

July 16, 2021



## *Dave Windsor's 'Alaska Real Estate'*

*as published in the Anchorage Daily News*

### **Real Estate Hermeneutics - Words Matter**

RE/MAX Dynamic Properties \* 907-727-3300 \* windsor@alaska.net \* www.davewindsor.com

**Dear Dave:** We saw a duplex for sale on a street nearby, and then found out only half of it was for sale and it was a condominium. How can you tell a duplex when you see one?

**Answer:** I am chuckling here - It's easy to be confused by real estate words. What matters with all real estate is (1) How is the building constructed and (2) How is the property legally established.

Many real estate terms can describe the kind of structure you are looking at. A building with 2 separate living quarters may be correctly described as a duplex, whether they be one on top of the other (up and down) or side by side.

A 'Townhome' or 'Townhouse' describes a structure where nobody lives above or below you. Townhomes may also appear to be a 'duplex' if two units are constructed side by side. An 'Apartment' is generally

a single living unit in a block of similar units with those living quarters stacked one over another and side by side. Yes, you were looking at a duplex structure but it was not legally a duplex for real estate purposes.

The legal status of structures is an entirely different question. A condominium is a residential (or commercial) unit established under the Uniform Common Interest Ownership Act where each unit owner may control his individual space but is an owner-in-common, with every other unit owner, of the land and buildings that comprise the total.

A 'Zero Lotline' home will also appear to be a duplex. A 'zero lotline' is a single family residence on an individual lot but is built right up to the neighboring structure with a 'zero' setback from the property line.

In other words, any structure comprising multiple units, be it a string of detached homes,

a duplex, or a block of apartments, or any combination thereof, may be 'Condominiums' if a common interest community exists where individual unit owners share common ownership of land and buildings.

Confused? What words mean is the science of hermeneutics. Always ask your Realtor to define the real estate you are interested in, or looking at. Alternatively, consult Muni records for the address concerned since zoning determines the use of all land, and the nature of the structure will be described in the Tax Records.

Dave  
Windsor

