

BC BUILDING CODE INTERPRETATION COMMITTEE

A joint committee with members representing
AIBC, EGBC, BOABC

File No: 18-0237

INTERPRETATION

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Interpretation Date:	March 21, 2023
Building Code Edition:	BC Building Code 2018
Subject:	Party Wall in a Detached Garage Serving Two Single Family Dwelling Units
Keywords:	Party Wall, Firewall, Dwelling Unit
Building Code Reference(s):	9.10.9.16, 9.10.11.1, 9.10.11.2, 9.10.11.3

Question:

Where two single family dwelling units on separate properties share a detached garage structure that has a party wall on the property line, is the party wall in the garage structure required to be constructed as a firewall?

No.

The definition of "party wall" in the BCBC is:

Party wall means a wall jointly owned and jointly used by 2 parties under easement agreement or by right in law, and erected at or upon a line separating 2 parcels of land each of which is, or is capable of being, a separate real-estate entity.

Sentence 9.10.11.1.(1) requires a party wall on a property line to be constructed as a firewall, with exceptions as described in Article 9.10.11.2. Sentence 9.10.11.3.(1) states that where firewalls are used, the requirements in Part 3 shall apply. These requirements include a 2 h fire separation and noncombustible construction, where a firewall separates Group C (residential) major occupancies.

Clause 9.10.11.2.(1)(a) allows a party wall on a property line of a building of residential occupancy to be constructed as a 1 h fire separation instead of a firewall, if the party wall separates two dwelling units where there is no dwelling unit above another dwelling unit. Single family dwelling units are assumed to be non-stacked, so they will comply with this provision to allow the units to be separated by a 1 h fire separation instead of a firewall.

If each side of the detached garage is considered as part of its associated dwelling unit, the party wall in the garage could also be a 1 h fire separation instead of a firewall. Articles



Patrick Shek, P.Eng., CP, FEC, Committee Chair

The views expressed are the consensus of the joint committee with members representing AIBC, EGBC and BOABC, which form the BC Building Code Interpretation Committee. The Building and Safety Standards Branch, Province of BC and the City of Vancouver participate in the committee's proceedings with respect to interpretations of the BC Building Code. The purpose of the committee is to encourage uniform province wide interpretation of the BC Building Code. These views should not be considered as the official interpretation of legislated requirements based on the BC Building Code, as final responsibility for an interpretation rests with the local *Authority Having Jurisdiction*. The views of the joint committee should not be construed as legal advice.

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9.10.11.1 and 9.10.11.2 do not state whether a detached garage is considered to be part of a dwelling unit. However, each side of the detached garage structure is used only by its associated dwelling unit, such that it can be considered as subsidiary to the dwelling unit and therefore part of the dwelling unit. As a result, the party wall on the property line in the garage structure is permitted to be a 1 h fire separation instead of a firewall. This conclusion is also supported by BC Building Code Appeal Board #1693.

Note that walls between strata-titled units, or between air space parcels, are not party walls as defined in the BCBC because the walls are not located between 2 parcels of land that are each capable of being a separate real estate entity. This means that other BCBC requirements apply to the fire separations between strata units or air space parcels. Refer to BC Building Code Appeal Board #1318 for further information.



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