



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Councilmember Bien Doan

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: 10/28/25

APPROVED:

SUBJECT: Amendment to the San José Municipal Code Adopting the 2025 California Building Standards, with Local Technical Amendments, and Repealing Superseded San José Reach Codes

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Accept the staff recommendation and defer further discussion of the single fire-exit staircase issue until the working group concludes its work in January 2026.
2. Direct the administration to monitor the workgroup's progress and bring forward a report to the City Council for consideration shortly after the report is published in January 2026.

BACKGROUND:

As noted in the staff memorandum, dated October 28, 2025, the California Building Standards Commission, in coordination with the California Office of the State Fire Marshal, has tasked a workgroup to develop recommendations addressing fire and life-safety in buildings retaining a single-exit, single-stair configuration that is above three stories.

Given recent fire tragedies, and opposition from San José Fire Fighters and the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) Local 230, it is both pragmatic and prudent for the Council to delay its deliberation on this topic until the workgroup can deliver its findings. This will align our future policy discussion with the most up-to-date technical analysis and will avoid premature decisions or code amendments that may prove inconsistent with the findings.

As a former Fire Captain, I have deep concerns over this proposal, rooted in 27 years of fire service. The National Fallen Firefighters Foundation has expressed concern that allowing residential structures with a single means of egress, places both residents and firefighters at greater risk of injury and death. Similarly, the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) warns that single-exit stairwell designs reduce escape routes for residents and firefighter access for entry into the emergency. This creates increased risk, when dual flows (egress and ingress)

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must share the same stairway. By taking this deliberate and informed path, the City Council can balance our intended housing innovation with life-safety focus, thus ensuring that San José remains a leader in smart development and community safety.