



Advisory

October 9, 2019

Subject:

Building Permit Requirements for Single vs Multiple Buildings

Background:

There is some confusion over the application of the requirements for a building permit to sites where there are multiple buildings on the same site (i.e. townhome development); buildings that may consist of more than one distinct part (two towers on a common podium; buildings separated by firewalls and; buildings that are divided by property lines (i.e strata or condominium). This Advisory is provided to clarify when a single building permit is needed and when multiple building permits may be needed or permitted.

The National Building Code – 2019 Alberta Edition (ABC 2019) contains references to requirements for permits. The Permit Regulation, enabled by the Safety Codes Act (SCA), is the source of the specific regulation requiring that a building permit be obtained for construction of a building. The Permit Regulation specifically says:

Building permit

6(1) A permit in the building discipline is required for the following:

- (a) the construction of a building, including the renovation of or addition to a building;

The Permit Regulation also states in 1(2) that a definition that is in force in the ABC 2019 is also in force for the Permit Regulation. Therefore the definition of a “building” from the ABC 2019 is in effect for the Permit Regulation. The definition from the ABC 2019 is:

Building means any structure used or intended for supporting or sheltering any use or *occupancy*.

From this definition it appears that a single structure is a single building permit regardless of firewall location, size or property line since those parameters are not a part of the definition. The application of this principle requires some flexibility to accommodate various building forms. From this definition, the application of the ABC 2019 and the City of Calgary Safety Codes Permit Bylaw, the interpretation in the Advisory below is applied.

Advisory:

The first principle for when single vs multiple building permits are required is that a single structure is considered a single building and therefore requires a single building permit regardless of how many firewalls or property lines may legally divide it and regardless of the size of the building. Exceptions to this principle may, at the discretion of an SCO, include:

1. Where two distinct buildings are connected by a podium as in a two tower office complex that is connected by a 2 or 3 storey podium. In this case each tower and the podium may each be considered a separate building permit or they could all be considered one building permit, or a combination of these.
2. Where a large building that would normally be considered under one building permit may be constructed in phases. A separate building permit may be issued for each phase.
3. Where two buildings are connected by a walkway. In this case they could be under one building permit or each building and the walkway could each be under a separate permit or a combination of these.

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Other exceptions may arise in a building form not contemplated here. For that reason a Safety Codes Officer (SCO) should be consulted if in doubt.

The issue of professional involvement on a building as required in Division C, Subsection 2.4.2. should not be confused with the issue of building permits. Multiple buildings, permitted separately, on a single site would require professional involvement only as it applies to the individual building as per the individual building permit. However, in the case of the exceptions above for building permit the building is still considered a single building for the purposes of applying professional involvement.

Note: This interpretation is made by the Codes and Standards Technical Interpretation Committee (CSTIC), October 9, 2019.

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