

ZONING ADMINISTRATOR INTERPRETATION

DATE: November 26, 2007


CODE SECTION: Section 17.80.020 - Definition of Dwelling Unit

QUESTION NEEDING INTERPRETATION: The Zoning Code defines a dwelling unit as having all rooms internally accessible from the interior of the dwelling unit. Is a room considered accessible if a person must go through a garage or carport to access the room? What if the room is accessible only through an enclosed hall?

INTERPRETATION: Chapter 17.80 of the Zoning Code (Glossary of Terms) defines a dwelling unit as "one or more rooms with no more than one kitchen, designed for occupancy by one family or single housekeeping unit for living and sleeping purposes, with all rooms (except an attached garage or carport) accessible from the interior of the dwelling unit." What does "accessible from the interior" mean? What if you have to walk through a garage or carport to access another room? What if a room is only connected to the house by a long enclosed hallway?

The intent of requiring all rooms to be internally accessible is to ensure that the dwelling functions as one unit and not as a duplex or a property with a second unit. Therefore, having to walk across a garage or carport to access a room would not be consistent with the intent of the definition. Therefore, all habitable rooms must be internally accessible to each other, and you should not have to walk through an uninhabitable room such as a garage, carport, enclosed porch, storage room or similar room.

However, an enclosed hallway connecting a room to the rest of the house would be considered internally accessible, even if the hallway is the only portion of the structure that connects the exterior walls of the room and the rest of the house. However, the hallway would need to be a minimum interior width of three feet and be constructed as an integral part of the house (i.e. would be fully enclosed, heated and cooled with the rest of the house, have a roofline consistent with the rest of the house, etc.).



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