



# 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](mailto:sbcc@ga.wa.gov) • [www.ga.wa.gov/sbcc](http://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