

FAQ: What Building Code applies to my residential project?

Discussion:

The Residential Code was developed to serve as a complete and comprehensive guideline for the construction and alteration of one- and two-family dwellings. It offers specific design standards for conventional residential construction. In contrast, the Building Code applies to all other types of buildings that fall outside the scope of the Residential Code. The Building Code is a more complex and performance-based code, necessitating reference to various other I-Codes and standards for a complete building design.

The scope of the Residential Code is limited to detached one- and two-family dwellings and townhouses not more than three stories in height with a separate means of egress and their accessory structures.

This includes *sprinklered* buildings containing the following uses:

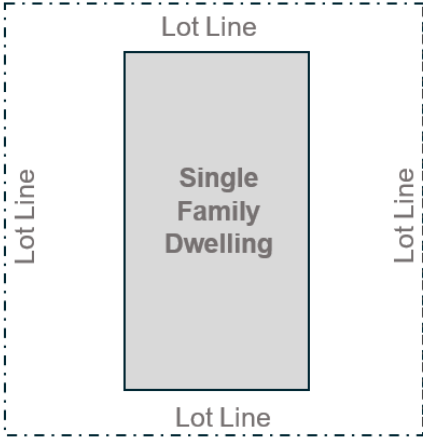
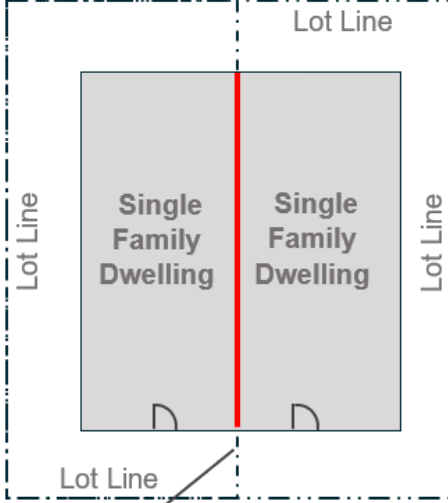
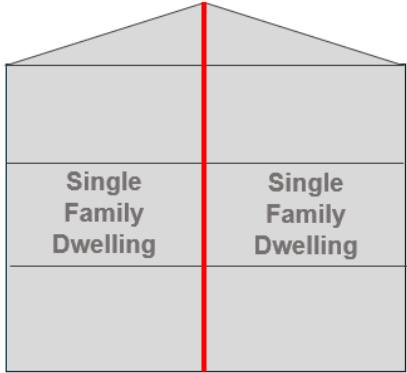
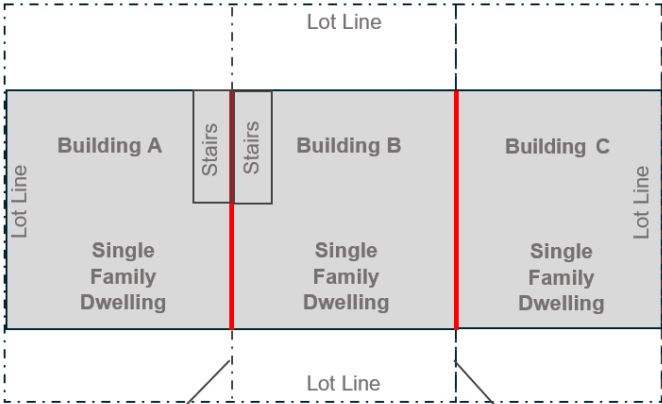
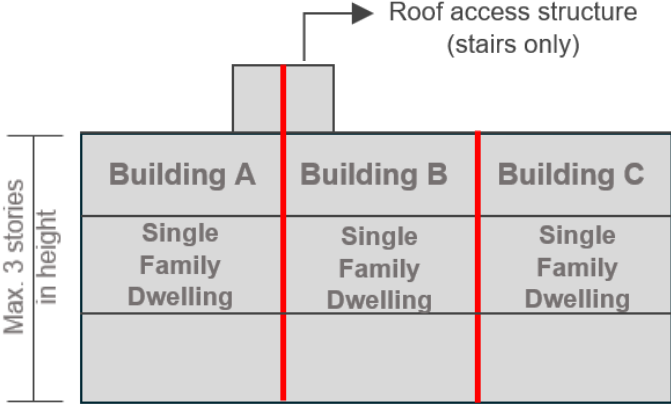
- Live/work units located in townhouses (must also meet Section 419 of the Building Code).
- Owner-occupied lodging houses with five or fewer guestrooms.
- A care facility with five or fewer persons receiving care within a dwelling unit, including custodial or medical care.

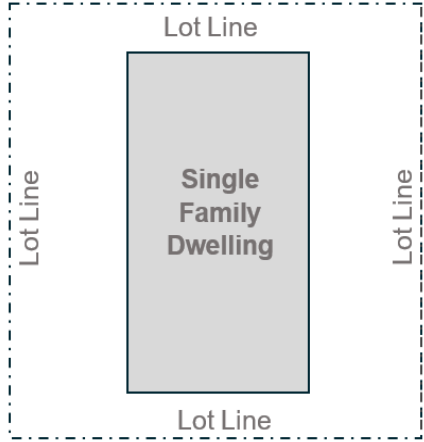
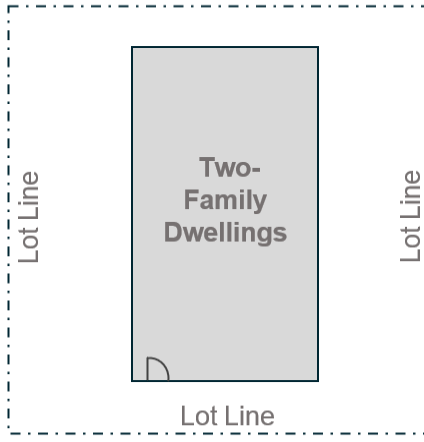


To accurately determine the number of stories in a building, one must clearly understand the definition of "story above grade plane" and the treatment of rooftop structures (or penthouses).

- **STORY ABOVE GRADE PLANE.** Any story having its finished floor surface entirely above grade plane, or in which the finished surface of the floor next above is either of the following:
 1. More than 6 feet above grade plane.
 2. More than 12 feet above the finished ground level at any point.
- Penthouses are not specifically mentioned in the Residential Code; however, we refer to Section 1510 of the Building Code for guidelines regarding rooftop structures. If a penthouse is used exclusively to house equipment or machinery, or for roof access, it is not regarded as an additional story. However, if the penthouse serves any other purpose, such as a bathroom, kitchenette, or bar, it will be classified as an additional story.

Answer:

The applicable Code is based on the building use, number of stories, and egress:

Code	Use and Number of Stories	
Residential Code The provisions of the Residential Code apply to one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detached one-family dwelling • Detached two-family dwellings with separate means of egress • Townhouses Additional Codes/Standards include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plumbing Code 	<p>Detached one-family dwelling (up to 3 stories in height)</p> 	<p>Two-family dwellings (up to 3 stories in height)</p> <p><i>Each dwelling has a separate means of egress.</i></p>   <p>Required Fire Separation (Foundation to Roof)</p>
	<p>Townhouses (up to 3 stories in height)</p>  	

Building Code The provisions of the IBC apply to all other buildings or structures that do not comply with the IRC provisions. Additional Codes/Standards include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing Building Code Plumbing Code NFPA Standards Mechanical Code Energy Code Accessibility Standard 	Detached/semi-detached/attached one-family dwelling (4 or more stories in height) 	Two-family dwellings <i>(all others not meeting scope of IRC)</i> 	Mixed-use building <i>(i.e. business on first floor and dwelling unit on upper floors)</i> 
	Multi-family dwelling (3 or more dwellings) 	Townhomes (4 or more stories in height) 