



## Tiny Houses – 2018 USBC

The 2018 Virginia Residential Code, which became effective July 1, 2021, includes a new “Appendix Q” and provides permit applicants the opportunity to use the provisions in Appendix Q to construct a tiny home. These homes, which must be 400 square ft or less in floor area, are permitted to have reductions in ceiling heights in habitable spaces (6’8” in tiny homes compared to 7’ in traditional homes) and bathrooms (6’4” in tiny homes compared to 6’8” in traditional homes). Appendix Q also has provisions for lofts being utilized as sleeping or living spaces, which must have a minimum dimension of 7’ x 5’ with a minimum 3’ ceiling height. This appendix also provides provisions for tighter stair geometry for accessing and egressing from lofts and provides the opportunity to utilize ladders and ship’s ladders for accessing and egressing from lofts in tiny homes.

A tiny house can be constructed on-site similar to a stick-built single-family dwelling, or constructed off-site under the Virginia Industrialized Building Safety Regulations and installed on a site under the 2018 USBC, similar to a typical modular single-family dwelling.

## FAQs

### **What is a Tiny House?**

Appendix Q of the 2018 Virginia Residential Code defines a Tiny House as a dwelling that is 400 square feet or less in floor area excluding lofts. For purposes of the USBC, a single-family dwelling constructed in accordance with the 2018 Virginia Residential Code and utilizing the alternative provisions of Appendix Q is a tiny house. For the purposes of the USBC, any structure that does not comply with the 2018 Virginia Residential Code and Appendix Q is not a tiny house.

### **How do you get to Appendix Q from the Virginia Residential Code?**

Section R333 of the 2018 Virginia Residential Code states that Appendix Q may be used as an alternative to the requirements of the code where a dwelling is 400 square feet or less in floor area.

### **Who determines whether a house can be built under Appendix Q?**

The permit applicant applying for a permit to construct a single-family dwelling may choose to construct a tiny home utilizing the provisions of Appendix Q. A building official cannot prohibit a single-family dwelling from being designed and built utilizing the provisions of Appendix Q if the proposed single-family dwelling complies with those provisions.

### **Can a tiny house stay on a trailer chassis?**

A tiny house must be positively anchored to the earth with a footing and foundation system that is compliant with the 2018 Virginia Residential Code (VRC). There are no alternative foundation or footing requirements for

tiny houses in Appendix Q of the 2018 VRC, so construction of a tiny house that incorporates a chassis or other features that will allow it to be moved or relocated in the future must comply with the VRC. The local building department where the tiny home will be located should be consulted regarding design or construction questions related to a specific project.

### **When would a tiny house be considered an industrialized building?**

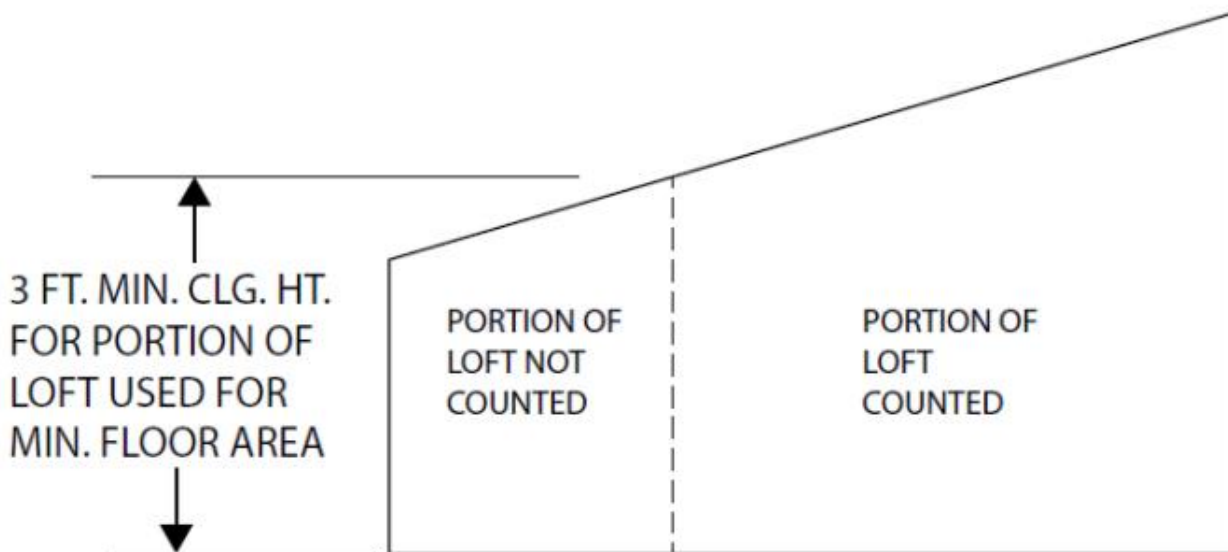
An “Industrialized Building, (IB)” is defined as a combination of one or more sections or modules, subject to state regulations and including the necessary electrical, plumbing, heating, ventilating, and other service systems, manufactured off-site and transported to the point of use for installation or erection, with or without other specified components, to comprise a finished building.

Tiny homes that meet the definition of an industrialized building are required to be built, approved, and registered through DHCD’s Industrialized Building Program and then delivered to the home site, bearing the required Virginia registration seal, to be installed on a code compliant foundation system.

### **What are the minimum dimensions, ceiling heights, and room sizes of a tiny house?**

The maximum square footage of a tiny house is 400 square feet. Habitable spaces within tiny houses are required to have a ceiling height of not less than 6 feet 8 inches. Bathrooms, toilet rooms and kitchens are required to have a ceiling height of not less than 6 feet 4 inches.

Lofts in tiny houses are required to have a floor area of not less than 35 square feet with the horizontal dimension not less than 5 feet in length. The contributing loft floor area to the minimum 35 square foot requirement is only that floor area with a ceiling height of 3 feet or greater. See the below picture from Appendix Q



Link to [Virginia Codes](#)