

MOTION

Los Angeles faces an urgent housing shortage, made worse by a permitting process that is often duplicative, unpredictable, and misaligned with the City's stated housing goals. Applicants must navigate siloed departments, unclear requirements, and sequential reviews that create costly delays—even for ministerial projects.

Under the current structure, applicants begin at the Department of Building and Safety (LADBS) for Plan Check. While a Plan Check Engineer is assigned, that role does not currently coordinate cross-departmental input. Applicants must then seek separate clearances from City Planning, Water and Power, Housing, Fire, and the Bureaus of Engineering, Sanitation, and Street Services, among others—each with its own processes, interpretations, and often conflicting requirements. New demands are routinely introduced late in the process, driving further cost, delay, and frustration. This fragmented review structure significantly increases budget and schedule risk, and has been identified as a major contributor to the higher cost of multifamily development in Los Angeles compared to other jurisdictions. It is one of the factors cited in some lenders' and investors' decisions not to place capital in Los Angeles versus other jurisdictions perceived as offering more predictable processes.

Even during construction, applicants face fragmented oversight: separate inspectors for building systems, plumbing, electrical, and HVAC—without a mechanism to ensure consistency or coordination. While new interventions like BuildLA and the Development Services Bureau hold promise, their potential will not be realized without other process reforms.

Cities as diverse as San Diego, Long Beach, and Chicago have made excellent headway on this issue by offering applicants the option of a coordinated intake meeting early in the process. At these meetings, applicants engage all relevant departments at once. Requirements are identified, conflicts and issues are surfaced—and often resolved—and binding determinations are issued. These meetings reduce the likelihood of late-stage surprises and allow interdepartmental conflicts to be handled collaboratively rather than contentiously.

To facilitate the construction of more housing, including desperately needed affordable housing, we need to create a system that has clear, consolidated, dependable, and accountable processes, that undergird a culture of saying “yes” to new housing in Los Angeles.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the Los Angeles City Council instruct the Department of Building and Safety and City Planning, with support from relevant departments as needed, to create a single, comprehensive review process for projects that includes the following:

- A summary of the most successful examples of coordinated input processes from other jurisdictions that can serve as models for LA
- One coordinated plan check that incorporates all required department input;
- A clear and complete list of requirements provided at the outset;
- A process for collaboratively resolving conflicts arising from layered City requirements along with the applicant;
- Binding approvals and permit issuances valid for a reasonable timeframe, such that applicants are not subject to varying interpretations (i.e., “late hits”).

I FURTHER MOVE that Department of Building and Safety and City Planning report back within 60 days with a framework for offering optional coordinated intake meetings, modeled on successful efforts in peer cities, that would allow applicants to meet with all relevant departments early in the process on a voluntary basis to receive consolidated requirements and determinations, and surface interdepartmental issues before plan submittal.




I FURTHER MOVE that the Department of Building and Safety report back within 60 days on establishing a “single inspector” model for projects—designating one lead inspector from pre-construction through final occupancy—to improve accountability and reduce contradictory directives.

I FURTHER MOVE that the Los Angeles City Council instruct the Department of Building and Safety, with support from relevant departments as needed, to report back within 60 days on recommendations on how to significantly reduce and consolidate the number of separate plan check clearances and condition types, which exceed 175.

I FURTHER MOVE that the Bureau of Engineering and the Department of Building and Safety, in coordination with any other relevant departments, report within 60 days on the current and potential capabilities of BuildLA to facilitate simultaneous reviews, consolidate departmental input, resolve conflicts early, including feedback from system users, and to provide transparency on departmental timelines and any delays.

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JUL 01 2025