

HOUSING AUTHORITY of BALTIMORE CITY

Building on Our Strengths, Investing in Our Future

Housing Choice Voucher Program

Evaluation of bedrooms/dens in assessment of residential properties

Bedrooms - A bedroom by definition is a private room or chamber to accommodate sleeping of at least one person. There is no minimum square foot requirement. However, as a general rule approximately 70 square feet is considered a base line, but no bedroom should be smaller than 60 square feet. All bedrooms must have access directly from public spaces through a door that has at a minimum a passage lockset. All bedrooms must have exposure to the exterior with a functioning window. Rooms with a skylight and no functioning window will not be considered bedrooms. All bedrooms must have adequate electrical service.

Basements

A bedroom can only be located in the basement if all the conditions cited above exist as well as the following:

- 1) There must be four season controlled air through properly functioning HVAC system.
- 2) There must be an unobstructed window with allowable light through 75% of the masonry opening.
- 3) There must be a minimum ceiling height of 84" clear headroom. Structural obstructions (beams, ventilation, piping, soffits, etc.) must be limited to less than 30% of the square footage of the ceiling and cannot protrude below 76".

Dens – A den by definition is a public multi-purpose room and is not intended to be a private chamber or bedroom. Its uses are but not limited to - family room, play room, library, study or home office. The minimum square footage requirements are at the discretion of the Inspections Manager. Dens can have electrical service and direct exposure to sunlight by window and/or doors. Absence of these amenities does not automatically qualify the space to be a den. The following conditions shall be evaluated when assessing whether space should be considered a den:

- 1) All spaces in the footprint of the building must be assessed as part of the residence. A room cannot be blocked off and not counted as part of the residence regardless of the previous use of that space.
- 2) Conversion of an existing bedroom cannot be done to create a den.
- 3) Blocking a window to create a "non-lighted" room does not create a den.
- 4) Removing outlets or replacing outlet plates with blank covers does not create a den.
- 5) Removing a door to create a "non-private" space does not create a den.
- 6) Removing a ceiling fixture does not create a den.
- 7) A den cannot be a private room.

"As built" dens are permitted and can be assessed as an amenity if the following conditions apply:

- 1) It may or may not have direct access to the exterior (either window or door).
- 2) It may or may not have electrical outlets.
- 3) It must be a permanent public space.

A structural redesign can create a den if the following conditions exist:

- 1) The space must be a public space prior to the HQS inspection.
- 2) If a door existed, the door, the casing and jamb must all be removed; all adjacent walls must be re-finished and public access must be created.
- 3) If the windows are removed, there must be permanent blockage of the window and this includes removal of the window, framing, sill and a permanent treatment to the exterior and skin of the building.
- 4) If electrical outlets are removed, all wiring to the breaker panel must be removed as well.

If there is any doubt in the assessment of residential living spaces, the inspector will discuss specific conditions with the manager of inspections.