

August 11, 2025

Planning and Land Use Management Committee
JOHN FERRARO COUNCIL CHAMBER
ROOM 340, CITY HALL
200 NORTH SPRING STREET, LOS ANGELES, CA 90012

MEMBERS: COUNCILMEMBER BOB BLUMENFIELD, CHAIR
COUNCILMEMBER HEATHER HUTT
COUNCILMEMBER ADRIN NAZARIAN
COUNCILMEMBER JOHN S. LEE
COUNCILMEMBER NITHYA RAMAN

RE: Support with Recommendation for Council File 25-0247 (Agenda Item #16) – Single-Stairway Multifamily Buildings – [Agenda Item #16](#)

Dear Chair Blumenfield and Honorable Committee Members,

As the Director of Government and Public Affairs with the Los Angeles Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA|LA), I serve as a liaison between our Institute, its 4500+ members, and various government agencies, advocating for policies that advance healthy, sustainable, functional, beautiful, and resilient built environments. In that capacity, **I am writing to share support for the proposed ordinance to permit single-stair multifamily buildings ([Council File 25-0247](#))**. This is more than a technical code change—it is an economic development opportunity that can unlock the potential for a more just, affordable, and beautiful Los Angeles.

Single-stair buildings are a proven, safe, and cost-effective typology used successfully in cities like Seattle, Austin, and New York. By making development viable on smaller or underutilized parcels, this change will help create the "missing middle" housing Los Angeles desperately needs. The benefits are clear:

- **Increased Housing Supply & Affordability:** Construction costs can be 6-13% lower, with more efficient floor plans that translate directly to more affordable homes.
- **Superior Design & Enhanced Community Context:** This typology allows for better design flexibility, improved natural light and ventilation, and a more human-scaled urban environment that fosters stronger neighborhood connections.

A Critical Next Step: A Technical Advisory Panel

While we strongly endorse this reform, its success hinges on getting the technical details right. We acknowledge the complexities [identified by LADBS and LAFD](#) in amending the California Building Code. These are not insurmountable barriers but design and engineering challenges that require expert collaboration.

To ensure the final ordinance is both ambitious and uncompromisingly safe, we **strongly urge the Committee to direct staff to convene a technical advisory panel** composed of practicing architects and engineers.

This panel would work directly with LADBS and LAFD to provide real-world design insight and technical analysis. Its key functions would be to:

1. **Integrate Proven Safety Measures:** Evaluate and incorporate best practices for compensatory safety systems, such as stairway pressurization, enhanced fire-resistive construction, and advanced sprinkler systems, ensuring the code meets or exceeds current safety standards.
2. **Ensure Practical Implementation:** Help draft a legally sound and technically defensible ordinance that is optimized for real-world application, fostering architectural innovation rather than creating unintended obstacles.
3. **Build Public Trust:** Demonstrate to the public that all aspects of this reform, particularly fire and life safety, have been rigorously vetted by a broad range of building experts.

A Path Forward

This is a pivotal opportunity to address our housing crisis with a smart, proven solution. By pairing this bold policy with deep technical expertise, the Council can ensure its success.

We urge you to **support the motion and adopt our recommendation to establish a technical advisory panel.** AIA|LA and our members are ready to assist in this vital work to build a more affordable, resilient, and beautiful Los Angeles.

Truly yours,

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

Will Wright, Hon. AIA|LA
Director, Government & Public Affairs