

Communication from Public

Name: Brandon Morino

Date Submitted: 08/08/2025 07:46 AM

Council File No: 25-0247

Comments for Public Posting: I would be extremely cautious in vetting out the legal ramifications the City may expose itself to if certain safety requirements are relaxed. A potential budget busting lawsuit simply isn't worth a few additional dwelling units here and there

Communication from Public

Name: Abundant Housing LA

Date Submitted: 08/08/2025 05:02 PM

Council File No: 25-0247

Comments for Public Posting: This letter from Abundant Housing LA expresses strong support for the recommendation from the Department of Building and Safety to draft an ordinance allowing single-stair multifamily residential buildings. Among its many benefits, this will facilitate badly needed housing and allow for better urban design--without making any sacrifices in the safety of Los Angeles City residents.



8/8/2025

LA City Planning and Land Use Committee
Los Angeles City Hall
200 North Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: CF 25-0247 (Legalizing Single-Stair Buildings Up to 6 Stories)

Dear Planning and Land Use Committee Members:

We write to you in strong support of an item that would represent a pivotal shift in land-use policy and an essential reform needed now more than ever.

We are proud to state that single-stair (item [CF 25-0247](#)), which passed unanimously out of the PLUM Committee and subsequently the full City Council in the spring, has the support of the Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety (DBS). After extensive research of state law and an investigation of cities around the nation, DBS has endorsed the need for a new ordinance, written by DBS and the LA Fire Department, in consultation with other agencies, that would permit construction of multifamily buildings built with just a single staircase. This is a common-sense solution to some of the challenges builders face when planning small multifamily buildings and developing on small parcels. Other cities with single-stair policies have permitted this typology in buildings up to six stories and up to four units per story. We believe this is also the solution for Los Angeles. Importantly, all of this can be done responsibly, in a way that prioritizes safety for all Angelenos.

LA's current code requirement for two stairways per building means that almost all new multifamily housing must be built on large sites and include double-loaded corridors connecting the two stairways (hallways with apartments on both sides). This typology often necessitates assembling multiple parcels, and produces small units with limited access to light and air. Single-stair buildings on the other hand could easily be built on typical parcels in Los Angeles, and would produce larger family-sized units with cross-ventilation and quality shared open space. More and more cities in California and across the United States are taking steps to legalize single-stair buildings as a common sense reform that unlocks the potential of small parcels and creates a product that is attractive to many families.

A [recent report from Pew Research](#) summarizes the benefits of single-stair buildings and provides evidence on their excellent safety record. The report found that single-stairway buildings “cost 6% to 13% less to construct than similar dual-stairway buildings” and that they

can fit on “smaller infill lots.” It also found that “small apartment buildings with two to 19 units” are made financially feasible by allowing single stairways. They tend to have the most affordable rents across building types, expanding housing options for low- and middle-income families. The Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies [found that](#) single-stair buildings are able to use up to 10% more of a floor plan for living space, as opposed to hallways. This leads to lower building costs and therefore greater affordability. In addition, single-stair buildings [“form more neighborly, less anonymous interior communities than one enormous whole-block apartment building with 100 units sharing a hallway.”](#)

We must state clearly that allowing for just a staircase in the building code does not make any sacrifices when it comes to safety from fire or other hazards. As shown by Pew, mandating two staircases is an unnecessary regulation rooted dating back to an era before the modern fire suppression and containment technologies. **In the 21st century, buildings with one staircase are just as safe as those with two.** That’s thanks to mandatory fire safety features, like sprinklers and fire-resistant materials. These are the factors that prevent tragedy from striking in American cities. In fact, a Pew Charitable Trusts study found no difference in fire mortality rates in buildings with two staircases, compared to those with just one. Furthermore, here in Los Angeles, the LA Fire Department continues to have a seat at the table about how best to facilitate this reform.

Reforms like this one cannot wait. In Los Angeles, 17% of the city’s renters live in overcrowded conditions. 42,000 of the city’s residents are experiencing homelessness, and the average unhoused resident dies more than 20 years younger than the average housed one. If we care about the safety of Angelenos, we must end scarcity and start building more homes. Our housing shortage has only gotten worse this year since the loss of 12,000 local homes during wildfires in Pacific Palisades and Altadena. We must move with more urgency to reform all aspects of our housing delivery system, so we can build faster and meet the needs of everyone.

This motion meets the urgency of the moment, and will help us: (1) boost housing production by putting more parcels into play, (2) revitalize commercial corridors, and (3) create higher quality housing options for families. We urge you to support the motion, and work to continue expediting necessary reform.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Azeen Khanmalek', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Azeen Khanmalek
Executive Director
Abundant Housing LA