



## FACT SHEET:

# TOWNHOUSE OR TWO-FAMILY DWELLING?

Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry

## DEFINITIONS

A **two-family dwelling** is defined as "Any building that contains:

- two separate dwelling units
- with separation either horizontal or vertical
- on one lot."
- This is also referred to as an IRC-2 occupancy.
- Two-family dwellings are sometimes referred to as "duplexes."

A **townhouse** is defined as "A single-family dwelling unit constructed in a group of

- two or more attached [dwelling] units in which
- each unit extends from the foundation to the roof and
- having open space on at least two sides of each unit.
- Each single-family unit shall be considered to be a separate building.
- Separate building service utilities shall be provided to each single-family dwelling unit when required by other chapters of the State Building Code."
- This is also referred to as an IRC-3 occupancy.
- A two-unit townhouse is sometimes referred to as a "twin-home." Although not defined in the code, they are constructed in the same manner as a two-family townhouse.

## DISTINCTIONS

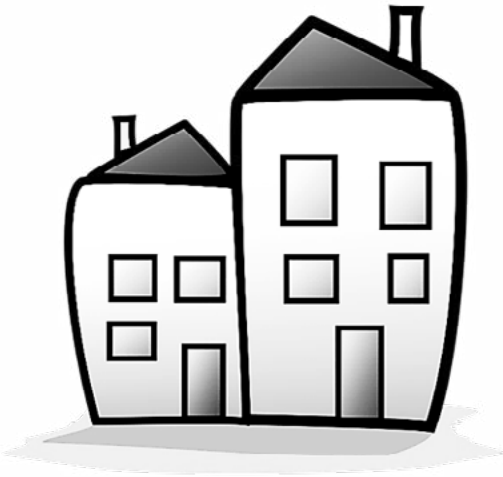
Following are the primary differences between a two-family dwelling and a two-unit townhouse or "twin home":

- **Property** – A two unit townhouse or twin home will be located on two separate individual lots with a property line running between them whereas both units of a two-family dwelling or "duplex" will be located on the same single lot.
- **Separation** – The two separation walls of a two-unit townhouse must each extend from the foundation to the roof and be one-hour fire-resistance-rated [for an equivalent 2 hours] whereas the separation between units in a two-family dwelling can be a single assembly, either horizontal or vertical, and be one-hour fire-resistance-rated.
- **Services** – To be considered a separate building, each townhouse unit must maintain separate utilities. When separate electrical services are provided to individual units, the units must be classified as townhouses. Townhouses also have similar requirements for separate water and sewer services.

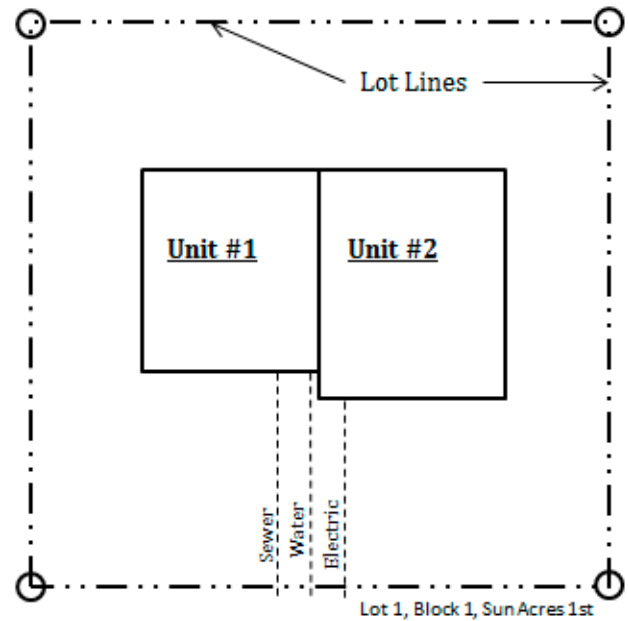
## FIRE SPRINKLERS

- Townhouses require the installation of an automatic fire sprinkler system.
- Two-family dwellings do not require the installation of an automatic fire sprinkler system.

## TWO-FAMILY DWELLING



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



## TWO-UNIT TOWNHOUSE



**Separation** – The two separation walls of a two-unit townhouse must each extend from the foundation to the roof and be one-hour fire-resistance-rated [for an equivalent two hours].

