

Communication from Public

Name: Fred Sutton

Date Submitted: 09/15/2025 08:44 PM

Council File No: 25-0247

Comments for Public Posting: Attached, please find a letter of support for item 17.



California Apartment Association
Los Angeles County

September 15, 2025

Via Electronic Mail Only

Council President Harris-Dawson
City of Los Angeles
200 North Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: Item 17- Single Stair Reform ([25-0247](#))

Dear Council President and Members of the Los Angeles City Council:

On behalf of the California Apartment Association (CAA), I am writing to express strong support for permitting the development of single-stair multifamily housing in Los Angeles. This ordinance represents a meaningful step toward addressing the city's urgent housing shortage by enabling the creation of safe, high-quality, and family-friendly homes on more parcels across the city.

Single-stair buildings are a proven housing typology already used successfully in cities across the country. By making development feasible on smaller and underutilized sites, this ordinance will unlock opportunities to build more housing, increase affordability, and better serve the diverse needs of Angelenos.

We urge the Council leadership to advance this important reform. At a time when so many Los Angeles families are struggling to find housing due to limited availability, this ordinance will help ensure a more livable and inclusive city.

Sincerely,

Fred Sutton
California Apartment Association

Communication from Public

Name: Abundant Housing LA
Date Submitted: 09/15/2025 10:38 AM
Council File No: 25-0247
Comments for Public Posting: Abundant Housing LA supports Single Stair Motion with Amendments



9/14/2025

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 express strong support for CF 25-0247, which if amended as outlined below, can help build high quality, livable, and extraordinarily safe housing for families of all sizes in LA. The City Council has shown great leadership in advancing single-stair through three PLUM Committee hearings and two hearings before the full council. We also have great appreciation for the Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety (DBS), Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD), and the Department of City Planning (DCP), who have worked in strong collaboration to move forward this ordinance at a quick pace to meet a key state deadline. **However, after careful review by experts in the development field, Abundant Housing LA has identified certain provisions that are unnecessary from a safety perspective and will make it challenging if not impossible to develop single stair buildings on many parcels.**

We strongly urge the council to make the following amendments:

- Item 26 eliminates an exception for non-combustible buildings to not include rescue windows, and Item 27 requires 8 foot side yards to access those rescue windows. The robust layering of safety provisions in the draft ordinance, including sprinklers, pressurized stairways, floor area limitations, etc. creates equivalency and eliminates the need for rescue windows. If rescue windows are required (and the 8-foot side yard setbacks needed to serve them) it would be virtually impossible to build single stair buildings on many narrow lots. **Please eliminate this extremely restrictive provision by deleting Items 26 and 27 from the draft ordinance.**
- Requiring exits to terminate onto a public right of way of 20 feet (as per Item 24) will make it very challenging to develop mixed use single stair buildings on commercial corridors as envisioned by the Livable Communities Initiative (LCI). **Please amend both references to require a right of way width of 15 feet so that exits can terminate at standard size alleys.**
- The agenda language on the operative date for the ordinance reads as follows, but for an unknown reason, the underlined language is missing from the draft ordinance itself:

“This ordinance shall become operative only if and when both of the following occur, upon the effective date of the later to occur: (a) the State either amends the California Building Code to make lawful the provisions of this ordinance which allows single-exit, single-stairway buildings of greater than three stories, or the provisions of this ordinance are approved by the California Building Standards Commission; and (b) the City amends its Fire Code to reflect the life safety enhancements required by this ordinance or otherwise required by City Council upon recommendation from the Los Angeles Fire Department.” **Please amend the ordinance to include the underlined language. Without that language, LA will be unable to proceed with permitting single stair buildings ahead of the statewide process.**

Permitting single-stair residential structures will help us build more well-designed buildings and a more beautiful city. LA’s current code requirement for two stairways per building means that almost all new multifamily housing 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. **Because the overall structures are smaller in scale, they also fit nicely within the fabric of existing neighborhoods.** 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.

We must state clearly that allowing for just one staircase in the building code does not make any sacrifices when it comes to safety from fire or other hazards. 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. As shown by research from Pew Charitable Trusts, mandating two staircases is an unnecessary regulation dating back to an era before the modern fire suppression and containment technologies. **In fact, the Pew study found no difference in fire mortality rates in buildings with two staircases, compared to those with just one.** Furthermore, here in Los Angeles, both the LAFD and now the State Fire Marshall have had a seat at the table in crafting this pivotal reform.

Ordinances 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.

The motion as amended in the ways outlined above 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. Thank you for your leadership.

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

Communication from Public

Name: Colin Warn
Date Submitted: 09/15/2025 03:23 PM
Council File No: 25-0247
Comments for Public Posting: Writing to express my support for single stair reform.