# Accessible-Ready Modular and Prefabricated Housing

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## Technical guide


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Normes d'accessibilité Canada

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# 2 About this technical guide

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Accessibility Standards Canada develops equity-based accessibility standards and guidance. Accessibility Standards Canada seeks to create inclusive standards that can impact all persons with disabilities while recognizing their intersectionality and expertise. Accessibility Standards Canada is sharing this technical guide so that organizations can begin implementing this guidance in their work while a standard in this area is being developed. This technical guide focuses on areas where people with disabilities face barriers in the built environment, specifically modular and prefabricated housing. Equity refers to fairness, justice, and freedom from discrimination. Equity recognizes that each person has different circumstances and focuses on enabling all individuals to achieve the same outcomes.

## 2.1 Audience

This technical guide is intended for all Government of Canada departments, agencies, and federally regulated entities, as well as anyone seeking guidance to improve accessibility in this area.

# 3 Context

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## 3.1 General

Accessibility Standards Canada develops technical guides that align with its vision. This vision is rooted in the principles of the *Accessible Canada Act* and “nothing without us.” These principles reflect a commitment to breaking down barriers to accessibility that can impact all persons in Canada—especially persons with disabilities and their families—ensuring full and equal participation in society.

As part of the "nothing without us" principle, Accessibility Standards Canada promotes that accessibility is good for everyone, as it can have society-wide benefits. As a result, Accessibility Standards Canada develops technical guides to promote accessibility and accessible best practices. This means that this technical guide incorporates best practices, the lived experience of people with disabilities, and information aimed at achieving the highest level of accessibility. This approach is meant to drive innovation, foster change, and promote requirements and best practices that have broad positive impacts.

This approach strives to improve outcomes for all Canadians, including creating employment opportunities and solutions that contribute to Canada’s economic growth.

By proactively removing barriers, these guides' support the key accessibility principles of the *Accessible Canada Act* and "nothing without us," support organizations on their accessibility journeys, and move Canada closer to being barrier-free by 2040. The technical content of this guide benefits:

- people with disabilities;
- people without disabilities;
- the federal public sector;
- the private sector;
- non-government organizations;
- Indigenous communities; and
- society.

The guidance provided in section 4 through Annex A, support the goals of the *Accessible Canada Act.* It is intended to complement existing guidelines and regulations including CAN-ASC-2.8:2025 – Accessible-Ready Housing, CSA/ASC B652:23 – Accessible Dwellings, and applicable local building regulations. It is also intended to be applied alongside the CSA A277-16 (R2021) – Procedure for certification of prefabricated buildings, modules, and panels, which addresses certification, construction, and quality control methods.

## 3.2 *Accessible Canada Act*

The *Accessible Canada Act* provides a framework which allows for the proactive identification, removal, and prevention of barriers wherever Canadians interact with areas under federal jurisdiction. It puts in place mechanisms that would systematically address accessibility. The purpose of the *Accessible Canada Act* is to make Canada barrier-free by January 1, 2040. This involves identifying, removing and preventing barriers in federal jurisdiction in the following priority areas:

- employment;
- the built environment (buildings and public spaces);
- information and communication technologies;
- communication, other than information and communication technologies;
- the procurement of goods, services and facilities;
- the design and delivery of programs and services; and
- transportation (airlines, as well as rail, road and marine transportation providers that cross provincial or international borders).

## 3.3 *Accessible Canada Act* consultations

To inform the development of the *Accessible Canada Act*, in 2016 to 2017 the Government of Canada undertook the largest and most accessible consultation on disability issues that Canada has ever seen. Over 6000 Canadians and over 90 organizations shared their ideas about an accessible Canada. Participants wanted the legislation to apply to all areas under the control of the Government of Canada and that Canada should become a leader in accessibility. While participants acknowledged that the development and implementation of some standards will take longer than others, they noted guidance should be clear and any accessibility requirements should lead to positive lasting change.

The “nothing without us” principle means that people with disabilities are engaged and involved in the identification, prevention, and removal of barriers. This also means consulting and working closely with people with disabilities, diverse disability communities and other experts to develop accessibility guidance to remove barriers. The principle of “nothing without us” drives everything we do at Accessibility Standards Canada, including relying on the knowledge and experiences of people with disabilities in the development of accessibility guidance.

## 3.4 Key *Accessible Canada Act* principles

The *Act* is to be implemented in recognition of, and in accordance with, the following principles:

- everyone must be treated with dignity;
- everyone must have the same opportunity to make for themselves the life they are able and wish to have;
- everyone must be able to participate fully and equally in society;
- everyone must have meaningful options and be free to make their own choices, with support if they desire;
- laws, policies, programs, services, and structures must take into account the ways that different kinds of barriers and discrimination intersect;
- persons with disabilities must be involved in the development and design of laws, policies, programs, services, and structures; and
- accessibility standards and regulations must be made with the goal of achieving the highest level of accessibility.

## 3.5 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Canada joined the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2010. The United Nations Convention protects and promotes the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities without discrimination, and on an equal basis with others. Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities are required to promote and ensure the full enjoyment of human rights of persons with disabilities including full equality under the law. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has served as the major catalyst in the global movement towards viewing persons with disabilities as full and equal members of society. The human rights approach has moved away from viewing persons with disabilities as subjects of charity, medical treatment and social protection. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the *Canadian Human Rights Act* were foundational human rights frameworks that support equity on which the *Accessible Canada Act* was built.

# 4 Definitions

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The following definitions apply to terms used within this technical guide:

**Accessible-ready modular home** – a modular home designed and built so that accessibility features can be added in the future without major reconstruction.

**Accessible-ready design process** – the design process used to incorporate accessible-ready features into a modular home.

**Design for accessible-ready (DAR)** – the documentation package that identifies where and how the accessible-ready features are incorporated and how the home can be modified later.

**Factory** – the off-site facility where modules or panels are fabricated.

**Home alterations** – any remodeling, renovating, modifying, or reconstructing work performed on an existing residence.

**Modular home** – a type of prefabricated housing in which the building is produced as three-dimensional (volumetric), partially or fully enclosed modules manufactured off-site, transported to the site, and assembled/connected to form the completed dweilling.

**Prefabricated module** – an open or closed building subassembly constructed off-site for use as part of a modular home.

**Prefabricated housing (prefab/factory-built housing)** – a housing construction approach in which building elements are manufactured off-site in a factory or controlled environment, ranging from panels (e.g., walls, floors, roofs) to volumetric units — and then transported to the site for installation and assembly. This includes panelized housing and manufactured homes.

# 5 Understanding accessible-ready modular and prefabricated housing

**Note:** This document was developed as a reference document for voluntary use. The voluntary guidance found in this document should not be interpreted as replacing or superseding, in whole or in part, obligations that entities must comply with. Also, fulfilling the voluntary guidance found in this document does not automatically fulfill obligations. These obligations include any obligations found in legislation, regulations, policies, directives, codes and/or other instruments that may apply to entities. It is the responsibility of users of this document to judge its suitability for their particular purpose.

## 5.1 What are accessible-ready modular and prefabricated housing?

Accessible-ready modular and prefabricated housing. They are designed so that accessibility features, such as manoeuvring areas at doorways, reconfigured bathrooms, or installation of lifts, can be added later without major reconstruction.

The goal is to ensure homes can adapt to occupants' needs over time, promoting long-term usability and their independence.

To meet this guidance, start by:

- Identifying which parts of the dwelling must be accessible-ready for future modification.
- Showing all accessible-ready zones and features clearly on drawings (plans, sections, and details).

- Designing structure, systems, and room layouts to support future accessibility upgrades.

## 5.2 Intended users

This guide is intended for:

- Architects and architectural designers
- Structural, mechanical, and electrical engineers
- Builders and installation contractors
- Housing providers, developers, and agencies responsible for design quality
- Modular and prefabricated housing manufacturers
- Anyone responsible for ensuring accessible design outcomes in modular or prefabricated housing projects
- People with disabilities who are interested in planning for their future in their own home

**Note:** When accessible-ready information must be communicated to manufacturers or installers, designers should include it in design submissions and project documentation.

# 6 Scope and limits

## 6.1 Scope

This guide provides accessibility focused design guidance for new modular and prefabricated housing that are intended to be accessible-ready.

It supports design and construction teams in planning and documenting accessible-ready provisions so future accessibility modifications can be completed without significant reconstruction.

For the purpose of this technical guide, the term “modular housing” will refer to all types of prefabricated and factory-built housing.

This guide does not apply to:

- Homes that are not modular or prefabricated housing.
- Dwellings that fall outside of the modular and prefabricated housing construction definitions used in this guide.
- Regulatory interpretation or enforcement, which remains the responsibility of Authorities Having Jurisdiction (AHJs).

## 6.2 Limits

Modular and prefabricated housing rely on pre-designed modules and panels.

Module dimensions, connection locations, and transportation tolerances can affect how easily accessible-ready features can be added later.

To meet this guidance, start by:

- Identifying structural or dimensional limits that may affect accessible-ready layouts.
- Avoiding placement of accessible-ready circulation routes directly across rigid module joints.

- Using framed openings or alternative detailing where accessible-ready zones must align across modules.

**Note:** Follow manufacturer installation and connection instructions. This guide supplements (or can guide) those instructions by identifying accessible-ready design process considerations.

# 7 Accessible-ready housing (CAN-ASC-2.8:2025)

The Accessible-Ready Housing Standard (CAN-ASC-2.8:2025) outlines core concepts that support dwellings designed for future accessibility without extensive reconstruction. These concepts include:

- planning for flexible layouts,
- considering where structural and service elements are located, and
- documenting features that may be adapted or upgraded over time.

While this guide provides technical guidance that is specific to new modular and prefabricated housing construction of new houses, many of its ideas draw from the broader accessible-ready approach described in the CAN-ASC-2.8:2025 standard.

Reviewing the standard alongside this guide can help designers better understand the purpose behind accessible-ready features and how they contribute to long-term usability, design for accessible-ready (DAR), and occupant independence.

Using both resources together is required to provide a complete picture of how accessible-ready principles function in different housing types and how these approaches can be consistently applied within modular and prefabricated housing design.

The CAN-ASC-2.8:2025 standard also offers context that may assist in interpreting certain design decisions, particularly where accessibility benefits extend beyond modular and prefabricated construction.

The CAN-ASC-2.8:2025 standard is complementary to this guide. It provides important background information and is the foundation of this guide. This allows for a greater understanding of the reasoning behind much of the modular and prefabricated housing-specific technical guidance to follow.

# 8 Design for accessible-ready (DAR)

## 8.1 Documentation of accessible-ready design process

DAR documentation explains where and how the modular and prefabricated housing can be modified in the future to add accessibility features.

It provides owners, designers, and future contractors with a durable record of accessible-ready provisions.

To meet this guidance, start by:

- Preparing DAR drawings that identify accessible-ready walls, routes, chases, reinforcements, and openings.
- Completing a DAR summary form referencing drawings, specifications, and notes on how each accessible-ready requirement is achieved (See Annex A).
- Including the DAR package in design submissions and retaining it in project and owner records.

**Note:** DAR documentation reduces uncertainty during future renovations and supports the preservation of accessibility potential.

## 8.2 Purpose

Clear documentation is required to demonstrate how accessible-ready features are incorporated. This enables future accessibility modifications to occur without intrusive reconstruction.

To meet this guidance, start by:

- Considering how structure, services, and layouts can support accessible-ready configurations.
- Locating reinforcements, chases, and structural elements so they can be used without modification during future upgrades.
- Verifying that circulation spaces meet, or can be changed to meet, accessibility requirements.

**Note:** Accessibility readiness is achieved through early planning. The cost and feasibility of future adaptations depend on decisions made during design and manufacturing.

## 8.3 Integrating accessible-ready provisions

Design documentation should include coordinated drawings and details that illustrate how accessible-ready features are implemented.

To meet this guidance, start by:

- Providing floor plans showing accessible-ready room layouts and circulation routes.
- Producing structural drawings identifying load-bearing and non-load-bearing walls.
- Producing structural drawings identifying structural floor framing with any provisions for future openings (e.g. elevator shaft).
- Providing MEP (Mechanical, Electrical, and Plumbing) layouts for services, HVAC ductwork, plumbing, etc.
- Showing vertical and horizontal service chase locations.
- Providing details for reinforcement or backing required for future lifts, grab bars, or ceiling tracks.

- Completing the DAR Summary Form.

**Note:** Coordination across disciplines ensures accessible-ready features are continuous and conflict free. For example, a lack of coordination between HVAC and plumbing could result in a conflict in routing and an unexpected bulkhead.

## 8.4 As-built records and retention

Accurate as-built documentation ensures that future designers can rely on the accessible-ready provisions incorporated into the completed home.

To meet this guidance, start by:

- Recording any deviations from the designed accessible-ready provisions.
- Updating the DAR drawings and form to reflect as-built conditions if deviations occur.
- Providing the updated DAR package to the owner and retaining it in the project file.

# 9 Interior structural design

## 9.1 Load-bearing walls

Modular and prefabricated construction may require, for fabrication, transportation, or installation purposes, the construction of interior load-bearing walls, doubled walls, or other interior load-bearing structures.

Interior load-bearing walls should be minimized to maintain accessible-ready flexibility for future layout changes.

Structural systems should support open planning and accessible circulation routes.

To meet this guidance, start by:

- Concentrating structural loads at perimeter walls or structural cores.
- Selecting framing systems that reduce the need for interior load-bearing partitions (e.g., post and beam designs).
- Avoiding placement of services within walls designated as accessible-ready.
- Clearly identifying all load-bearing and non-load bearing walls in the structural drawings.

**Note:** Where interior load-bearing walls are unavoidable, document any implications for future accessible-ready reconfiguration. For example, if a load-bearing wall intersects a potential future accessible circulation route, a post and beam system may be used to create an opening that can accommodate future accessibility needs.

# 10 Service chases

Service chases contain plumbing, electrical, and mechanical runs. Proper planning of their size and placement ensures they remain accessible for maintenance and design for accessible-ready.

Service chases support long-term maintainability of the MEP systems, and increase the flexibility for future retrofits, including future accessibility upgrades.

To meet this guidance, start by:

- Designing service routes early to avoid accessible-ready walls.
- Identifying chase locations and clear zones on the DAR drawings.
- Reviewing the layout to confirm that services will not limit future accessibility upgrades.

**Note:** For example, positioning the main plumbing stack of a bathroom so it does not conflict with an adjacent non-load-bearing partition allows that wall to be moved later. This makes it easier to create an accessible bathroom layout in the future.

## 10.1 Vertical service chases

Vertical chases should be consolidated and documented to support maintenance and design for accessible-ready.

To meet this guidance, start by:

- Grouping vertical services into one or two main chase locations per floor.
- Ensuring chases are large enough for inspection and future upgrades.

- Locating chases in non-accessible-ready areas such as closets or utility rooms.
- Providing removable access panels or hatches.
- Ensuring that vertical chases intersect with at least one, and ideally all, horizontal service chases.
- Documenting chase dimensions and locations in the DAR package.

**Note:** Accessible chases allow future system upgrades or replacements without major demolition or disruption to occupants.

## 10.2 Horizontal service chases

Horizontal chases distribute services throughout each floor. Their placement must maintain the design for accessible-ready process of adjacent spaces.

To meet this guidance, start by:

- Coordinating service routing with floor structure and connection points between modules.
- Providing access openings in the floor or ceilings where chases are concealed.
- Aligning and intersecting horizontal chases with vertical ones between stacked modules.
- Recording chase routes and access points in the DAR documentation.

**Note:** Accurate documentation of horizontal chase locations ensures that future trades can locate and modify systems safely and efficiently.

# 11 Module and panel design

Connections, structural systems, pre-wiring, and service routing in modular and prefabricated housing should be planned so that design for accessible-ready process and accessibility is maintained throughout the life of the dwelling. Each design decision should anticipate how the building can later be modified without requiring extensive reconstruction.

## 11.1 Connection design

Connections between modules or panels should support both structural performance and design for accessible-ready process.

Proper detailing allows future adjustments without compromising safety or appearance.

To meet this guidance, start by:

- Locating joints away from accessible-ready circulation routes when possible.
- Using framed openings or continuous finish detailing where accessible-ready zones must cross joints.
- Using fasteners and seals that can be removed and reinstated without damage.
- Documenting all connection locations and types clearly on drawings.

**Note:** Connection details may permit disassembly for maintenance or modification while maintaining strength and weather protection.

## 11.2 Pre-wiring of electrical cables

Electrical provisions can simplify future accessibility upgrades such as powered doors or controls.

To meet this guidance, start by:

- Providing conduit routes or capped junction boxes for potential future powered devices.
- Labelling each capped junction box and identifying it on the electrical drawings.
- Avoiding concealed wiring in panels that may require future modification.
- Including a recorded summary of pre-wired locations within the DAR documentation.

**Note:** Pre-wiring simplifies future installations. It allows powered equipment such as a lift or power-assisted door to be connected without new wall penetrations or surface-mounted conduits.

## 11.3 Routing of mechanical and electrical systems

Service routing should be done thoughtfully as to minimize the impact on the accessible-ready provisions of modular and prefabricated housing.

To meet this guidance, start by:

- Routing systems through designated vertical and horizontal service chases shown on accessible-ready drawings.
- Keeping services out of non-load-bearing walls identified as accessible-ready where possible.
- Documenting all routing in the DAR package.

**Note:** Proper service routing avoids interference with adaptable spaces. It ensures that future modification, such as lifts, grab bars, or removal of non-load-bearing wall segments, can be achieved without rerouting building systems.

## 11.4 Transportation and installation considerations

Modular and prefabricated housing can face unique layout restrictions because of segmentation requirements due to transportation limits on panel sizes.

Careful consideration should be given to ensuring that transportation and installation-related restrictions do not interfere with future accessible-ready modifications; be it via misalignment, mislocated services, or disruption of open spaces required for accessibility.

To meet this guidance, start by:

- Where adaptable areas align with joints, incorporating framed openings or continuous floor detailing to maintain accessibility potential.
- Accounting for dimensional tolerances between modules to preserve the alignment of accessible-ready spaces.
- Confirming that installation sequencing will not limit access to chases or accessible-ready areas.

**Note:** Transportation-related tolerances can affect ceiling and floor alignment. Detailing connection joints to protect adaptable areas ensures accessibility can be implemented without structural or major cosmetic rework.

# 12 Accessible-ready modular housing documentation

Proper documentation confirms that a modular or prefabricated home has been designed to be accessible-ready and records how this readiness is achieved.

DAR documentation includes both written forms and drawings to guide future adaptation work.

## 12.1 Accessible-ready housing form

The accessible-ready housing form provides a summary of how each provision is met and references the corresponding drawings or specifications.

To meet this guidance, start by:

- Completing a form to show where accessible-ready provisions have been incorporated in the design.
- Cross-referencing each item with drawings, specifications sections, and construction details.
- Including a brief note explaining how the feature is achieved.
- Retaining the completed form with the project documentation.
- Including the form with the CSA A277 documentation requirements.

## 12.2 Accessibility drawings

Accessibility drawings identify adaptable elements and form part of the accessible-ready documentation set.

They support the design verification and future adaptation by visually showing where and how spaces can be modified.

To meet this guidance, start by:

- Clearly marking adaptable walls, chases, and connection points on architectural and structural drawings.
- Using consistent symbols and legends to distinguish accessible-ready features.
- Including fixture layouts, finishes, and fittings to illustrate retrofit conditions.
- Including these drawings in permit submissions and record documentation.
- Including the drawings with the CSA A277 documentation requirements.

# 13 Annex A: Sample accessible-ready housing form

| Section | Feature | Compliance method<br><br>(i.e., specify how and if a feature is achieved by a method other than design requirements, or if the design requirement approach is used. If so, specify whether the design requirement is provided in a drawing set or in text form in this table.) | Design |
|---|---|---|---|
| 9.1 | Accessible-ready provisions for module transportation restrictions | Example: DAR paths are not along module connections, except for a designated opening designed into the module wall to provide accessible circulation. | Example: a framed in opening is provided at the module connection point to provide a future accessible path of travel between rooms. This is documented with an |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | accompanying drawing. |
| 10.1 | Routing and installation of mechanical and electrical systems | Example: Mechanical and electrical systems are routed out of the way of future lift and accessible path of travel locations. This is documented in the DAR package. | Example: A vertical service chase is designed adjacent to a structural post from the utility room in the basement to the main floor. |
| 11.1 | Module and panel connections | Example: Design and performance requirement – Drawing PC01.<br>(Detail Drawing is provided outlining method for panel disconnection or modification for the purposes of achieving an accessible space.) | Example: Panel connections are designed and positioned to be readily accessible and simple to operate, enabling panels to be attached or detached from the module with minimal disruption. |
| 11.2 | Pre-wiring of electrical cables | Example: Wiring is provided for the future installation of a power door. This is documented in the DAR package to be used in guiding future retrofits. | Example: A separate circuit for power doors is roughed into the electrical panel. Junction boxes are provided capped designated future locations for power doors. |

# 14 Links to other accessibility standards and resources

- **Accessibility Standards Canada.** (2025, May). CAN-ASC–2.8:2025 Accessible-Ready Housing https://accessible.canada.ca/creating-accessibility-standards/can-asc-282025-accessible-ready-housing

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