



CITY OF BALTIMORE
MAYOR BRANDON M. SCOTT

TO	The Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
FROM	Alice Kennedy, Commissioner, Housing and Community Development
CC	Mayor's Office of Government Relations
DATE	September 12, 2025
SUBJECT	25-0062 Building Code – Single Exit from Residential Occupancy

Position: Favorable

BILL SYNOPSIS

The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has reviewed City Council Bill 25-0062 Building Code – Single Exit from Residential Occupancy for the purpose of permitting certain residential buildings to have a single exit or access to a single exit, so long as certain conditions are met regarding the construction of the exit.

If enacted, Council Bill 25-0062 would allow certain types of residential buildings to have a single exit or access to a single exit, so long as specific conditions are met that allow those buildings to remain safe. If approved, this Bill will take effect on the 30th day after its enactment.

SUMMARY OF POSITION

DHCD would first like to thank the sponsor of this Bill for collaborating with our agency before its introduction and working to address our initial concerns. This Bill, in short, would allow for certain types of residential buildings to have only one means of egress, so long as they meet all requirements, as outlined in the Bill, to ensure safety. Permitting “Single Stair” building construction is already the accepted standard outside of North America, and several US cities such as Seattle and Knoxville have already successfully implemented the change.

Without needing to build around multiple stairwells, smaller scale multi-family homes are both easier and more cost-effective to build. Perhaps even more importantly, this change would allow for those multi-family homes to be built on lots that would have otherwise been considered too small or oddly shaped to accommodate them. Permitting such construction would better serve to develop otherwise unacceptable infill sites within communities that would benefit the greatest from increased housing opportunities. Furthermore, this legislation may allow for older commercial properties, such as those along the Howard Street corridor, to lawfully convert their upper floors to residential uses, thereby returning them to productive use.

At its regular meeting of August 28th, 2025, the Planning Commission concurred with the recommendation of its Departmental Staff and recommended that City Council Ordinance 25-0062 be approved by the City Council. The Commission's report noted many of the same points addressed by DHCD, and we share in their support for this legislation.

FISCAL IMPACT

As drafted, this Bill would have minimal fiscal or administrative impact on DHCD.

AMENDMENTS

DHCD does not seek any amendments to this Bill at this time.