


FROM	NAME & TITLE	CHRIS RYER, DIRECTOR	CITY of BALTIMORE MEMO	
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING 8 TH FLOOR, 417 EAST FAYETTE STREET		
	SUBJECT	CITY COUNCIL BILL #25-0062 / BUILDING CODE – SINGLE EXIT FROM RESIDENTIAL OCCUPANCY		

TO The Honorable President and
Members of the City Council
City Hall, Room 400
100 North Holliday Street

DATE: September 5, 2025

At its regular meeting of August 28, 2025, the Planning Commission considered City Council Bill #25-0062, 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.

In its consideration of this Bill, the Planning Commission reviewed the attached staff report, which recommended approval of City Council Bill #25-0062 and adopted the following resolution, with six members being present (six in favor):

RESOLVED, That the Planning Commission concurs with the recommendation of its departmental staff, adopts the findings and equity analysis outlined in the staff report, with consideration for testimony and facts presented in the meeting, and recommends that City Council Bill #25-0062 be **approved** by the City Council.

If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Eric Tiso, Division Chief, Land Use and Urban Design Division at 410-396-8358.

CR/ewt

attachment

cc: Ms. Nina Themelis, Mayor's Office
The Honorable John Bullock, Council Rep. to Planning Commission
Ms. Rebecca Witt, BMZA
Mr. Geoffrey Veale, Zoning Administration
Ms. Stephanie Murdock, DHCD
Ms. Hilary Ruley, Law Dept.
Mr. Francis Burnszynski, PABC
Mr. Luciano Diaz, DOT
Ms. Nancy Mead, Council Services



Brandon M. Scott
Mayor

PLANNING COMMISSION

Jon Laria, Chair; Eric Stephenson, Vice Chair

STAFF REPORT



Chris Ryer
Director

August 7, 2025

REQUEST: 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.

RECOMMENDATION: Approval

STAFF: Caitlin Audette

PETITIONER: Introduced by Councilmember Dorsey, Cosponsored by President Cohen and Councilmembers Conway, Gray, Bullock, Blanchard, and Ramos

HISTORY

There are no previous legislative or Planning Commission actions regarding this site.

CONFORMITY TO PLANS

The 2024 Comprehensive Master Plan for the City of Baltimore was enacted by Ordinance #24-426, dated December 2, 2024. Goal 4.06 states the following:

Examine the building code to identify ways to expand opportunities for the creation of affordable housing (for example, raise the story limit for single-stair buildings).

The proposed legislation addresses this goal by expanding the use of single exit and access to single exit buildings for residential construction.

ANALYSIS

Background: The proposed legislation was created with feedback from both Housing and the Fire Department, making sure that any safety concerns were addressed prior to the introduction of the legislation.

By modifying the code to allow for single exits new construction of multi-family housing will be less expensive, will be more suited to smaller infill sites, and will allow for a wider variety of building types creating a wider range of building typologies – which will allow for a more unique urban context.

The changes to the code continue to allow other uses in the building, maintain mixed use opportunities.

1006.3.4. *SINGLE EXITS.*

A SINGLE EXIT OR ACCESS TO A SINGLE EXIT SHALL BE PERMITTED FROM ANY STORY OR OCCUPIED ROOF WHERE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS EXISTS:

1. TO 5. {AS IN IBC}
6. A BUILDING MAY HAVE A SINGLE EXIT OR ACCESS TO A SINGLE EXIT PROVIDED THAT ALL OF THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS ARE MET:
 - 6.1. THE BUILDING, IF IT IS OF TYPE I, TYPE II, TYPE III-A OR TYPE IV CONSTRUCTION, HAS NO MORE THAN 6 STORIES OF GROUP R-2 OCCUPANCY AND NO MORE THAN 6 STORIES ABOVE GRADE PLANE;
OR
 - 6.2. THE BUILDING, IF IT IS OF TYPE V CONSTRUCTION, HAS NO MORE THAN 4 STORIES OF GROUP R- 2 OCCUPANCY AND NO MORE THAN 4 STORIES ABOVE GRADE PLANE.
 - 6.3. THE BUILDING DOES NOT CONTAIN A BOARDING HOUSE.
 - 6.4. THERE ARE NO MORE THAN 4 DWELLING UNITS PER FLOOR.
 - 6.5. THE BUILDING IS OF NOT LESS THAN 1 HOUR FIRE-RESISTIVE CONSTRUCTION.
 - 6.6. THE BUILDING IS EQUIPPED WITH A SPRINKLER SYSTEM THROUGHOUT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 903.3.1.1 OF THE BALTIMORE CITY FIRE CODE.
 - 6.7. THERE ARE NO MORE THAN 2 SINGLE EXIT STAIRWAY CONDITIONS IN THE SAME BUILDING.

- 6.8. STAIRWAYS MAY BE AN EXTERIOR EXIT STAIRWAY OR AN INTERIOR EXIT STAIRWAY. INTERIOR EXIT STAIRWAYS SHALL:
- A. BE ENCLOSED IN A 2-HOUR FIRE RATED WALL WITH 1-HOUR FIRE RATED DOORS;
 - B. BE PRESSURIZED IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 909.20 OF THIS CODE; AND
 - C. HAVE DOORS THAT SWING INTO THE INTERIOR EXIT STAIRWAY REGARDLESS OF THE SERVED OCCUPANT LOAD, PROVIDED THAT DOORS FROM THE INTERIOR EXIT STAIRWAY TO THE BUILDING EXTERIOR SWING TOWARDS THE EXTERIOR.
- 6.9. A CORRIDOR SEPARATES THE ENTRY AND EXIT DOOR OF EACH DWELLING UNIT FROM THE DOOR TO AN INTERIOR EXIT STAIRWAY, AND NO DWELLING UNIT DOORS OPEN DIRECTLY INTO THE INTERIOR EXIT STAIRWAY.
- 6.10. THE DISTANCE BETWEEN THE EXIT STAIRWAY AND THE ENTRY AND EXIT DOOR OF ANY DWELLING UNIT IS NO MORE THAN 20 FEET.
- 6.11. TRAVEL DISTANCE, MEASURED IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 1017 OF THIS CODE, DOES NOT EXCEED 125 FEET.
- 6.12. ELEVATORS ARE PRESSURIZED IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 909.21 OF THIS CODE, OR OPEN INTO ELEVATOR LOBBIES IN COMPLIANCE WITH § 713.14 OF THIS CODE.
- 6.13. THE STAIRWAY EITHER:
- A. EXTENDS TO THE ROOF SURFACE THROUGH A STAIRWAY BULKHEAD IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 1511.7.2 OF THIS CODE, IF THE ROOF HAS A SLOPE NOT STEEPER THAN 20 DEGREES (0.35 RAD); OR
 - B. IS CONSTRUCTED AGAINST THE STREET WALL, WITH 1 WINDOW FACING THE STREET AT EACH LANDING, AND ACCESS TO THE ROOF IS PROVIDED VIA A SCUTTLE WITH A STATIONARY, NONCOMBUSTIBLE ACCESS LADDER.
- 6.14. OTHER OCCUPANCIES ARE PERMITTED IN THE SAME BUILDING PROVIDED THEY COMPLY WITH ALL THE REQUIREMENTS OF THIS CODE. OTHER OCCUPANCIES SHALL NOT COMMUNICATE WITH THE GROUP R OCCUPANCY PORTION OF THE BUILDING OR WITH THE SINGLE-EXIT STAIRWAY.

Equity:

- Impact:
 - The proposed legislation would make smaller scale multi-family easier and more cost efficient to complete, thus allowing developers to work in neighborhoods that might not otherwise be feasible. The building types are well suited to infill lots that are predominately found in the higher need communities.
- Engagement:
 - Various advocacy organizations have been sharing information on this bill including Balt P.O.P. (People Oriented Places) and the Congress for New Urbanism (CNU). CNU Mid-Atlantic held a single stair design competition in May.
- Internal Operations:
 - Will have no impact to Planning Department operations, but will require Housing review staff to become familiar with the updated requirements so that they are correctly implemented.

Notification: The agenda was sent to the 17,000 unique emails on file with the Planning Department.



Chris Ryer
Director