



Washington State Building Code Council

Improving the built environment by promoting health, safety and welfare

1500 Jefferson Street SE • P.O. Box 41449 • Olympia, Washington 98504
(360) 407-9280 • fax (360) 586-5366 • e-mail sbcc@ga.wa.gov • www.ga.wa.gov/sbcc

STATE BUILDING CODE INTERPRETATION NO. 13-02

CODE: 2009 International Residential Code

SECTION: R403, Footings

QUESTION 1: Do underground footings make multiple buildings a **one** building structure?

ANSWER 1: **No. This determination is made not by the presence of underground footings. Factors defining “building” include the fire separation between buildings, exterior walls of the building, and the type of fire-resistance-rated wall assemblies used in the design and construction of the buildings.**

QUESTION 2: Does connecting two buildings/units with an underground footing make the square footage of the two buildings/units into a total square footage structure?

ANSWER 2: **No. Floor area is defined in the IBC as the area within the inside perimeter of the exterior walls.**

QUESTION 3: Clarify the definition of duplex and townhouse: is that one building?

ANSWER 3: **Yes, townhouses are considered to be one-building structures:**

- IRC Section 302.2 states that each townhouse is to be considered a separate building, separated by fire-resistance rated wall assemblies meeting the requirements of section R302.1 for exterior walls.
- **TOWNHOUSE:** A single-family dwelling unit constructed in a group of three or more attached units in which each unit extends from foundation to roof with a yard or public way on at least two sides.
- **DUPLEX:** is not defined in the building or residential codes. The term used in the IRC is “detached two family dwelling”.

QUESTION 4: Do three or more buildings on one lot require the use of the IBC?

ANSWER 4: **No, the lot line does not determine the applicable code. The scope of the IRC, occupancy classification, use and size of the structure determine the applicable codes.**

QUESTION 5: If there are two buildings with the use identified as condominiums, would the IRC be used? Would occupancy type be R-2?

ANSWER 5: **No, a condominium designation does not determine the applicable code. The IRC applies to buildings with one or two dwelling units, and townhouses not more than three stories above grade and with a separate means of egress. A residential building containing more than two dwelling units is defined as an apartment house and classified as an R-2 occupancy under the IBC. Condominiums are designated based on an ownership agreement and are not defined or classified in the building code.**

QUESTION 6: By connecting them underground to make duplexes or townhouses, does that change the designation from commercial (IBC) to residential (IRC)?

ANSWER 6: **No. The occupancy classification is determined by the local code official depending on the occupancy and use of the building.**

SUPERSEDES: None

REQUESTED BY: City of Ocean Shores