



2015 SBC Code Interpretation

Section SBC 202
Residential Occupancies:
Dwelling Unit vs. Boarding House
Release Date: April 3, 2020
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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/sendusaquestion/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>*