

DOB Proposes Nine Interim Changes to the 2001 Chicago Plumbing Code to Facilitate Affordable Housing and Economic Recovery

The Department of Buildings (DOB) is committed to convening a robust stakeholder advisory group to propose a comprehensive update to the Chicago Plumbing Code, based on an up-to-date model plumbing code, as part of Phase 3 of the *Modernizing Chicago's Construction Codes* initiative. Because this effort has been delayed by COVID-19, DOB is recommending several interim amendments to the 2001 Chicago Plumbing Code to better coordinate with the 2019 Building Code and immediately facilitate affordable housing and economic recovery.

1. Expand allowance for PVC drain pipes for residential uses in low- and mid-rise buildings based on data from 4-year pilot program.

Allowed uses of PVC (plastic) drain pipes will be expanded to cover residential uses in buildings up to 60 feet in height (approximately 5 stories), including residential portions of mixed-use buildings. This change is expected to provide significant cost savings for residential construction and rehabilitation work based on data from a pilot program run by DOB from 2017 to 2021.

2. Adopt provisions for optional all-gender restrooms.

Single-user toilet room signage requirements will be updated based on recent changes in Illinois law, and optional provisions for all gender restrooms with private toilet stalls and shared sinks, based on best practices recently adopted in Denver and Vancouver, will be incorporated.

3. Align terminology in requirements for minimum number of plumbing fixtures with the 2019 Chicago Building Code and standardize requirements for very small occupancies.

As a transitional measure, terminology in requirements establishing the minimum number of required plumbing fixtures will be made consistent with terminology used in the 2019 Chicago Building Code. Small businesses and restaurants (with fewer than 30 occupants) will be allowed to provide a single restroom.

4. Align requirements for protecting sewer system from grease with national standards.

Requirements for pre-treatment of grease-laden waste from commercial food service establishments will be updated to reflect the latest technical standards, allowing businesses to comply using off-the-shelf products. Requirements for catch basins in multifamily residential buildings, which are not based on current science, will be eliminated.

5. Clarify requirements for water-conserving plumbing fixtures.

Inconsistent water usage requirements for different types of plumbing fixtures will be clarified based on federal regulations and previous legislation that requires new plumbing fixtures to be certified under the EPA's WaterSense program, where applicable.

6. Strengthen and clarify requirements to protect drinking water.

Chicago's commitment to enforcing lead-free standards in new water lines and plumbing fixtures will be restated in clearer language. Methods allowed for joining copper pipe and connecting faucets and appliances to the building plumbing with short lengths of flexible hose will also be clarified.

7. Update technical standards for plumbing fixtures, consistent with Illinois Plumbing Code and 2021 *International Plumbing Code*.

Technical standards for plumbing fixtures such as faucets, toilets, and showers will be updated to reflect the latest national product safety and performance standards so that newer products are fully recognized without confusion or the need for variances.

8. Align requirements for public swimming pools with 2014 Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) regulations.

Provisions that are inconsistent with state swimming pool regulations adopted in 2014 will be eliminated. Provisions for private residential pools (not regulated by the state) will also have inconsistent provisions removed.

9. Streamline administration of trade licenses.

DOB will be given full responsibility for licensing and disciplining both plumbing contractors and drainlayers. City-licensed plumbing contractors will be authorized to perform drain repair without paying an additional license fee.