

MEDIA RELEASE

Enhancements for Accessibility Fund, S\$20 million available to support more building owners in Universal Design (UD) upgrading works

- *Funding eligibility expanded to include buildings already fitted with accessibility features to support further UD upgrades*
- *Extension of funding support until March 2027 for non-barrier free buildings to upgrade with basic accessibility features*
- *From early 2023, basic accessibility upgrades for existing commercial and institutional buildings without accessibility features will be mandatory when any addition and alteration works are carried out*

Monday, 1 August 2022 – The Building and Construction Authority (BCA) is accelerating the pace of accessibility upgrading for buildings and the built environment through incentives, legislation and community partnerships. These initiatives complement the vision of a more inclusive Singapore that will be charted in the next Enabling Masterplan¹, EMP2030.

Enhancement and Extension of Accessibility Fund²

2 The Accessibility Fund (AF) is an incentive scheme that provides funding support to building owners who undertake upgrading works to improve the inclusiveness of their buildings. Since its inception in 2007, the AF has supported accessibility upgrading in more than 150 buildings, with about S\$20 million still available. BCA will enhance the AF by expanding the eligibility criteria to include buildings that have already been fitted with basic accessibility features.³ This is to

¹ The Enabling Masterplans are roadmaps for the government and the community to work together, to support persons with disabilities (PwDs). More information is available on Ministry of Social and Family development's website: go.gov.sg/emp3site

² Since its inception in 2007, more than 150 buildings have tapped on the AF to better cater to their patrons, staff and visitors, including persons with disabilities (PwDs) and the elderly. More information on the AF is available on the BCA website: go.gov.sg/bcaud-af

³ The AF was initially available only to buildings built prior to the implementation of basic accessibility requirements in 1990. Under the enhanced AF, buildings built between 1990 and the implementation of the Code on Accessibility in the Built Environment 2013, i.e. 1 April 2014, will be eligible for funding to support the implementation of UD features.

encourage building owners to voluntarily upgrade their buildings with more UD features such as grab bars for the elderly, child-friendly toilets and lactation rooms, to improve support for the needs of the elderly, families with young children and nursing mothers. Building owners can receive up to S\$100,000 to fund these upgrades.

3 BCA will also continue to accept applications for funding support for accessibility upgrading in older, non-barrier free buildings until end March 2027. In addition, an interim payment⁴ option is now available to better support building owners to meet their cashflow needs for costlier accessibility upgrading works involving lifts.

4 A beneficiary of the AF is Panasonic Factory Solutions Asia Pacific Pte. Ltd. (PFSAP). HR General Manager, Ms. Celia Quek shared, “We have tapped on the AF to put in place a toilet, passenger lift and car park lot for persons with disabilities, as well as ramps and a nursing room at our company’s premises. We believe that the accessibility and universal design upgrade is of utmost necessity as it allows us to tap on a larger employment pool such as senior workers or people with disabilities. We can also better support nursing mothers who are returning back to the workplace after their maternity leave.”

5 Minister of State, Ministry of Home Affairs & Ministry of National Development, Dr Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim said, “Singapore is progressively becoming a more inclusive society, making provisions to allow our people with different needs to carry out their daily activities and integrate fully into society. We can do more by having accessibility features integrated into our existing buildings. I encourage building owners to tap on the AF and make good use of the funding support to make their buildings barrier-free.”

Mandatory Basic Accessibility Upgrading for Existing Inaccessible Buildings

6 To further accelerate accessibility upgrading in older buildings, BCA will require the owners of existing commercial or institutional buildings which are not barrier-free to put in place basic accessibility features when any addition and alteration works are carried out within their building.⁵ BCA will implement this requirement in early 2023.

7 BCA’s Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Kelvin Wong said, “We want to provide the necessary basic infrastructure to support not just individual patrons, but also business owners looking to tap onto a wider pool of talents. A study⁶ in 2018 has shown that companies championing accessibility see 28% greater annual revenue and a profit

⁴ This one-time interim payment will be available to buildings that undergo accessibility upgrading projects with a minimum value of \$200,000 which involve lift installation works.

⁵ Existing commercial or institutional buildings with gross floor area of more than 500sqm carrying out addition and alteration works and which are required to put in place basic accessibility features under the new requirement, will not be eligible for the AF for basic accessibility upgrading works. The AF is meant to support voluntary efforts from the industry.

⁶ Research findings from Accenture’s Getting to Equal 2018: The Disability Inclusion Advantage report

margin 30% higher than their peers. And in Singapore, we want to be an enabler for them.”

Improving Accessibility of Public Spaces Through Community Partnerships

8 Some public spaces in between buildings and infrastructure still pose challenges for persons with disabilities (PwDs). BCA has been working with Our Accessible City@CBD (Raffles Place), a community partnership comprising representatives from the PwD community, built environment sector, social service agencies and the public sector, to identify issues, co-create solutions and enhance the accessibility of public spaces.

9 Co-lead of Our Accessible City@CBD, Ar. Michael Ngu said, “I am pleased to co-chair the Community Partnership initiative for this project with many talented individuals. Through an open collaborative framework to work with public, private and non-profit organisations, we are able to collectively identify key challenges, prioritise and co-develop solutions to improve accessibility in Raffles Place, Singapore’s prominent financial city center. This is indeed a key milestone towards building a more inclusive and sustainable Singapore.”

10 The efforts of Our Accessible City@CBD have resulted in accessibility improvements at Raffles Place, such as better way-finding signage and connectivity between buildings. Efforts are still ongoing – accessibility site survey sessions were conducted in May and June 2022 to gather feedback from community partners and PwD representatives on the suggested accessible routes and solutions, which will facilitate the subsequent discussion on the development of the accessibility plan for Raffles Place.

Issued by the Building and Construction Authority on 1 August 2022

Annex A – Factsheet on accessibility and user-friendliness of the Built Environment

About BCA

The Building and Construction Authority (BCA) champions the development and transformation of the built environment sector, in order to improve Singapore’s living environment. BCA oversees areas such as safety, quality, inclusiveness, sustainability and productivity, all of which, together with our stakeholders and industry partners, help to achieve our mission to transform the Built Environment sector and shape a liveable and smart built environment for Singapore. For more information, visit www1.bca.gov.sg.

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Annex A

FACTSHEET ON ACCESSIBILITY AND USER-FRIENDLINESS OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

1. Approximately 25% of the Singapore population will be aged 65 or older by 2030.⁷ It is therefore important to make Singapore an inclusive and age-friendly city, where people of all ages and abilities can move freely and participate in all aspects of life. Accessibility in the Built Environment (BE) is a key enabler, through the following key strategies:

- a. Ensure minimum accessibility standards;
- b. Drive accessibility upgrading for existing buildings;
- c. Improve accessibility of public spaces; and
- d. Promote universal design (UD)⁸ adoption.

A. Ensuring Minimum Standards through Code on Accessibility

2. BCA introduced the Code on Barrier-free Accessibility in Buildings in 1990 to promote the development of barrier-free buildings for wheelchair users. Since then, all new buildings and existing buildings that undertake addition and alteration (A&A) works are required to meet the requirements of the prevailing Code.⁹ The Code has undergone several reviews (about once every 5 years), with its scope progressively expanded to include UD principles to better meet the changing needs of the population. For instance, the recent versions of the Code take into consideration the needs of other persons with disabilities (PwDs) beyond wheelchair users.

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

- a. Accessible changing room for selected building types, to support adults with disabilities and elderly persons who may need the help of caregivers;¹⁰
- b. Larger accessible toilet for selected building types, to cater to users of motorised wheelchairs which require larger manoeuvring spaces;
- c. More accessible parking lots in hospitals;
- d. Provision of non-breakable mirror/mirror-like finishes at the back of the lift car to allow visual feedback for wheelchair users when reversing into the lift lobby; and
- e. Lactation room to be provided in more building types.

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

⁷ Source: Singapore Department of Statistics), Population in Brief 2021.

⁸ UD refers to “design for all”. In the context of the built environment, it seeks to create more inclusive building infrastructure that addresses the needs of all age groups (e.g. families with young children and infants, elderly persons) and persons with varying abilities (e.g. wheelchair users, ambulant disabled, those with visual/hearing impairments) to the greatest extent possible.

⁹ Currently, for existing buildings, the Code requirements only apply to areas of the building undergoing major A&A works.

¹⁰ The purpose of an accessible changing room is to facilitate the cleaning up and changing of adult diapers.

B. Driving Accessibility Upgrading for Existing Buildings

Incentivising Voluntary Upgrading of Private Sector Buildings

5. To improve the accessibility of pre-1990 privately-owned buildings, BCA introduced the \$40 million Accessibility Fund (AF) in 2007 to incentivise building owners to carry out voluntary upgrading. **The AF co-funds up to 80% of the construction cost for basic accessibility features¹¹, and up to 60% of the construction cost for UD features¹².**

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

7. An interim payment option¹³ is now available for projects with a minimum value of \$200,000 and involving lift installation works. This one-time interim payment can be claimed at any point during the project, which will help building owners address cashflow challenges for costlier accessibility upgrading works.

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

Requiring Existing Buildings Undergoing A&A to Provide Basic Accessibility

9. To accelerate accessibility upgrading in older buildings, BCA will require existing commercial and institutional (C&I) buildings without basic accessibility features to provide these when undertaking A&A works, regardless of where such works are carried out in the building.¹⁴ These features generally refer to an accessible building entrance, an accessible route within the entrance level and an accessible toilet. The requirement will apply to C&I buildings with Gross Floor Area (GFA) of more than 500 sqm.

10. The requirement will take effect from early 2023.

¹¹ Basic accessibility features include (i) ramps/lifts to provide entry into the building and within the entrance level, (ii) accessible toilet, and (iii) signage to provide directions to the accessibility features.

¹² Universal Design features include (i) elder-friendly features such as additional grab bars, (ii) family-friendly features such as child-friendly sanitary facilities, lactation rooms, diaper-changing stations, and (iii) features for persons with visual/hearing impairment such as hearing enhancement systems, braille/tactile features.

¹³This is applicable only for pre-1990 private buildings that are not affected by the basic accessibility requirements under the Building Control Act 1989.

¹⁴ Buildings that are not subject to this requirement can still tap on the Accessibility Fund for the installation of basic accessibility features, if they meet the eligibility criteria for funding. This will include buildings of other types (e.g. residential, industrial).

C. Improving Accessibility of Public Spaces

Improving Accessibility through Community Partnerships

11. Our Accessible City @ Raffles Place is a pilot community partnership that aims to improve accessibility at the Raffles Place precinct and facilitate inclusive employment¹⁵. The community partnership, which started in January 2020, is co-led by Ar. Michael Ngu (CE of Architects 61 Pte Ltd, who is also a practising architect and a PwD) and BCA, with members comprising representatives from the BE sector, public sector and social service agencies (SSAs) (see Appendix A). Through a community-driven, 3P approach, the community partnership will identify challenges with accessibility and inter-connectivity, prioritise needs, and co-develop solutions with agencies to address these gaps. Completed/ongoing efforts include:

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

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

13. As announced by Minister Desmond Lee at the launch of CaringSG in November 2021, these three pilots will form the backbone of the Accessible City Network, an alliance of community partnerships that brings together the public, private and people sectors to enhance the accessibility of public spaces.

¹⁵ In July 2019, the Disabled People's Association (DPA) – a non-profit organisation – conducted an accessibility mapping exercise in Raffles Place which surfaced accessibility issues that PwDs working in the CBD area face on a daily basis. Besides the lack of basic accessibility in some pre-1990 buildings, there is also a need to improve the interconnectivity between buildings and the surrounding amenities (e.g. public transport infrastructure, F&B outlets).

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

The objectives of the community partnership are to:

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

List of Members

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