Building Code Issues

2013 The Year of yet Another Code Change

Steven R Winkel, FAIA, CASp
The PREVIEW Group, Inc.
Architects providing regulatory solutions

Kerwin says:

This coming year we will see a new edition, the 2013, of the California Building Code (CBC) issued. All of the proposed changes are in place and the Building Standards Commission (BSC) is ready to approve the 2013 edition of Title 24. Publication of this document is expected in July 2013 with an expected effective date of January 2014. This new edition of the CBC is based on the 2012 International Building Code (IBC).

Some of the changes are coming from the International Code Conference (ICC) and the national level. The State continues to refine and adjust their amendments to the IBC. The biggest exception will continue to be Chapter 11B, Disabled Access for Public Accommodations. The Division of the State Architect Access Compliance (DSA-AC) decided to try to make Chapter 11B better. Earlier in the year an online survey was made to see which of three options people wanted: 1) leave Chapter 11B as is, 2) Adopt Chapter 11 of the IBC or 3) Adopt the 2010 Standards of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). The last two options would include bringing forward and incorporating any State amendments. The survey ended up with 65% wanting option 3, adopting the 2010 Standards.

What people really wanted was a single document for compliance with the requirements for disabled access, not a Chapter 11A, Chapter 11B, ADA and the Fair Housing Act (FHA). Only the adoption of the IBC Chapter 11 would have brought us closer to a single chapter/document. We will continue to have Chapter 11A/Dwellings, Chapter 11B/Public Accommodations and both the ADA and the FHA to deal with.

What will we see when the code is published is that Chapter 11B will look like the 2010 ADA Standards format, which is totally different from what we have today. The format is the same as ANSI A-117.1 for the IBC. The document has been amended to death. The basic rules for writing the new Chapter 11B were to use the 2010 Standard as the model and bring forward any State amendments. The more restrictive would be maintained.

There are a lot of good things to be found in the new document. Dimensional tolerances with maximums and minimums along with ranges are found throughout. Also, there will be a “Safe Harbor” clause related to the 2010 California Building Code (CBC). Anything that complies with the 2010 edition of code will not be required to change to comply with the 2013 code. This is the first time the State has recognized this. This comes from the ADA, where anything that complies with the original Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) need not be changed to comply with the 2010 Standards. The key to this is going to be documentation by the architect or owner that what has been installed did comply with the previous applicable document(s). Remember that compliance with the 2010 Standards for the ADA are now/already in effect.

The following are some of the other major changes to keep in mind and be ready to apply:

- All definitions are moved to Chapter 2.
- Backup fire pump for high-rise buildings.
- Smoke alarms (detectors) are required to have 10-year batteries and the units need to be replaced every 10-years.
- New set of requirements (about 15-pages, Section 1226) for Office of Statewide Health Planning Development (OSHPD)-3/Clinic Buildings. This is to align with Medicare/Medicaid requirements for room sizes and types.

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**Members & Firm News**

**Stept to open new firm**

Steven Stept, AIA, formerly of Swatt I Miers Architects, announces the formation of a new firm: AXEL-ROD + STEPT ARCHITECTS. The new firm is based in San Francisco and Tel Aviv. He can be reached at steven@axelrodstept.com and 415/777-2529

**Local Projects Highlighted in Greenbuild Tours**

Siegel and Strain announces its participation in part of this year’s Greenbuild tour schedule. Our award-winning Portola Valley Town Center project is part of the full day tour. Another project, the David Brower Center, is on the half day Berkeley Walking Tour. Siegel & Strain served as Green Materials & LEED Consultants to Solomon Design Partners on the Brower Center project. For more information about these and other projects, please visit their website at www.siegelstrain.com.

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The study asked the question:

How can the AIA evolve with the changing needs of the architecture profession while maintaining its core values, beliefs, and offerings?

And a number of environmental impacts were identified:

- Architects are generally perceived favorably, but are seen as expensive...their value is not widely understood.
- Americans have low interaction with architects versus other professions...contributing to their lack of awareness (only 8% of the population will interact with an architect on a professional level).
- While a slim majority of licensed architects are members of the AIA, interest in joining among younger professionals has declined.
- Due to the challenging economy, the next generation of architects practice differently than established architects...and the younger generation is not looking to replicate the traditional model.
- Members consider educating the public, making the business case for the value of architecture, and legislation advocacy to be the AIA’s most important roles and activities.
- Among members’ individual needs, the two areas they felt were most important were opportunities to advance their career and assistance with the business side of architecture.

As we look to 2013, I encourage you, the AIA East Bay, to speak up and become engaged. How should the AIA appeal to the younger generation of architects? Do we need to reinvent the way AIA is seen? Or, do we need to change the public’s perception of architects and architecture overall? Read the Repositioning Hypotheses and let us know—do you agree? What would you be willing and able to do as an AIA member to educate and engage the public? [click here to return to page 2]

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Although the code does not come into effect until January 2014, any long term project scheduled to be submitted for permit on or after this date will need to comply with the new code. If you have such a project, compliance with the 2013 code is recommended now. If you have a project that is substantially complete, but may not be scheduled to be submitted until the first of the year in 2014, you will need to work with the jurisdiction to allow the current code to be applied to the project. This usually requires some sort of submission before the effective date. This should be evaluated in the coming year whether the new code has any advantages or disadvantages to your project. [click here to return to page 4]