

APRIL 2025

# ADVISORY

MULTI UNIT RESIDENTIAL BUILDING  
GENERAL DESIGN AND REVIEW – PART 9

BUILDING CODE SERVICES



This advisory provides guidance to industry practitioners on determining the review path and application of the Ontario Building Code and City of Ottawa Zoning By-law, for Part 9 multi-unit residential buildings.

## PURPOSE

To evaluate zoning use type, fire separation, servicing and professional designer requirements for various multi-unit residential building configurations on a parcel of land or multiple parcels of land.

## REFERENCES

- ✓ Ontario Building Code Division B and Supplementary Standard SB-3
- ✓ City of Ottawa Zoning By-law No. 2008-250
- ✓ City of Ottawa Water By-law No. 2019-74
- ✓ City of Ottawa Sewer Design Guidelines

## DEFINITIONS: 2024 ONTARIO BUILDING CODE - DIVISION A 1.4.1.2.

- ✓ **Dwelling unit** means a suite operated as a housekeeping unit, used or intended to be used by one or more persons and usually containing cooking, eating, living, sleeping and sanitary facilities.
- ✓ **Fire separation** means a construction assembly that acts as a barrier against the spread of fire.
- ✓ **Firewall** means a type of fire separation of non-combustible construction that subdivides a building or separates adjoining buildings to resist the spread of fire and that has a fire-resistance rating as prescribed in this Code and has structural stability to remain intact under fire conditions for the required fire-rated time.

- ✓ **Gross area** means the total area of all floors above grade measured between the outside surfaces of exterior walls or between the outside surfaces of exterior walls and the centre line of firewalls, except that, in any occupancy other than a residential occupancy, where an access or a building service penetrates a firewall, measurements shall not be taken to the centre line of such firewall.
- ✓ **Party wall** means a wall jointly owned and jointly used by two parties under easement agreement or by right in law and erected at or upon a line separating two parcels of land each of which is, or is capable of being, a separate real-estate entity.

## DEFINITIONS: ZONING BY-LAW 2008-250

- ✓ **Additional dwelling unit** means a separate dwelling unit located in the same building as an associated principal dwelling unit in a detached dwelling, linked-detached dwelling, semidetached dwelling, duplex dwelling, or townhouse dwelling; and its creation does not result in the conversion of the existing residential use into a different residential use.
- ✓ **Apartment dwelling, low rise** means a residential use building that is four or fewer storeys in height and contains four or more principal dwelling units, other than a townhouse dwelling or stacked dwelling.
- ✓ **Semi-detached dwelling** means a residential use building containing two attached principal dwelling units that are divided vertically, with each unit having lot frontage except where located within a planned unit development, and in the case of a long semi-detached dwelling where the dwelling units are attached and arranged one behind the other, and that may be developed in a flag lot configuration; and “long semi” has the same meaning as long semi-detached dwelling.
- ✓ **Three-unit dwelling** means a residential use building containing three principal dwelling units divided horizontally or a combination of horizontally and vertically. (triplex)

## LIMITATIONS AND CONDITIONS

This advisory **does not** apply to the following:

- Semi-detached dwellings with **one** additional dwelling unit in each half,
- Standalone triplexes,
- Singles or rowhouses with **one** additional dwelling unit, or
- Rural un-serviced parcels of land (maximum of two dwelling units).

## DESCRIPTION

Provincial Bill 23, *More Homes Built Faster Act*, permits up to three dwelling units on a single, municipally serviced parcel of land, however the City of Ottawa Zoning By-law limits certain multi-unit residential building types depending on the designated zone code (i.e. R1, R2, etc.).

Ontario Building Code fire separation, servicing and professional design requirements are dependent on whether a severance is proposed.

A wall constructed on a property line or future property line, which is jointly owned and used by two parties under an easement agreement or by a right-in-law, is considered a party wall which must be constructed as a firewall when separating a multi-unit residential building.

Where a property line or future property line separates the building into separate real estate entities, a separate set of water, storm sewer and sanitary sewer service connections are required.

*(See flow table demonstrated in Figure 1 of the Appendix)*

## FIREWALLS

Firewalls shall be constructed as a continuous, non-combustible, two-hour fire separation, extending through the roof to form a 150 mm high parapet.

Supplementary Standard SB-3 contains firewall assembly options. Alternatively, listed assemblies conforming to the minimum Ontario Building Code firewall requirements may be acceptable (e.g., from UL solutions: [BXUVC – Fire-resistance Ratings Design No. W314](#)).

## PLUMBING

Where only one set of services are connected to a building, provisions must be made to ensure compliance with Part 7 – particularly to article 7.1.2.4.(2) of the Ontario Building Code:

*Plumbing serving a dwelling unit shall not be installed in or under another unit of the building, unless the piping is located in a tunnel, pipe corridor, common basement or parking garage, so that the piping is accessible for servicing and maintenance throughout its length without encroachment on any private living space.*

This requirement does not prevent plumbing serving a unit located above another unit from being installed in or under the lower unit.

## SERVICE CONNECTIONS

Building permit applications are reviewed to the satisfaction of the City's Development Review service area.

The number of building service connections permitted is dependent on the building and parcel configuration.

*(Figures 2 & 3 in the Appendix provides examples of acceptable service connection configurations for parcels permitted severance and parcels not permitted severance)*

## DESIGN AND GENERAL REVIEW

Where a dwelling unit is constructed above another dwelling unit, the gross area of the entire building must be confirmed to determine the professional design requirements.

If the gross area exceeds 600 m<sup>2</sup>, a licensed architect is required to design and provide general review of the building in accordance with the 8(2) of the Building Code Act, 11(1), (2), and (3) of the Ontario Architect's Act and Division C article 1.2.2.1.(1) of the Ontario Building Code.

## LETTER OF UNDERSTANDING

Where a building is capable of being severed but the owner opts to forgo the servicing and/or firewall requirements, a completed letter of understanding will be required.

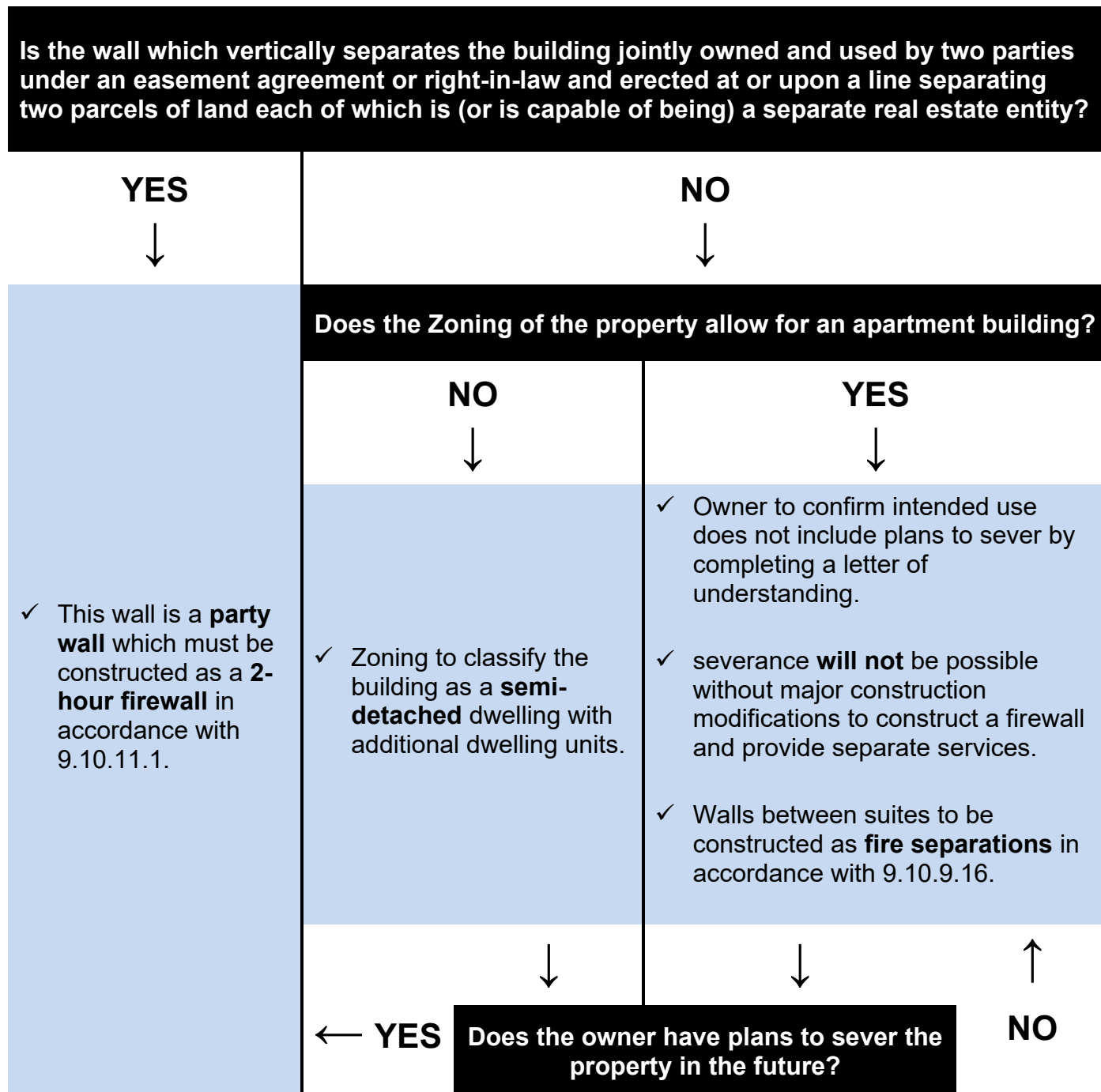
This letter must be signed by the property owner or, where the property is owned by a corporation, the signee must have the authority to bind the corporation.

A parcel warning is added to the property file for future building permits or severance applications that states:

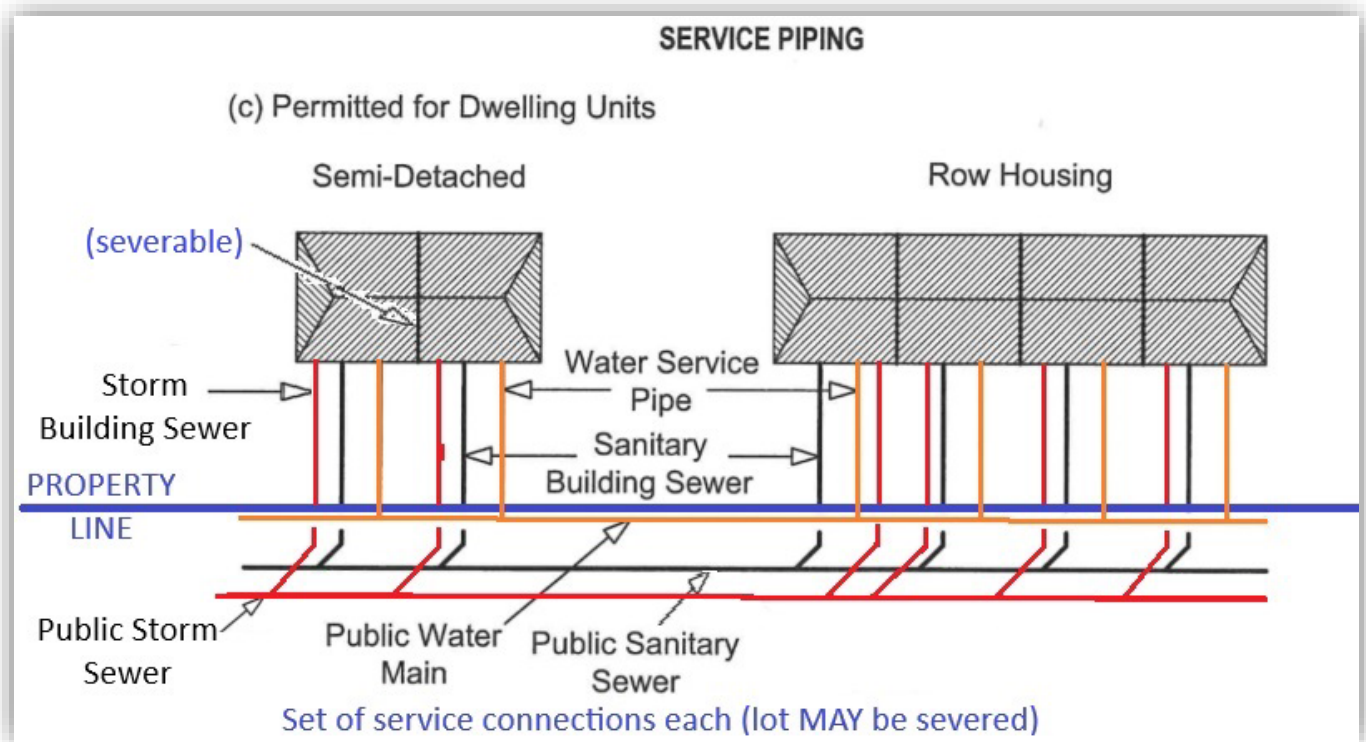
***“The lot may not be eligible for severance in the future because it shares a single set of service connections and is not separated by a firewall. Please refer to the letter of understanding for more details.”***

## APPENDIX

**Figure 1: Design requirements for multi-unit residential buildings**



**Figure 2 : Service connections (Note: lot may be severed)**



**Figure 3: One set of services; split between units (Note: lot **NOT** severable)**

