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Code Bulletin – Interpretation

Applicable Code Section(s): 2009 IBC , 2009 IRC	Interpretation#: IBC702-5.22.2016
Subject: Building Across Lot Lines	BCO: Erik Harless Date: May 22, 2016

Can a building span across lot lines onto adjoining properties?

Subject of Interpretation:

There is no provision of the building code which permits any part of a building to cross lot lines onto adjoining properties. While private agreements, encroachments, or easements may exist, they are not regulated or enforced by, or an alternative to, the requirements of the building code.

The building codes are inherently designed to address building safety within the property in which it is located, without regard to the use of an adjoining parcel. No control of any other private property is assumed, granted, or recognized.

One of the fundamental intents of building planning is to prevent the spread of fire from one building to other buildings or properties through the concept of *Fire Separation Distance*.

Fire Separation Distance is defined under the 2009 International Building Code, and the 2009 International Residential Code as

"The distance measured from the building face to one of the following:

1. The closest interior *lot line*;
2. To the centerline of a street, an alley or public way; or
3. To an imaginary line between two buildings on the property.

The distance shall be measured at right angles from the face of the wall."

Essentially, the closer a building is proposed to be built to interior lot lines, the greater degree of protection is required. When fire separation distance is zero, i.e., when a building is built up to a lot line not facing a public way, the exterior wall up to the lot line is required to be of fire-resistance rated construction and no openings into the building are permitted.

Buildings may be proposed on either side of the interior lot line in this manner, however each building must be protected in accordance with the fire separation distance. In lieu of independent exterior walls, buildings may also be built to a *party wall*, a shared fire wall located on the lot line, again without openings, that is adapted for joint service of each building. (IBC 706.1.1, IRC R302.2).

These requirements must be met regardless of ownership, private easements or encroachments, or whether or not other buildings exist on adjoining properties.