



# DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Office of the Assistant Secretary for  
Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity

24 CFR Part 100

[Docket No. N-91-2011; FR 2665-N-06]

## Fair Housing Accessibility Guidelines Final Guidelines

**AGENCY:** Office of the Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity, HUD.

**ACTION:** Notice of Adoption of Fair Housing Accessibility Guidelines -- Final Guidelines.

**SUMMARY:** This document presents guidelines adopted by the Department of Housing and Urban Development to provide builders and developers with technical guidance on how to comply with the specific accessibility requirements of the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988. Issuance of this document follows consideration of public comment received on proposed accessibility guidelines published in the Federal Register on June 15, 1990. The guidelines presented in this document are intended to provide technical guidance only, and are not mandatory. The guidelines will be codified in the 1991 edition of the Code of Federal Regulations as Appendix II to the Fair Housing regulations (24 CFR Ch. I, Subch. A, App. II). The preamble to the guidelines will be codified in the 1991 edition of the Code of Federal Regulations as Appendix III to the Fair Housing regulations (24 CFR Ch. I, Subch. A, App. III).

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** March 6, 1991

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Merle Morrow, Office of HUD Program Compliance, Room 5204, Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20410-0500, telephone (202) 708-2618 (voice) or (202) 708-0015 (TDD). (These are not toll-free numbers.)

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**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:****1. Adoption of Final Guidelines**

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (Department) is adopting as its Fair Housing Accessibility Guidelines, the design and construction guidelines set forth in this notice (Guidelines). Issuance of this document follows consideration of public comments received in response to an advance notice of intention to develop and publish Fair Housing Accessibility Guidelines, published in the Federal Register on August 2, 1989 (54 FR 31856), and in response to proposed accessibility guidelines published in the Federal Register on June 15, 1990 (55 FR 24730).

The Department is adopting as final Guidelines, the guidelines designated as Option One in the proposed guidelines published on June 15, 1990, with modifications to certain of the Option One design specifications. In developing the final Guidelines, the Department was cognizant of the need to provide technical guidance that appropriately implements the specific accessibility requirements of the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988, while avoiding design specifications that would impose an unreasonable burden on builders, and significantly increase the cost of new multifamily construction.

The Department believes that the final Guidelines adopted by this notice

1. are consistent with the level of accessibility envisioned by Congress;
2. simplify compliance with the Fair Housing Amendments Act by providing guidance concerning what constitutes acceptable compliance with the Act; and
3. maintain the affordability of new multifamily construction by specifying reasonable design and construction methods.

The Option One design specifications substantially revised in the final Guidelines include the following:

1. **Site impracticality.** The final Guidelines provide that covered multifamily dwellings with elevators shall be designed and constructed to provide at least one accessible entrance on an accessible route regardless of terrain or unusual characteristics of the site. Every dwelling unit on a floor served by an elevator must be on an accessible route, and must be made accessible in accordance with the Act's requirements for covered dwelling units.

For covered multifamily dwellings without elevators, the final Guidelines provide two alternative tests for determining site impracticality due to terrain. The first test is an individual building test which involves a two-step process: measurement of the slope of the undisturbed site between the planned entrance and all vehicular or pedestrian arrival points; and measurement of the slope of the planned finished grade between the entrance and all vehicular or pedestrian arrival points. The second test is a site analysis test which involves an analysis of the existing natural terrain (before grading) by topographic survey with 2 foot contour intervals, with slope determination made between each successive contour interval.

A site with a single building (without an elevator), having a common entrance for all units, may be analyzed only under the first test -- the individual building test. All other sites, including a site with a single building having multiple entrances serving either individual dwelling units or clusters of dwelling units, may be analyzed either under the first test or the second test. For sites for which either test is applicable (that is, all sites other than a site with a single nonelevator building having a common entrance for all units), the final Guidelines provide that regardless of which test is utilized by a builder or developer, at least 20% of the total ground floor units in nonelevator buildings, on any site, must comply with the Act's accessibility requirements.

2. **An accessible route into and through covered dwelling units.** The final Guidelines distinguish between (i) single-story dwelling units, and (ii) multistory dwelling units in elevator buildings, and provide guidance on designing an accessible entrance into and through each of these two types of dwelling units.
  1. **Single-story dwelling units.** For single-story dwelling units, the final Guidelines specify the same design specifications as presented in the proposed Option One guidelines, except that design features within the single-story dwelling unit, such as a loft or a sunken living room, are exempt from the access specifications, subject to certain requirements. Lofts are exempt provided that all other space within the unit is on an accessible route. Sunken or raised functional areas, such as a

- sunken living room, are also exempt from access specifications, provided that such areas do not interrupt the accessible route through the remainder of the unit. However, split-level entries or areas will need ramps or other means of providing an accessible route.
2. Multistory dwelling units in buildings with elevators. For multistory dwelling units in buildings with elevators, the final Guidelines specify that only the story served by the building elevator must comply with the accessible features for dwelling units required by the Fair Housing Act. The other stories of the multistory dwelling unit are exempt from access specifications, provided that the story of the unit that is served by the building elevator (1) is the primary entry to the unit; (2) complies with Requirements 2 through 7 with respect to the rooms located on the entry/accessible level; and (3) contains a bathroom or powder room which complies with Requirement 7.
  3. Thresholds at patio, deck or balcony doors. The final Guidelines provide that exterior deck, patio, or balcony surfaces should be no more than 1/2 inch below the floor level of the interior of the dwelling unit, unless they are constructed of impervious materials such as concrete, brick or flagstone, in which case the surface should be no more than 4 inches below the floor level of the interior dwelling unit, unless the local building code requires a lower drop. This provision and the following provision were included in order to minimize the possibility of interior water damage when exterior surfaces are constructed of impervious materials.
  4. Outside surface at entry door. The final Guidelines also provide that at the primary entry door to a dwelling units with direct exterior access, outside landing surfaces constructed of impervious materials such as concrete, brick, or flagstone should be no more than 1/2 inch below the interior of the dwelling unit. The Guidelines further provide that the finished surface of this area, located immediately outside the entry door, may be sloped for drainage, but the sloping may be no more than 1/8 inch per foot.
3. Usable bathrooms. The final Guidelines provide two alternative sets of specifications for making bathrooms accessible in accordance with the Act's requirements. The Act requires that an accessible or "usable" bathroom is one which provides sufficient space for an individual in a wheelchair to maneuver about. The two sets of specifications provide different approaches as to how compliance with this maneuvering space requirement may be achieved.

The final Guidelines for usable bathrooms also provide that the usable bathroom specifications (either set of specifications) are applicable to powder rooms (i.e., a room with only a toilet and a sink) when the powder room is the only toilet facility on the accessible level of a covered multistory dwelling unit.

The details about, and the reasons for these modifications, and additional minor technical modifications made to certain design specifications of the Option One guidelines, are discussed more fully in the section-by-section analysis which appears later in this preamble.

Principal features of the Option One guidelines that were not changed in the final Guidelines include the following:

1. Accessible entrance and an accessible route. The Option One guidelines for these two requirements remain unchanged in the final Guidelines.
2. Accessible and usable public and common use areas. The Option One guidelines for public and common use areas remain unchanged in the final Guidelines.
3. Doors within individual dwelling units. The final Guidelines recommend that doors intended for user passage within individual dwelling units have a clear opening of at least 32 inches nominal width when the door is open 90 degrees.
4. Doors to public and common use areas. The final Guidelines continued to provide that on accessible routes in public and common use areas, and for primary entry doors to covered units, doors that comply with ANSI 4.13 meet the Act's requirement for "usable" doors.
5. Thresholds at exterior doors. Subject to the exceptions for thresholds and changes in level at exterior areas constructed of impervious materials, the final Guidelines continue to specify that thresholds at exterior doors, including sliding door tracks, be no higher than 3/4 inch.
6. Reinforced walls for grab bars. The final Guidelines for bathroom wall reinforcement remains essentially unchanged from the Option One guidelines. The only change made to these guidelines has been to subject powder rooms to the reinforced wall requirement when the powder room is the only toilet facility on the accessible floor of a covered multistory dwelling unit.

The text of the final Guidelines follows the preamble, which includes a discussion of the public comments received on the proposed guidelines, and the section-by-section analysis referenced above. The design specifications presented in the Fair Housing Accessibility Guidelines provide technical guidance to builders and developers in complying with the specific accessibility requirements of the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988. The Guidelines are intended to provide a safe harbor for compliance with the accessibility requirements of the Fair Housing Amendments Act, as implemented by 24 CFR §100.205 of the Department's Fair Housing regulations. **THE GUIDELINES ARE NOT MANDATORY.** Additionally, the Guidelines **DO NOT** prescribe specific requirements which must be met, and which, if not met, would constitute unlawful discrimination under the Fair

Housing Amendments Act. Builders and developers may choose to depart from the Guidelines, and seek alternate ways to demonstrate that they have met the requirements of the Fair Housing Act.

## 2. Statutory and Regulatory Background

Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 makes it unlawful to discriminate in any aspect relating to the sale, rental or financing of dwellings, or in the provision of brokerage services or facilities in connection with the sale or rental of a dwelling, because of race, color, religion, sex or national origin. The Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988 (Pub.L. 100-430, approved September 13, 1988) (Fair Housing Act or the Act) expanded coverage of Title VIII (42 U.S.C. 3601-3620) to prohibit discriminatory housing practices based on handicap and familial status. As amended, Section 804(f)(3)(C) of the Act provides that unlawful discrimination includes a failure to design and construct covered multifamily dwellings for first occupancy after March 13, 1991 (30 months after the date of enactment) in accordance with certain accessibility requirements. The Act defines "covered multifamily dwellings" as "(a) buildings consisting of 4 or more units if such buildings have one or more elevators; and (b) ground floor units in other buildings consisting of 4 or more units" (42 U.S.C. 3604).

The Act makes it unlawful to fail to design and construct covered multifamily dwellings so that:

1. public use and common use portions of the dwellings are readily accessible to and usable by persons with handicaps;
2. all doors within such dwellings which are designed to allow passage into and within the premises are sufficiently wide to allow passage by persons in wheelchairs; and
3. all premises within such dwellings contain the following features of adaptive design:
  1. an accessible route into and through the dwelling;
  2. light switches, electrical outlets, thermostats, and other environmental controls in accessible locations.
  3. reinforcements in bathroom walls to allow later installation of grab bars; and
  4. usable kitchens and bathrooms such that an individual in a wheelchair can maneuver about the space.

The Act provides that compliance with (1) the appropriate requirements of the American National Standard for Buildings and Facilities--Providing Accessibility and Usability for Physically Handicapped People (commonly cited as "ANSI A117.1"), or (2) with the laws of a State or unit of general local government, that has incorporated into such laws the accessibility requirements of the Act, shall be deemed to satisfy the accessibility requirements of the Act. (See Section 804(f)(4) and (5)(A).) The Act also provides that the Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development shall provide technical assistance to States and units of local government and other persons to implement the accessibility requirements of the Act. (See Section 804(f)(5)(C).)

Congress believed that the accessibility provisions of the Act would

1. facilitate the ability of persons with handicaps to enjoy full use of their homes without imposing unreasonable requirements on homebuilders, landlords and non-handicapped tenants;
2. be essential for equal access and to avoid future de facto exclusion of persons with handicaps; and
3. be easy to incorporate in housing design and construction.

Congress predicted that compliance with these minimal accessibility design and construction standards would eliminate many of the barriers which discriminate against persons with disabilities in their attempts to obtain equal housing opportunities. (See H.R. Rep. No. 711, 100th Cong. 2d Sess. 27-28 (1988) ("House Report").)

The Fair Housing Act became effective on March 12, 1989. The Department implemented the Act by a final rule published January 23, 1989 (54 FR 3232), and which became effective on March 12, 1989. Section 100.205 of that rule incorporates the Act's design and construction requirements, including the requirement that multifamily dwellings for first occupancy after March 13, 1991 be designed and constructed in accordance with the Act's accessibility requirements. The final rule clarified which multifamily dwellings are subject to the Act's requirements. Section 100.205 provides, in paragraph (a), that covered multifamily dwellings shall be deemed to be designed and constructed for first occupancy on or before March 13, 1991, if they are occupied by that date, or if the last building permit or renewal thereof for the covered multifamily dwellings is issued by a State, County or local government on or before January 13, 1990. The Department selected the date of January 13, 1990 because it is fourteen months before March 13, 1991. Based on data contained in the Marshall Valuation Service, the Department found that fourteen months represented a reasonable median construction time for multifamily housing projects of all sizes. The Department chose the issuance of a building permit as the appropriate point in the

building process because such permits are issued in writing by governmental authorities. The issuance of a building permit has the advantage of being a clear and objective standard. In addition, any project that actually achieves first occupancy before March 13, 1991 will be judged to have met this standard even if the last building permit or renewal thereof was issued after January 13, 1990 (55 FR 3251).

Section 100.205 of the final rule also incorporates the Act's provisions that compliance with the appropriate requirements of ANSI A117.1, or with State or local laws that have incorporated the Act's accessibility requirements, suffices to satisfy the accessibility requirements of the Act as codified in §100.205. In the preamble to the final rule, the Department stated that it would provide more specific guidance on the Act's accessibility requirements in a notice of proposed guidelines that would provide a reasonable period for public comment on the guidelines.

### 3. Proposed Accessibility Guidelines

On August 2, 1989, the Department published in the Federal Register an advance notice of intention to develop and publish Fair Housing Accessibility Guidelines (54 FR 31856). The purpose of this document was to solicit early comment from the public concerning the content of the Accessibility Guidelines, and to outline the Department's procedures for their development. To the extent practicable, the Department considered all public comments submitted in response to the August 2, 1989 advance notice in its preparation of the proposed accessibility guidelines.

On June 15, 1990, the Department published proposed Fair Housing Accessibility guidelines (55 FR 24370). The proposed guidelines presented, and requested public comment on, three options for accessible design:

1. Option one (Option One) provided guidelines developed by the Department with the assistance of the Southern Building Code Congress International (SBCCI), and incorporated suggestions received in response to the August 2, 1989 advance notice;
2. Option two (Option Two) offered guidelines developed by the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) and the National Coordinating Council on Spinal Cord Injuries (NCCSCI); and
3. Option three (Option Three) offered "adaptable accommodations" guidelines, an approach that provides for identification of certain features in dwelling units that could be made accessible to people with handicaps on a case-by-case basis.

In the June 15, 1990 notice of proposed guidelines, the Department recognized that projects then being designed, in advance of publication of the final Guidelines may not become available for occupancy until after March 13, 1991. The Department advised that efforts to comply with the proposed guidelines, Option One, in the design of projects which would be completed before issuance of the final Guidelines, would be considered as evidence of compliance with the Act in connection with the Department's investigation of any complaints. Following publication of the June 15, 1990 notice, the Department received a number of inquiries concerning whether certain design and construction activities in connection with projects likely to be completed before issuance of final Guidelines would be considered by the Department to be in compliance with the Act.

In order to resolve these questions, the Department, on August 1, 1990, published in the Federal Register a supplementary notice to the proposed guidelines (55 FR 31191). In the supplementary notice, the Department advised that it only would consider efforts to comply with the proposed guidelines, Option One, as evidence of compliance with the Act. The Department stated that evidence of compliance with the Option One guidelines, under the circumstances described in the supplementary notice, would be a basis for determination that there is no reasonable cause to believe that a discriminatory housing practice under Section 804(f)(3) has occurred, or is about to occur in connection with the investigation of complaints filed with the Department relating to covered multifamily dwellings. The circumstances described in the August 1, 1990 supplementary notice that the Department found would be in compliance with the Act, were limited to:

1. Any covered multifamily dwellings which are designed in accordance with the Option One guidelines, and for which construction is completed before publication of the final Fair Housing Accessibility Guidelines; and
2. Any covered multifamily dwellings which have been designed in accordance with the Option One guidelines, but for which construction is not completed by the date of publication of the final Guidelines provided:
  1. Construction begins before the final Guidelines are published; or
  2. A building permit is issued less than 60 days after the final Guidelines are published.

On September 7, 1990, the Department published for public comment a Preliminary Regulatory Impact Analysis on the Department's assessment of the economic impact of the Guidelines, as implemented by each of the three design options then under consideration (55 FR 37072-37129).

### 4. Public Comments and Commenters

The proposed guidelines provided a 90-day period for the submission of comments by the public, ending

September 13, 1990. The Department received 562 timely comments. In addition, a substantial number of comments were received by the Department after the September 13, 1990 deadline. Although those comments were not timely filed, they were reviewed to assure that any major issues raised had been adequately addressed in comments that were received by the deadline. Each of the timely comments was read, and a list of all significant issues raised by those comments was compiled. All these issues were considered in the development of the final Guidelines.

Of the 562 comments received, approximately 200 were from disability advocacy organizations, or units of State or local government concerned with disability issues. Sixty-eight (68) additional commenters identified themselves as members of the disability community; 61 commenters identified themselves as individuals who work with members of the disability community (e.g., vocational or physical therapists or counselors), or who have family members with disabilities; and 96 commenters were members of the building industry, including architects, developers, designers, design consultants, manufacturers of home building products, and rental managers. Approximately 292 commenters supported Option One without any recommendation for change. An additional 155 commenters supported Option One, but recommended changes to certain Option One design standards. Twenty-six (26) commenters supported Option Two, and 10 commenters supported Option Three. The remaining commenters submitted questions, comments and recommendations for changes on certain design features of one or more of the three options, but expressed no preference for any particular option, or, alternatively, recommended final guidelines that combine features from two or all three of the options.

### **The Commenters**

The commenters included several national, State and local organizations and agencies, private firms, and individuals that have been involved in the development of State and local accessibility codes. These commenters offered valuable information, including copies of State and local accessibility codes, on accessibility design standards. These commenters included: the Southern Building Code Congress International (SBCCCI); the U.S. Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (ATBCB); the Building Officials & Code Administrators International, Inc. (BOCA); the State of Washington Building Code Council; the Seattle Department of Construction and Land Use; the Barrier-free Subcode Committee of the New Jersey Uniform Construction Code Advisory Board; the Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development of Arlington County, Virginia; the City of Atlanta Department of Community Development, Bureau of Buildings; and members of the Department of Architecture, the State University of New York at Buffalo. In addition to the foregoing organizations, a number of the commenters from the building industry submitted detailed comments on the proposed guidelines.

The commenters also included a number of disability organizations, several of which prepared detailed comments on the proposed guidelines. The comments of two disability organizations also were submitted as concurring comments by many individuals and other disability advocacy organizations. These two organizations are the Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund, and the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD). The CCD represents the following organizations: the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired, Association for Retarded Citizens of the United States, International Association of Psychological Rehabilitation Facilities, National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, National Association of Protection and Advocacy Systems, National Association of Developmental Disabilities Councils, National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors, National Council of Community Mental Health Centers, National Head Injury Foundation, National Mental Health Association, United Cerebral Palsy Associations, Inc. Both the Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund and the CCD were strongly supportive of Option One.

A coalition of 20 organizations (Coalition), representing both the building industry and the disability community, also submitted detailed comments on the proposed guidelines. The members of the Coalition include: American Institute of Architects, American Paralysis Association, American Resort and Residential Development Association, American Society of Landscape Architects, Apartment and Office Building Association, Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers, Bridge Housing Corporation, Marriott Corporation, Mortgage Bankers Association, National Apartment Association, National Assisted Housing Management Association, National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), National Association of Realtors, National Association of Senior Living Industries, National Conference of States on Building Codes and Standards, National Coordinating Council on Spinal Cord Injury (NCCSCI), National Leased Housing Association, National Multi Housing Council, National Organization on Disability, and the Paralyzed Veterans of America.

The commenters also included U.S. Representatives Don Edwards, Barney Frank and Hamilton Fish, Jr., who advised that they were the primary sponsors of the Fair Housing Act, and who expressed their support of Option One.

### **Comments on the Three Options**

In addition to specific issues and questions raised about the design standards recommended by the proposed guidelines, a number of commenters simply submitted comments on their overall opinion of one or more of the options. Following is a summary of the opinions typically expressed on each of the options.

*Option One.* The Option One guidelines drew a strong reaction from commenters. Supporters stated that the Option One guidelines provided a faithful and clearly stated interpretation of the Act's intent. Opponents of Option One stated that its design standards would increase housing costs significantly -- for everyone. Several commenters who supported some features of Option One were concerned that adoption of Option One in its entirety would escalate housing costs. Another frequent criticism was that Option One's design guidelines were too complex and cumbersome.

*Option Two.* Supporters of Option Two stated that this option presented a reasonable compromise between Option One and Option Three. Supporters stated that the Option Two guidelines provided more design flexibility than the Option One guidelines, and that this flexibility would allow builders to deliver the required accessibility features at a lower cost. Opponents of Option Two stated that this option allowed builders to circumvent the Act's intent with respect to several essential accessibility features.

*Option Three.* Supporters of Option Three stated that Option Three presented the best method of achieving the accessibility objectives of the Act, at the lowest possible cost. Supporters stated that Option Three would contain housing costs, because design adaptation only would be made to those units which actually would be occupied by a disabled resident, and the adaptation would be tailored to the specific accessibility needs of the individual tenant. Opponents of Option Three stated that this option, with its "add-on" approach to accessibility, was contrary to the Act's intent, which, the commenters claimed, mandates accessible features at the time of construction.

### **Comments on the Costs of Implementation.**

In addition to the comments on the specific features of the three design options, one of the issues most widely commented upon was the cost of compliance with the Act's accessibility requirements, as implemented by the Guidelines. Several commenters disputed the Department's estimate of the cost of compliance, as presented in the Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis, published with the proposed guidelines on June 15, 1990 (55 FR 24384-24385), and in the Preliminary Regulatory Impact Analysis published on September 7, 1990 (55 FR 37072-37129). The Department's response to these comments is discussed in the Final Regulatory Impact Analysis, which is available for public inspection during regular business hours in the Office of the Rules Docket Clerk, Room 10276, Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20410-0500.

## **5. Discussion of Principal Public Comment Issues, and Section-by-Section Analysis of the Final Guidelines**

The following presents a discussion of the principal issues raised by the commenters, and the Department's response to each issue. This discussion includes a section-by-section analysis of the final Guidelines that addresses many of the specific concerns raised by the commenters, and highlights the differences between the proposed Option One guidelines and the final Guidelines. Comments related to issues outside the purview of the Guidelines, but related to the Act (e.g., enforcement procedures, statutory effective date), are discussed in the final section of the preamble under the preamble heading "Discussion of Comments on Related Fair Housing Issues".

- 1. Discussion of General Comments on the Guidelines ANSI Standard. Comment.** Many commenters expressed their support for the ANSI Standard as the basis for the Act's Guidelines, because ANSI is a familiar and accepted accessibility standard.

**Response.** In developing the proposed and final Guidelines, the Department was cognizant of the need for uniformity, and of the widespread application of the ANSI Standard. The original ANSI A117.1, adopted in 1961, formed the technical basis for the first accessibility standards adopted by the Federal Government, and most State governments. The 1980 edition of that standard was based on research funded by the Department, and became the basis for the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards (UFAS), published in the Federal Register on August 4, 1984 (47 FR 33862). The 1980 edition also was generally accepted by the private sector, and was recommended for use in State and local building codes by the Council of American Building Officials. Additionally, Congress, in the Fair Housing Act, specifically referenced the ANSI Standard, thereby encouraging utilization of the ANSI Standard as guidance for compliance with the Act's accessibility requirements. Accordingly, in using the ANSI Standard as a reference point for the Fair Housing Act Accessibility Guidelines, the Department is issuing Guidelines based on existing and familiar design standards, and is promoting uniformity between Federal accessibility standards, and those commonly used in the private sector. However, the ANSI Standard and the final Guidelines have differing purposes and goals, and they are by no means identical. The purpose of the Guidelines is to describe minimum standards of compliance with the specific accessibility requirements of the Act.

**Comment.** Two commenters suggested that the Department adopt the ANSI Standard as the guidelines for the Fair Housing Act's accessibility requirements, and not issue new guidelines.

**Response.** The Department has incorporated in the Guidelines those technical provisions of the ANSI Standard that are consistent with the Act's accessibility requirements. However, with respect to certain of the Act's requirements, the applicable ANSI provisions impose more stringent design standards than required by the Act. (In the preamble to the proposed rule (55 FR 3251), and again in the preamble to the proposed guidelines (55 FR 24370), the Department advised that a dwelling unit that complies fully with the ANSI Standard goes beyond what is required by the Fair Housing Act.) The Department has developed Guidelines for those requirements of the Act where departures from ANSI were appropriate.

**Comment.** A few commenters questioned whether the Department would revise the Guidelines to correspond to ANSI's periodic update of its standard.

**Response.** The ANSI Standard is reviewed at five-year intervals. As the ANSI Standard is revised in the future, the Department intends to review each version, and, if appropriate, to make revisions to the Guidelines in accordance with any revisions made to the ANSI Standard. Modifications of the Guidelines, whether or not reflective of changes to the ANSI Standard, will be subject to notice and prior public comment.

**Comment.** A few commenters requested that the Department republish the ANSI Standard in its entirety in the final Guidelines.

**Response.** The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) is a private, national organization, and is not connected with the Federal Government. The Department received permission from ANSI to print the ANSI Standard in its entirety, at the time of publication of the proposed guidelines (55 FR 24404-24487), specifically for the purpose of assisting readers of the proposed guidelines in developing timely comments. In the preamble to the proposed guidelines, the Department stated that since it was printing the entire ANSI Standard, as an appendix to the proposed guidelines, the final notice of the Accessibility Guidelines would not include the complete text of the ANSI Standard (55 FR 24371). Copies of the ANSI Standard may be purchased from the American National Standards Institute, 1430 Broadway, New York, NY 10018.

**Comment.** Another commenter requested that the Department confirm that any ANSI provision not cited in the final Guidelines is not necessary for compliance with the Act.

**Response.** In the proposed guidelines, the Department stated that: "Where the guidelines rely on sections of the ANSI Standard, the ANSI sections are cited. \* \* \* For those guidelines that differ from the ANSI Standard, recommended specifications are provided" (55 FR 24385). The final Guidelines include this statement, and further state that the ANSI sections not cited in the Guidelines have been determined by the Department not to be necessary for compliance with the Act's requirements.

### **Bias Toward Wheelchair Users.**

**Comment.** Two commenters stated that the proposed guidelines were biased toward wheelchair users, and that the Department has erroneously assumed that the elderly and the physically disabled have similar needs. The commenters stated that the physical problems suffered by the elderly often involve arthritic and back problems, which make bending and stooping difficult.

**Response.** The proposed guidelines, and the final Guidelines, reflect the accessibility requirements contained in the Fair Housing Act. These requirements largely are directed toward individuals with mobility impairments, particularly those who require mobility aids, such as wheelchairs, walkers, or crutches. In two of the Act's accessibility requirements, specific reference is made to wheelchair users. The emphasis of the law and the Guidelines on design and construction standards that are compatible with the needs of wheelchair users is realistic because the requirements for wheelchair access (e.g., wider doorways) are met more easily at the construction stage. (See House Report at 27.) Individuals with non-mobility impairments more easily can be accommodated by later nonstructural adaptations to dwelling units. The Fair Housing Act and the Fair Housing regulations assure the right of these individuals to make such later adaptations. (See Section 804(f)(3)(A) of the Act and 24 CFR 100.203 of the regulations. See also discussion of adaptations made to units in this preamble under the heading "Costs of Adaptation" in the section entitled "Discussion of Comments on Related Fair Housing Issues".)

### **Compliance Problems Due to Lack of Accessibility Guidelines**

**Comment.** A number of commenters from the building industry attributed difficulty in meeting the Act's March 13, 1991 compliance deadline, in part, to the lack of accessibility guidelines. The commenters complained about the time that it has taken the Department to publish proposed guidelines, and the additional time it has taken to publish final Guidelines.

**Response.** The Department acknowledges that the development and issuance of final Fair Housing Accessibility Guidelines has been a time-consuming process. However, the building industry has not been without guidance on compliance with the Act's accessibility requirements. The Fair Housing Act identifies the ANSI Standard as providing design standards that would achieve compliance with the Act's

accessibility requirements. Additionally, in the preamble to both the proposed and final Fair Housing rule, and in the text of §100.205, the Department provided examples of how certain of the Act's accessibility requirements may be met. (See 53 FR 45004-45005, 54 FR 3249-3252 (24 CFR Ch. I, Subch. A, App. I, at 583-586 (1990)), 24 CFR 100.205.)

The delay in publication of the final Guidelines has resulted, in part, because of the Department's pledge, at the time of publication of the final Fair Housing regulations, that the public would be provided an opportunity to comment on the Guidelines (54 FR 3251, 24 CFR Ch. I, Subch. A, at 585-586 (1990)). The delay in publication of the final Guidelines also is attributable in part to the Department's effort to develop Guidelines that would

1. ensure that persons with disabilities are afforded the degree of accessibility provided for in the Fair Housing Act, and
2. avoid the imposition of unreasonable requirements on builders.

**Comment.** Two commenters requested that interim accessibility guidelines should be adopted for projects "caught in the middle", i.e. those projects started before publication of the final Guidelines.

**Response.** The preamble to the June 15, 1990 proposed guidelines and the August 1, 1990 supplementary notice directly addressed this issue. In both documents, the Department recognized that projects being designed in advance of publication of the Guidelines may not become available for occupancy until after March 13, 1991. The Department advised that efforts to comply with the Option One guidelines, in the design of projects that would be completed before issuance of the final Guidelines, would be considered as evidence of compliance with the Act in connection with the Department's investigation of any complaints. The August 1, 1990 supplementary notice restated the Department's position on compliance with the Act's requirements prior to publication of the final Guidelines, and addressed what "evidence of compliance" will mean in a complaint situation.

### **Conflict with Historic Preservation Design Codes.**

**Comment.** Two commenters expressed concern about a possible conflict between the Act's accessibility requirements and local historic preservation codes (including compatible design requirements). The commenters stated that their particular concerns are:

1. the conversion of warehouse and commercial space to dwelling units; and
2. new housing construction on vacant lots in historically designated neighborhoods.

**Response.** Existing facilities that are converted to dwelling units are not subject to the Act's accessibility requirements. Additionally, alteration, rehabilitation or repair of covered multifamily dwellings are not subject to the Act's accessibility requirements. The Act's accessibility requirements only apply to new construction. With respect to new construction in neighborhoods subject to historic codes, the Department believes that the Act's accessibility requirements should not conflict with, or preclude building designs compatible with historic preservation codes.

### **Conflict with Local Accessibility Codes.**

**Comment.** Several commenters inquired about the appropriate course of action to follow when confronted with a conflict between the Act's accessibility requirements and local accessibility requirements.

**Response.** Section 100.205(i) of the Fair Housing regulations implements Section 804(f)(8) of the Act, which provides that the Act's accessibility requirements do not supplant or replace State or local laws that impose higher accessibility standards (53 FR 45005). For accessibility standards, as for other code requirements, the governing principle to follow when Federal and State (or local) codes differ is that the more stringent requirement applies.

This principle is equally applicable when multifamily dwellings are subject to more than one Federal law requiring accessibility for persons with physical disabilities. For example, a multifamily dwelling may be subject both to the Fair Housing Amendments Act and to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Section 504 requires that 5% of units in a covered multifamily dwelling be fully accessible -- thus imposing a stricter accessibility standard for those units than would be imposed by the Fair Housing Act. However, compliance only with the Section 504 requirements would not satisfy the requirements of the Fair Housing Act. The remaining units in the covered multifamily dwelling would be required to meet the specific accessibility requirements of the Fair Housing Act.

**Comment.** One commenter, the Seattle Department of Construction and Land Use, presented an example of how a local accessibility code that is more stringent with respect to some accessibility provisions may interact with the Act's accessibility requirements, where they are more stringent with respect to other

provisions. The commenter pointed out that the State of Washington is very hilly, and that the State of Washington's accessibility code requires accessible buildings on sites that would be deemed impractical under the Option One guidelines. The commenter stated that the State of Washington's accessibility code may require installation of a ramp, and that the ramp may then create an accessible entrance for the ground floor, making it subject to the Act's accessibility requirements. The commenter asked that, since the project was not initially subject to the Act's requirements, whether the creation of an accessible ground floor in accordance with the State code provisions would require all units on the ground floor to be made accessible in accordance with the Fair Housing Act. (The State of Washington's accessibility code would require only a percentage of the units to be accessible.)

**Response.** The answer to the commenter's question is that a nonelevator building with an accessible entrance on an accessible route is required to have the ground floor units designed and constructed in compliance with the Act's accessibility requirements. This response is consistent with the principle that the stricter accessibility requirement applies.

### **Design Guidelines for Environmental Illness**

**Comment.** Twenty-three (23) commenters advised the Department that many individuals are disabled because of severe allergic reactions to certain chemicals used in construction, and in construction materials. These commenters requested that the Department develop guidelines for constructing or renovating housing that are sensitive to the problems of individuals who suffer from these allergic reactions (commonly referred to as environmental illnesses). These commenters further advised that, as of February 1988, the Social Security Administration lists as a disability "Environmental Illness" (P.O.M.S. Manual No. 24515.065).

**Response.** The Guidelines developed by the Department are limited to providing guidance relating to the specific accessibility requirements of the Fair Housing Act. As discussed above, under the preamble heading "Bias Toward Wheelchair Users," the Act's requirements primarily are directed to providing housing that is accessible to individuals with mobility impairments. There is no statutory authority for the Department to create the type of design and construction standards suggested by the commenters.

### **Design Guidelines for the Hearing and Visually-Impaired**

**Comment.** Several commenters stated that the proposed guidelines failed to provide design features for people with hearing and visual impairments. These commenters stated that visual and auditory design features must be included in the final Guidelines.

**Response.** As noted in the response to the preceding comment, the Department is limited to providing Guidelines for the specific accessibility requirements of the Act. The Act does not require fully accessible individual dwelling units. For individual dwelling units, the Act requires the following: doors sufficiently wide to allow passage by handicapped persons in wheelchairs; accessible route into and through the dwelling unit; light switches, electrical outlets, thermostats, and other environmental controls in accessible locations; reinforcements in bathroom walls to allow later installation of grab bars; and usable kitchens and bathrooms such that an individual in a wheelchair can maneuver about the space. To specify visual and auditory design features for individual dwelling units would be to recommend standards beyond those necessary for compliance with the Act. Such features were among those identified in Congressional statements discussing modifications that would be made by occupants.

The Act, however, requires public and common use portions of covered multifamily dwellings to be "readily accessible to and usable by handicapped persons." The more comprehensive accessibility requirement for public and common use areas of dwellings necessitates a more comprehensive accessibility standard for these areas. Accordingly, for public and common use areas, the final Guidelines recommend compliance with the appropriate provisions of the ANSI Standard. The ANSI Standard for public and common use areas specifies certain design features to accommodate people with hearing and visual impairments.

### **Guidelines as Minimum Requirements**

**Comment.** A number of commenters requested that the Department categorize the final Guidelines as minimum requirements, and not as performance standards, because "recommended" guidelines are less effective in achieving the objectives of the Act. Another commenter noted that a safe harbor provision becomes a de facto minimum requirement, and that it should therefore be referred to as a minimum requirement.

**Response.** The Department has not categorized the final Guidelines as either performance standards or minimum requirements. The minimum accessibility requirements are contained in the Act. The Guidelines adopted by the Department provide one way in which a builder or developer may achieve compliance with

the Act's accessibility requirements. There are other ways to achieve compliance with the Act's accessibility requirements, as for example, full compliance with ANSI A117.1. Given this fact, it would be inappropriate on the part of the Department to constrain designers by presenting the Fair Housing Accessibility Guidelines as minimum requirements. Builders and developers should be free to use any reasonable design that obtains a result consistent with the Act's requirements. Accordingly, the design specifications presented in the final Guidelines are appropriately referred to as "recommended guidelines". It is true, however, that compliance with the Fair Housing Accessibility Guidelines will provide builders with a safe harbor. Evidence of compliance with the Fair Housing Accessibility Guidelines adopted by this notice shall be a basis for a determination that there is no reasonable cause to believe that a discriminatory housing practice under Section 804(f)(3) has occurred or is about to occur in connection with the investigation of complaints filed with the Department relating to covered multifamily dwellings.

### **National Accessibility Code**

**Comment.** Several commenters stated that there are too many accessibility codes -- ANSI, UFAS, and State and local accessibility codes. These commenters requested that the Department work with the individual States to arrive at one national uniform set of accessibility guidelines.

**Response.** There is no statutory authority to establish one nationally uniform set of accessibility standards. The Department is in agreement with the commenters' basic theme that increased uniformity in accessibility standards is desirable. In furtherance of this objective, the Department has relied upon the ANSI Standard as the design basis for the Fair Housing Accessibility Guidelines. The Department notes that the ANSI Standard also serves as the design basis for the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards (UFAS), the Minimum Guidelines and Requirements for Accessible Design (MGRAD) issued by the U.S. Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board, and many State and local government accessibility codes.

### **One Set of Design Standards**

**Comment.** A number of commenters objected to the fact that the proposed guidelines included more than one set of design standards. The commenters stated that the final Guidelines should present only one set of design standards so as not to weaken the Act's accessibility requirements.

**Response.** The inclusion of options for accessibility design in the proposed guidelines was both to encourage a maximum range of public comment, and to illustrate that there may be several ways to achieve compliance with the Act's accessibility requirements. Congress made clear that compliance with the Act's accessibility standards did not require adherence to a single set of design specifications. In Section 804(f)(4) of the Act, the Congress stated that compliance with the appropriate requirements of the ANSI Standard suffices to satisfy the accessibility requirements of the Act. In House Report No. 711, the Congress further stated as follows:

"However this section [Section 804(f)(4)] is not intended to require that designers follow this standard exclusively, for there may be other local or State standards with which compliance is required or there may be other creative methods of meeting these standards." (House Report at 27)

Similarly, the Department's Guidelines are not the exclusive standard for compliance with the Act's accessibility requirements. Since the Department's Guidelines are a safe harbor, and not minimum requirements, builders and developers may follow alternative standards that achieve compliance with the Act's accessibility requirements. This policy is consistent with the intent of Congress, which was to encourage creativity and flexibility in meeting the requirements of the Act.

### **Reliance on Preamble to Guidelines**

**Comment.** One commenter asked whether the explanatory information in the background section of the final Guidelines may be relied upon, and deemed to have the same force and effect as the Guidelines themselves.

**Response.** The Fair Housing Accessibility Guidelines are -- as the name indicates -- only guidelines, not regulations or minimum requirements. The Guidelines consist of recommended design specifications for compliance with the specific accessibility requirements of the Fair Housing Act. The final Guidelines provide builders with a safe harbor that, short of specifying all of the provisions of the ANSI Standard, illustrate acceptable methods of compliance with the Act. To the extent that the preamble to the Guidelines provides clarification on certain provisions of the Guidelines, or illustrates additional acceptable methods of compliance with the Act's requirements, the preamble may be relied upon as additional guidance. As

noted in the "Summary" portion of this document, the preamble to the Guidelines will be codified in the 1991 edition of the Code of Federal Regulations as Appendix III to the Fair Housing regulations (24 CFR Ch. I, Subch. A, App. III.).

## "User Friendly" Guidelines

**Comment.** A number of commenters criticized the proposed guidelines for being too complicated, too ambiguous, and for requiring reference to a number of different sources. These commenters requested that the final Guidelines be clear, concise and "user friendly". One commenter requested that the final Guidelines use terms that conform to terms used by each of the three major building code organizations: the Building Officials and Code Administrators International, Inc. (BOCA); the International Conference of Building Officials (ICBO), and the Southern Building Code Congress International (SBCCI).

**Response.** The Department recognizes that the Accessibility Guidelines include several highly technical provisions. In drafting the final Guidelines, the Department has made every effort to explain these provisions as clearly as possible, to use technical and building terms consistent with the terms used by the major building code organizations, to define terms clearly, and to provide additional explanatory information on certain of the provisions of the Guidelines.

## 2. Section-by-Section Analysis of Final Guidelines

The following presents a section-by-section analysis of the final Guidelines. The text of the final Guidelines is organized into five sections. The first four sections of the Guidelines provide background and explanatory information on the Guidelines. Section 1, the Introduction, describes the purpose, scope and organization of the Guidelines. Section 2 defines relevant terms used. Section 3 reprints the text of 24 CFR 100.205, which implements the Fair Housing Act's accessibility requirements, and Section 4 describes the application of the Guidelines. Section 5, the final section, presents the design specifications recommended by the Department for meeting the Act's accessibility requirements, as codified in 24 CFR 100.205. Section 5 is subdivided into seven areas, to address each of the seven areas of accessible design required by the Act.

The following section-by-section analysis discusses the comments received on each of the sections of the proposed Option One Guidelines, and the Department's response to these comments. Where no discussion of comments is provided under a section heading, no comments were received on this section.

### Section 1. Introduction

Section 1, the Introduction, describes the purpose, scope and organization of the Fair Housing Accessibility Guidelines. This section also clarifies that the accessibility guidelines apply only to the design and construction requirements of 24 CFR 100.205, and do not relieve persons participating in a federal or federally-assisted program or activity from other requirements, such as those required by section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 794), or the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 4151-4157). (The design provisions for those laws are found at 24 CFR Part 8 and 24 CFR Part 40, respectively.) Additionally, Section 1 explains that only those sections of the ANSI Standard cited in the Guidelines are required for compliance with the accessibility requirements of the Fair Housing Act. Revisions to Section 1 reflect the Department's response to the request of several commenters for further clarification on the purpose and scope of the Guidelines.

### Section 2. Definitions

This section incorporates appropriate definitions from §100.201 of the Department's Fair Housing regulations, and provides additional definitions for terms used in the Guidelines. A number of comments were received on the definitions. Clarifications were made to certain definitions, and additional terms were defined. New terms defined in the final Guidelines include: "adaptable," "assistive device," "ground floor," "loft," "multistory dwelling unit," "single-story dwelling unit," and "story". The inclusion of new definitions reflects the comments received, and also reflects new terms introduced by changes to certain of the Option One design specifications. In several instances, the clarifications of existing definitions, or the new terms defined, were derived from definitions of certain terms used by one or more of the major building code organizations. Comments on specific definitions are discussed either below or in that portion of the preamble under the particular section heading of the Guidelines in which these terms appear.

## Accessible

**Comment.** A number of commenters stated that the Department used the terms "accessible" and "adaptable" interchangeably, and requested clarification of the meaning of each. The commenters noted that, under several State building codes, these terms denote different standards for compliance. The commenters requested that if the Department intends these two terms to have the same meaning, this should be clearly stated in the final Guidelines, and, if the terms have different meanings, "adaptable" should also be defined.

**Response.** The Department's use of the terms "adaptable" and "accessible" in the preamble to the proposed guidelines generally reflected Congress' use of the terms in the text of the Act, and in the House and Senate conference reports. However, to respond to commenters' concerns about the distinctions between these terms, the Department has included a definition of "adaptable dwelling units" to clarify the meaning of this term, within the context of the Fair Housing Act. In the final Guidelines, "adaptable dwelling units", when used with respect to covered multifamily dwellings, means dwelling units that include features of adaptable design specified in 24 CFR 100.205(c)(2)-(3).

The Fair Housing Act refers to design features that include both the minimal "accessibility" features required to be built into the unit, and the "adaptable" feature of reinforcement for bathroom walls for the future installation of grab bars. Accordingly, under the Fair Housing Act, an "adaptable dwelling unit" is one that meets the minimal accessibility requirements specified in the Act (i.e., usable doors, an accessible route, accessible environmental controls, and usable kitchens and bathrooms) and the "adaptable" structural feature of reinforced bathroom walls for later installation of grab bars.

## Assistive Device

**Comment.** Several commenters requested that we define the phrase "assistive device."

**Response.** "Assistive device" means an aid, tool, or instrument used by a person with disabilities to assist in activities of daily living. Examples of assistive devices include tongs, knob turners, and oven rack pusher/pullers. A definition for "assistive device" has been included in the final Guidelines.

## Bathroom

In response to the concern of several commenters, the Department has revised the definition of "bathroom" in the final Guidelines to clarify that a bathroom includes a "compartmented" bathroom. A compartmented bathroom is one in which the bathroom fixtures are distributed among interconnected rooms. The fact that bathroom facilities may be located in interconnecting rooms does not exempt this type of bathroom from the Act's accessibility requirements. This clarification, and minor editorial changes, were the only revisions made to the definition of "bathroom". Other comments on this term were as follows:

**Comment.** Several commenters requested that the Department reconsider its definition of "bathroom", to include powder rooms, i.e., rooms with only a toilet and sink. These commenters stated that persons with disabilities should have access to all bathrooms in their homes, not only full bathrooms. One commenter believed that, unless bathroom was redefined to include single- or two-fixture facilities, some developers will remove a bathtub or shower from a proposed second full bathroom to avoid having to make the second bathroom accessible. The commenter suggested that bathroom be redefined to include any room containing at least two of the possible bathroom fixtures (toilet, sink, bathtub or shower).

**Response.** In defining "bathroom" to include a water closet (toilet), lavatory (sink), and bathtub or shower, the Department has followed standard dictionary usage, as well as Congressional intent. Congressional statements emphasized that the Act's accessibility requirements were expected to have a minimal effect on the size and design of dwelling units. In a full-size bathroom, this can be achieved. To specify space for wheelchair maneuvering in a powder room would, in most cases, require enlarging the room significantly. However, a powder room would be subject to the Act's accessibility requirements if the powder room is the only toilet facility on the accessible level of a covered multistory dwelling unit. Additionally, it should be noted that doors to powder rooms (regardless of the location of the powder room), like all doors within dwelling units, are required by the Act to be wide enough for wheelchair passage. Some powder rooms may, in fact, be usable by persons in wheelchairs.

**Comment.** One commenter requested that the final Guidelines provide that a three-quarters bathroom (water closet, lavatory and shower) would not be subject to the accessibility requirements -- specifically, the requirement for grab bar reinforcement.

**Response.** The Fair Housing Act requires reinforcements in bathroom walls to allow for later installation of grab bars at toilet, bathtub or shower, if provided. Accordingly, the Fair Housing regulations specifically require reinforcement in bathroom walls to allow later installation of grab bars around the shower, where showers are provided. (See 24 CFR 100.205(c)(3)(iii).)

## Building

**Comment.** One commenter suggested that the Department use the term "structure" in lieu of "building". The commenter stated that, in the building industry, "building" is defined by exterior walls and fire walls, and that an apartment structure of four units could be subdivided into two separate buildings of two units each by inexpensive construction of a firewall. The commenter suggested that the final definition of "building" include the following language: "For the purpose of the Act, firewall separation does not define buildings."

**Response.** The term "building" is the term used in the Fair Housing Act. The Department uses this term in the Guidelines to be consistent with the Act. With respect to the comment on firewall separation, the Department believes that, within the context of the Fair Housing Act, the more appropriate place for the language on firewall separation is in the definition of "covered multifamily dwellings". Since many building codes in fact define "building" by exterior walls and firewalls, a definition of "building" in the Fair Housing Accessibility Guidelines that explicitly excludes firewalls as a means of identifying a building would place the Guidelines in conflict with local building codes. Accordingly, to avoid this conflict, the Department has clarified the definition of "covered multifamily dwelling" (which is discussed below) to address the issue of firewall separation.

## Covered Multifamily Dwellings

The Department has revised the definition of "covered multifamily dwellings" to clarify that dwelling units within a single structure separated by firewalls do not, for purposes of these Guidelines, constitute separate buildings.

A number of questions and comments were received on what should, or should not, be considered a covered multifamily dwelling. Several of these comments requested clarification concerning "ground floor dwelling units". These comments generally concluded with a request that the Department define "ground floor" and "ground floor unit". The Department has included a definition of "ground floor" in the final Guidelines. The Department believes that this definition is sufficiently clear to identify ground floor units, and that therefore a separate definition for "ground floor unit" is unnecessary. Specific questions concerning ground floor units are discussed below under the heading "Ground Floor". Comments on other covered multifamily dwellings are as follows:

**Comment.** (Garden apartments) One commenter requested that the Department clarify whether single family attached dwelling units with all living space on one level (i.e. garden units) fall within the definition of covered multifamily dwellings.

**Response.** The Fair Housing Act and its regulations clearly define "covered multifamily dwellings" as buildings consisting of four or more dwelling units, if such buildings have one or more elevators, and ground floor dwelling units in other buildings consisting of four or more dwelling units. Garden apartments located in an elevator building of four or more units are subject to the Act's requirements. If the garden apartment is on the ground floor of a nonelevator building consisting of four or more apartments, and if all living space is on one level, then the apartment is subject to the Act's requirements (unless the building is exempt on the basis of site impracticality).

**Comment.** (Townhouses) Several commenters requested clarification concerning whether townhouses are covered multifamily dwellings.

**Response.** In the preamble to the Fair Housing regulations, the Department addressed this issue. Using an example of a single structure consisting of five two-story townhouses, the Department stated that such a structure is not a covered multifamily dwelling if the building does not have an elevator, because the entire dwelling unit is not on the ground floor. Thus, the first floor of a two-story townhouse in the example is not a ground floor unit, because the entire unit is not on the ground floor. In contrast, a structure consisting of five single-story townhouses would be a covered multifamily dwelling. (See 54 FR 3244; 24 CFR Ch. I, Subch. A, App. I at 575-576

(1990).)

**Comment.** (Units with basements) One commenter asked whether a unit that contains a basement, which provides additional living space, would be viewed as a townhouse, and therefore exempt from the Act's accessibility requirements. The commenter stated that basements are generally designed with the top of the basement, including the basement entrance, above finished grade, and that basement space cannot be made accessible without installation of an elevator or a lengthy ramp.

**Response.** If the basement is part of the finished living space of a dwelling unit, then the dwelling unit will be treated as a multistory unit, and application of the Act's accessibility requirements will be determined as provided in the Guidelines for Requirement 4. If the basement space is unfinished, then it would not be considered part of the living space of the unit, and the basement would not be subject to the Act's requirements. Attic space would be treated in the same manner.

## Dwelling Unit

"Dwelling unit" is defined as a single unit of residence for a household of one or more persons. The definition provides a list of examples of dwelling units in order to clarify the types of units that may be covered by the Fair Housing Act. The examples include condominiums and apartment units in apartment buildings. Several commenters submitted questions on condominiums, and one commenter requested clarification on whether vacation time-sharing units are subject to the Act's requirements. Their specific comments are as follows:

**Comment.** (Condominiums) A few commenters requested that condominiums be excluded from covered dwelling units because condominiums are comparable to single family homes. The commenter stated that condominiums do not compete in the rental market, but compete in the sale market with single family homes, which are exempt from the Act's requirements.

**Response.** The Fair Housing Act requires all covered multifamily dwellings for first occupancy after March 13, 1991 to be designed and constructed in accordance with the Act's accessibility requirements. The Act does not distinguish between dwelling units in covered multifamily dwellings that are for sale, and dwelling units that are for rent. Condominium units in covered multifamily dwellings must comply with the Act's accessibility requirements.

**Comment.** (Custom-designed condominium units) Two commenters stated that purchasers of condominium units often request their units to be custom designed. The commenters questioned whether custom-designed units must comply with the Act's accessibility requirements. Another commenter stated that the Department should exempt from compliance those condominium units which are pre-sold, but not yet constructed, and for which owners have expressly requested designs that are incompatible with the Act's accessibility requirements.

**Response.** The fact that a condominium unit is sold before the completion of construction does not exempt a developer from compliance with the Act's accessibility requirements. The Act imposes affirmative duties on builders and developers to design and construct covered multifamily dwellings for first occupancy after March 13, 1991 in accordance with the Act's accessibility requirements. These requirements are mandatory for covered multifamily dwellings for first occupancy after March 13, 1991, regardless of the ownership status of covered individual dwelling units. Thus, to the extent that the pre-sale or post-sale construction included features that are covered by the Act (such as framing for doors in pre-sale "shell" construction), they should be built accordingly.

**Comment.** (Vacation timeshare units) One commenter questioned whether vacation timeshare units were subject to the Act's requirements. The commenter stated that a timeshare unit may be owned by 2 to 51 individuals, each of whom owns, or has the right to use, the unit for a proportionate period of time equal to his or her ownership.

**Response.** Vacation timeshare units are subject to the Act's accessibility requirements, when the units are otherwise subject to the accessibility requirements. "Dwelling" is defined in 24 CFR 100.20 as "any building, structure, or portion thereof which is occupied as, or designed or intended for occupancy as, a residence by one or more families, and any vacant land which is offered for sale or lease for the construction or location thereon of any such building, structure or portion thereof". The preamble to the final Fair Housing rule states that the definition of "dwelling" is "broad enough to cover each of the types of dwellings enumerated in the proposed rule: mobile home parks, trailer courts, condominiums, cooperatives, and time-sharing properties."

(Emphasis added.) (See 54 FR 3238, 24 CFR Ch. I, Subch. A, App. I, at 567 (1990).) Accordingly, the fact of vacation timeshare ownership of units in a building does not affect whether the structure is subject to the Act's accessibility requirements.

## Entrance

**Comment.** One commenter requested clarification on whether "entrance" refers to an entry door to a dwelling unit, or an entry door to the building.

**Response.** As used in the Guidelines, "entrance" refers to an exterior entry door. The definition of "entrance" has been revised in the final Guidelines to clarify this point, and the term "entry" is used instead of "entrance" when referring to the entry into a unit when it is interior to the building.

## Ground Floor

As noted above, under the discussion of covered multifamily dwellings, several commenters requested clarification concerning "ground floor" and "ground floor dwelling unit". In response to these comments, the Department has included a definition for "ground floor" in the final Guidelines. The Department has incorporated the definition of "ground floor" found in the Fair Housing regulations (24 CFR 100.201), and has expanded this definition to address specific concerns related to implementation of the Guidelines. In the final Guidelines, "ground floor" is defined as follows:

"Ground floor" means a floor of a building with a building entrance on an accessible route. A building may have one or more ground floors. Where the first floor containing dwelling units in a building is above grade, all units on that floor must be served by a building entrance on an accessible route. This floor will be considered to be a ground floor.

### Specific comments concerning ground floor units are as follows:

**Comment.** (Nonresidential ground floor units) Two commenters advised that, in many urban areas, buildings are constructed without an elevator and with no dwelling units on the ground floor. The ground floor contains either parking, retail shops, restaurants or offices. To bring these buildings into compliance with the Act, one of the commenters recommended that the Department adopt a proposal under consideration by the International Conference of Building Officials (ICBO). The commenter stated that the proposal provides that, in buildings with ground floors occupied by parking and other nonresidential uses, the lowest story containing residential units is considered the ground floor. Another commenter recommended that a building should be exempt from compliance with the Act's requirements if the ground floor is occupied by a non-residential use (including parking). The commenter stated that if an elevator is to be provided to serve the upper residential floors, then the elevator should also serve the ground floor, and access be provided to all the dwelling units.

**Response.** The Department believes that the definition of "ground floor unit" incorporated in the final Guidelines addresses the concerns of the commenters.

**Comment.** (More than one ground floor) One commenter requested guidance on treatment of nonelevator garden apartments (i.e., apartment buildings that generally are built on slopes and contain two stories in the front of the building and three stories in the back). The commenter stated that these buildings arguably may be said to have two ground floors. The commenter requested that the Department clarify that, if a building has more than one ground floor, the developer must make one ground floor accessible -- but not both -- and the developer may choose which floor to make accessible. Another commenter suggested that, in a garden-type apartment building, the floor served by the primary entrance, and which is located at the parking lot level, is the floor which must be made accessible.

**Response.** In the preamble to the final Fair Housing rule, the Department addressed the issue of buildings with more than one ground floor. (See 54 3244, 24 CFR Ch. I, Subch. A, App. I at 576 (1990).) The Department stated that if a covered building has more than one floor with a building entrance on an accessible route, then the units on each floor with an accessible building entrance must satisfy the Act's accessibility requirements. (See the discussion of townhouses in nonelevator buildings above.)

## Handicap

**Comment.** Several commenters requested that the Department avoid use of the terms "handicap" and "handicapped persons", and replace them with the terms "disability" and "persons with disabilities".

**Response.** "Handicap" and "handicapped persons" are the terms used by the Fair Housing Act. These terms are used in Guidelines and regulations to be consistent with the statute. Principle of Reasonableness and Cost

**Comment.** Four commenters noted that, in the preamble to the proposed guidelines, the Department indicated that the Fair Housing Accessibility Guidelines were limited by a "principle of reasonableness and cost". The commenters requested that the Department define this phrase.

**Response.** In the preamble to the proposed guidelines, the Department stated in relevant part as follows: "These guidelines are intended to provide a safe harbor for compliance with respect to those issues they cover. \* \* \* Where the ANSI Standard is not applicable, the language of the statute itself is the safest guide. The degree of scoping, accessibility, and the like are of course limited by a principle of reasonableness and cost." (55 FR 24371)

In House Report No. 711, the accessibility requirements of the Fair Housing Act were referred to by the Congress as "modest" (House Report at 25), "minimal" and "basic features of adaptability" (House Report at 27). In developing the Fair Housing Accessibility Guidelines, the Department was attentive to the fact that Congress viewed the Act's accessibility requirements as reasonable, and that the Guidelines for these requirements should conform to this "reasonableness" principle -- that is, that the Guidelines should provide the level of reasonable accessibility envisioned by Congress, while maintaining the affordability of new multifamily construction. The Department believes that the final Guidelines conform to this principle of reasonableness and cost.

## Slope

**Comment.** One commenter, the Building Officials & Code Administrators International, Inc. (BOCA), requested clarification of the term, "slope". The commenter stated the definition indicates that slope is calculated based on the distance and elevation between two points. The commenter stated that this is adequate when there is a uniform and reasonably consistent change in elevation between points (i.e., one point is at the top of a hill and the other is at the bottom), but the definition does not adequately address land where a valley, gorge, or swale occurs between two points. The commenter stated that the definition also does not adequately address conditions where there is an abrupt change in the rate of slope between the points (i.e. a sharp drop off within a short distance, with the remaining distance being flat or sloped much more gradually).

**Response.** Slope is measured from ground level at the entrance to all arrival points within 50 feet, and is considered impractical only when it exceeds 10 percent between the entrance and all these points. Since multifamily dwellings typically have an arrival point fairly close to the building, a significant change such as a sharp drop would likely result in an impractical slope. Minor variations, such as a swale, if more than 5 percent, would be easily graded or ramped; a gorge would be bridged or filled, in any event, if it was on an entrance route.

## Usable Door

**Comment.** One commenter stated that a clear definition of "usable door" is required.

**Response.** The Guidelines for Requirement 3 (usable doors) fully describe what is meant by "usable door" within the meaning of the Act.

**Section 3. Fair Housing Act Design and Construction Requirements** This section reprints B100.205 (Design and Construction Requirements) from the Department's final rule implementing the Fair Housing Act. A reprint of B100.205 was included to provide easy reference to (1) the Act's accessibility requirements, as codified by B100.205; and (2) the additional examples of methods of compliance with the Act's requirements that are presented in this regulation.

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## Section 4. Application of the Guidelines

This section states that the design specifications that comprise the final Guidelines apply to all "covered multifamily dwellings" as defined in Section 2 of the Guidelines. Section 4 also clarifies that the Guidelines, are "recommended" for designing dwellings that comply with the

requirements of the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988.

Under the discussion of Section 4 in the proposed guidelines, the Department requested comment on the Act's application to dwelling units with design features such as a loft or sunken living room (55 FR 24377). A number of comments were received on this issue. Since the Act's application to units with such features is relevant within the context of an accessible route into and through a dwelling unit, the comments and the Department's response to these comments are discussed in Section 5, under the subheading, "Guidelines for Requirement 4".

**Section 5. Guidelines** The Guidelines contained in this Section 5 are organized to follow the sequence of requirements as they are presented in the Fair Housing Act and in the regulation implementing these requirements, 24 CFR 100.205. There are Guidelines for seven requirements:

1. An accessible entrance on an accessible route;
2. accessible and usable public and common use areas;
3. doors usable by a person in a wheelchair;
4. accessible route into and through the covered dwelling unit;
5. light switches, electrical outlets and environmental controls in accessible locations;
6. bathroom walls reinforced for grab bars; and
7. usable kitchens and bathrooms.

For each of these seven requirements, the Department adopted the corresponding Option One guidelines, but changes were made to certain of the Option One design specifications. The following discussion describes the Guidelines for each of the seven requirements, and highlights the changes that have been made.

#### **Guidelines for Requirement 1.**

The Guidelines for Requirement 1 present guidance on designing an accessible entrance on an accessible route, as required by  $\beta$ 100.205(a), and on determining when an accessible entrance is impractical because of terrain or unusual characteristics of the site.

The Department has adopted the Option One guidelines for Requirement 1, with substantial changes to the specifications for determining site impracticality. These changes, and the guidelines that remain unchanged for Requirement 1 are discussed below.

**Site Impracticality Determinations.** The Guidelines for Requirement 1 begin by presenting criteria for determining when terrain or unusual site characteristics would make an accessible entrance impractical. Section 100.205(a) recognizes that certain sites may have characteristics that make it impractical to provide an accessible route to a multifamily dwelling. This section states that all covered multifamily dwellings shall be designed and constructed to have at least one building entrance on an accessible route unless it is impractical to do so because of the terrain or unusual characteristics of the site.

**Comments.** The Department received many comments on the site impracticality specifications presented in the proposed guidelines (55 FR 24377-24378). The majority of the members of the disability community who commented on this issue supported the Option One guidelines, and recommended no change. However, other commenters, including a few disability organizations, members of the building industry, State and local government agencies involved in the development and enforcement of accessibility codes, and some of the major building code organizations, criticized one or more aspects of the Option One and Option Two guidelines for Requirement 1.

#### **Specific comments are noted below.**

A few commenters suggested that the 10% slope criterion was too low, and easily will be met by a project site having a hilly terrain which could (and typically would) be made more level. These commenters recommended a higher slope criterion, ranging anywhere from 12% to 30%. Other commenters stated that the slope criterion for the planned finished grade should not exceed 8.33%. The Congressional sponsors of the Act (U.S. Representatives Edwards, Fish, and Frank) stated that a limited exemption for slopes greater than 10% "was not contemplated by the Act"; but that they believed the Department has the discretion to develop such an exemption if it is "carefully crafted and narrowly tailored".

Several commenters stated that any evaluation of the undisturbed site should be done only on the percentage of land that is buildable. Several commenters stated that the final Guidelines should not

require an evaluation of the undisturbed site between the planned entrance and the arrival points -- that the only evaluation of the undisturbed site should be the initial threshold slope analysis. There were a number of questions on arrival points, and requests that these points be more clearly defined. Several commenters presented specific examples of possible problems with the use of arrival points, as specified in the Option One guidelines. A few commenters stated that the individual building analysis should involve a measurement between the entrance and only one designated vehicular or pedestrian arrival point.

Other commenters stated that single buildings on a site should be subject to the same analysis as multiple buildings on a site. A number of commenters criticized the Option One site impracticality analysis as being too cumbersome and confusing. A number of commenters objected to Option Two's requirement that covered multifamily dwellings with elevators must comply with the Act's accessibility requirements, regardless of site conditions or terrain.

**Response.** Following careful consideration of these comments, the Department has revised significantly the procedure for determining site impracticality, and its application to covered multifamily dwellings.

For covered multifamily dwellings with elevators, the final Guidelines would not exempt these dwellings from the Act's accessibility requirements. The final Guidelines provide that covered multifamily dwellings with elevators shall be designed and constructed to provide at least one accessible entrance on an accessible route regardless of terrain or unusual characteristics of the site. Every dwelling unit on a floor served by an elevator must be on an accessible route, and must be made accessible in accordance with the Act's requirements for covered dwelling units. The Department has excluded elevator buildings from any exemption from the Act's accessibility requirements because the Department believes that the type of site work that is performed in connection with the construction of a high rise elevator building generally results in a finished grade that would make the building accessible. The Department also notes that the majority of elevator buildings are designed with a primary building entrance and a passenger drop-off area which are easily made accessible to individuals with handicaps. Additionally, many elevator buildings have large, relatively level areas adjacent to the building entrances, which are normally provided for moving vans. These factors lead the Department to conclude that site impracticality considerations should not apply to multifamily elevator buildings.

For covered multifamily dwellings without elevators, the final Guidelines provide two alternative tests for determining site impracticality due to terrain. The first test is an individual building test which involves a two-step process: measurement of the slope of the undisturbed site between the planned entrance and all vehicular or pedestrian arrival points; and measurement of the slope of the planned finished grade between the entrance and all vehicular or pedestrian arrival points. The second test is a site analysis test which involves an analysis of the topography of the existing natural terrain.

A site with a single building, having a common entrance for all units, may be analyzed only under the first test -- the individual building test.

All other sites, including a site with a single building having multiple entrances serving either individual dwelling units or clusters of dwelling units, may be analyzed either under the first test or the second test. For these sites for which either test is applicable, the final Guidelines provide that regardless of which test is utilized by a builder or developer, at least 20% of the total ground floor units in nonelevator buildings, on any site, must comply with the Act's accessibility requirements.

The distinctive features of the two tests for determining site impracticality due to terrain, for nonelevator multifamily dwellings, are as follows:

1. The individual building test.
  1. This test is applicable to all sites.
  2. This test eliminates the slope analysis of the entire undisturbed site that was applicable only to multiple building sites, and, concomitantly, the table that specifies the minimum percentage of adaptable units required for every multiple building site. The only analysis for site impracticality will be the individual building analysis. This analysis will be applied to each building regardless of the number of buildings on the site.
  3. The individual building analysis has been modified to provide for measurement of the slopes between the planned entrance and all vehicular or pedestrian arrival points within 50 feet of the planned entrance. The analysis further provides that if there are no vehicular or pedestrian arrival points within 50 feet of the planned

entrance, then measurement will be made of the slope between the planned entrance and the closest vehicular or pedestrian arrival point. Additionally, the final Guidelines clarify how to measure the slope between the planned entrance and an arrival point.

4. The individual building analysis retains the evaluation of both the undisturbed site and the planned finished grade. Buildings would be exempt only if the slopes of both the original undisturbed site and the planned finished grade exceed 10 percent (1) as measured between the planned entrance and all vehicular or pedestrian arrival points within 50 feet of the planned entrance; or (2) if there are no vehicular or pedestrian arrival points within that 50 foot area, as measured between the planned entrance and the closest vehicular or pedestrian arrival point.
2. The site analysis test.
    1. This test is only applicable to sites with multiple buildings, or to sites with a single building with multiple entrances.

2. This test involves an analysis of the existing natural terrain (before grading) of the buildable area of the site by topographic survey with 2 foot contour intervals, with slope determination made between each successive contour interval. The accuracy of the slope analysis is to be certified by a professional licensed engineer, landscape architect, architect or surveyor.
3. This test provides that the minimum number of ground floor units to be made accessible on a site must equal the percentage of the total buildable area (excluding floodplains, wetlands, or other restricted use areas) of the undisturbed site that has an existing natural grade of less than 10% slope.

The Department believes that both tests for determining site impracticality due to terrain present enforceable criteria for determining when terrain makes accessibility, as required by the Act, impractical. The Department also believes that by offering a choice of tests, the Department is providing builders and developers with greater flexibility in selecting the approach that is most appropriate, or least burdensome, for their development project, while assuring that accessible units are provided on every site. As noted earlier in this preamble, this policy is consistent with the intent of Congress which was to encourage creativity and flexibility in meeting the Act's requirements, and thus minimize the impact of these requirements on housing affordability.

With respect to determining site impracticality due to unusual characteristics of the site, the test in the final Guidelines is essentially the same as that provided in the Option One guidelines. This test has been modified to limit measurement of the finished grade elevation to that between the entrance and all vehicular or pedestrian arrival points within 50 feet of the planned entrance.

Finally, the final Guidelines for Requirement 1 contemplate that the site tests recommended by the Guidelines will be performed, generally, on "normal" soil. The Department solicits additional public comment only on the issue of the feasibility of the site tests on areas that have difficult soil, such as areas where expansive clay or hard granite is prevalent.

Additional specific comments on the site impracticality determination are as follows:

**Comment.** One commenter stated that the site impracticality determination seems to suggest that only the most direct path from the pedestrian or vehicular arrival points will be used to evaluate the ability to create an accessible route of travel to the building. The commenter stated that it may be possible to use natural or finished contours of the site to provide an accessible route other than a straight-line route.

**Response.** To be enforceable, the Guidelines must specify where the line is drawn; otherwise it is not possible to specify what is "practical". Generally, developers provide relatively direct access from the entrance to the pedestrian and vehicular arrival points. If, in fact, the route as built was accessible, then the building would be expected to have an accessible entrance and otherwise comply with the Act.

**Comment.** Another commenter stated that the site impracticality determination does not take into account the many building types and unit arrangements. The commenter stated that some buildings have a common entrance with unit entrances off a common corridor, while others have

individual, exterior entrances to the units. The commenter stated that if the Department is going to permit exemptions from the Act's requirements caused by terrain, the commenter did not understand why every entrance in a building containing individually-accessed apartments must comply with the Act's requirements, simply because they are in one building.

**Response.** The final Guidelines recognize (as did the proposed guidelines) the difference in building types. If there is a single entry point serving the entire building (or portions thereof), that entry point is considered the "entrance". If each unit has a separate exterior entrance, then each entrance is to be evaluated for the conditions at that entrance. Thus, a building with four entrances, each serving one of four units, might have only one accessible entrance, depending upon site conditions, or it might have any combination up to four.

**Comment.** Another commenter stated that the evaluation for unusual characteristics of the site only takes into account floodplains or high hazard coastal areas, and excludes other possible unique and unusual site characteristics.

**Response.** The provision for unusual characteristics of the site clearly provides that floodplains or high hazard coastal areas are only two examples of unusual site characteristics. The provision states that "unusual site characteristics" includes "sites subject to similar requirements of law or code."

**Comment.** A number of commenters expressed concern that the site impracticality determination of the Guidelines may conflict with local health, safety, environmental or zoning codes. A principal concern of one of the commenters was that the final Guidelines may require "massive grading" of a site in order to achieve compliance with the Act. The commenter was concerned that such grading may conflict with local laws directed at minimizing environmental damage, or with zoning codes that severely limit substantial fill activities at a site.

**Response.** The Department believes that the site impracticality determination adopted in these final Guidelines will not conflict with local safety, health, environmental or zoning codes. The final Guidelines provide, as did the proposed guidelines, that the site planning involves consideration of all State and local requirements to which a site is subject, such as "density constraints, tree-save or wetlands ordinances and other factors impacting development choices" (55 FR 24378), and explicitly accept the site plan that results from balancing these and other factors affecting the development. The Guidelines would not require, for example, that a site be graded in violation of a tree-save ordinance. If, however, access is required based on the final site plan, then installation of a ramp for access, rather than grading, could be necessary in some cases so as not to disturb the trees. Where access is required, the method of providing access, whether grading or a ramp, will be decided by the developer, based on local ordinances and codes, and on business or aesthetic factors. It should be noted that these nonmandatory Guidelines do not purport to preempt conflicting State or local laws. However, where a State or local law contradicts a specification in the Guidelines, a builder must seek other reasonable cost-effective means, consistent with local law, to assure the accessibility of his or her units. The accessibility requirements of the Fair Housing Act remain applicable, and State and local laws must be in accord with those requirements.

### **Additional Design Specifications for Requirement 1.**

In addition to the site impracticality determinations, the final Guidelines for Requirement 1 specify that an accessible entrance on an accessible route is practical when (1) there is an elevator connecting the parking area with any floor on which dwelling units are located, and (2) an elevated walkway is planned between a building entrance and a vehicular or pedestrian arrival point, and the planned walkway has a slope no greater than 10 percent. The Guidelines also provide that (1) an accessible entrance that complies with ANSI 4.14, and (2) an accessible route that complies with ANSI 4.3, meets with the accessibility requirements of §100.205(a). Finally, the Guidelines provide that if the slope of the finished grade between covered multifamily dwellings and a public or common use facility exceeds 8.33%, or where other physical barriers, or legal restrictions, outside the control of the owner, prevent the installation of an accessible pedestrian route, an acceptable alternative is to provide access via a vehicular route. (These design specifications are unchanged from the proposed Option One guidelines for Requirement 1.)

**Comment.** Several comments were received on the additional design specifications for Requirement 1. The majority of commenters supported 8.33% as the slope criterion for the finished grade between covered multifamily dwellings and a public or common use facility. A few commenters stated that vehicular access was not an acceptable alternative to pedestrian access. Other commenters stated that the 10% slope criterion for the planned walkway was inconsistent

with accessibility requirements that prohibit ramps from having a slope in excess of 8.33%.

**Response.** With respect to access via a vehicular route, the Department's expectation is that public and common use facilities generally will be on an accessible pedestrian route. The Department, however, recognizes that there may be situations in which an accessible pedestrian route simply is not practical, because of factors beyond the control of the owner. In those situations, vehicular access may be provided. With respect to the 10% slope criterion for planned elevated walkways, this is the criterion for determining whether it is practical to provide an accessible entrance. If the site is determined to be practical, then the slope of the walkway must be reduced to 8.33%.

### **Guidelines for Requirement 2.**

The Guidelines for Requirement 2 present design standards that will make public and common use areas readily accessible to and usable by handicapped persons, as required by §100.205(c)(1).

The Department has adopted the Option One guidelines for Requirement 2, without change. The Guidelines for Requirement 2 identify components of public and common use areas that should be made accessible, reference the section or sections of the ANSI Standard which apply in each case, and describe the appropriate application of the design specifications. In some cases, the Guidelines for Requirement 2 describe variations from the basic ANSI provision that is referenced.

The basic components of public and common use areas covered by the Guidelines include, for example: accessible route(s); protruding objects; ground and floor surface treatments; parking and passenger loading zones; curb ramps; ramps; stairs; elevator; platform lifts; drinking fountains and water coolers; toilet rooms and bathing facilities, including water closets, toilet rooms and stalls, urinals, lavatories and mirrors, bathtubs, shower stalls, and sinks; seating, tables or work surfaces; places of assembly; common-use spaces and facilities, including swimming pools, playgrounds, entrances, rental offices, lobbies, elevators, mailbox areas, lounges, halls and corridors and the like; and laundry rooms.

Specific comments on the Guidelines for Requirement 2 are as follows:

**Comment.** A number of comments were received on the various components listed in the Guidelines for Requirement 2, and the accessibility specifications for these components provided by both Options One and Two. A few commenters, including the Granite State Independent Living Foundation, submitted detailed comments on the design standards for the listed components of public and common use areas, and, in many cases, recommended specifications different than those provided by either Option One or Option Two.

**Response.** Following careful consideration of the comments submitted on the design specifications of Requirement 2, the Department has decided not to adopt any of the commenters' proposals for change. The Department believes that application of the appropriate ANSI provisions to each of the basic components of public and common use areas, in the manner specified on the Option One chart, and with the limitations and modifications noted, remains the best approach to meeting the requirements of §100.205(c)(1) for accessible and usable public and common use areas, both because Congress clearly intended that the ANSI Standard be used where appropriate, and because it is consistent with the Department's support for uniform standards to the greatest degree possible.

**Comment.** Other commenters requested that the ANSI provisions applicable to certain components in public and common use areas also should be applied to these components when they are part of individual dwelling units (for example, floor surface treatments, carpeting, and work surfaces).

**Response.** To require such application in individual dwelling units would exceed the requirements imposed by the Fair Housing Act. The Fair Housing Act does not require individual dwelling units to be fully accessible and usable by individuals with handicaps. For individual dwelling units, the Act limits its requirements to specific features of accessible design.

**Comment.** A number of commenters indicated confusion concerning when the ANSI Standard was applicable to stairs.

**Response.** Stairs are subject to the ANSI Standard only when they are located along an accessible route not served by an elevator. (Accessibility between the levels served by the stairs or steps would, under such circumstances, be provided by some other means such as a ramp or lift located with the stairs or steps.) For example, a ground floor entry might have three steps up to an elevator lobby, with a ramp located besides the steps. The steps in this case should meet the ANSI

specification since they will be used by people with particular disabilities for whom steps are more usable than ramps.

In nonelevator buildings, stairs serving levels above or below the ground floor are not required to meet the ANSI Standard, unless they are a part of an accessible route providing access to public or common use areas located on these levels. For example, mailboxes serving a covered multifamily dwelling in a nonelevator building might be located down three steps from the ground floor level, with a ramp located beside the steps. The steps in this case would be required to meet the ANSI specifications.

**Comment.** Other commenters indicated confusion concerning when handrails are required. A few commenters stated that the installation of handrails limits access to lawn areas.

**Response.** Handrails are required only on ramps that are on routes required to be accessible. Handrails are not required on any on-grade walks with slopes no greater than 5%. Only on those walks that exceed 5% slope, and that are parts of the required accessible route, would handrails be required. Accordingly, walks from one building containing dwelling units to another, would not be affected even if slopes exceeded 5%, because the Guidelines do not require such walks as part of the accessible route. The Department believes that the benefits provided to persons with mobility-impairments by the installation of handrails on required accessible routes outweigh any limitations on access to lawn areas.

**Comment.** A number of proposals for revisions were submitted on the final Guidelines for parking and passenger loading zones.

**Response.** The Department has not adopted any of these proposals. The Department has retained the applicable provisions of the ANSI Standard for parking space. As noted previously in the preamble, the ANSI Standard is a familiar and widely accepted standard. The Department is reluctant to introduce a new or unfamiliar standard, or to specify parking specifications that exceed the minimal accessibility standards of the Act. However, if a local parking code requires greater accessibility features (e.g. wider aisles) with respect to parking and passenger loading zones, the appropriate provisions of the local code would prevail.

**Comment.** A number of commenters requested that the final Guidelines for parking specify minimum vertical clearance for garage parking. Other commenters suggested that the Department adopt ANSI's vertical height requirement at passenger loading zones as the minimal vertical clearance for garage parking.

**Response.** No national accessibility standards, including UFAS, require particular vertical clearances in parking garages. The Department did not consider it appropriate to exceed commonly accepted standards by including a minimum vertical clearance in the Fair Housing Accessibility Guidelines, in view of the minimal accessibility requirements of the Fair Housing Act.

**Comment.** Two commenters stated that parking spaces for condominiums is problematic because the parking spaces are typically deeded in ownership to the unit owner at the time of purchase, and it becomes extremely difficult to arrange for the subsequent provision of accessible parking. One of the commenters recommended that the Guidelines specify that a condominium development have two percent accessible visitor parking, and that these visitor accessible spaces be reassigned to residents with disabilities as needed.

**Response.** Condominiums subject to the requirements of the Act must provide accessible spaces for two percent of covered units. One approach to the particular situation presented by the commenters would be for condominium documents to include a provision that accessible spaces may be reassigned to residents with disabilities, in exchange for nonaccessible spaces that were initially assigned to units that were later purchased by persons with disabilities.

**Comment.** Several commenters stated that Option One's requirement of "sufficient accessible facilities" of each type of recreational facility is too vague. The commenters preferred Option Two's guidelines on recreational facilities, which provides that a minimum of 25% (or at least one of each type) of recreational facilities must be accessible.

**Response.** The Department decided to retain its more flexible approach to recreational facilities. The final Guidelines specify that where multiple recreational facilities are provided, accessibility is met under B100.205(c)(1) if sufficient accessible facilities of each type are provided.

**Comment.** Several commenters suggested that all recreational facilities should be made accessible. **Response.** To specify that all recreational facilities should be accessible would exceed

the requirements of the Act. Congress stated that the Act did not require every feature and aspect of covered multifamily housing to be made accessible to individuals with handicaps. (See House Report at 26.)

**Comment.** Several commenters submitted detailed specifications on how various recreational facilities could be made accessible. These comments were submitted in response to the Department's request, in the proposed guidelines, for more specific guidance on making recreational facilities accessible to persons with handicaps (55 FR 24376). The Department specifically requested information about ways to provide access into pools.

**Response.** The Department appreciates all suggestions on recommended specifications for recreational facilities, and, in particular, for swimming pools. For the present, the Department has decided not to change the specifications for recreational facilities, including swimming pools, as provided by the Option One guidelines, since there are no generally accepted standards covering such facilities. Thus, access to the pool area of a swimming facility is expected, but not specialized features for access into the pool (e.g., hoists, or ramps into the water).

**Comment.** Several commenters criticized the chart in the Option One guidelines, stating that it was confusing and difficult to follow.

**Response.** The chart is adapted from ANSI's Table 2 pertaining to basic components for accessible sites, facilities and buildings. The ANSI chart is familiar to persons in the building industry. Accordingly, the Option One chart (and now part of the final Guidelines), which is a more limited version of ANSI's Table 2, is not a novel approach.

### **Guidelines for Requirement 3.**

The Guidelines for Requirement 3 present design standards for providing doors that will be sufficiently wide to allow passage into and within all premises by handicapped persons in wheelchairs (usable doors) as required by §100.205(c)(2).

The Department has adopted the Option One guidelines for Requirement 3 with minor editorial changes. No changes were made to the design specifications for "usable doors".

The Guidelines provide separate guidance for (1) doors that are part of an accessible route in the public and common use areas of multifamily dwellings, including entry doors to individual dwelling units; and (2) doors within individual dwelling units.

1. For public and common use areas and entry doors to dwelling units, doors that comply with ANSI 4.13 would meet the requirements of §100.205(c)(2).
2. For doors within individual dwelling units, the Department has retained, in the final Guidelines, the design specification that a door with a clear opening of at least 32 inches nominal width when the door is open 90 degrees, as measured between the face of the door and the stop, would meet the requirements of §100.205(c)(2).

Specific comments on the design specifications presented in the Guidelines for Requirement 3 are as follows:

### **Minimum Clear Opening**

**Comment.** The issue of minimum clear opening for doors was one of the most widely commented-upon design features of the guidelines. The majority of commenters representing the disability community supported the Option One specification of a minimum clear opening of 32 inches. A few commenters advocated a wider clear opening. U.S. Representatives Edwards, Frank, and Fish expressed their support for the Option One specification on minimum clearance which is consistent with the ANSI Standard.

Commenters from the building industry were almost unanimous in their opposition to a minimum clear opening of 32 inches. Several builders noted that a 32-inch clear opening requires use of 36-inch doors. These commenters stated that a standard 2'10" door (34") provides only a 31 3/4 inch clear opening. The commenters therefore recommended amending the Guidelines to permit a "nominal" 32 inch clear space, allowing the use of a 2'10" door, which provides a 31 3/4 inch clear opening. Other commenters stated that, generally, door width should provide a 32-inch clear opening, but that this width can be reduced if sufficient maneuvering space is provided at the door. These commenters supported Option Two's approach, which provided for clear width to be

determined by the clear floor space available for maneuvering on both sides of the door, with the minimum width set at 29 1/4 inches. (See Option 2 chart and accompanying text at 55 FR 24382.)

**Response.** The Department considered the recommendations for both wider clear openings, and more narrow clear openings, and decided to maintain the design specification proposed in the Option One guidelines (a clear opening of at least 32 inches nominal width). The clear opening of at least 32 inches nominal width has been the accepted standard for accessibility since the issuance of the original ANSI Standard in 1961. While the Department recognizes that it may be possible to maneuver most wheelchairs through a doorway with a slightly more narrow opening, such doors do not permit ready access on the constant-use basis that is the reality of daily living within a home environment. The Department also recognizes that wider doorways may ensure easier passage for wheelchair users. However, by assuring that the minimum 36-inch hallway and 32-inch clear openings are provided, the Department believes that its recommended opening for doors should accommodate most people with disabilities. In the preamble to the proposed guidelines, the Department stated that the clear width provided by a standard 34-inch door would be acceptable under the Guidelines.

### **Maneuvering Space at Doors**

**Comment.** Several commenters requested that the final Guidelines incorporate minimum maneuvering clearances at doors, as provided by the ANSI Standard. These commenters stated that maneuvering space on the latch side of the door is as important a feature as minimum door width. Other commenters stated that the maneuvering space was necessary to ensure safe egress in cases of emergency.

**Response.** The Department has carefully considered these comments, and has declined to adopt this approach. The Department believes that, by adhering to the standard 32-inch clear opening, it is possible to forego other accessibility requirements related to doors (e.g. door closing forces, maneuvering clearances, and hardware) without compromising the Congressional directive requiring doors to be "sufficiently wide to allow passage by handicapped persons in wheelchairs." However, as the Department noted in the preamble to the proposed guidelines, approaches to, and maneuvering spaces at, the exterior side of the entrance door to an individual dwelling unit would be considered part of the public spaces, and therefore would be subject to the appropriate ANSI provisions. (See 55 FR 24380.)

### **Doors in a Series**

**Comment.** A few commenters expressed concern that the Guidelines did not provide design specification for an entrance that consists of a series of more than one door. The commenters were concerned that, without adequate guidance, a disabled resident or tenant could be trapped between doors.

**Response.** Doors in a series are not typically part of an individual dwelling unit. Doors in a series generally are used in the entries to buildings, and are therefore part of public spaces. Section 4.13 of the ANSI Standard, which is applicable to doors in public and common use areas, provides design specifications for doors in a series. However, where doors in a series are provided as part of a dwelling unit, the Department notes that the requirements of an accessible route into and through the dwelling unit would apply.

### **Door Hardware**

**Comment.** A few commenters requested that lever hardware be required on doors throughout dwelling units, not only at the entry door to the dwelling unit.

**Response.** For doors within individual dwelling units, the Fair Housing Act only requires that the doors be sufficiently wide to allow passage by handicapped persons in wheelchairs. Lever hardware is required for entry doors to the building and to individual dwelling units because these doors are part of the public and common use areas, and are, therefore, subject to the ANSI provisions for public and common use areas, which specify lever hardware. Installing lever hardware on doors is the type of adaptation that individual residents can make easily. The ANSI Standard also recognizes this point. Under the ANSI Standard, only the entry door into an accessible dwelling unit is required to comply with the requirements for door hardware. (See ANSI section 4.13.9.)

### **Multiple Usable entrances**

**Comment.** Several commenters noted that the Guidelines do not provide more than one accessible entrance/exit, and that without a second means of egress, wheelchair users may find themselves in danger in an emergency situation.

**Response.** As stated previously, the Department is limited to providing Guidelines that are consistent with the accessibility requirements of the Act. The Act requires "an accessible entrance", rather than requiring all entrances to be accessible. However, the requirements for usable doors and an accessible route to exterior spaces such as balconies and decks does respond to this concern.

#### **Guidelines for Requirement 4**

The Guidelines for Requirement 4 present design specifications for providing an accessible route into and through the covered dwelling unit, as required by §100.205(c)(3)(i).

The Department has adopted the Option One guidelines for Requirement 4 with the following changes:

First, the Department has eliminated the specification for maneuvering space if a person in a wheelchair must make a T-turn.

Second, the Department has eliminated the specification for a minimum clear headroom of 80 inches.

Third, and most significantly, the Department has revised the design specifications for "changes in level" within a dwelling unit to include separate design specifications for:

1. single-story dwelling units, including single-story dwelling units with design features such as a loft or a sunken living room; and
2. multistory dwelling units in buildings with elevators.

Fourth, the Department has revised the specifications for changes in level at exterior patios, decks or balconies in certain circumstances, to minimize water damage. For the same reason, the final Guidelines also include separate specifications for changes in level at the primary entry doors of dwelling units in certain circumstances.

Specific comments on the Guidelines for Requirement 4, and the rationale for the changes made, are discussed below.

#### **Minimum Clear Corridor Width**

A few commenters from the disability community advocated a minimum clear corridor width of 48 inches. However, the majority of commenters on this issue had no objection to the minimum clear corridor width of 36 inches. The 36-inch minimum clear corridor width, which has been retained, is consistent with the ANSI Standard.

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#### **T-turn Maneuvering Space**

**Comment.** Several commenters stated that this design specification was unclear in two respects. First, they stated that it was unclear when it is necessary for a designer to provide space for a T-turn. The commenters stated that it was difficult to envision circumstances where a wheelchair could be pulled into a position traveling forward and then not be capable of backing out. Second, the commenters stated that the two descriptions of the T-turn provided by the Department were contradictory. The commenters stated that the preamble to the proposed guidelines provided one description of the T-turn (55 FR 24380), while Figure 2 of the guideline 4 (55 FR 24392), presented a different description of the T-turn.

**Response.** The Department has decided to delete the reference to the T-turn dimensions in the Guidelines for Requirement 4. The Guidelines adequately address the accessible route into and through the dwelling unit by the minimum corridor width and door width specifications, given typical apartment layouts. Should a designer find that a unique layout in a particular unit made a T-turn necessary for a wheelchair user, the specifications provided in the ANSI Standard sections referenced for public and common use areas could be used.

#### **Minimum Clear Headroom**

**Comment.** Several commenters from the building industry objected to the specification for a minimum clear headroom of 80 inches. The commenters stated that standard doors provide a height range from 75 to 79 inches, and that an 80-inch specification would considerably increase the cost of each door installed.

**Response.** The specification for minimum clear headroom of 80 inches was included in the proposed guidelines because it is a specification included in the major accessibility codes. This design specification was not expected to conflict with typical door heights. However, since the principal purpose of the requirement is to restrict obstructions such as overhanging signs in public walkways, the Department has determined that this specification is not needed for accessible routes within individual dwellings units, and has therefore deleted this standard from the final Guidelines for such routes. (The requirement, however, still applies in public and common use spaces.)

### **Changes in Level within a Dwelling Unit**

In the preamble to the proposed guidelines, the Department advised that the Act appears to require that dwelling units with design features such as lofts or with more than one floor in elevator buildings be equipped with internal elevators, chair lifts, or other means of access to the upper levels (55 FR 24377). The Department stated that, although it is not clear that Congress intended this result, the Department's preliminary assessment was that the statute appears to offer little flexibility in this regard. The Department noted that several commenters, including the NAHB and the NCCSCI, suggested that units with more than one floor in elevator buildings should be required to comply with the Act's accessibility requirements only on the floor that is served by the building elevator. (This was the position taken by Option Two.) The Department solicited comments on this issue, and received a number of responses opposing the Department's interpretation.

**Comment.** The commenters opposing the Department's interpretation stated that the Department's interpretation would place an undue burden on developers and needlessly increase housing costs for everyone; defeat the purpose of having multilevel units, which is to provide additional space at a lower cost; eliminate multilevel designs which may be desirable to disabled residents (e.g., to provide living accommodations for live-in attendants); and "create a backlash" against the Accessibility Guidelines.

**Response.** Following careful consideration of these comments, and a reexamination of the Act and its legislative history, the Department has determined that its previous interpretation of the Act's application to units with changes in level (whether lofts, or additional stories in elevator buildings), which would have required installation of chair lifts or internal elevators in such units, runs contrary to the purpose and intent of the Fair Housing Act, which is to place "modest accessibility requirements on covered multifamily dwellings." (See House Report at 25.) In House Report No. 711, the Congress repeatedly emphasized that the accessibility requirements of the Fair Housing Act were minimal basic requirements of accessibility.

"These modest requirements will be incorporated into the design of new buildings, resulting in features which do not look unusual and will not add significant additional costs. The bill does not require the installation of elevators or 'hospital-like' features, or the renovation of existing units." (House Report at 18)

\* \* \*

"Accessibility requirements can vary across a wide range. A standard of total accessibility would require that every entrance, doorway, bathroom, parking space, and portion of buildings and grounds be accessible. Many designers and builders have interpreted the term 'accessible' to mean this type of standard. The Committee does not intend to impose such a standard. Rather, the Committee intends to use a standard of 'adaptable' design, a standard developed in recent years by the building industry and by advocates for handicapped individuals to provide usable housing for handicapped persons without necessarily being significantly different from conventional housing." (House Report at 26)

The Department has determined that a requirement that units with lofts or multiple stories in elevator buildings be equipped with internal elevators, chair lifts, or other means of access to lofts or upper stories would make accessible housing under the Fair Housing Act significantly different

from conventional housing, and would be inconsistent with the Act's "modest accessibility requirements". (See House Report at 25.)

The Department also has determined that a requirement that dwelling units with design features, such as sunken living rooms, must provide some means of access, such as ramps or lifts, as submitted in the proposed guidelines (55 FR 24380) is inconsistent with the Act's modest accessibility requirements. Sunken living rooms are not an uncommon design feature. To require a ramp or other means of access to such an area, at the time of construction, would reduce, perhaps significantly, the space provided by the area. The reduced space might interfere with the use and enjoyment of this area by a resident who is not disabled, or whose disability does not require access by means of a ramp or lift. The Department believes that had it maintained in the final Guidelines the access specifications for design features, such as sunken living rooms, as set forth in the proposed guidelines, the final Guidelines would have interfered unduly with a developer's choice of design, or would have eliminated a popular design choice. Accordingly, the final Guidelines provide that access is not required to design features, such as a sunken living room, provided that the area does not have the effect of interrupting the accessible route through the remainder of the unit.

The Department believes that the installation of a ramp or deck in order to make a sunken room accessible is the type of later adaptation that easily can be made by a tenant. The Department, however, does require that design features, such as a split-level entry, which is critical to providing an accessible route into and through the unit, must provide a ramp or other means of access to the accessible route.

In order to comply with the Act's requirement of an accessible route into and through covered dwelling units, the Department has revised the Guidelines for Requirement 4 to provide separate technical guidance for two types of dwelling units:

1. single-story dwelling units, including single-story dwelling units with design features such as a loft or a sunken living room; and
2. multistory dwelling units in elevator buildings. (Definitions for "single-story dwelling unit," "loft," "multistory dwelling unit" and "story" have been included in Section 2 of the final Guidelines.)

"Single-story dwelling unit" is defined as a dwelling unit with all finished living space located on one floor.

"Loft" is defined as an intermediate level between the floor and ceiling of any story, located within a room or rooms of a dwelling.

"Multistory dwelling unit" is defined as a dwelling unit with finished living space located on one floor and the floor or floors immediately above or below it.

"Story" is defined as that portion of a dwelling unit between the upper surface of any floor and the upper surface of the floor next above, or the roof of the unit. Within the context of dwelling units, the terms "story" and "floor" are synonymous.

For single-story dwelling units and multistory dwelling units, the Guidelines for Requirement 4 are as follows:

1. For single-story dwelling units, the design specifications for changes in level, are the same as proposed in the Option One guidelines. Changes in level within the dwelling unit with heights between 1/4 inch and 1/2 inch are beveled with a slope no greater than 1:2. Changes in level greater than 1/2 inch (excluding changes in level resulting from design features such as a loft or a sunken living room) must be ramped or must provide other means of access. For example, split-level entries must be ramped or use other means of providing and accessible route into and through the dwelling unit. For single-story dwelling units with design features such as a loft or a raised or sunken functional area, such as a sunken living room, the Guidelines specify that:
  1. access to lofts is not required, provided that all spaces other than the loft are on an accessible route; and
  2. design features such as a sunken living room are also exempt from the access specifications, provided that the sunken area does not interrupt the accessible route through the remainder of the unit.

2. In multistory dwelling units in buildings with elevators, access to the additional story, or stories, is not required, provided that the story of the unit that is served by the building elevator
  1. is the primary entry to the unit;
  2. complies with Requirements 2 through 7 with respect to the rooms located on the entry/accessible level; and (3) contains a bathroom or powder room which complies with Requirement 7. (As previously noted, multistory units in buildings without elevators are not considered ground floor units, and therefore are exempt.)

The Department believes that the foregoing revisions to the Guidelines for Requirement 4 will provide individuals with handicaps the degree of accessibility intended by the Fair Housing Act, without increasing significantly the cost of multifamily housing.

**Comment.** Two commenters suggested that the same adaptability requirement that is applied to bathrooms should be applied to dwelling units with more than one story, or with lofts, i.e. that stairs, and the wall along the stairs, contain the appropriate reinforcement to provide for later installation of a wheelchair lift by a disabled resident, if so desired.

**Response.** The only blocking or wall reinforcement required by the Fair Housing Act is the reinforcement in bathroom walls for later installation of grab bars. As noted earlier in this preamble, the Fair Housing Act does not actually require that features in covered units be "adaptable", except for bathrooms. The adaptable feature is the reinforcement in bathroom walls which allows later installation of grab bars. Accordingly, the Department believes that a specification for reinforcement of the walls along stairs would exceed the Act's requirements, because the necessary reinforcement could vary by type of lift chosen, and more appropriately would be specified and installed as part of the installation of the lift.

### **Thresholds at Exterior Doors/Thresholds to Balconies or Decks**

**Comment.** A number of commenters from the building industry objected to the provision of the Option One guidelines that specified that an exterior deck, balcony, patio, or similar surface may be no more than 3/4 inch below the adjacent threshold. Several commenters stated that, in many situations, this height is unworkable for balconies and decks because of waterproofing and safety concerns. This was a particular concern among commenters from the South Florida building industry, who stated that the 3/4" height is ineffective for upper floors of high rise buildings in a coastal environment and invites water control problems. Others noted that the suggestion of a wooden decking insert, or the specification of a 3/4 inch maximum change in level, in general, might conflict with fire codes.

**Response.** In response to these concerns, and mindful that Congress did not intend the accessibility requirements of the Act to override the need to protect the physical integrity of multifamily housing, the Department has included two additional provisions for changes in level at thresholds leading to certain exterior surfaces, as a protective measure against possible water damage. The final Guidelines provide that exterior deck, patio or balcony surfaces should be no more than 1/2 inch below the floor level of the interior of the dwelling unit, unless they are constructed of impervious material such as concrete, brick or flagstone. In such case, the surface should be no more than 4 inches below the floor level of the interior dwelling unit, unless the local code requires a lower drop. Additionally, the final Guidelines provide that at the primary entry doors to dwelling units with direct exterior access, outside landing surfaces constructed of impervious materials such as concrete, brick, or flagstone should be no more than 1/2 inch below the floor level of the interior of the dwelling unit. The Guidelines further provide that the finished surface of this area, located immediately outside the entry door, may be sloped for drainage, but the sloping may be no more than 1/8 inch per foot.

In response to commenters' concern that the Guidelines for an accessible route to balconies and decks may conflict with certain building codes that require higher thresholds, or balconies or decks lower than the 3/4 inch specified by the Guidelines, the Department notes that the Guidelines are "recommended" design specifications, not building code "requirements". Accordingly, the Guidelines cannot preempt State or local law. However, the builder confronted with local requirements that thwart the particular means of providing accessibility suggested by the Guidelines is under a duty to take reasonable steps to provide for accessibility by other means consistent with local law constraints and considerations of cost-effectiveness, in order to provide

dwelling units that meet the specific accessibility requirements of the Fair Housing Act.

### **Guidelines for Requirement 5**

The Guidelines for Requirement 5 present design specifications for providing dwelling units that contain light switches, electrical outlets, thermostats, and other environmental controls in accessible locations, as required by §100.205(c)(2)(ii).

The Department has adopted the Option One guidelines for Requirement 5 with minor technical changes. The final Guidelines clarify that to be in an accessible location within the meaning of the Act, the maximum height for an environmental control, for which reach is over an obstruction, is 44 inches for forward approach (as was proposed in the Option One guidelines), or 46 inches for side approach, provided that the obstruction is no more than 24 inches in depth. The inclusion of this additional specification for side approach is consistent with the comparable provisions in the ANSI Standard.

Specific comments on the Guidelines for Requirement 5 are as follows:

**Comments.** Three commenters stated that lowered thermostats could pose a safety hazard for children. However, the majority of comments requested clarification as to what is meant by "other environmental controls". Several commenters from the disability community requested that circuit breakers be categorized as environmental controls. Other commenters asked whether light and fan switches on range hoods fall within the category of light switches and environmental controls.

**Response.** With regard to concerns about lowered thermostats, the Act specifically identifies "thermostats" as one of the controls that must be in accessible locations, and the mounting heights specified in the Guidelines are necessary for an accessible location. The only other environmental controls covered by the Guidelines for Requirement 5 would be heating, air conditioning or ventilation controls (e.g., ceiling fan controls). The Department interprets the Act's requirement of placing environmental controls in accessible locations as referring to those environmental controls that are used by residents or tenants on a daily or regular basis. Circuit breakers do not fall into this category, and therefore are not subject to accessible location specifications. Light and fan switches on range hoods are appliance controls and therefore are not covered by the Act.

**Comment.** Other commenters asked whether light switches and electrical outlets in the inside corners of kitchen counter areas, and floor outlets are permissible.

**Response.** Light switches and electrical outlets in the inside corners of kitchen counters, and floor outlets, are permissible, if they are not the only light switches and electrical outlets provided for the area.

**Comment.** Another commenter pointed out that some electrical outlets that are installed specifically to serve individual appliances, such as refrigerators or microwave ovens, cannot realistically be mounted in an accessible location.

**Response.** Electrical outlets installed to serve individual appliances, such as refrigerators or built-in microwave ovens, may be mounted in non-accessible locations. These are not the type of electrical outlets which a disabled resident or tenant would need access to on a regular or frequent basis.

**Comment.** One commenter stated that Figure 3 in the proposed guidelines (Figure 2 in the final Guidelines) specifies a reach requirement more stringent than the ANSI Standard.

**Response.** The ANSI Standard presents reach ranges for both forward and side approaches for two situations:

1. unobstructed; and
2. over an obstruction.

The proposed guidelines specified only the heights for forward reach, because those heights also are usable in side approach. The diagram in Figure 2 (formerly Figure 3) showing forward reach is identical to that of Figure 5 in the ANSI Standard. The ANSI Standard also includes a figure (Figure 6) for side reach that permits higher placement. The reach range for forward approach was the only one referenced in the proposed guidelines for use in the dwelling unit, because it was considered simpler and easier to use a single specification that would work in all situations. The reach range for forward approach has been retained in the final Guidelines for situations where there is no built-in obstruction in order to assure usability when the unit was furnished. However,

the final Guidelines have added the specification for side reach over a built-in obstruction that is consistent with the ANSI requirement, and that permits placement two inches higher than forward reach.

### **Guidelines for Requirement 6**

The Guidelines for Requirement 6 present design standards for installation of reinforcement in bathroom walls to allow for later installation of grab bars around the toilet, tub, shower stall and shower seat where such facilities are provided, as required by §100.205(c)(3)(iii).

The Department adopted the Option One guidelines for Requirement 6 with two modifications. First, the final Guidelines provide that a powder room is subject to the requirement for reinforced walls for grab bars when the powder room is the only toilet facility located on the accessible level of a covered multistory dwelling unit. Second, the final Guidelines further clarify that reinforced bathroom walls will meet the accessibility requirement of §100.205(c)(3)(iii), if reinforced areas are provided at least at those points where grab bars will be mounted.

Specific comments on this guideline were as follows:

**Comment.** A number of commenters requested that the Department specify the dimensions for grab bar reinforcement, and suggested that grab bar reinforcing material run horizontally throughout the entire length of the space given for grab bars, as provided by the ANSI standard. These commenters stated that if this type of reinforcement was required, residents could locate more easily the studs for future grab bar installation, and have flexibility in the placement of grab bars for optimal use, and safety in bathrooms. One commenter noted that many grab bars are of such a length that they require an intermediate fastener, but the proposed standard does not permit intermediate fastening. Two commenters recommended that the final Guidelines follow ANSI and UFAS standards for requirements for mounting grab bars. One commenter recommended the installation of panels of plywood behind bathroom walls because this would provide greater flexibility in the installation of grab bars.

**Response.** The illustrations of grab bar wall reinforcement accompanying the Guidelines for Requirement 6 are intended only to show where reinforcement for grab bars is needed. The illustrations are not intended to prescribe how the reinforcing should be provided, or that the bathtub or shower is required to be surrounded by three walls of reinforcement. The additional language added to the Guidelines is to clarify that the Act's accessibility requirement for grab bar reinforcement is met if reinforced areas are provided, at a minimum, at those points where grab bars will be mounted. The Department recognizes that reinforcing for grab bars may be accomplished in a variety of ways, such as by providing plywood panels in the areas illustrated, or by installing vertical reinforcement (in the form of double studs, for example) at the points noted on the figures accompanying the Guidelines.

**Comment.** Several commenters stated that the final Guidelines should incorporate Option Two's specification of reinforcement for shower seats when shower stalls are provided.

**Response.** The Fair Housing Act only requires reinforcement for later installation of grab bars. The Act does not cover reinforcement for shower seats; rather, it mentions shower seats (if provided) as an area where grab bar reinforcement would be needed. However, as will be discussed more fully in the following section concerning the Guidelines for Requirement 7 (Usable Bathrooms), reinforcement for shower seats would provide adaptability to increase usability of shower stalls, and is a design option available to builders and developers in designing "usable" bathrooms.

**Comment.** One commenter recommended that the final Guidelines incorporate Option Two's specification that prefabricated tub/shower enclosures would have to be fabricated with reinforcement for grab bar enclosures.

**Response.** The Department did not incorporate this specification in the final Guidelines. The Department believes that it is inappropriate to specify product design. A builder should have the flexibility to choose how reinforcement for grab bars will be provided.

**Comment.** Two commenters stated that half-baths should also contain grab-bar reinforcements.

**Response.** Half-baths are not considered "bathrooms", as this term is commonly used, and, therefore are not subject to the bathroom wall reinforcement requirement, unless a half-bath facility is the only restroom facility on the accessible level of a covered multistory dwelling unit.

**Comment.** One commenter requested that the final Guidelines incorporate language clearly to specify that the builder's responsibility is limited solely to wall reinforcement, and later installation is the responsibility of the resident or tenant.

**Response.** It is unnecessary to incorporate the suggested language in the final Guidelines. The Guidelines for Requirement 6 are solely directed to reinforcement. No guidelines are provided for the actual installation of grab bars. Accordingly, there should be no confusion on this issue.

### **Guidelines for Requirement 7**

The Guidelines for Requirement 7 present design specifications for providing usable kitchens and bathrooms such that an individual in a wheelchair can maneuver about the space, as required by §100.205(c)(3)(iv).

For usable kitchens, the Department adopted the Option One guidelines with one change. The Department has eliminated the specification that controls for ranges and cooktops be placed so that reaching across burners is not required.

For usable bathrooms, the final Guidelines provide two alternative sets of design specifications. The Fair Housing Act requires that an accessible or "usable" bathroom is one which provides sufficient space for an individual in a wheelchair to maneuver about. The two sets of specifications provide different approaches as to how compliance with this maneuvering space requirement may be accomplished. The first set of specifications also includes size dimensions for shower stalls, but only when a shower stall is the only bathing facility provided in a dwelling unit. Additionally, either set of specifications is applicable to powder rooms, when a powder room is the only restroom facility on the accessible level of a covered multistory dwelling unit.

With the exception of the inclusion of shower stall dimensions, the first set of "usable bathroom" specifications remain the same as the Option One guidelines for usable bathrooms. The second set of "usable bathroom" specifications provide somewhat greater accessibility than the first set, but would be applicable only to one bathroom in a dwelling unit that has two or more bathrooms. The second set of specifications include clear space specifications for bathrooms with in-swinging doors and for bathrooms with outswinging doors. This second set of specifications also provides that toilets must be located in a manner that permits a grab bar to be installed on one side of the fixture, and provides specifications on the installation of vanities and lavatories.

To meet the Act's requirements for usable bathrooms, the final Guidelines provide that

1. in a dwelling unit with a single bathroom, either set of specifications may be used; and
2. in a dwelling unit with more than one bathroom, all bathrooms in the unit must comply with the first set of specifications, or, alternatively, at least one bathroom must comply with the second set of specifications, and all other bathrooms must be on an accessible route, and must have a usable entry door in accordance with the guidelines for Requirements 3 and 4.

However, in multistory dwelling units, only those bathrooms on the accessible level are subject to the Act's requirements for usable bathrooms. Where a powder room is the only restroom facility provided on the accessible level of a multistory dwelling unit, the powder must meet either the first set of specifications or the second set of specifications. All bathrooms and powder rooms that are subject to Requirement 7, must have reinforcements for grab bars as provided in the Guideline for Requirement 6.

In developing the final Guidelines for the usable bathroom requirement, the Department recognized that the Option One guidelines for usable bathrooms presented the minimum specifications necessary to meet the Act's requirements. Accordingly, the Department believes that it is appropriate to provide a second set of specifications which provide somewhat different accessibility accommodations than the Option One guidelines. The Department believes that by offering two sets of specifications for usable bathrooms, the Department is providing builders and developers with more development choices in designing dwelling units that contain more than one bathroom; and it is providing individuals and families with more housing options. Builders and developers may design all bathrooms to meet the minimal specifications of the first set of specifications, or they may design only one bathroom to meet the somewhat greater accessibility specifications of the second set. Regardless of which set of usable bathroom specifications is selected by a builder or developer, all doors to bathrooms and powder rooms must meet the minimum door width specifications of Requirement 3.

The following presents a discussion of the specific comments received on usable kitchens and usable bathrooms.

## Controls for Ranges and Cooktops

**Comment.** A few commenters stated that the Department lacks authority under the Fair Housing Act to impose design standards on appliances. The commenter stated that standards that specify certain design features for appliances in individual dwelling units exceed the scope of the Department's statutory authority. Other commenters objected to front range controls as a safety hazard for children. Commenters from the disability community were strongly supportive of this design specification.

**Response.** With respect to usable kitchens, the Act solely requires that kitchens have sufficient space such that an individual in a wheelchair can maneuver about. Accordingly, a specification that controls for ranges and cooktops be placed so that they can be used without reaching across burners is not consistent with the Act's requirement for usable kitchens.

In the proposed guidelines, the Option One guidelines for usable kitchens specified that controls should be located so as to be usable without reaching across burners. As the preamble to the proposed guidelines noted, many standard styles of ranges and cooktops meeting this specification (other than those with front controls) are available on the market. However, in reviewing the entire rulemaking history on the design and constructions requirements, the Department has concluded that the requirements of the Fair Housing Act did not cover any appliance controls. Accordingly, this specification was not included in the final Guidelines.

## Maneuvering Space, Adjustable Cabinetry, Fixtures and Plumbing

**Comment.** A number of commenters from the disability community stated that it was important that the Guidelines for both kitchens and bathrooms specify a five-foot turning radius; adjustable cabinetry, fixtures and plumbing; and fixture controls that comply with the appropriate provisions of the ANSI Standard.

**Response.** The legislative history of the Fair Housing Act clearly indicates that Congress did not envision usable kitchens and bathrooms to be designed in accordance with the specifications suggested by the commenters. In House Report No. 711, the Congress stated as follows:

"The fourth feature is that kitchens and bathrooms be usable such that an individual in a wheelchair can maneuver about the space. This provision is carefully worded to provide a living environment usable by all. Design of standard sized kitchens and bathrooms can be done in such a way as to assure usability by persons with disabilities without necessarily increasing the size of space. The Committee intends that such space be usable by handicapped persons, but this does not necessarily require that a turning radius be provided in every situation. This provision also does not require that fixtures, cabinetry or plumbing be of such design as to be adjustable." (House Report at 27)

Accordingly, the Department is unable to adopt any of the proposals suggested by the commenters. The Act's requirement for usable kitchens and bathrooms only specifies maneuverability for wheelchair users, and this maneuverability does not require the specification advocated by the commenters. (See previous discussion of this issue in the preamble to the proposed Fair Housing regulations at 53 FR 45005.)

**Comment.** Two commenters requested clarification concerning what is meant by "sufficient maneuvering space". One of the commenters recommended that this term be defined to include "such space as shall permit a person in a wheelchair to use the features and appliances of a room without having to leave the room to obtain an approach to an appliance, work surface, or cabinet".

**Response.** The Guidelines for Requirement 7 (usable kitchens and bathrooms) describe what constitutes sufficient maneuvering space in the kitchen and the bathroom. Additionally, the preamble to the proposed guidelines explicitly states that sufficient maneuvering space for kitchens does not require a wheelchair turning radius (55 FR 24381). As noted in response to the preceding comment, a wheelchair turning radius also is not required for either usable kitchens or usable bathrooms. The Guidelines for usable bathroom state that sufficient maneuvering space is provided within the bathroom for a person using a wheelchair or other assistive device to enter and close the door, use the fixtures, reopen the door and exit. This specification was not changed in the final Guidelines.

## Kitchen Work Surfaces

**Comment.** One commenter stated that "Element 12" in the chart accompanying the Guidelines for Requirement 2 (public and common use areas) seems to require a portion of the kitchen counters to be accessible since they are work surfaces. This commenter stated that if this interpretation is correct then it should be made clear in the Guidelines.

**Response.** The commenter's interpretation is not correct. The chart accompanying the Guidelines for Requirement 2 is only applicable to the public and common use areas, not to individual dwelling units.

## Showers

**Comments.** Several commenters requested that the final Guidelines provide dimensions on the appropriate width and height of showers and shower doors. Another commenter asked whether showers were required to comply with dimensions specified by the ANSI Standard.

**Response.** The final Guidelines for usable bathrooms (the first set of specifications) specify size dimensions for shower stalls in only one situation -- when the shower stall is the only bathing facility provided in a covered dwelling unit. The Department believes that, where a shower stall is the only bathing facility provided, size specification for the shower stall is consistent with the Act's requirement for usable bathrooms. However, if a shower stall is not the only bathing facility provided in the dwelling unit, then the only specification for showers, appropriate under the Act, concerns reinforced walls in showers. (The titles under the illustrations (figures) related to showers in the final Guidelines for Requirement 6 have been revised to make it clear that the figures are specifying only the different areas required to be reinforced in showers of different sizes, not the required sizes of the shower stalls.)

## In-swinging Bathroom Doors

**Comment.** One commenter stated that in-swinging bathroom doors generally are problematic, unless the bathroom is unusually large. The commenter noted that an in-swinging door makes it extremely difficult to enter and exit. The commenter recommended that in-swinging doors be prohibited unless there is sufficient internal bathroom space, exclusive of the swing of the door, which allows either a five foot turning radius or two mutually exclusive 30" x 48" wheelchair spaces. Another commenter stated that in-swinging bathroom doors create a serious obstacle for the wheelchair user.

**Response.** The Department declines to prohibit in-swinging bathroom doors. Adjusting an in-swinging door to swing out is the type of later adaptation that can be made fairly easily by a resident or tenant. Once a minimum door width is provided, a tenant who finds a bathroom not readily usable can have the door rehung as an outswinging door. Note, however, that the second set of guidelines for usable bathrooms specifies clear space for bathrooms with in-swinging doors.

## Bathroom Design Illustrations

**Comment.** A number of commenters from the disability community stated that two of the six bathroom drawings in the preamble to the proposed guidelines (numbers 4 and 6 at 55 FR 24374-24375) did not allow for a parallel approach to the tub. These commenters requested that these drawings be removed from the final Guidelines. Other commenters stated that the Department's bathroom design illustrations at 55 FR 24374-24375 are not consistent with the Figure 8 bathroom design illustrations at 55 FR 24401.

**Response.** While a parallel approach to the tub would provide somewhat greater accessibility, the Department believes that to indicate, through the Guidelines, that a parallel approach to the tub is necessary to meet the Act's requirements, exceeds the Fair Housing Act's minimal design expectations for bathrooms. Accordingly, the first set of specifications for usable bathrooms does not specify a parallel approach to the tub. However, the second set of specifications provides for a clear access aisle adjacent to the tub that would permit a parallel approach to the tub. Either method would meet the Act's requirements. With respect to the comments on the bathroom design illustrations, these illustrations have been revised to make the clear floor space requirements more readily understood. The illustrations are adapted from ANSI A117.1.

## Number of Accessible Bathrooms

**Comment.** A number of comments were received on how many bathrooms in a dwelling unit should be subject to the Act's "usable" bathroom requirement. Many commenters recommended

that all full bathrooms be made accessible. Other commenters recommended that only one full bathroom be required to be made accessible. A few commenters recommended that half-baths/powder rooms also be subject to the Act's requirement.

**Response.** In House Report No. 711, the Congress distinguished between "total accessibility" and the level of accessibility required by the Fair Housing Act. The report referred to standards requiring every aspect or portion of buildings to be totally accessible, and pointed out that this was not the level of accessibility required by the Act. The final Guidelines for bathrooms are consistent with the Act's usable bathroom requirement, and provide the level of accessibility intended by Congress. As discussed previously in this preamble, the final Guidelines for usable bathrooms provide two sets of specifications. The second set of specifications provides somewhat greater accessibility than the first set of specifications. In view of this fact, the final Guidelines provide that in a dwelling unit with a single bathroom, the bathroom may be designed in accordance with either set of specifications -- the first set or the second set. However, in a dwelling unit with more than one bathroom, all bathrooms in the unit must comply with the first set of specifications, or a minimum of one bathroom must comply with the second set of specifications, and all other bathrooms must be on an accessible route, and must have a usable entry door in accordance with the guidelines for Requirements 3 and 4. Additionally, the final Guidelines provide that a powder room must comply with the Act's usable bathroom requirements when the powder room is the only restroom facility provided on the accessible level of a multistory dwelling unit.

### 3. Discussion of Comments on Related Fair Housing Issues Compliance Deadline

Section 100.205 of the Fair Housing regulations incorporates the Act's design and construction requirements, including the requirement that multifamily dwellings for first occupancy after March 13, 1991 be designed and constructed in accordance with the Act's accessibility requirements. Section 100.205(a) provides that covered multifamily dwellings shall be deemed to be designed and constructed for first occupancy on or before March 13, 1991 (and, therefore, exempt from Act's accessibility requirements), if they are occupied by that date, or if the last building permit or renewal thereof for the covered multifamily dwellings is issued by a State, County, or local government on or before January 13, 1990.

**Comment.** The Department received a number of comments on the March 13, 1991 compliance deadline, and on methods of achieving compliance. Many commenters objected to the March 13, 1991 compliance deadline on the basis that this deadline was unreasonable. Several commenters from the building industry stated that, in many cases, design plans for buildings now under construction were submitted over two years ago, and it would be very expensive to make changes to buildings near completion. Other commenters stated that it is unreasonable to impose additional requirements on a substantially completed project that unexpectedly has been delayed for occupancy beyond the March 13, 1991 effective date.

**Response.** Section 804(f)(3)(C) of the Fair Housing Act states that the design and construction standards will be applied to covered multifamily dwelling units for first occupancy after the date that is 30 months after the date of enactment of the Fair Housing Amendments Act. The Fair Housing Act was enacted on September 13, 1988. The date that is 30 months from that date is March 13, 1991. Accordingly, the inclusion of a March 13, 1991 compliance date in §100.205 is a codification of the Act's compliance deadline. The Department has no authority to change that date. Only Congress may extend the March 13, 1991 deadline.

The Department, however, has been attentive to the concerns of the building industry, and has addressed these concerns, to the extent that it could, in prior published documents. In the preamble to the final Fair Housing rule, the Department addressed the objections of the building industry to the Department's reliance on "actual occupancy" as the sole basis for determining "first occupancy". (See 54 FR 3251; 24 CFR Ch. I, Subch. A, App. I at 585 (1990).) Commenters to the proposed Fair Housing rule, like the commenters to the proposed guidelines, argued that coverage of the design and construction requirements must be determinable at the beginning of planning and development, and that projects delayed by unplanned and uncontrollable events (labor strikes, Acts of God, etc.) should not be subject to the Act. In order to accommodate the "legitimate concerns on the part of the building industry" the Department expanded §100.205 of the final rule to provide that covered multifamily dwellings would be deemed to be for first occupancy if the last building permit or renewal thereof was issued on or before January 13, 1990. A date of fourteen months before the March 13, 1991 deadline was selected because the median construction time for multifamily housing projects of all sizes was determined to be fourteen months, based on data provided by the Marshall Valuation Service.

More recently, the Department addressed similar concerns of the building industry in the preamble to the proposed accessibility guidelines. In the June 15, 1990 publication, the Department recognized that projects designed in advance of the publication of the final Guidelines, may not become available for first occupancy until after March 13, 1991. To provide some guidance, the Department stated in the June 15,

1990 notice that compliance with the Option One guidelines would be considered as evidence of compliance with the Act, in projects designed before the issuance of the final Guidelines. The Department restated its position on this issue in a supplementary notice published in the Federal Register on August 1, 1990 (55 FR 31131). The specific circumstances under which the Department would consider compliance with the Option One guidelines as compliance with the accessibility requirements of the Act were more fully addressed in the August 1, 1990 notice.

**Comment.** A number of commenters requested extending the date of issuance of the last building permit from January 13, 1990 to some other date, such as June 15, 1990, the date of publication of the proposed guidelines; August 1, 1990, the date of publication of the supplementary notice; or today's date, the date of publication of the final Guidelines.

**Response.** The date of January 13, 1990 was not randomly selected by the Department. This date was selected because it was fourteen months before the compliance deadline of March 13, 1991. As previously noted in this preamble, fourteen months was found to represent a reasonable median construction time for multifamily housing projects of all sizes, based on data contained in the Marshall Valuation Service. Builders have been on notice since January 23, 1989 -- the publication date of the final Fair Housing rule, that undertaking construction after January 13, 1990 without adequate attention to accessibility considerations would be at the builder's risk.

**Comment.** One commenter requested that the applicable building permit be the "primary" building permit for a particular building. Other commenters inquired about the status of building permits that are issued in stages, or about small modifications to building plans during construction which necessitate a reissued building permit.

**Response.** Following publication of the proposed Fair Housing regulation, and the many comments received at that time from the building industry expressing concern that "actual occupancy" was the only standard for determining "first occupancy", the Department gave careful consideration to the steps and stages involved in the building process. On the basis of this study, the Department determined that an appropriate standard to determine "first occupancy", other than actual occupancy, would be issuance of the last building permit on or before January 13, 1990. This additional standard was added to the final Fair Housing Act regulation. The Department believes that, aside from actual occupancy, issuance of the last building permit remains the appropriate standard.

### Compliance Determinations by State and Local Jurisdictions

**Comment.** A few commenters questioned the role of States and units of local government in determining compliance with the Act's accessibility requirements. The commenters noted that

1. §100.205(g) encourages States and units of general local government to include, in their existing procedures for the review and approval of newly constructed covered multifamily dwellings, determinations as to whether the design and construction of such dwellings are consistent with the Act's accessibility requirements; but
2. §100.205(h) provides that determinations of compliance or noncompliance by a State or a unit of general local government are not conclusive in enforcement proceedings under the Fair Housing Act. These commenters stated that, unless determinations of compliance or noncompliance by a State or unit of general local government are deemed to be conclusive, local jurisdictions will be discouraged from performing compliance reviews because they will not be able to provide a building permit applicant with a sense of finality that proposed design plans are in compliance with the Act. **V - 3 Continued...**

**Response.** Sections 100.205(g) and (h) of the Fair Housing regulations implement Sections 804(f)(5)(B) and (C), and Section 804(f)(6)(b) of the Fair Housing Act. The language of §§100.205(g) and (h) is taken directly from these statutory provisions. The Congress, not the Department, made the decision that determinations of compliance or noncompliance with the Act by a State or unit of general local government shall not be conclusive in enforcement proceedings. The Department, however, agrees with the position taken in the statute. The Department believes that it would be inappropriate to accord particular "weight" to determinations made by a wide variety of State and local government agencies involving a new civil rights law, without first having the benefit of some experience reviewing the accuracy of the determinations made by State and local authorities under the Fair Housing Act.

**Comment.** Two commenters stated that local building departments, especially those in smaller urban areas and in rural areas, do not have the manpower or expert knowledge to assure a proper determination of

compliance, particularly in "close call" situations. The commenters recommended that liability for any infractions exclude local building departments unless the Department is willing to provide qualified personnel from its local field office to attend staff reviews of every building permit request.

**Response.** The Department is reluctant to assume that State and local jurisdictions, by performing compliance reviews, will subject themselves to liability under the Fair Housing Act, particularly in light of section 804(f)(5)(C) of the Act, which encourages States and localities to make reviews for compliance with the statute; and the implicit recognition, under Section 804(f)(6)(B), that these reviews may not be correct.

**Comment.** With reference to a violation of the Act's requirements, several commenters questioned how violations of the Act would be determined, and what the penalty would be for a violation. The commenters asked whether a builder would be cited, and fined, for each violation per building, or for each violation per unit.

**Response.** If it is determined that a violation of the Act has occurred, a Federal District Court or an administrative law judge (ALJ) has the authority to award actual damages, including damages for humiliation and emotional distress; punitive damages (in court) or civil penalties (in ALJ proceedings); injunctive relief; attorneys fees (except to the United States); and any other equitable relief that may be considered appropriate. Whether a violation will be found for each violation per building, for each violation per unit, or on any other basis, is properly left to the courts and the ALJs.

### **Enforcement Mechanisms.**

In the proposed guidelines, the Department solicited public comment on effective enforcement mechanisms (55 FR 24383-24384). Specifically, the Department requested comment on the effectiveness of: annual surveys to assess the number of projects developed with accessible buildings; recordkeeping requirements; and a "second opinion" by an independent, licensed architect or engineer on the site impracticality issue. The Department stated that comments on these proposals would be considered in connection with forthcoming amendments to the Fair Housing regulation.

The Department appreciates all comments submitted on the proposed enforcement mechanisms, and the suggestions offered on other possible enforcement mechanisms, such as a preconstruction review process, certification by a licensed architect, engineer or other building professional that a project is in compliance with the Act, and certification of local accessibility codes by the Department. All these comments will be considered in connection with future amendments to the Fair Housing Act regulation.

### **First Occupancy**

**Comment.** A number of commenters requested clarification of the determination of "first occupancy" after March 13, 1991. A few commenters referred to the Act's first occupancy requirement as that of "ready for occupancy" by March 13, 1991.

**Response.** The phrase "ready for occupancy" does not correctly describe the standard contained in the Fair Housing Act. The Act states that covered multifamily dwellings subject to the Act's accessibility requirements are those that are "for first occupancy" after March 13, 1991. The standard, "first occupancy," is based on actual occupancy of the covered multifamily dwelling, or on issuance of the last building permit, or building permit renewal, on or before January 13, 1990. Where an individual is relying on a claim that a building was actually occupied on March 13, 1991, the Department, in making a determination of reasonable cause, will consider each situation on a case-by-case basis. As long as one dwelling unit in a covered multifamily dwelling is occupied, the one occupied dwelling unit is sufficient to meet the requirements for actual occupancy. However, the question of whether the occupancy was in compliance with State and local law (e.g., pursuant to a local occupancy permit, where one is required) will be a crucial factor in determining whether first occupancy has been achieved.

**Comment.** Several commenters requested clarification of "first occupancy", with respect to projects involving several buildings, or projects with extended build-out terms, such as planned communities with completion dates 5 to 10 years into the future.

**Response.** "First occupancy" is determined on a building-by-building basis, not on a project-by-project basis. For a project that involves several buildings, one building in the project could be built without reference to the accessibility requirements, while a building constructed next door might have to comply with the Act's requirements. The fact that one or more buildings in a multiple building project were occupied on March 13, 1991 will not be sufficient to afford an exemption from the Act's requirements for other buildings in the same project that are developed at a later time.

## Costs of Adaptation.

**Comment.** A few commenters requested clarification on who incurs the cost of making a unit adaptable for a disabled tenant.

**Response.** All costs associated with incorporating the new design and construction requirements of the Fair Housing Act are borne by the builder. There are, of course, situations where a tenant may need to make modifications to the dwelling unit which are necessary to make the unit accessible for that person's particular type of disability. The tenant would incur the cost of this type of modification -- whether or not the dwelling unit is part of a multifamily dwelling exempt from the Act's accessibility requirements. For dwellings subject to the statute's accessibility requirements, the tenant's costs would be limited to those modifications that were not covered by the Act's design and construction requirements. (For example, the tenant would pay for the cost of purchasing and installing grab bars.) For dwellings not subject to the accessibility requirements, the tenant would pay the cost of all modifications necessary to meet his or her needs. (Using the grab bar example, the tenant would pay both the cost of buying and installing the grab bars and the costs associated with adding bathroom wall reinforcement.)

Section 100.203 of the Fair Housing regulations provides that discrimination includes a refusal to permit, at the expense of a handicapped person, reasonable modifications of existing premises occupied or to be occupied by that person, if modifications are necessary to afford the person full enjoyment of the premises. In the case of a rental, the landlord may reasonably condition permission for a modification on the renter's agreeing to restore the interior of the unit to the condition that existed before its modification -- reasonable wear and tear excepted. This regulatory section provides examples of reasonable modifications that a tenant may make to existing premises. The examples include bathroom wall reinforcement. In House Report No. 711, the Congress provided additional examples of reasonable modifications that could be made to existing premises by persons with disabilities:

"For example, persons who have a hearing disability could install a flashing light in order to `see' that someone is ringing the doorbell. Elderly individuals with severe arthritis may need to replace the doorknobs with lever handles. A person in a wheelchair may need to install fold-back hinges in order to be able to go through a door or may need to build a ramp to enter the unit. Any modifications protected under this section [Section 804(f)(3)(A)] must be reasonable and must be made at the expense of the individual with handicaps." (House Report at 25)

## Reasonable Modification.

**Comment.** One commenter requested clarification concerning what is meant by "reasonable modification".

**Response.** What constitutes "reasonable modification" is discussed to some extent in the preceding section, "Costs of Adaptation", and also was discussed extensively in the preambles to both the proposed and final Fair Housing rules. (See 53 FR 45002-45003, 54 FR 3247-3248; 24 CFR Ch. I, Subch. A, App. I at 580-583 (1990).) Additionally, examples of reasonable modifications are provided in 24 CFR 100.203(c).

## Scope of Coverage

**Comment.** A number of comments were received on the issue of which types of dwelling units should be subject to the Act's accessibility requirements, and the number or percentage of dwelling units that must comply with the Act's requirements.

**Response.** The Department lacks the authority to adopt any of the proposals recommended by the commenters. The type of multifamily dwelling subject to the Fair Housing Act's accessibility requirements, and the number of individual dwelling units that must be made accessible were established by the Congress, not the Department. The Fair Housing Act defines "covered multifamily dwelling" to mean buildings consisting of four or more units if such buildings have one or more elevators; and ground floor units in other buildings consisting of four or more units." (See Section 804(f)(7) of the Act.) The Fair Housing Act requires that covered multifamily dwellings for first occupancy after March 13, 1991 be designed and constructed in accordance with the Act's accessibility requirements. The Act does not permit only a percentage of units in covered multifamily dwellings to be designed in accordance with the Act's requirements, nor does the Department have the authority so to provide by regulation.

## 6. Other Matters

**Codification of Guidelines.** In order to assure the availability of the Guidelines, and the preamble to the

Guidelines, to interested persons in the future, the Department has decided to codify both documents. The Guidelines will be codified in the 1991 edition of the Code of Federal Regulations as Appendix II to the Fair Housing regulations (i.e., 24 CFR Ch. I, Subch. A, App. II), and the preamble to the Guidelines will be codified as Appendix III (i.e., 24 CFR Ch. I, Subch. A, App. III).

**Regulatory Impact Analysis.** A Preliminary Impact Analysis was published in the Federal Register on September 7, 1990 (55 FR 37072-37129). A Final Regulatory Impact Analysis is available for public inspection during regular business hours in the Office of the Rules Docket Clerk, Room 10276, Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20410-0500.

**Environmental Impact.** A Finding of No Significant Impact with respect to the environment has been made in accordance with HUD regulations at 24 CFR Part 50, which implement section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. The Finding of No Significant Impact is available for public inspection during regular business hours in the Office of the Rules Docket Clerk, Office of the General Counsel, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Room 10276, 451 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20410-0500.

**Executive Order 12606, The Family.** The General Counsel, as the Designated Official under Executive Order No. 12606, The Family, has determined that this notice will likely have a significant beneficial impact on family formation, maintenance or well-being. Housing designed in accordance with the Guidelines will offer more housing choices for families with members who have disabilities. Housing designed in accordance with the Guidelines also may be beneficial to families that do not have members with disabilities. For example, accessible building entrances, as required by the Act and implemented by the Guidelines, may benefit parents with children in strollers, and also allow residents and visitors the convenience of using luggage or shopping carts easily. Additionally, with the aging of the population, and the increase in incidence of disability that accompanies aging, significant numbers of people will be able to remain in units designed in accordance with the Guidelines as the aging process advances. Compliance with these Guidelines may also increase the costs of developing a multifamily building, and, thus, may increase the cost of renting or purchasing homes. Such costs could negatively affect families' ability to obtain housing. However, the Department believes that the benefits provided to families by housing that is in compliance with the Fair Housing Amendments Act outweigh the possible increased costs of housing.

**Executive Order 12611, Federalism.** The General Counsel, as the Designated Official under section 6(a) of Executive Order No. 12611, Federalism, has determined that this notice does not involve the preemption of State law by Federal statute or regulation and does not have federalism implications. The Guidelines only are recommended design specifications, not legal requirements. Accordingly, the Guidelines do not preempt State or local laws that address the same issues covered by the Guidelines.

Accordingly, the Department adopts the guidelines that follow as the Fair Housing Accessibility Guidelines

Dated

Gordon H. Mansfield, Assistant Secretary for  
Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity

Fair Housing Accessibility Guidelines--Design Guidelines  
for Accessible/Adaptable Dwellings

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## Section 1. Introduction

### Authority

Section 804(f)(5)(C) of the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988 directs the Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development to provide technical assistance to States, local governments, and other persons in implementing the accessibility requirements of the Fair Housing Act. These guidelines are issued under this statutory authority.

### Purpose

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide technical guidance on designing dwelling units as required by the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988 (Fair Housing Act). These guidelines are not mandatory, nor do they prescribe specific requirements which must be met, and which, if not met, would constitute unlawful discrimination under the Fair Housing Act. Builders and developers may choose to depart from these guidelines and seek alternate ways to demonstrate that they have met the requirements of the Fair Housing Act. These guidelines are intended to provide a safe harbor for compliance with the accessibility requirements of the Fair Housing Act.

### Scope

These guidelines apply only to the design and construction requirements of 24 CFR 100.205. Compliance with these guidelines do not relieve persons participating in a Federal or Federally-assisted program or activity from other requirements, such as those required by section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 794) and the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 4151-4157). Accessible design requirements for Section 504 are found at 24 CFR Part 8. Accessible design requirements for the Architectural Barriers Act are found at 24 CFR Part 40.

### Organization of Guidelines

The design guidelines are incorporated in Section 5 of this document. Each guideline cites the appropriate paragraph of HUD's regulation at 24 CFR 100.205; quotes from the regulation to identify the required design features, and states recommended specifications for each design feature.

Generally, these guidelines rely on the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) A117.1-1986, American National Standard for Buildings and Facilities--Providing Accessibility and Usability for Physically Handicapped People (ANSI Standard). Where the guidelines rely on sections of the ANSI Standard, the ANSI sections are cited. Only those sections of the ANSI Standard cited in the guidelines are recommended for compliance with 24 CFR 100.205. For those guidelines that differ from the ANSI Standard, recommended specifications are provided. The texts of cited ANSI sections are not reproduced in the guidelines. The complete text of the 1986 version of the ANSI A117.1 Standard may be purchased from the American National Standards Institute, 1430 Broadway, New York, NY 10018.

## Section 2. Definitions

As used in these guidelines:

"Accessible", when used with respect to the public and common use areas of a building containing covered multifamily dwellings, means that the public or common use areas of the building can be approached, entered, and used by individuals with physical handicaps. The phrase "readily accessible to and usable by" is synonymous with accessible. A public or common use area that complies with the appropriate requirements of ANSI A117.1-1986, a comparable standard or these guidelines is "accessible" within the meaning of this paragraph.

"Accessible route" means a continuous unobstructed path connecting accessible elements and spaces in a building or within a site that can be negotiated by a person with a severe disability using a wheelchair, and that is also safe for and usable by people with other disabilities. Interior accessible routes may include corridors, floors, ramps, elevators and lifts. Exterior accessible routes may include parking access aisles,

curb ramps, walks, ramps and lifts. A route that complies with the appropriate requirements of ANSI A117.1-1986, a comparable standard, or Section 5, Requirement 1 of these guidelines is an "accessible route". In the circumstances described in Section 5, Requirements 1 and 2, "accessible route" may include access via a vehicular route.

"Adaptable dwelling units", when used with respect to covered multifamily dwellings, means dwelling units that include the features of adaptable design specified in 24 CFR 100.205(c)(2)-(3).

"ANSI A117.1-1986" means the 1986 edition of the American National Standard for buildings and facilities providing accessibility and usability for physically handicapped people.

"Assistive device" means an aid, tool, or instrument used by a person with disabilities to assist in activities of daily living. Examples of assistive devices include tongs, knob-turners, and oven-rack pusher/pullers.

"Bathroom" means a bathroom which includes a water closet (toilet), lavatory (sink), and bathtub or shower. It does not include single-fixture facilities or those with only a water closet and lavatory. It does include a compartmented bathroom. A compartmented bathroom is one in which the fixtures are distributed among interconnected rooms. A compartmented bathroom is considered a single unit and is subject to the Act's requirements for bathrooms.

"Building" means a structure, facility or portion thereof that contains or serves one or more dwelling units.

"Building entrance on an accessible route" means an accessible entrance to a building that is connected by an accessible route to public transportation stops, to parking or passenger loading zones, or to public streets or sidewalks, if available. A building entrance that complies with ANSI A117.1-1986 (see Section 5, Requirement 1 of these guidelines) or a comparable standard complies with the requirements of this paragraph.

"Clear" means unobstructed.

"Common use areas" means rooms, spaces or elements inside or outside of a building that are made available for the use of residents of a building or the guests thereof. These areas include hallways, lounges, lobbies, laundry rooms, refuse rooms, mail rooms, recreational areas and passageways among and between buildings. See Section 5, Requirement 2 of these guidelines.

"Controlled substance" means any drug or other substance, or immediate precursor included in the definition in Section 102 of the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. 802).

"Covered multifamily dwellings" or "covered multifamily dwellings subject to the Fair Housing Amendments" means buildings consisting of four or more dwelling units if such buildings have one or more elevators; and ground floor dwelling units in other buildings consisting of four or more dwelling units. Dwelling units within a single structure separated by firewalls do not constitute separate buildings.

"Dwelling unit" means a single unit of residence for a household of one or more persons. Examples of dwelling units covered by these guidelines include: condominiums; an apartment unit within an apartment building; and other types of dwellings in which sleeping accommodations are provided but toileting or cooking facilities are shared by occupants of more than one room or portion of the dwelling. Examples of the latter include dormitory rooms and sleeping accommodations in shelters intended for occupancy as a residence for homeless persons.

"Entrance" means any exterior access point to a building or portion of a building used by residents for the purpose of entering. For purposes of these guidelines, an "entrance" does not include a door to a loading dock or a door used primarily as a service entrance, even if nonhandicapped residents occasionally use that door to enter.

"Finished grade" means the ground surface of the site after all construction, levelling, grading, and development has been completed.

"Ground floor" means a floor of a building with a building entrance on an accessible route. A building may have one or more ground floors. Where the first floor containing dwelling units in a building is above grade, all units on that floor must be served by a building entrance on an accessible route. This floor will be considered to be a ground floor.

"Handicap" means, with respect to a person, a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities; a record of such an impairment; or being regarded as having such an impairment. This term does not include current, illegal use of or addiction to a controlled substance. For purposes of these guidelines, an individual shall not be considered to have a handicap solely because that individual is a transvestite. As used in this definition:

1. "Physical or mental impairment" includes:
  1. Any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the following body systems: Neurological; musculoskeletal; special sense organs; respiratory, including speech organs; cardiovascular; reproductive; digestive; genito-urinary; hemic and lymphatic; skin; and endocrine; or
  2. Any mental or psychological disorder, such as mental retardation, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness, and specific learning disabilities. The term "physical or mental impairment" includes, but is not limited to, such diseases and conditions as orthopedic, visual, speech and hearing impairments, cerebral palsy, autism, epilepsy, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis, cancer, heart disease, diabetes, Human Immunodeficiency Virus infection, mental retardation, emotional illness, drug addiction (other than addiction caused by current, illegal use of a controlled substance) and alcoholism. These guidelines are designed to make units accessible or adaptable for people with physical handicaps.
2. "Major life activities" means functions such as caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning and working.
3. "Has a record of such an impairment" means has a history of, or has been misclassified as having, a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.
4. "Is regarded as having an impairment" means:
  1. Has a physical or mental impairment that does not substantially limit one or more major life activities but that is treated by another person as constituting such a limitation;
  2. Has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities only as a result of the attitudes of others toward such impairment; or
  3. Has none of the impairments defined in paragraph (a) of this definition but is treated by another person as having such an impairment.

"Loft" means an intermediate level between the floor and ceiling of any story, located within a room or rooms of a dwelling.

"Multistory dwelling unit" means a dwelling unit with finished living space located on one floor and the floor or floors immediately above or below it.

"Public use areas" means interior or exterior rooms or spaces of a building that are made available to the general public. Public use may be provided at a building that is privately or publicly owned.

"Single-story dwelling unit" means a dwelling unit with all finished living space located on one floor.

"Site" means a parcel of land bounded by a property line or a designated portion of a public right of way.

"Slope" means the relative steepness of the land between two points and is calculated as follows: The distance and elevation between the two points (e.g., an entrance and a passenger loading zone) are determined from a topographical map. The difference in elevation is divided by the distance and that fraction is multiplied by 100 to obtain a percentage slope figure. For example, if a principal entrance is ten feet from a passenger loading zone, and the principal entrance is raised one foot higher than the passenger loading zone, then the slope is  $1/10 \times 100 = 10\%$ .

"Story" means that portion of a dwelling unit between the upper surface of any floor and the upper surface

of the floor next above, or the roof of the unit. Within the context of dwelling units, the terms "story" and "floor" are synonymous.

"Undisturbed site" means the site before any construction, levelling, grading, or development associated with the current project.

"Vehicular or pedestrian arrival points" means public or resident parking areas, public transportation stops, passenger loading zones, and public streets or sidewalks.

"Vehicular route" means a route intended for vehicular traffic, such as a street, driveway or parking lot.

### Section 3. Fair Housing Act Design and Construction Requirements

The regulations issued by the Department at 24 CFR 100.205 state:

[Text of 24 CFR 100.205 to be inserted]

### Section 4. Application of the Guidelines

The design specifications (guidelines) presented in Section 5 apply to new construction of "covered multifamily dwellings", as defined in Section 2. These guidelines are recommended for designing dwellings that comply with the requirements of the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988.

### Section 5. Guidelines

**Requirement 1.** Accessible building entrance on an accessible route.

Under section 100.205(a), covered multifamily dwellings shall be designed and constructed to have at least one building entrance on an accessible route, unless it is impractical to do so because of terrain or unusual characteristics of the site.

#### Guideline

1. **Building entrance.** Each building on a site shall have at least one building entrance on an accessible route unless prohibited by the terrain, as provided in paragraphs (2)(a)(i) or (2)(a)(ii), or unusual characteristics of the site, as provided in paragraph (2)(b). This guideline applies both to a single building on a site and to multiple buildings on a site.
  1. **Separate ground floor unit entrances.** When a ground floor unit of a building has a separate entrance, each such ground floor unit shall be served by an accessible route, except for any unit where the terrain or unusual characteristics of the site prohibit the provision of an accessible route to the entrance of that unit.
  2. **Multiple entrances.** Only one entrance is required to be accessible to any one ground floor of a building, except in cases where an individual dwelling unit has a separate exterior entrance, or where the building contains clusters of dwelling units, with each cluster sharing a different exterior entrance. In these cases, more than one entrance may be required to be accessible, as determined by analysis of the site. In every case, the accessible entrance should be on an accessible route to the covered dwelling units it serves.
2. **Site impracticality.** Covered multifamily dwellings with elevators shall be designed and constructed to provide at least one accessible entrance on an accessible route, regardless of terrain or unusual characteristics of the site. Covered multifamily dwellings without elevators shall be designed and constructed to provide at least one accessible entrance on an accessible route unless terrain or unusual characteristics of the site are such that the following conditions are found to exist:
  1. **Site impracticality due to terrain.** There are two alternative tests for determining site impracticality due to terrain: the individual building test provided in paragraph (i), or the site analysis test provided in paragraph (ii). These tests may be used as follows.

A site with a single building having a common entrance for all units may be analyzed only as described in paragraph (i).

All other sites, including a site with a single building having multiple entrances serving either individual dwelling units or clusters of dwelling units, may be analyzed using the methodology in either paragraph (i) or paragraph (ii). For these sites for which either test is applicable, regardless of which test is selected, at

least 20% of the total ground floor units in nonelevator buildings, on any site, must comply with the guidelines.

1. **Individual building test.** It is impractical to provide an accessible entrance served by an accessible route when the terrain of the site is such that:
  1. the slopes of the undisturbed site measured between the planned entrance and all vehicular or pedestrian arrival points within 50 feet of the planned entrance exceed 10 percent; and
  2. the slopes of the planned finished grade measured between the entrance and all vehicular or pedestrian arrival points within 50 feet of the planned entrance also exceed 10 percent.

If there are no vehicular or pedestrian arrival points within 50 feet of the planned entrance, the slope for the purposes of this paragraph (i) will be measured to the closest vehicular or pedestrian arrival point.

For purposes of these guidelines, vehicular or pedestrian arrival points include public or resident parking areas; public transportation stops; passenger loading zones; and public streets or sidewalks. To determine site impracticality, the slope would be measured at ground level from the point of the planned entrance on a straight line to (i) each vehicular or pedestrian arrival point that is within 50 feet of the planned entrance, or (ii) if there are no vehicular or pedestrian arrival points within that specified area, the vehicular or pedestrian arrival point closest to the planned entrance. In the case of sidewalks, the closest point to the entrance will be where a public sidewalk entering the site intersects with the sidewalk to the entrance. In the case of resident parking areas, the closest point to the planned entrance will be measured from the entry point to the parking area that is located closest to the planned entrance.

2. **Site analysis test.** Alternatively, for a site having multiple buildings, or a site with a single building with multiple entrances, impracticality of providing an accessible entrance served by an accessible route can be established by the following steps:
  1. The percentage of the total buildable area of the undisturbed site with a natural grade less than 10% slope shall be calculated. The analysis of the existing slope (before grading) shall be done on a topographic survey with two foot (2') contour intervals with slope determination made between each successive interval. The accuracy of the slope analysis shall be certified by a professional licensed engineer, landscape architect, architect or surveyor.
  2. To determine the practicality of providing accessibility to planned multifamily dwellings based on the topography of the existing natural terrain, the minimum percentage of ground floor units to be made accessible should equal the percentage of the total buildable area (not including floodplains, wetlands, or other restricted use areas) of the undisturbed site that has an existing natural grade of less than 10% slope.
  3. In addition to the percentage established in paragraph (B), all ground floor units in a building, or ground floor units served by a particular entrance, shall be made accessible if the entrance to the units is on an accessible route, defined as a walkway with a slope between the planned entrance and a pedestrian or vehicular arrival point that is no greater than 8.33%
2. **Site impracticality due to unusual characteristics.** Unusual characteristics include sites located in a federally-designated floodplain or coastal high-hazard area and sites subject to other similar requirements of law or code that the lowest floor or the lowest structural member of the lowest floor must be raised to a specified level at or above the base flood elevation. An accessible route to a building entrance is impractical due to unusual characteristics of the site when:
  1. the unusual site characteristics result in a difference in finished grade elevation exceeding 30 inches and 10 percent measured between an entrance and all vehicular or pedestrian arrival points within 50 feet of the planned entrance; or
  2. if there are no vehicular or pedestrian arrival points within 50 feet of the planned entrance, the

unusual characteristics result in a difference in finished grade elevation exceeding 30 inches and 10 percent measured between an entrance and the closest vehicular or pedestrian arrival point.

3. **Exceptions to site impracticality** . Regardless of site considerations described in paragraphs (1) and (2), an accessible entrance on an accessible route is practical when:
  1. There is an elevator connecting the parking area with the dwelling units on a ground floor. (In this case, those dwelling units on the ground floor served by an elevator, and at least one of each type of public and common use areas, would be subject to these guidelines.) However:
    1. Where a building elevator is provided only as a means of creating an accessible route to dwelling units on a ground floor, the building is not considered an elevator building for purposes of these guidelines; hence, only the ground floor dwelling units would be covered.
    2. If the building elevator is provided as a means of access to dwelling units other than dwelling units on a ground floor, then the building is an elevator building which is a covered multifamily dwelling, and the elevator in that building must provide accessibility to all dwelling units in the building, regardless of the slope of the natural terrain; or
  2. An elevated walkway is planned between a building entrance and a vehicular or pedestrian arrival point and the planned walkway has a slope no greater than 10 percent.
4. **Accessible entrance**. An entrance that complies with ANSI 4.14 meets section 100.205(a).
5. **Accessible route**. An accessible route that complies with ANSI 4.3 would meet section 100.205(a). If the slope of the finished grade between covered multifamily dwellings and a public or common use facility (including parking) exceeds 8.33%, or where other physical barriers (natural or manmade) or legal restrictions, all of which are outside the control of the owner, prevent the installation of an accessible pedestrian route, an acceptable alternative is to provide access via a vehicular route, so long as necessary site provisions such as parking spaces and curb ramps are provided at the public or common use facility.

VI Continued...

**Requirement 2.** Accessible and usable public and common use areas.

Section 100.205(c)(1) provides that covered multifamily dwellings with a building entrance on an accessible route shall be designed in such a manner that the public and common use areas are readily accessible to and usable by handicapped persons.

**Guideline**

The following chart identifies the public and common use areas that should be made accessible, cites the appropriate section of the ANSI Standard, and describes the appropriate application of the specifications, including modifications to the referenced Standard.

**Basic Components for Accessible and Usable Public and Common Use Areas or Facilities**

Accessible element or space	ANSI A117.1 section	APPLICATION
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1. Accessible route(s)	4.3	<p>Within the boundary of the site:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. From public transportation stops, accessible parking spaces, accessible passenger loading zones, and public streets or sidewalks to accessible building entrances (subject to site considerations describes in section 5).</li> <li>2. Connecting accessible buildings, facilities, elements and spaces that are on the same site. On-grade walks or paths between separate buildings with covered multifamily dwellings, while not required, should be accessible unless the slope of finish grade exceeds 8.33% at any point along the route. Handrails are not required on these accessible walks.</li> <li>3. Connecting accessible building or facility entrances with accessible spaces and elements within the building or facility, including adaptable dwelling units.</li> <li>4. Where site or legal constraints prevent a route accessible to wheelchair users between covered multifamily dwellings and public or common-use facilities elsewhere on the site, an acceptable alternative is the provision of access via a vehicular route so long as there is accessible parking on an accessible route to at least 2% of covered dwelling units, and necessary site provisions such as parking and curb cuts are available at the public or common use facility.</li> </ol>
2. Protruding Objects	4.4	Accessible routes or maneuvering space including , but not limited to halls, corridors, passageways, or aisles.
3. Ground and floor surface treatments	4.5	Accessible routes, and spaces, including floors, walks, ramps, stairs, and curb ramps.
4. Parking and passenger loading zones	4.6	If provided at the site, designated accessible parking at the dwelling unit on request of residents with handicaps, on the same terms and with the full range of choices (e.g. surface parking or garage) that are provided for other residents of the project, with accessible parking on a route accessible to wheelchairs for at least 2% of the dwelling units: accessible visitor parking sufficient to provide access to gradelevel entrances of covered multifamily dwelling: and accessible parking at facilities (e.g. swimming pools) that serve accessible building.
5. Curb ramps	4.7	Accessible routes crossing curbs.
6. Ramps	4.8	Accessible routes with slopes greater than 1:20.
7. Stairs	4.9	Stairs on accessible routes connecting levels not connected by an elevator.
8. Elevator	4.10	If provided.
9. Platform lift	4.11	May be used in lieu of an elevator or ramp under certain conditions.
10. Drinking fountains and water coolers	4.15	Fifty percent of fountains and coolers on each floor, or at least one, if provided in the facility or the site.
11. Toilet rooms and bathing facilities (including water closets, toilet rooms and stalls, urinals, lavatories and mirrors, bathtubs, shower stalls, and sinks.)	4.22	Where provided in public-use and common-use facilities, at least one on each fixture provided per room.
12. Seating, tables, or work surfaces	4.30	If provided in accessible spaces, at least one of each type provided.
13. Places of assembly	4.31	If provided in the facility or at the site.
14. Common-use spaces and facilities (including swimming pools, playgrounds, entrances, rental offices, lobbies, elevators, mailbox areas, lounges, halls and corridors, and the like.)	4.1 through 4.30	<p>If provided in the facility or at the site:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Where multiple recreational facilities (e.g. tennis courts) are provided sufficient accessible facilities of each type equitable opportunity for use by persons with handicaps.</li> <li>2. Where practical, access to all or a portion of nature trails and jogging paths</li> </ol>
15. Laundry rooms	4.32.6	If provided in the facility or at the site, at least one of each type of appliance provided in each laundry area, except that laundry rooms serving covered multifamily dwellings would not be required to have front loading washers in order to meet the requirements of §100.205(c)(1). (Where front loading washers are not provided, management will be expected to provide assistive devices on request if necessary to permit a resident to use a top loading washer.)

**Requirement 3. Usable doors.**

Section 100.205(c)(2) provides that covered multifamily dwellings with a building entrance on an accessible route shall be designed in such a manner that all the doors designed to allow passage into and within all premises are sufficiently wide to allow passage by handicapped persons in wheelchairs.

**Guideline**

Section 100.205(c)(2) would apply to doors that are a part of an accessible route in the public and common use areas of multifamily dwellings and to doors into and within individual dwelling units.

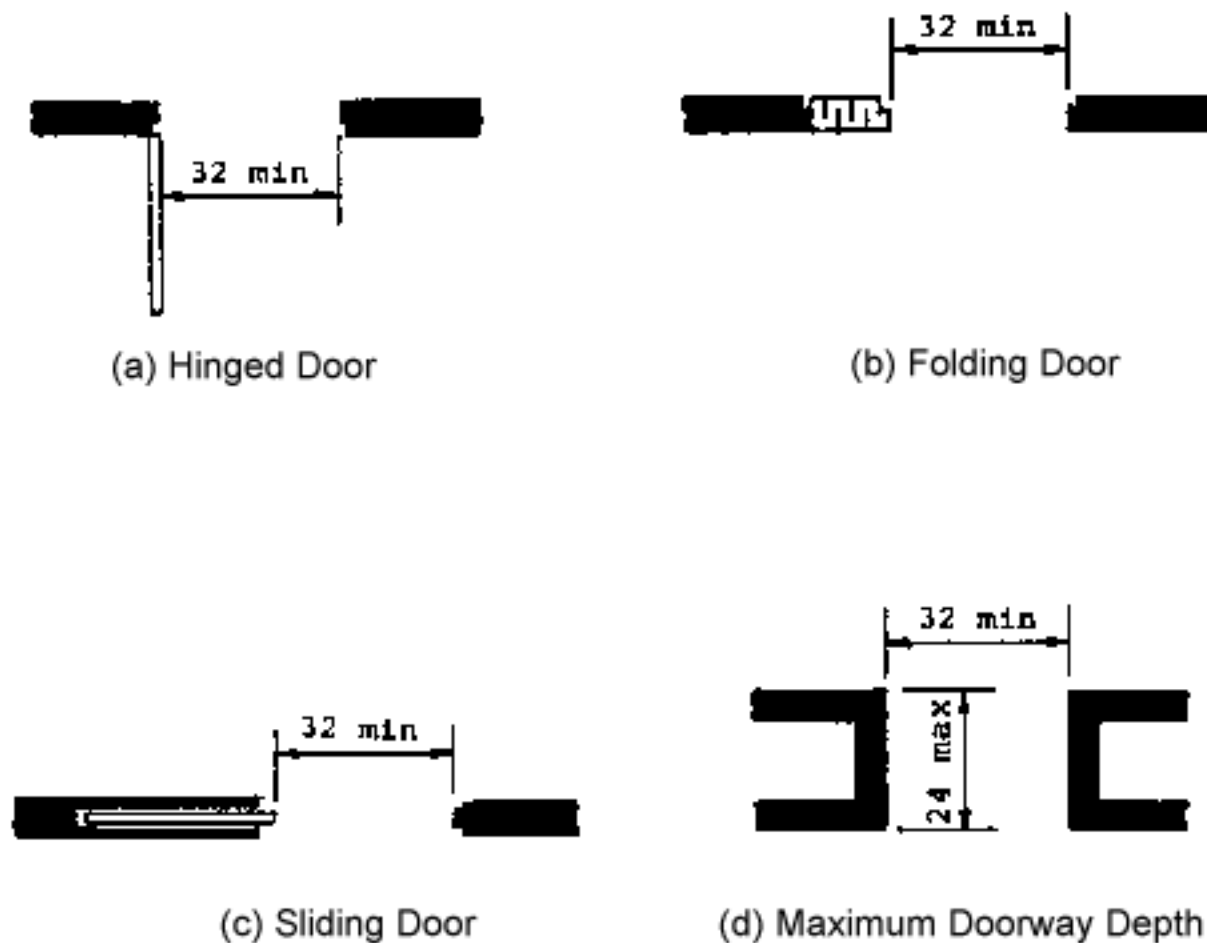
1. On accessible routes in public and common use areas, and for primary entry doors to covered units, doors that comply with ANSI 4.13 would meet this requirement.
2. Within individual dwelling units, doors intended for user passage through the unit which have a clear opening of at least 32 inches nominal width when the door is open 90 degrees, measured between the face of the door and the stop, would meet this requirement. (See Fig. 1 (a), (b), and (c).) Openings more than 24 inches in depth are not considered doorways. (See Fig. 1(d).)

**Note**

A 34-inch door, hung in the standard manner, provides an acceptable nominal 32-inch clear opening. This door can be adapted to provide a wider opening by using offset hinges, by removing lower portions of the door stop, or both.

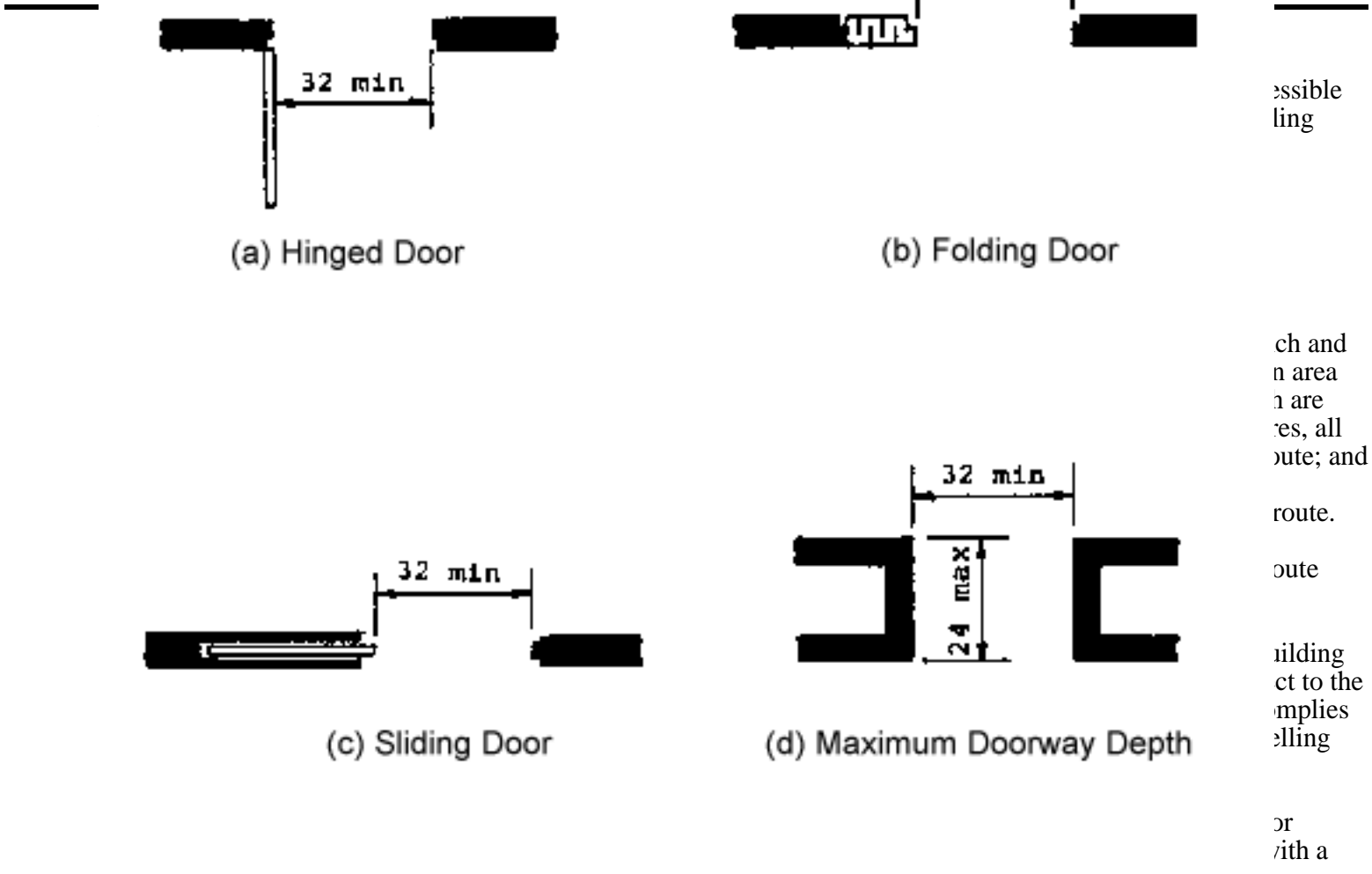
Pocket or sliding doors are acceptable doors in covered dwelling units and have the added advantage of not impinging on clear floor space in small rooms.

The nominal 32-inch clear opening provided by a standard six-foot sliding patio door assembly is acceptable.



**Fig. 1 Clear Doorway Width and Depth**

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5. Exterior deck, patio, or balcony surfaces are no more than 1/2 inch below the floor level of the interior of the dwelling unit, unless they are constructed of impervious material such as concrete, brick or flagstone. In such case, the surface is no more than 4 inches below the floor level of the interior of the dwelling unit, or lower if required by local building code.
6. At the primary entry door to dwelling units with direct exterior access, outside landing surfaces constructed of impervious materials such as concrete, brick or flagstone, are no more than 1/2 inch below the floor level of the interior of the dwelling unit. The finished surface of this area that is located immediately outside the entry may be sloped, up to 1/8 inch per foot (12 inches), for drainage.

**Requirement 5.** Light switches, electrical outlets, thermostats and other environmental controls in accessible locations.

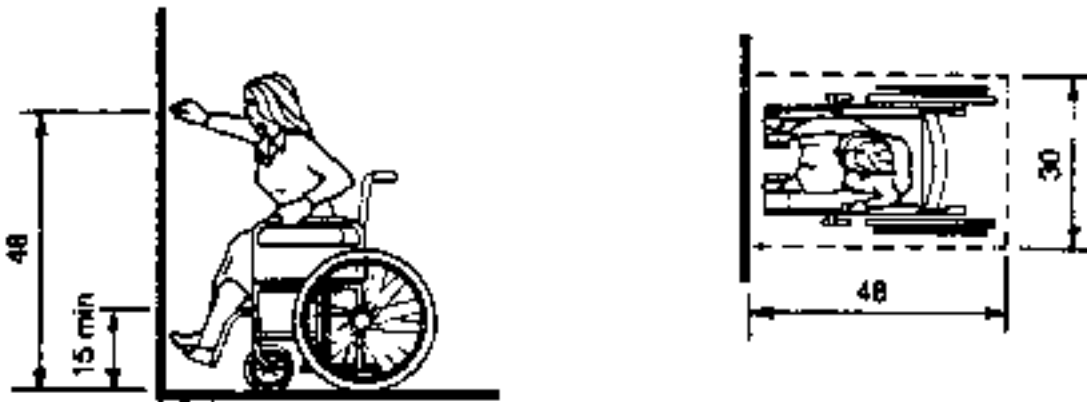
Section 100.205(c)(3)(ii) requires that all covered multifamily dwellings with a building entrance on an accessible route shall be designed and constructed in such a manner that all premises within covered multifamily dwelling units contain light switches, electrical outlets, thermostats, and other environmental controls in accessible locations.

**Guideline**

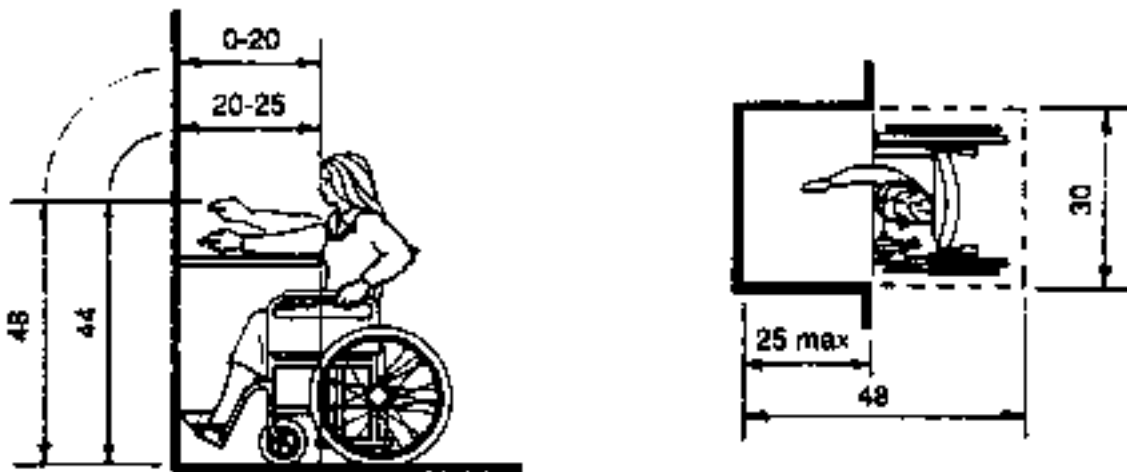
Light switches, electrical outlets, thermostats and other environmental controls would meet section 100.205(c)(3)(ii) if operable parts of the controls are located no higher than 48 inches, and no lower than 15 inches, above the floor. If the reach is over an obstruction (for example, an overhanging shelf) between 20 and 25 inches in depth, the maximum height is reduced to 44 inches for forward approach; or 46 inches for side approach, provided the obstruction (for example, a kitchen base cabinet) is no more than 24 inches in depth. Obstructions should not extend more than 25 inches from the wall beneath a control. (See Fig.2.)

**Note**

Controls or outlets that do not satisfy these specifications are acceptable provided that comparable controls or outlets (i.e., that perform the same functions) are provided within the same area and are accessible, in accordance with this guideline for Requirement 5.

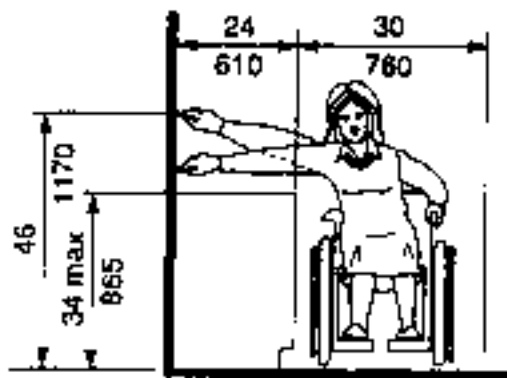


(a) Forward Reach Limit



NOTE: Clear knee space should be as deep as the reach distance.

(b) Maximum Forward Reach Over an Obstruction



(c) Maximum Side Reach Over Obstruction

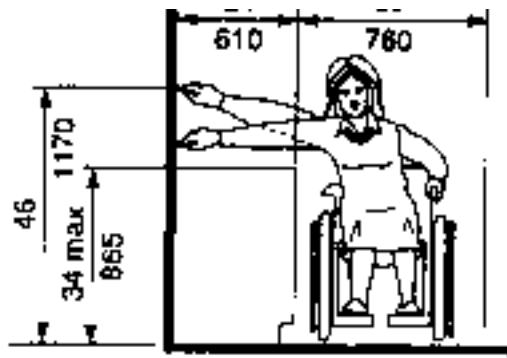
**Fig. 2 Reach Ranges**

**Requirement 6. Reinforced walls for grab bars.**

Section 100.205(c)(3)(iii) route shall be designed and units contain reinforcements and shower seat, where such

**Guideline**

Reinforced bathroom walls to seat, where such facilities are least at those points where placed adjacent to a side wall foldaway or similar alternative facility located on an accessible reinforced walls for grab bars



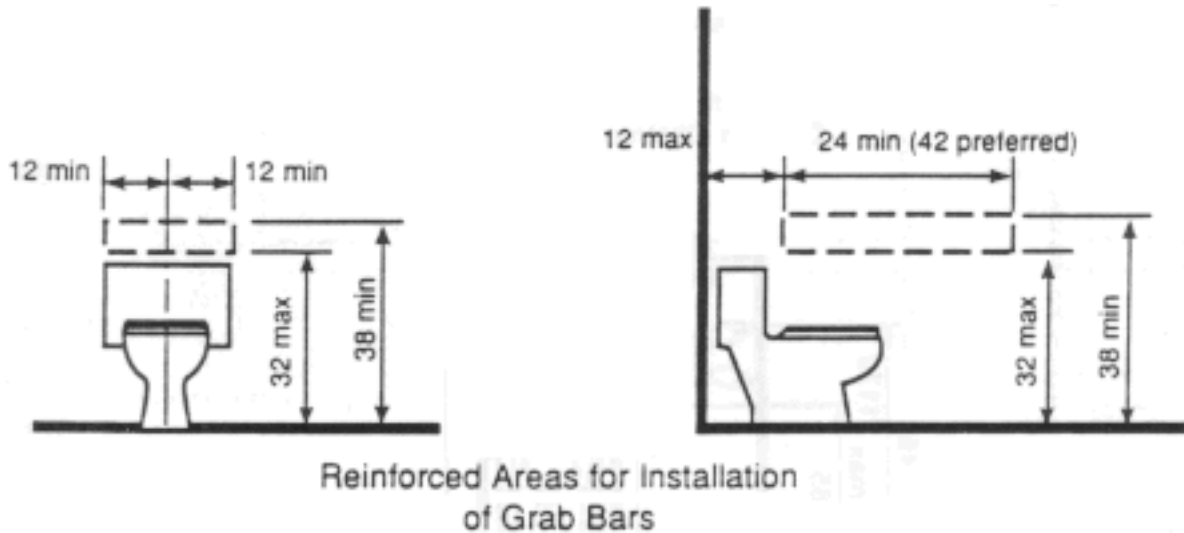
Entrance on an accessible and multifamily dwelling ground toilet, tub, shower stall

shower stall and showered areas are provided at 5.) Where the toilet is not stallation of floor mounted, and sink) is the only toilet the requirement for

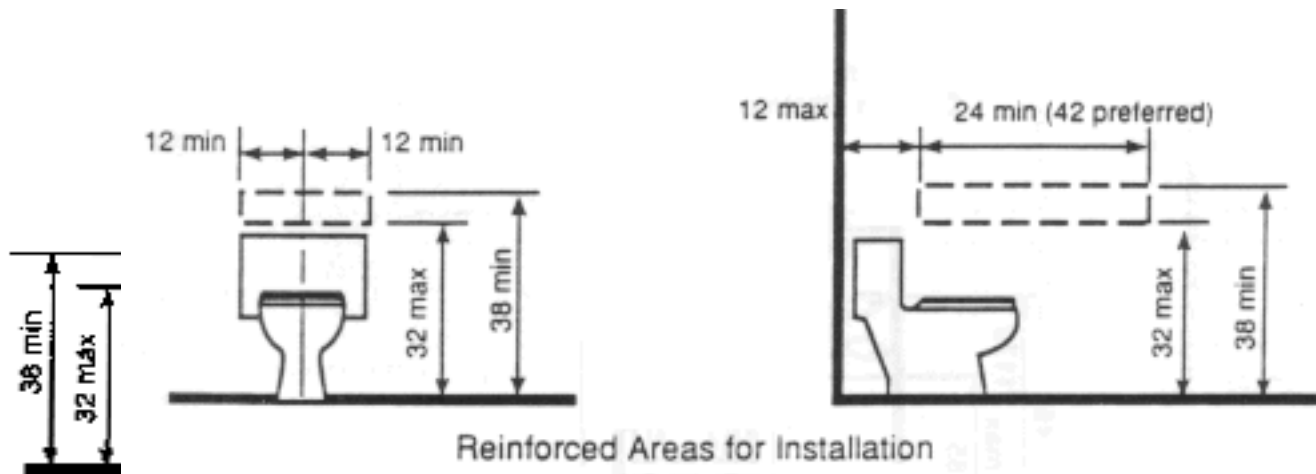
(c) Maximum Side Reach Over Obstruction

**Note**

Installation of bathtubs is not limited by the illustrative figures; a tub may have shelves or benches at either end; or a tub may be installed without surrounding walls, if there is provision for alternative mounting of grab bars. For example, a sunken tub placed away from walls could have reinforced areas for installation of floor-mounted grab bars. The same principle applies to shower stalls -- e.g., glass-walled stalls could be planned to allow floor-mounted grab bars to be installed later. Reinforcement for grab bars may be provided in a variety of ways (for example, by plywood or wood blocking) so long as the necessary reinforcement is placed so as to permit later installation of appropriate grab bars.

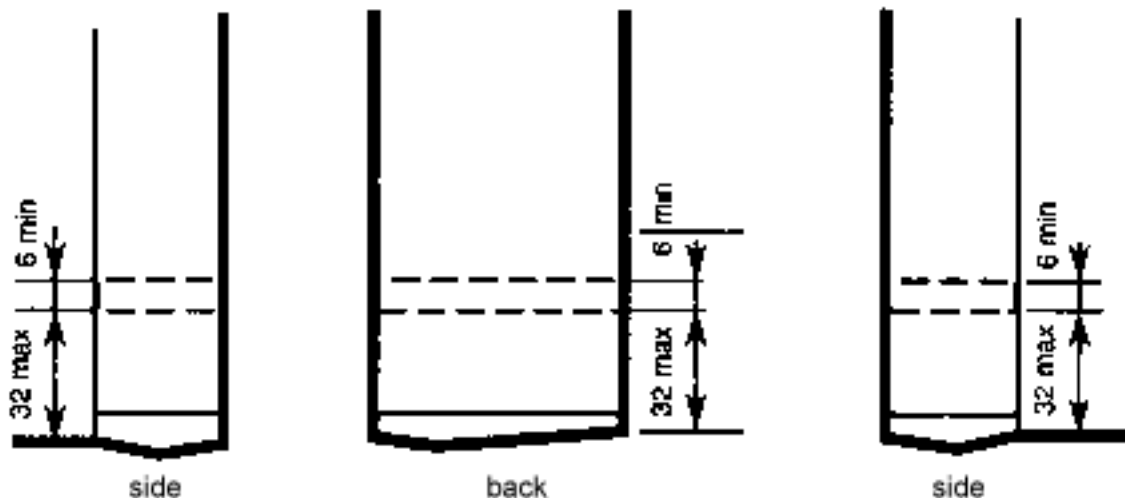


Reinforced Areas for Installation of Grab Bars  
Fig. 3 Water Closets in Adaptable Bathrooms



**Fig 4: Location of Grab Bar Reinforcements for Adaptable Bathtubs**

**NOTE:** The areas outlined in dashed lines represent locations for future installation of grab bars for typical fixture configurations.



**Fig. 5 Location of Grab Bar Reinforcements for Adaptable Showers**

**NOTE:** The areas outlined in dashed lines represent locations for future installation of grab bars.

VI Continued...

**Requirement 7.** Usable kitchens and bathrooms.

Section 100.205(c)(3)(iv) requires that covered multifamily dwellings with a building entrance on an accessible route shall be designed and constructed in such a manner that all premises within covered multifamily dwelling units contain usable kitchens and bathrooms such that an individual in a wheelchair can maneuver about the space.

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Fig. 5 Location of Grab Bar Reinforcements for Adaptable Showers

NOTE: The areas outlined in dashed lines represent locations for

- In U-shaped kitchens with sink or range or cooktop at the base of the "U", a 60-inch turning radius is provided to allow parallel approach, or base cabinets are removable at that location to allow knee space for a forward approach.

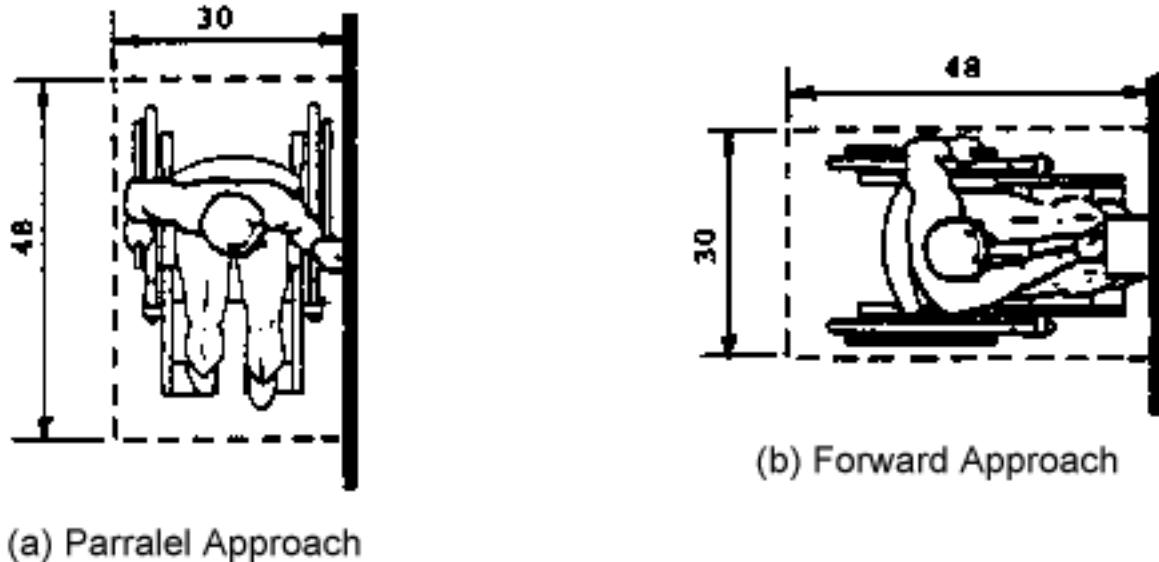


Fig. 6 Minimum Clear Floor Space for Wheelchairs

- Usable bathrooms. To meet the requirements of section 100.205(c)(3)(iv) either:

All bathrooms in the dwelling unit comply with the provisions of paragraph (a); or  
 At least one bathroom in the dwelling unit complies with the provisions of paragraph (b), and all other bathrooms and powder rooms within the dwelling unit must be on an accessible route with usable entry doors in accordance with the guidelines for Requirements 3 and 4.  
 However, in multistory dwelling units, only those bathrooms on the accessible level are subject to the requirements of section 100.205(c)(3)(iv).

Where a powder room is the only facility provided on the accessible level of a multistory dwelling unit, the powder room must comply with provisions of paragraph (a) or paragraph (b). Powder rooms that are subject to the requirements of section 100.205(c)(3)(iv) must have reinforcements for grab bars as provided in the guideline for Requirement 6.

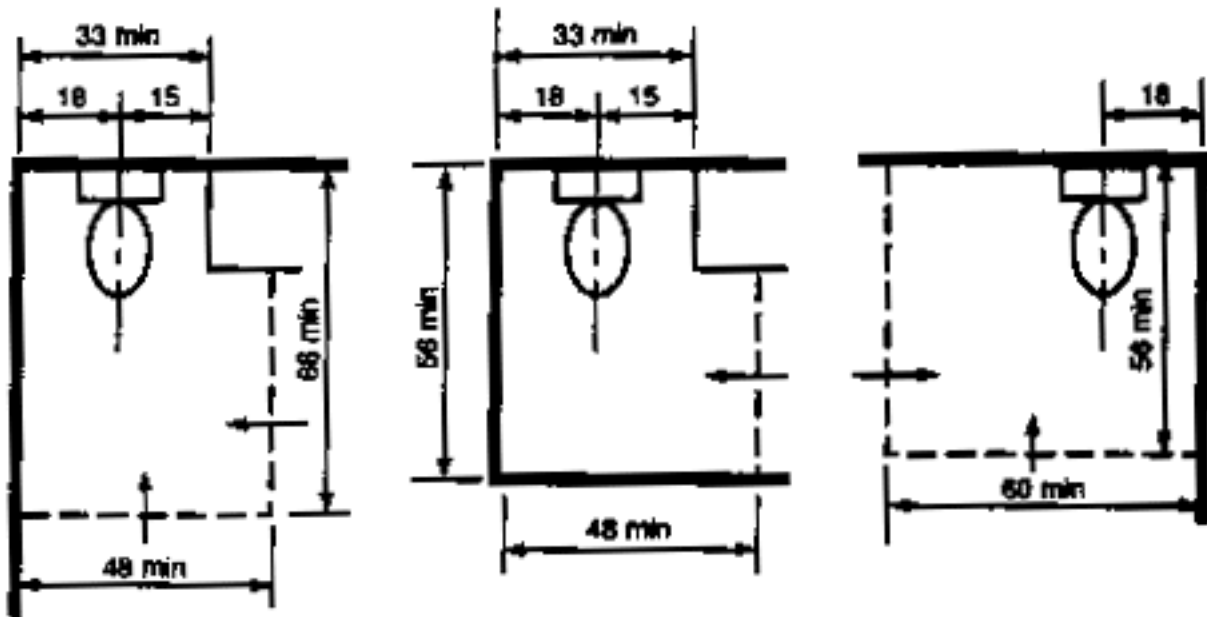
- Bathrooms that have reinforced walls for grab bars (see Requirement 6) would meet section 100.205(c)(3)(iv) if:
  - Sufficient maneuvering space is provided within the bathroom for a person using a wheelchair or other mobility aid to enter and close the door, use the fixtures, reopen the door and exit. Doors may swing into the clear floor space provided at any fixture if the maneuvering space is provided. Maneuvering spaces may include any kneespace or toespace available below bathroom fixtures.

2. Clear floor space is provided at fixtures as shown in Fig. 7 (a), (b), (c) and (d). Clear floor space at fixtures may overlap.
3. If the shower stall is the only bathing facility provided in the covered dwelling unit, or on the accessible level of a covered multistory unit, the shower stall measures at least 36 inches x 36 inches.

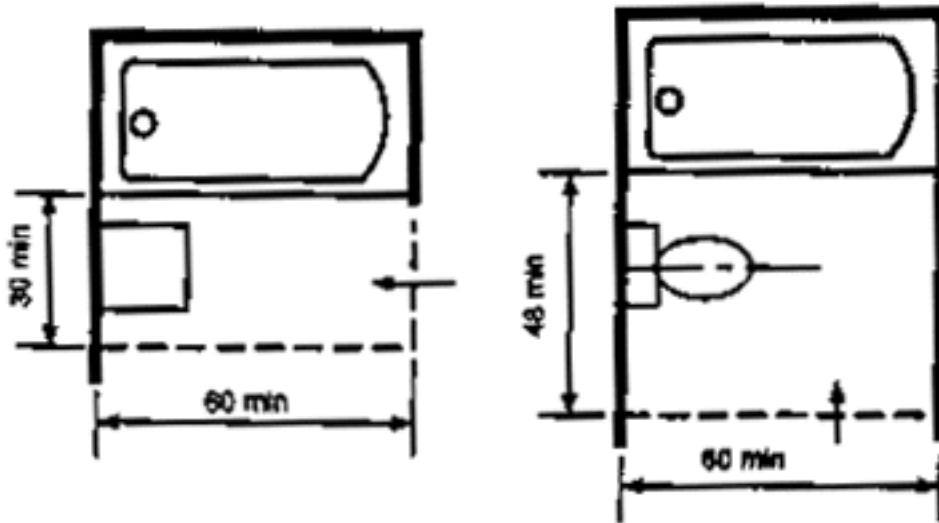
**Note**

Cabinets under lavatories are acceptable provided the bathroom has space to allow a parallel approach by a person in a wheelchair; if parallel approach is not possible within the space, any cabinets provided would have to be removable to afford the necessary knee clearance for forward approach.

2. Bathrooms that have reinforced walls for grab bars (see Requirement 6) would meet section 100.205(c)(3)(iv) if:
  1. Where the door swings into the bathroom, there is a clear space (approximately, 2' 6" by 4'0") within the room to position a wheelchair or other mobility aid clear of the path of the door as it is closed and to permit use of fixtures. This clear space can include any kneespace and toespace available below bathroom fixtures.
  2. Where the door swings out, a clear space is provided within the bathroom for a person using a wheelchair or other mobility aid to position the wheelchair such that the person is allowed use of fixtures. There also shall be clear space to allow persons using wheelchairs to reopen the door to exit.
  3. When both tub and shower fixtures are provided in the bathroom, at least one is made accessible. When two or more lavatories in a bathroom are provided, at least one is made accessible.
  4. Toilets are located within bathrooms in a manner that permit a grab bar to be installed on one side of the fixture. In locations where toilets are adjacent to walls or bathtubs, the center line of the fixture is a minimum of 1'6" from the obstacle. The other (non-grab bar) side of the toilet fixture is a minimum of 1'3" from the finished surface of adjoining walls, vanities or from the edge of a lavatory. (See Figure 7(a).)
  5. Vanities and lavatories are installed with the centerline of the fixture a minimum of 1'3" horizontally from an adjoining wall or fixture. The top of the fixture rim is a maximum height of 2'10" above the finished floor. If kneespace is provided below the vanity, the bottom of the apron is at least 2'3" above the floor. If provided, full kneespace (for front approach) is at least 1'5" deep. (See Figure 7(c).)
  6. Bathtubs and tub/showers located in the bathroom provide a clear access aisle adjacent to the lavatory that is at least 2'6" wide and extends for a length of 4'0" (measured from the head of the bathtub). (See Figure 8.)
  7. Stall showers in the bathroom may be of any size or configuration. A minimum clear floor space 2'6" wide by 4'0" should be available outside the stall. (See Figure 7(d).) If the shower stall is the only bathing facility provided in the covered dwelling unit, or on the accessible level of a covered multistory unit, and measures a nominal 36 x 36 or smaller, the shower stall must have reinforcing to allow for installation of an optional wall hung bench seat.

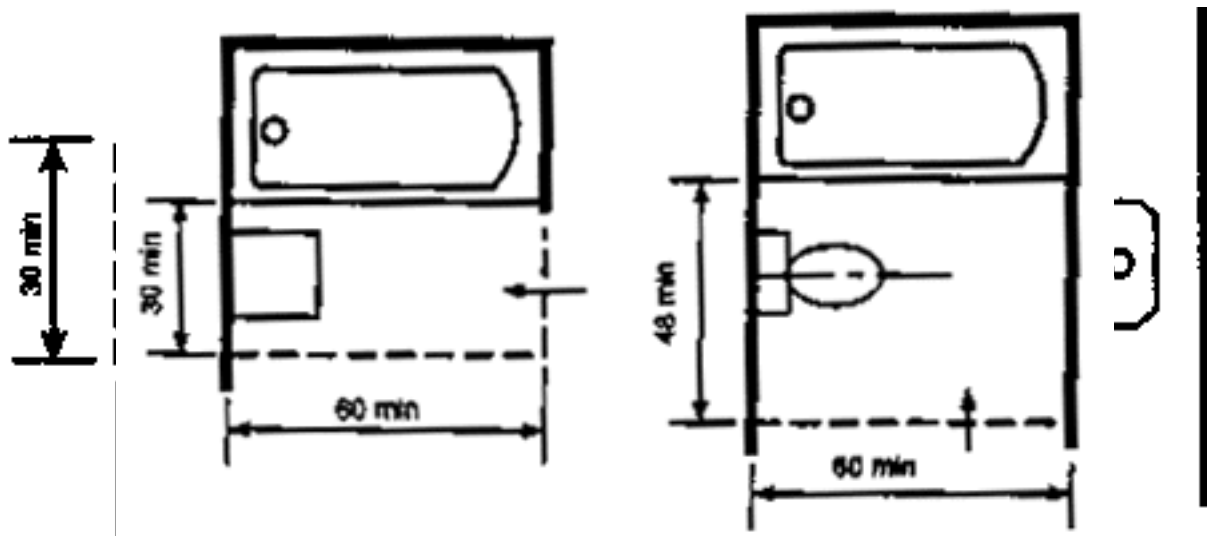


(a) Clear Floor Space for Water Closets



(b) Clear Floor Space at Bathtubs

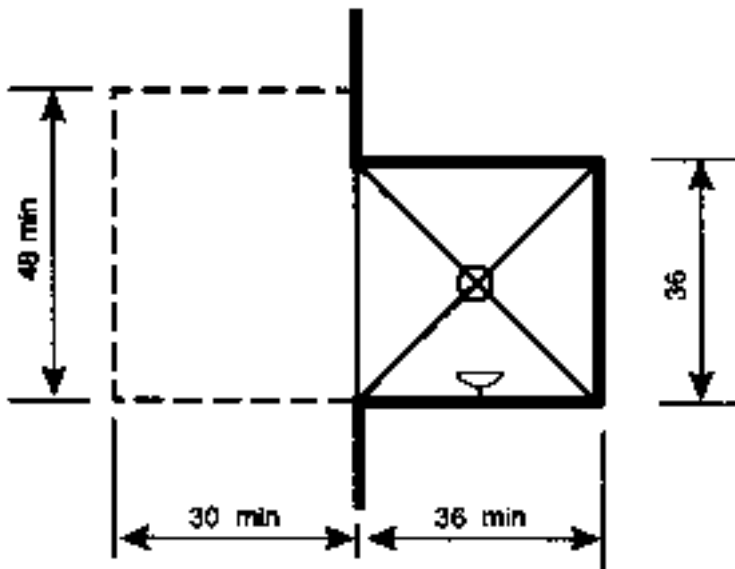
Fig. 7 Clear Floor Space for Adaptable Bathrooms



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(b) Clear Floor Space at Bathtubs

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(d) Clear Floor Space at Shower

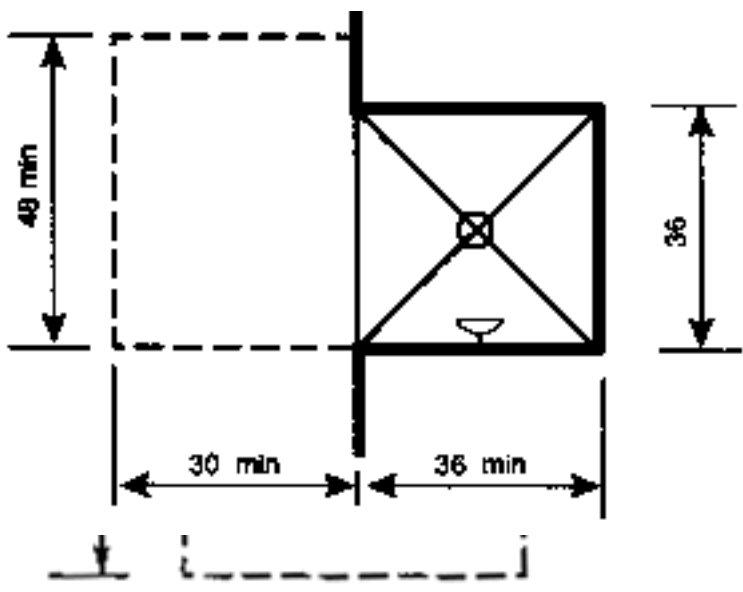


Fig. 8 Alternative Specification - Clear Floor Space at Bathtub

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