



MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 29, 2003

TO: Building Officials, Builders, Contractors,
Architects and Homeowners

FROM: Thomas R. Joachim 
State Building Official

SUBJECT: **APPLYING THE IRC AND IBC TO RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION**

Recent inquiries have brought to our attention terminology in the IRC and IBC that could cause misunderstanding of the intent of these codes.

It has been, and continues to be, the intent of the codes to be permissive, allowing the proponent to choose how they wish to build and then build the project to the provisions of the code based on the design submittal. The code has always allowed the proponent to build better than the code, just not less than the code.

The new IRC and IBC each have provisions for single-family residences. During the submittal of plans, the proponent should clearly communicate the design intent to the building official by stating that this project is designed as IRC townhouses, IBC R-3 occupancies, or IBC R-2 occupancies.

This interpretation is written to clarify terminology used at our training seminars. We believe the intent of the scoping in IRC section R101.2 best describes the application of the IRC. It reads:

“The provisions of the IRC shall apply to detached one and two family dwellings and townhouses.” We interpret this to mean that the IRC can only be applied to detached one and two family dwellings and townhouses meeting the definitions in the IRC and submitted as an IRC project. Other projects submitted as an R-2 or R-3 occupancy would be required to meet the provisions of the IBC.

A project submitted, as IRC townhouses with three or more units would be required to be built to all provisions of the IRC. The basic provisions would include one, two-hour wall or two one-hour walls between each townhouse, separate plumbing, mechanical and electrical services, have two sides open with property lines between units or without property lines between units.

An exact duplicate project without property lines could be submitted as an R-2 occupancy building. This building could have common services, two sides open (not required) and one-hour separations between units. An R-2 building would be subject to the provisions of the IBC for area, height, type of construction, sprinklers, separation of R-2 to U if applicable, licensed design professional, etc.

The third type of project could be a R-3 one/two family dwelling with property lines submitted in compliance to the IBC R-3 occupancy requirements. This project would require separate services and two one-hour walls separating units.

Please see the attached drawings, we attempted to show examples of various design submittals meeting each scenario.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 651.296.4627.

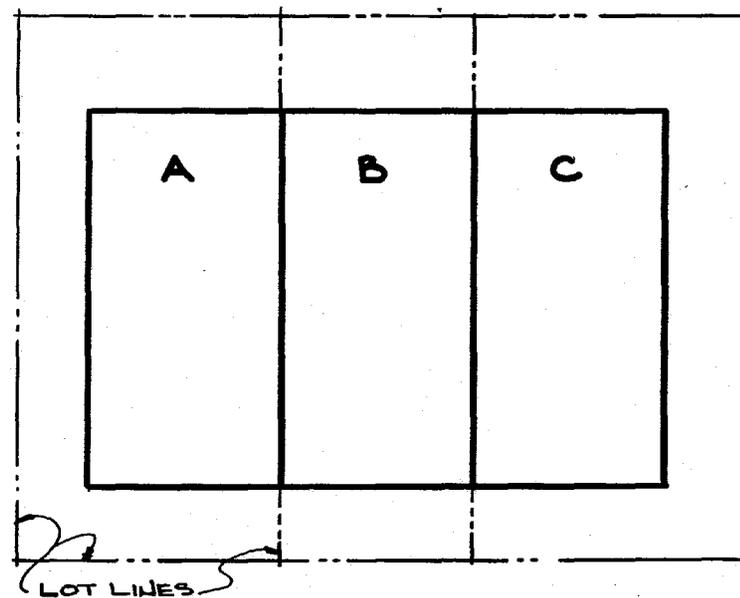
trj/pw

os/tj/IRC IBC ResidentialConstructionMemo5-03

“Townhouse” in IRC

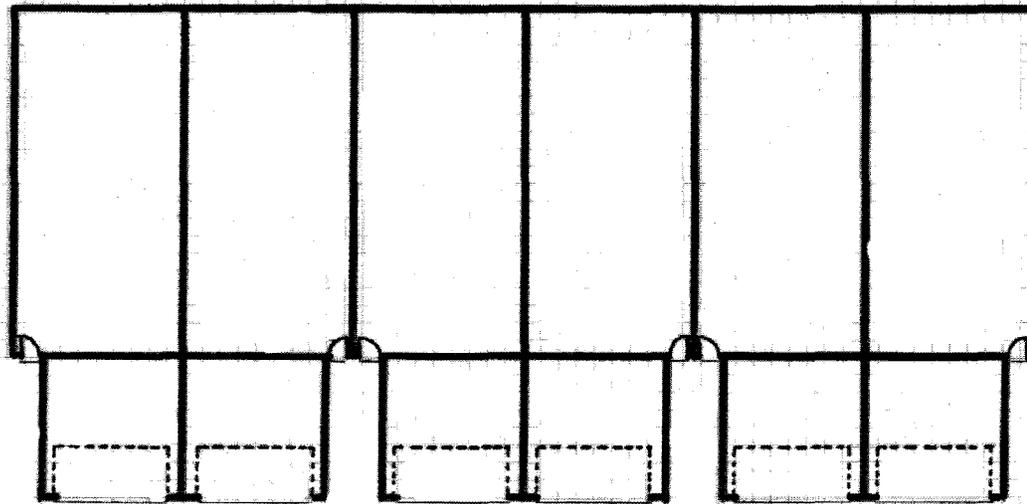
A single-family dwelling unit constructed in a group of three or more attached units in which each unit extends from foundation to roof and with open space on at least two sides.

Lot lines are permitted to separate the units.



International Residential Code, section R202

“Townhouse” definition

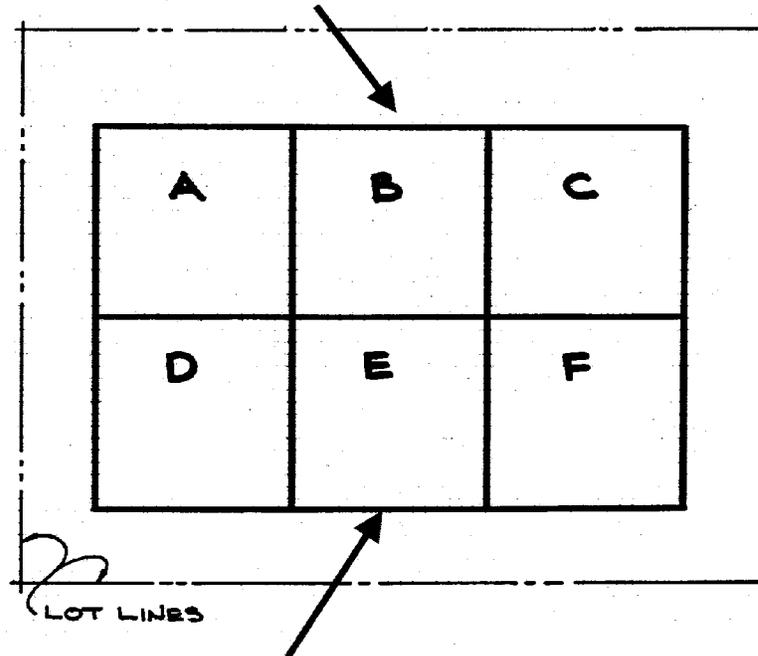


A single-family dwelling unit constructed in a group of three or more attached units in which each unit extends from foundation to roof and with open space on at least two sides. These units with the garage in front are “open.”

International Residential Code, section R202

R-2 Building

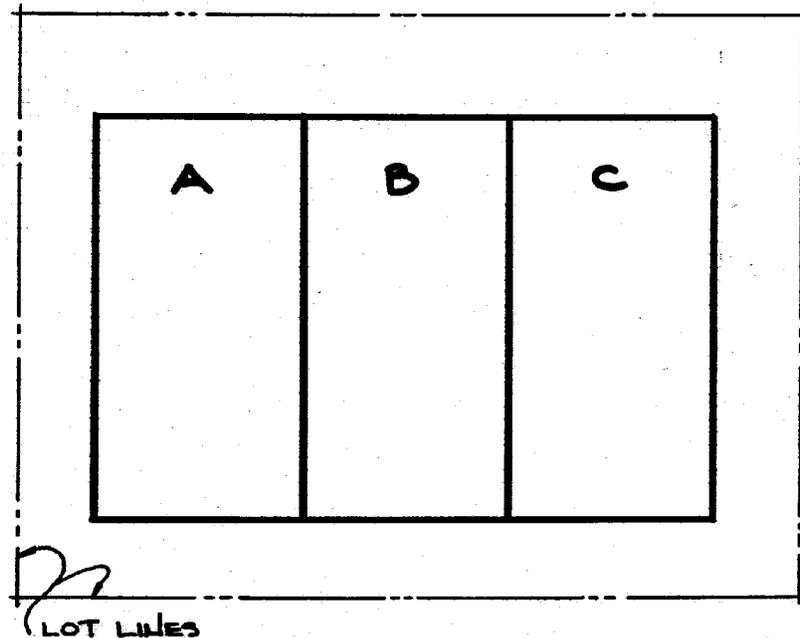
These six attached dwellings without lot lines between them would not comply with the definition of “townhouse” because they are not open on two sides for unit “B” and unit “E,” and therefore need to be constructed per the International Building Code.



International Residential Code, section R202
International Building Code, Section 310.1

R-2 Building

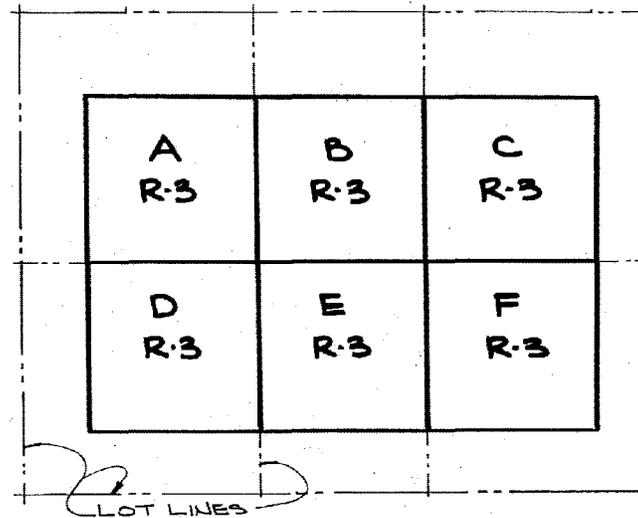
These 3 Units, without property lines, could be built to the IBC R-2 occupancy requirements, if submitted as such.



International Building Code, section 202

IBC R-3 Buildings

These six attached dwelling units with lot lines between the units do not meet the “scoping” provisions in International Residential Code, section R101.2 that includes “detached one and two family dwellings” and therefore they need to be constructed according to the International Building Code.



International Residential Code, section R101.2

Summary

Projects submitted as IRC townhouses

- Built to provisions of the IRC
- Separate services as required by State Plumbing Code and State Electrical Code
- Such townhouses may have property lines or may not

Summary

Projects submitted as IBC R-2

- Licensed design professionals for buildings with 4 or more units
- Built to IBC R-2 occupancy requirements
- May have common services
- May be called condominiums, townhouse style units, etc.
- Full one-hour separation between private garage and dwelling unit