

County Environmental Health Department:

We do not have a definition for what defines a bedroom in our department. The Inspections Department has a definition that they use.

County Inspections Department:

Below is the definition of a bedroom when it comes to the Building Code:
NC Department of Insurance/Office of the State Fire Marshal – Engineering Division
Bedroom Definition

Code: 2009 Residential Code Date: July 1, 2009

Section: R202

Question: When does a room have to be treated as a bedroom?

Answer: When it meets the definition provided in Section 202 of the code. The definition for “bedroom” is “sleeping room.” The definition for “sleeping room” is: “a room designated as sleeping or bedroom on the plans.” A room with a closet and/or a room with a window properly sized for an emergency escape opening does not constitute a bedroom. Only a room meeting the definition in the code is considered a bedroom.

General Contractor and HBA Member:

The building code requires a window in bedrooms for egress. The window has to be equal or bigger than a 2’ 8” wide by 4’ 8” height. There are some exceptions to this rule for example you may have a bedroom with a door that leads to the outside or the exit door is located in an adjacent room. You can call it a bedroom. Many times building inspectors will not count a room without a closet as a bedroom. For septic tank purposes the county health department goes by number of bedrooms (not baths) in a dwelling for sizing a septic system; their criteria is a closet.

The issue you run into in Realist is that people perform remodeling on their home without a professional or a permit. They then use a space as a bedroom. Also, some rooms get turned into a bedroom by adding a closet but then the room spaces is very tiny and it turns buyers off.

We require a closet to be in the room to count as a bedroom and then look for egress windows and doors. In other words, it must be reasonable and normal to buyers for them to count it as a bedroom. But in the end you need to tell your client that it depends on what the appraiser will say which affects the value greatly.



Independent General Contractor (in regards to NC Residential Building Code):

The NC Code is no more as it was replaced by the international code. The window in the bedroom must meet egress requirements. The room must be heated and cooled and have a working smoke detector. Other than a minimum width (9') I do not think there is a minimum square footage of 100, but instead 81 square feet.

NCAR:

Realtor Report 4/27/11 Risk Watch Hotline Q&A

Question: I recently agreed to list a home for sale. One of the rooms is being used as an office but the owner says that it used to be a bedroom. He wants me to advertise the home in the MLS as if that room is a bedroom. I have some concerns because the room does not have a closet. What should I do?

Answer: In an article published in the October 2006 issue of the "Real Estate Bulletin," the North Carolina Real Estate Commission acknowledged that there is no clear answer to the question "What is a bedroom?" The article advised brokers to use their common sense and exercise reasonable judgment when determining whether a room is, for listing purposes, a bedroom.

Some Multiple Listing Services have prepared guidelines to assist their members on what can be listed as a bedroom. You should check with your MLS and be sure to follow these guidelines.

In the absence of MLS guidance, you should consider several factors in making your determination. First, if the home has a septic tank, the home must comply with the septic permit issued by local authorities. If the home is only permitted for two bedrooms, you cannot list it as having three or more bedrooms.

If the home is on public water and sewer, you should consider whether the room was designed to serve as a bedroom. A closet is one indication of such intent, but older homes were often designed to use an armoire. If the home you are listing is relatively new, keep in mind that potential buyers will likely expect to see a closet in every bedroom.

Finally, you should consider the applicable building code. Under the North Carolina Residential Building Code, if a room has at least 100 square feet, and at least 50% of the room has a ceiling height of greater than 7', it can be called a bedroom. The NCRBC also requires a bedroom to have a window or door leading directly to the outside for access in case of an emergency. If the room in question meets these guidelines, advertising it as a bedroom would be reasonable.



Appraiser:

There really is no one answer. For appraisal purposes the room must have a closet and a functioning door to provide privacy to be called a bedroom. Older homes don't get special treatment: bedrooms must have closets. From an appraisal standpoint, we would not require the 100 square foot size minimum. If the room is large enough to place a bed and have reasonable utility then we would still call it a bedroom.

There are many, many older homes in our market with bedrooms that are only 9'x10'. These homes were built prior to the adoption of the current code. There is no requirement that a house be brought up to code to sell it. I am not aware of any lending standard which requires a home to meet all existing codes to be mortgage worthy. I would venture a guess that most homes in this market more than 25 – 30 years old were constructed to a very different set of building codes than we have now. It will be grossly misleading to make the statement that a room can't be a bedroom if it's not 100 square feet. It's my understanding that would only apply to new construction or a renovation requiring a building permit.

While the statement that the bedrooms cannot exceed the number approved on a permit may be true, there are many homes in this market that various health departments have no record for the permits.



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Valuation Forum