

Convert single-family or two-family dwelling to three units

In Minneapolis, you can convert a single-family home or duplex to a three-unit dwelling. This type of conversion is a major project under the Minnesota Building Code.

Examples of a three-unit dwelling:

- Triplex
- Two-family dwelling (duplex) with an accessory dwelling unit (ADU)

Converting a single-family dwelling or duplex to a structure with 3 or more dwelling units is a significant undertaking under the Minnesota Building Code. The applicable building code section changes from Minnesota Residential Code 1309 (IRC) to Minnesota Building Code 1305 (IBC). This change in applicable code sections constitutes a special condition. Because of this, construction documents must be prepared by a MN licensed architect for all projects converting a single-family or two-family dwelling to a 3-unit apartment building (triplex).

Steps

Property owners who want to convert a single-family dwelling or duplex to a building with 3 or more units must:

- Learn relevant state codes and city rules
- Hire an architect to prepare drawings showing how the building will comply with the building code
- Complete a building permit application
- Get zoning and plan review approval

1) Learn relevant state and city rules

When you convert a single-family home or duplex to a three or more unit building, the applicable building code changes from the International Residential Code (IRC) requirements to R-2 occupancy (apartment) rules under the International Building Code (IBC).

If your converted dwelling will include a detached ADU, you will need to know the requirements for a detached ADU.

2) Hire an architect to prepare drawings

The architect will need to review the existing building and will discuss with you the issues that will need to be addressed to make this conversion. The architect will then prepare a building code analysis and drawings that will indicate the proposed changes necessary to meet code requirements.

3) Complete a building permit application

After the plans are complete, the next step is to complete a building permit application. After you submit the building permit:

- You will receive an email from a development coordinator.
- The development coordinator will explain the process to submit your floor plans using the city's electronic plan system (ProjectDox).
- After you submit the plans, city staff will do a zoning and plan review.

4) Get zoning and plan review approval

When a property owner wants to change the use of a building, the city must do a zoning and plan review to approve the plans. Staff from two divisions in the city's Community Planning & Economic Development (CPED) department will review your plans:

- CPED Zoning will verify that converting from a single-family dwelling or duplex complies with city zoning ordinances.
- CPED Construction Code Services will review for state building code requirements.

During the review, CPED might send you comments for correction. If this happens, you will need to correct the plans and resubmit them.

Once CPED approves your plans, you will be notified by our electronic system to pay for the permit. Once the fees are paid, you will receive another notice from our electronic system informing you of how to download your approved plans and building permit.

After you finish the project, the city will perform a certificate of occupancy inspection. Once CPED approves your work, we will:

- Issue a certificate of occupancy for the new building use that includes the number of units.
- Change the unit count record in department permit records.
- Notify the city's Solid Waste & Recycling and Utility Billing (water department) that the conversion is complete. City services will then be billed according to the number of dwelling units.