

# TWO-FAMILY DWELLING, TWO-UNIT TOWNHOUSE and TOWNHOUSE BUILDINGS and the 2020 MINNESOTA RESIDENTIAL CODE

Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry

## DEFINITIONS

A **two-family dwelling (IRC-2 occupancy)** is:

- A building containing two separate dwelling units.
- The separation between units is either horizontal or vertical.
- Both units are on one lot.
- Sometimes referred to as “duplexes.”

A **townhouse (IRC-3 occupancy)** is:

- A single-family dwelling unit constructed in a group of two or more attached dwelling units.
- Each unit is a separate building and extends from the foundation to the roof with open space on at least two sides of each unit.
- Each unit is provided with separate building service utilities required by other chapters of the State Building Code.
- A two-unit townhouse is sometimes referred to as a “twin-home.”

## DISTINCTION

The primary differences between a two-family dwelling and a two-unit townhouse or twin-home:

- **Property** – A two-unit townhouse or twin-home is typically located on two separate individual lots with a property line running between them whereas both units of a two-family dwelling, or “duplex,” are located on the same single lot.
- **Separation** – A two-unit townhouse must be separated from the foundation to the roof by a double wall (two one-hour walls, see exceptions below). The separation between units in a two-family dwelling can be provided by single one-hour fire-resistance-rated assembly that is horizontal or vertical.
- **Services** – Since each townhouse unit is a separate building, each townhouse unit must be supplied with separate utilities. Units classified as townhouses must be supplied by separate electrical services. Townhouses also have similar requirements for separate water and sewer services .

## FIRE SPRINKLERS

- Two-family dwellings and two-unit townhouses do not require the installation of an automatic fire sprinkler system.
- Buildings having three or more attached townhouse dwelling units are required to be equipped with automatic fire sprinkler systems.
- One-and two-family dwellings and two-unit townhouses may require automatic fire sprinkler systems when containing a facility required to be licensed or registered by the state of Minnesota.

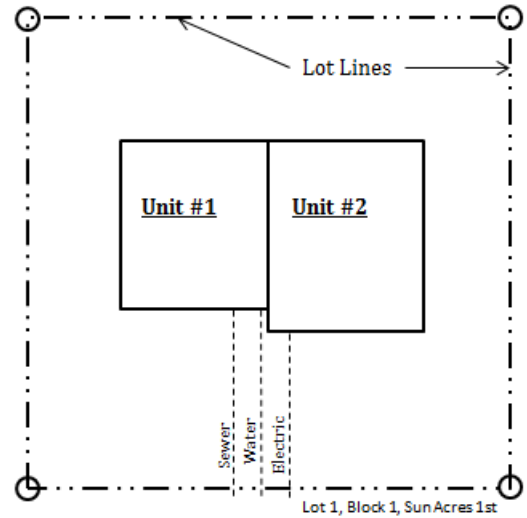
## GENERAL BUILDING CODE REQUIREMENTS

- The Minnesota State Building Code is the standard of construction for Minnesota (Minnesota Statute 326B.121). The 2020 Minnesota Residential Code adopts the 2018 International Residential Code (2018 IRC). View the 2020 Minnesota Residential Code at <https://codes.iccsafe.org/content/document/1581>.

# TWO-FAMILY DWELLING



Separation – The separation between units in a two-family dwelling can be constructed as a single one-hour fire-resistance-rated assembly, either horizontal or vertical.



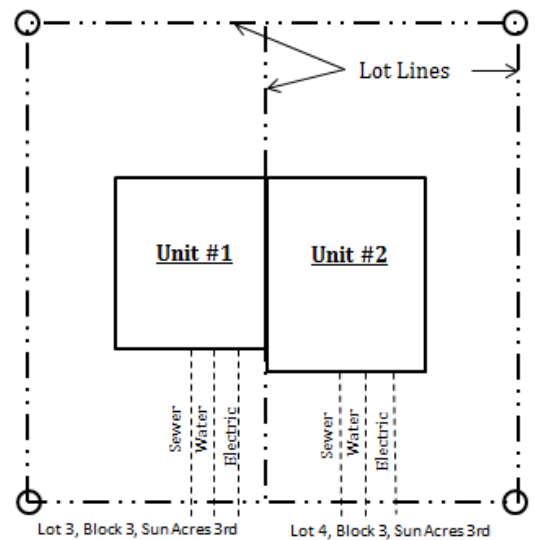
# TWO-UNIT TOWNHOUSE



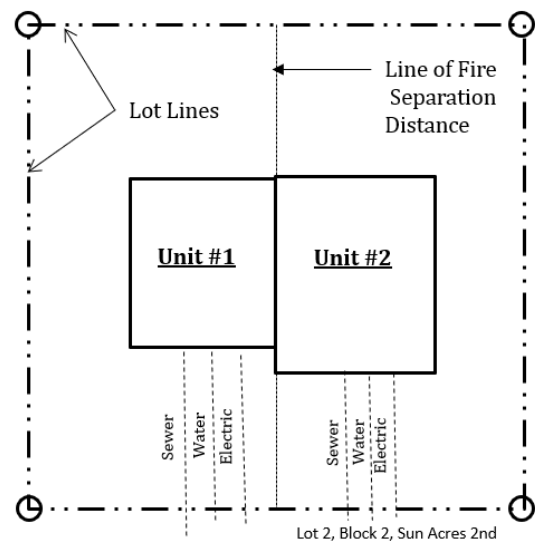
**Separation** – A two-unit townhouse building can be constructed with an individual lot for each dwelling unit or several two-unit townhouse buildings can be placed on a single lot depending if the townhouse is intended for individual ownership or as rental dwellings.

The separation between the townhouses is the same whether there is a lot line or a line of fire separation distance. Fire-separation between townhouses requires a double wall (two one-hour walls) or a common two-hour wall. A common one-hour separation wall is only permitted in a two-unit attached townhouse building equipped with an automatic fire sprinkler system. Common one-hour or two-hour separation walls must be constructed without plumbing, mechanical equipment, ducts or vents in the cavity of the common wall.

Two-unit townhouse - individual lots



Two-unit townhouse – single lot



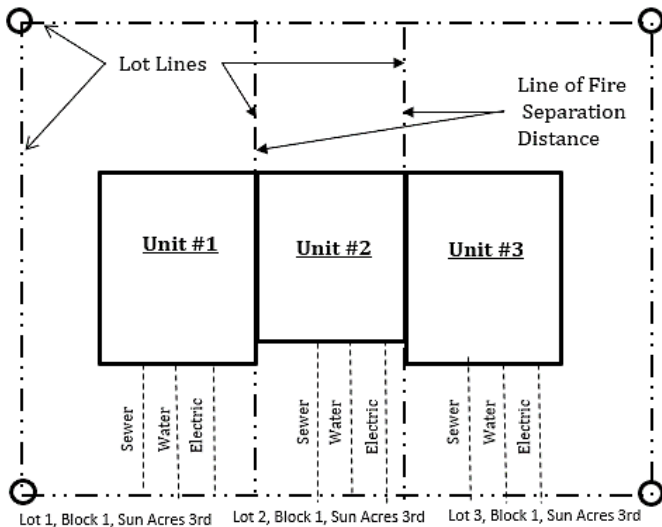
# THREE-UNIT TOWNHOUSE BUILDINGS



**Separation** – A three-unit or more townhouse building can be constructed with an individual lot for each dwelling unit or several townhouse buildings placed on one lot depending if the townhouse is intended for individual ownership or as rental dwellings.

The separation construction between the townhouses remains the same whether using a lot line or a line of fire separation distance. Fire-separation between townhouses requires a double wall (two one-hour walls); a common two-hour wall; or a common one-hour wall. A common one-hour separation wall is permitted since three or more attached townhouses must be equipped with automatic fire sprinkler systems. Common one-hour or two-hour separation walls must be constructed without plumbing, mechanical equipment, ducts or vents in the cavity of the common wall.

Three-unit townhouse - individual lots



Three-unit townhouse - single lot

