

PB-26

PROFESSIONAL INVOLVEMENT ON BUILDING PROJECTS

SUMMARY

This Practice Bulletin addresses when a building project requires professional involvement.

BACKGROUND

The Alberta Association of Architects (AAA) recommends that any design project can benefit from the involvement of a registered architect or licensed interior designer. In Alberta, the criteria for determining when a registered architect or licensed interior designer is required for a building project are provided in both the *Architects Act* and the *National Building Code – Alberta Edition* (“NBC-AE”) as enabled through the *Safety Codes Act*. However, these two acts use different technical criteria when determining the professional involvement requirements. The differences between the *Architects Act* and *Safety Codes Act/NBC-AE* may result in assessments where professional involvement is required by the *Architects Act* but not by the *Safety Codes Act/NBC-AE* in which case professional involvement is required since ***both Acts apply***.

The *Architects Act* is administered and enforced by the AAA, whereas the *NBC-AE* is administered by Alberta Municipal Affairs and enforced by safety code officers as identified in the *Safety Codes Acts*.

APPLICABLE LEGISLATION & RESOURCES

- ▶ [The Architects Act](#)
- ▶ [The Architects Act General Regulation](#)
- ▶ [The Engineers and Geosciences Professions Act](#)
- ▶ [The Alberta Safety Codes Act](#)
- ▶ [The National Building Code – Alberta Edition](#)
- ▶ [Functional Relationships for the Building Envelope Portion of Projects \(AAA/APEGA Joint document\)](#)

THE MEANING OF PROFESSIONAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE ARCHITECTS ACT

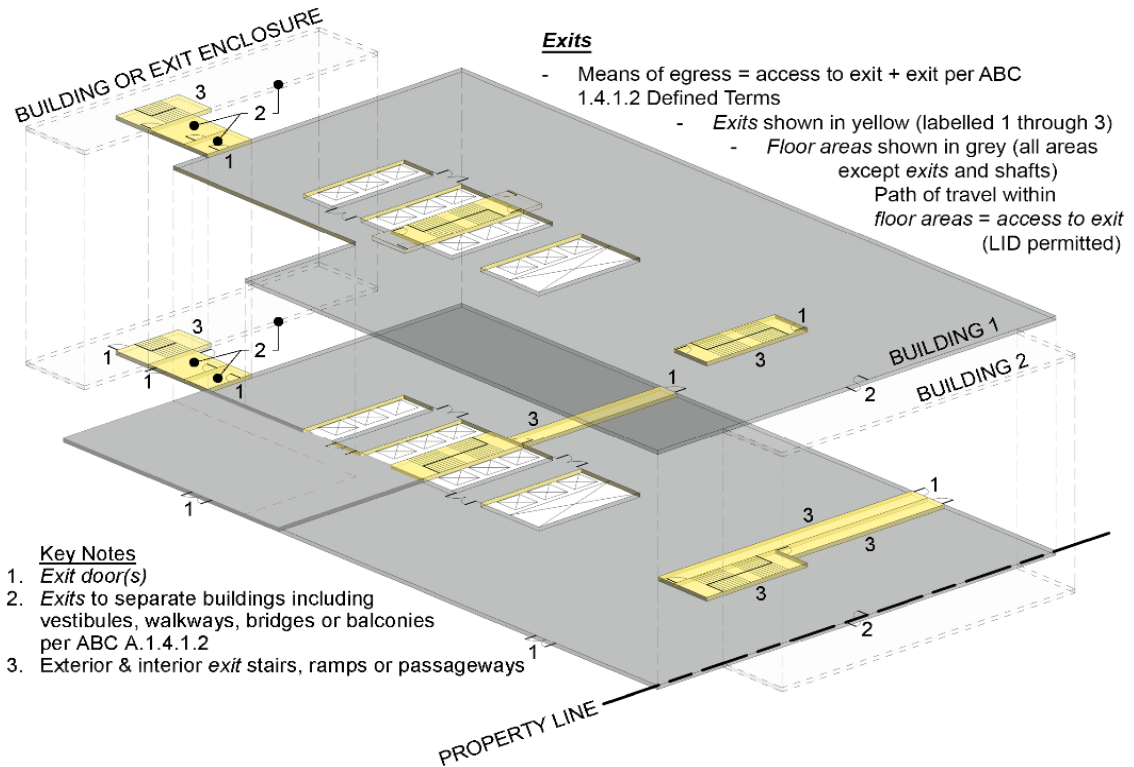
The involvement of professional architects and licensed interior designers is prescribed by the *Architects Act* which is directly referenced by the *Safety Codes Act / NBC-AE*. Under the *Architects Act*, architects and licensed interior designers are responsible for the “...*personal supervision, direction and control...*” in the “...*planning, design or giving advice on the design...*” for “...*the erection, construction or alteration of or addition to a building*” except for buildings smaller than the occupancy types and sizes noted. These obligations extend to the production of all instruments of service, such as construction drawings, specifications, sketches, and models. It also applies to the monitoring of construction for compliance with the instruments of service.

Licensed Interior Designers (LID)

Licensed Interior Designers (LIDs) may design, prepare plans and oversee the construction or alteration of the interior of a building. They can also coordinate architectural and engineering work within the interior of a building. LIDs may provide the same services as registered architects except on matters that affect the exterior of a building, environmental separations and exits.

Licensed Interior Designer Scope Exclusions

(1) Building Shell; (2) Environmental Separations as per ABC Part 5; and (3) Exits (refer to diagram)



COMPARISON OF METHODS FOR DETERMINING PROFESSIONAL INVOLVEMENT

The *Architects Act* and *Safety Codes Act/NBC-AE* determine the professional involvement requirements based on the building uses or occupancies, and the building size. Both Acts use a combination of the building occupancy and size factors for determining professional involvement but in slightly different ways. The key variances include:

- ▶ **Building Area:** Different methods are used to determine the size of a building. *The Architects Act* uses “gross area” to determine the building size whereas the *NBC-AE* uses “building area”.
- ▶ **Building Height:** Different methods are used for measuring the vertical size of the building.

Building Size Comparisons

“Gross area,” as used in the *Architects Act*, is substantially different from “building area” in the *Safety Codes Act /NBC-AE*.

The AAA interpretation of “gross area” may result in substantially different assessments of the professional involvement requirements than the *Safety Codes Act / NBC-AE 2023* interpretation of “building area”. The AAA defines “gross area” as the total of all horizontal areas of all floors

capable of accommodating any building occupancy as measured to the outside of building surfaces at the floor level of all storeys. The “gross area” considers the area of each floor across all building storeys to include all of the following areas that may result in substantially different assessments of the professional involvement requirements:

- ▶ mezzanine floors, bridges, tunnels, links, and occupied roof areas
- ▶ service room, floors, stairways, walkways, and platforms
- ▶ attached decks, connecting walkways, patios or balconies
- ▶ stairways, shafts, and vertical service spaces, and
- ▶ interconnected floor areas, but
- ▶ excludes horizontal service spaces.

In contrast, the *Safety Codes Act/NBC-AE* considers the area of the largest floor above grade to the centerline of firewalls and under certain circumstances may exclude mezzanine, service room, and below-grade floor levels.

Appendix A provides a side-by-side comparison of these Acts to identify the combination of factors that trigger the requirement for professional involvement.

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NOTES

Practice Bulletins are issued by The Alberta Association of Architects as a practice resource or as general interpretations of the requirements in the *Architects Act*, the Regulations under the *Act*, and the By-laws. Bulletins should be read in conjunction with the *Act*, Regulations and By-laws and in no way supersede these documents. Bulletins are not intended to be and are not legal advice to the Members of the Association nor to the Public/Client. Members and the Public should consult their own legal, income tax or financial advisors as to the application of the *Architects Act* and Regulations in specific circumstances.

Appendix A

You will note that there are minor discrepancies between the two charts in Appendix A. As professionals, Registered Architects and Licensed Interior Designers, we are governed by the *Architects Act* and its *Regulation*. It is incumbent on you to follow the requirements of the *Architects Act*.

COMPARISON OF ACTS – LIMITS BELOW WHICH PROFESSIONAL INVOLVEMENT MAY NOT BE REQUIRED						
ARCHITECTS ACT				SAFETY CODES ACT / National Building Code -Alberta Edition		
Occupancy	# Storeys	Gross Area (m ²)		Occupancy	# Storeys	Building Area (m ²)
Assembly	1	300	or less	Group A - Assembly	1	300 or less
	2	150	or less on each floor		2	150 or less
	3	100	or less on each floor		3	100 or less
Institutional	1	300	or less	Group B – Care, Treatment and Detention	1	300 or less
	2	150	or less on each floor		2	150 or less
	3	100	or less on each floor		3	100 or less
Warehouse / Industrial	1	500	or less	Group F - Industrial	1	500 or less
	2	250	or less on each floor		2	250 or less
	3	165	or less on each floor		3	165 or less
Business and Personal Services	1	500	or less	Group D – Business and Personal Services	1	500 or less
	2	250	or less on each floor		2	250 or less
	3	165	or less on each floor		3	165 or less
Mercantile	1	500	or less	Group E - Mercantile	1	500 or less
	2	250	or less on each floor		2	250 or less
	3	165	or less on each floor		3	165 or less
Industrial	1	500	or less	Group F - Industrial	1	500 or less
	2	250	or less on each floor		2	250 or less
	3	165	or less on each floor		3	165 or less
Residential - Hotel, Motel or Similar	1	400	or less	Group C – Residential	1	400 or less
	2	200	or less on each floor		2	200 or less
	3	130	or less on each floor		3	130 or less
Occupancy	# Storeys	# Dwelling Units		Occupancy	# Storeys	# Dwelling Units
Residential – Family Dwellings	N/A	1	N/A	Group C – Residential	N/A	1 or less
	N/A	4	Or less		N/A	4 or less
	<i>The Architects Act does not recognize the SCA / NBC-AE concept of a Secondary</i>				<i>Secondary Suites excluded from # Dwelling Units</i>	

Acts Comparison Summary

AA = *Architects Act*

NBC-AE = *Safety Codes Act / National Building Code – Alberta Edition*

No impact on determination of professional involvement:

1. AA “Institutional” occupancy and ABC “Group B - Care, Treatment and Detention” occupancy – no difference for purpose of assessing professional involvement.

Variations that may result in different professional involvement determinations under each Act:

1. AA uses “gross area” whereas ABC uses “building area” as one determinant of building size. The AA “gross area” includes floor areas that may not be included in NBC-AE “building area.”
2. AA uses all stories in a building whereas the NBC-AE may exclude some storeys to determine “building height.”

Both Acts apply.