

## **2015 SBC Code Interpretation**

Section SBC 202  
Residential Occupancies:  
**Dwelling Unit vs. Boarding House**  
Release Date: April 3, 2020  
Page 1 of 1

*The following interpretation is intended to provide guidance to staff for consistency of review and is subject to change without notice. Application of this interpretation to specific projects may vary.*

### **Code Issue:**

What distinguishes a boarding house from a dwelling unit?

### **Code Interpretation:**

Boarding house occupancies can look similar to dwelling units, but there are distinguishing characteristics. If a building or portion of a building has two or more of the following characteristics, we will consider each bedroom to be a sleeping unit and the residential occupancy to be boarding house. A boarding house is outside the scope of the SRC and must be designed to the SBC.

- A high percentage of bedrooms have private bathrooms or wet bars.
- The percentage of common space floor area is small compared to the total area of the bedrooms and bathrooms.
- The circulation path serving the bedrooms can be used primarily as ingress/egress routes to the exterior rather than leading to common areas.
- The configuration promotes privacy and independence for each occupant.

For questions about whether this code interpretation applies to your project:

- *If you have submitted a permit application, contact the Building Code plan reviewer assigned to your application*
- *If you have not submitted an application, send us a question through the SDCI website <http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/toolsresources/sendusaproblem/default.htm> or in person at the Applicant Services Center. Visit the Applicant Services Center website for more information about hours and location <http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/aboutus/whoweare/applicantservicescenter/default.htm>*