioritise needs, and co-develop solutions with agencies to address these gaps. Completed/ongoing efforts include:

- a. Co-solutioning workshop: The community partnership held a co-solutioning workshop in June 2021 to develop possible solutions for the accessibility gaps identified and prioritise the works to be carried out.
- b. Engagement with developers /building owners: BCA and URA are engaging the project teams involved in redevelopment projects at Raffles Place on incorporating accessibility improvements as part of their works.
- c. Engagement with PwDs/SSAs: Accessibility site survey sessions involving the community partnership members and PwD representatives from SSA partners were conducted in May and June 2022 to gather feedback on the suggested accessible routes and solutions, which will facilitate the subsequent discussion on the development of the accessibility plan for Raffles Place.

12. HDB has also formed a similar community partnership in the HDB heartlands – Our Accessible City @ Boon Lay Neighbourhood – in February 2022. This community partnership is co-chaired by Ms Judy Wee (ED of Muscular Dystrophy Association Singapore) and HDB. Another community partnership will be formed in Nee Soon Central later.

13. As announced by Minister Desmond Lee at the launch of CaringSG in November 2021, these three pilots will form the backbone of the Accessible City

⁹ In July 2019, the Disabled People's Association (DPA) – a non-profit organisation – conducted an accessibility mapping exercise in Raffles Place which surfaced accessibility issues that PwDs working in the CBD area face on a daily basis. Besides the lack of basic accessibility in some pre-1990 buildings, there is also a need to improve the interconnectivity between buildings and the surrounding amenities (e.g. public transport infrastructure, F&B outlets).

Network, an alliance of community partnerships that brings together the public, private and people sectors to enhance the accessibility of public spaces.

Appendix A: Our Accessible City@CBD (Raffles Place)

The objectives of the community partnership are to:

- Establish shared goals and values among stakeholders to support inclusivity;
- Raise awareness of the role of an inclusive built environment in enabling meaningful employment;
- Gather ground feedback through curated outreach efforts;
- Provide recommendations to improve accessibility to workplaces for both government agencies and private entities; and
- Effectively communicate accessibility information.

List of Members

	Name	Organisation
Co-chair	Ar. Michael Ngu	Architects 61, President and CEO
Co-chair	Er. Clement Tseng	BCA, Group Director (Building Plan and Management Group)
Members	Mr Marc Boey	Real Estate Developers' Association of Singapore, Council member Far East International, Chief Operating Officer Far East Organization, Executive Director of Planning & Acquisitions
	Mr Richard Kuppusamy	Disabled People's Association, President Lend Lease, Head of Digital Integration, Asia
	Er. Hui Beng Hong	Handicaps Welfare Association, President
	Mr Abhimanyau Pal	SPD, CEO
	Mr Chong Kwek Bin	Singapore Association of Visually Handicapped, Head (Advocacy, Communications, Employment & Training)
	Mr Ong Hua Han	Deutsche Bank, Client Service & Delivery APAC
	Ms Eliza Choo	URA, Director (Urban Design, Central Area East)
	Mr Yeo See Leong	LTA, Principal Architect (Commuter & Road Infrastructure)