



Monday, July 8, 2024

Dear Members of the Planning and Housing Committee:

RE: PH14.7 - Single Exit Stair: Ontario Building Code Feasibility Study

As one of Toronto's leading builders of missing middle housing, Assembly Corp. is pleased to see the Committee considering ways to support single stair egresses.

Missing middle housing, particularly purpose-built rental, is crucial in creating and fostering more affordable, sustainable, and inclusive neighborhoods for all Torontonians while meeting Municipal, Provincial, and Federal housing targets. Provincial and independent housing studies have identified this form of housing as a critical factor in solving our housing shortage within the city, province, and country at large.

For a litany of reasons, mid-rise developments have often proved difficult to make financially feasible. In recent years, this has been exacerbated by increased labour, material, and land costs. However, innovations in prefabricated, modular, and timber construction have made significant headway in making this form of housing viable. These innovations must be supported by policy reform to truly unlock the full potential of the missing middle and deliver at the scale required to address the current housing crisis.

A single-stair egress for four-storey buildings with an expedited alternative solution approvals process is a welcome proposal that would help many sites become financially viable and build more homes faster. We encourage City Staff and the Planning and Housing Committee to continue their work to improve the permitting process regarding single-stair solutions and look to other jurisdictions, such as British Columbia, are moving to adopted single-stair solutions for up to six storeys as opposed to four. We also encourage City Staff to be bold in their advocacy for an alignment with the National Building Code 2025, which permits a single point of egress for up to six storeys. Using single-stair egress in mid-rise building designs increases the rentable area, providing more urgently needed housing units and improving the building's cost efficiency. Doing so would amplify the feasibility of mid-rise infill development and contribute immensely to the addition of gentle density in urban Toronto, helping ease the housing shortage in our city's most desired neighbourhoods.

We sincerely appreciate the work and proposal put forward by City Staff, and eagerly await any advancements in the streamlining of the alternative solutions process for single stair solutions.

Sincerely,

Graham Askwith
Manager of Development