Rachael Gangelhoff

From: Robert Cortright <23cort@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, December 8, 2025 3:30 PM
To: CityRecorder
Cc: Phil Carver; Lisa Anderson-Ogilvie
Subject: [EXTERNAL]Public Comment for December 12 City Council Meeting
Attachments: Single stair Code.pdf; 25ossc-single-exit-stair-appq.pdf

City Recorder

Please include this written testimony to the City Council for their meeting this evening.

Thanks.

Bob Cortright
on behalf of 350 Salem

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350 Salem OR

December 8, 2025

TO: Salem City Council

FROM: Bob Cortright, 350 Salem

SUBJECT: POTENTIAL HOUSING CODE AMENDMENTS

350 Salem advocates for and supports state, regional and local efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Amendments to the city's zoning codes to promote more affordable housing and provide developers with additional flexibility to provide a range of housing types is an important strategy to promote walkable, mixed use development.

One of the most effective ways to reduce building costs and increase flexibility for development of four-story buildings is to allow construction of single-stair buildings. Current code provisions require that four-story apartment buildings include long internal hallways that connect to two separate stairways. While this requirement may be appropriate for taller buildings, it drives up building costs and limits building design - and may cause developers to build only a three-story building even where zoning allows taller buildings.

Amendments to the state fire code adopted in October (attached) allow cities to adopt code provisions allowing four-story buildings with single-stair access. The city should add this to the list of code amendments to be considered. Our suggestion, using the city's format, is as follows:

Issue: Single Stair Code Amendment

Current Standard: Current codes require that four-story apartment buildings include full length internal hallways and two stairwells.

Code Revision Idea Recent changes to state fire code include an appendix which allows cities to adopt a "single stair" standard for four-story buildings under certain conditions.

Rationale This change would implement state approved changes to the building code, reduce development costs and provides builders more flexibility especially on smaller lots.

INFORMATIONAL BACKGROUNDER

Group R-2 Single Exit Stair Buildings

Oregon Structural Specialty Code (OSSC)

Building Codes Division

Department of Consumer and Business Services

House Bill 3395 (2023) required the division and the Building Codes Structures Board to consider the inclusion of provisions in the Oregon Structural Specialty Code (OSSC) to allow residential occupancies to be served by a single exit stair. Following review of emerging national codes and consultation with the fire service and local governments, the board and division approved OSSC Appendix Q, *Single Exit Provisions for Buildings Containing Group R-2 Dwelling Units*, for local adoption effective Oct. 1, 2025.

Single Exit Provisions for Buildings Containing Group R-2 Dwelling Units, Appendix Q

This appendix is a prospective local amendment – meaning that municipalities may adopt it locally, in its entirety, without requesting division approval and undergoing the local amendment process from Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) 455.040. Local modification of any of the published construction standards within the appendix is not permitted. Any such proposed local modification would require submission and division approval of a formal local amendment request detailing the desired changes in accordance with ORS 455.040 and Oregon Administrative Rules (OAR) 918-020-0370.

It requires local fire service approval (based on their operational response capabilities and needs) and requires local municipality adoption via local ordinance – or similar local legally sufficient adoption method as determined by local legal counsel.

This appendix also does the following:

- Aligns with the current national approach on the matter, based on the national symposium discussion led by ICC and NFPA.
- Allows certain residential Group R-2 buildings up to and including 4 stories above grade to be served by a single exit stair.
- Limits the configuration of Group R-2 dwelling units as specified in the appendix.

The Oregon Fire Marshals Association and Oregon Fire Chiefs Association plans to publish a technical advisory in the near future to assist in local fire service approval decisions.

View the 2025 OSSC - Appendix Q.

Contact:

Visit the division website to contact a building code specialist.