



# Townhouse Requirements

## Bulletin # 60

Department of Planning and Land Services, June 2007  
Division of Building Safety and Inspection for 2006 I Codes

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### Townhouses

The purpose of this Bulletin is to briefly outline options for building Townhouses. Buildings with townhouse units will not be allowed to blend or interchange requirements between the IBC and the IRC.

#### Option 1

Buildings containing three or more Townhouse units on individual parcels SHALL be built under the International Residential Code (IRC) only.

When Townhouse units are on individual parcels, ALL utilities must come into each unit without passing through or under another unit or parcel (excluding common areas).

Exception:

When Townhouse units are on a common parcel, utilities may come into each unit by passing through another unit. Proper fire penetration details must be provided to ensure the integrity of the unit separation walls.

#### Option 2

Buildings containing three or more Townhouse units on one parcel may be built under the International Residential Code (IRC) or the International Building Code (IBC).

When using Option 2 and selecting the IBC for code compliance you are also required to use the International Mechanical Code. This option requires you to build the building as a Group R, Division 2, occupancy.

The IBC requires fire sprinklers for all Group R, occupancies regardless of the number of dwelling units.

## Code References:

**2006 International Residential Code: 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 and with open space on at least two sides.

**R317.2 Townhouses.** Each townhouse shall be considered a separate building and shall be separated by fire-resistance-rated wall assemblies meeting the requirements of Section R302 for exterior walls.

**Pierce County Code 17C.90.130.** Section R313.4 Approved automatic sprinkler systems shall be installed in any structure containing five or more townhouse units.

**2006 International Building Code: F] 903.2.7 Group R.** An automatic sprinkler system installed in accordance with Section 903.3 shall be provided throughout all buildings with a Group R fire area.

**R-2 Residential occupancies** containing sleeping units or more than two dwelling units where the occupants are primarily permanent in nature, including:

- Apartment houses
- Boarding houses (not transient)
- Convents
- Dormitories
- Fraternities and sororities
- Hotels (nontransient)
- Monasteries
- Motels (nontransient)
- Vacation timeshare properties

### **Townhouses are Permitted as Multifamily**

The permit process for each building containing 3 or more townhouse units will be a single commercial (BPCO) building permit. Each building will have one plumbing and mechanical permit.

Mechanical permits will not require plans, but you will need to provide an appliance count. Gas pipe sizing plan is required.

Energy code compliance will be documented by completing the normal residential energy form provided by the counter tech.

Plumbing permits shall also require a fixture count and a riser diagram from the water main through meter to the individual unit shut off valve. In addition, the building drain must be located and sized from each unit to the property line or septic tank

## **Lot Requirements**

Townhouse units are not required to be on an individual parcel.

**Note:** If they are not on individual lots and if there are any water lines, building sewers, fire suppression, or electrical services passing through another unit, an easement or condominium agreement will be required.

## **Impact Fees for Schools Assessed at Multifamily Rate**

The impact fees shall be assessed as multifamily. Determination was made in consultation with Budget and Finance.

## **Fire Sprinkler System Requirements**

**PCC 17C.90.130** Section R313 of the International Residential Code is amended by adding the following section:

Section R313.3 Approved automatic sprinkler systems shall be installed in any structure containing five or more townhouse units.

An NFPA 13 R system is **required** as the minimum sprinkler system that will be approved in buildings containing five (5) or more townhouse units.

## **Deferred Submittals not Allowed**

There is no provision for deferred submittals in the IRC. Since plumbing and mechanical systems are not complex, permits shall be applied for with the building permit.

**Exception:** Fire suppression permits may be deferred at time of application but **MUST** be applied for before the building permit will be issued.

## **Moisture Protection Requirements**

In order to comply with the Moisture Protection Law for Multi-Unit Residential Buildings (EHB 1848), applications must comply with Bulletin 45 Moisture Protection for Multifamily.

For additional resources on Engrossed House Bill 1848, you may go to [www1.leg.wa.gov/legislature](http://www1.leg.wa.gov/legislature), type in 1848 under Bill Search, click on Available Documents, then open the Engrossed Bill.