

OFFERED BY COUNCILORS SHARON DURKAN AND LIZ BREADON



## CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

### ORDER FOR A HEARING TO EXAMINE POTENTIAL REFORMS TO THE MASSACHUSETTS STATE BUILDING CODE TO ALLOW FOR MID-RISE SINGLE-STAIR BUILDINGS

- WHEREAS,** The City of Boston is experiencing a housing crisis marked by high demand, rising costs, and a lack of affordable, diverse housing options for residents of all income levels and household structures; *and*
- WHEREAS,** The availability of developable land in Boston's urban, transit-proximate areas is limited, necessitating innovative approaches to increase housing supply while maintaining safety and livability; *and*
- WHEREAS,** The Massachusetts State Building Code, which incorporates the International Building Code with state-specific amendments, imposes requirements for two separate means of egress (i.e., two staircases) for residential buildings taller than three stories, which limits the flexibility of building designs and increases construction costs; *and*
- WHEREAS,** Single-stair mid-rise buildings provide significant advantages including lower construction costs, increased housing density on smaller parcels, better natural light and ventilation, and the ability to create more diverse unit layouts that support families of all sizes; *and*
- WHEREAS,** Research and real-world data show that single-stair mid-rise buildings offer safer and more efficient housing options and mitigate safety concerns via modern fire prevention techniques such as sprinkler systems, smoke detection, and fire-resistant materials; *and*
- WHEREAS,** Several cities in the United States and numerous countries around the world have successfully implemented regulations permitting single-stair mid-rise buildings, thereby capturing the aforementioned benefits of allowing for such a typology; *and*
- WHEREAS,** Governor Maura Healey signed Executive Order, No. 651: Facilitating Safe and Affordable Single-Stair Multifamily Residential Buildings initiating a statewide study of the issue and establishing a technical advisory group; *and*
- WHEREAS,** While all municipalities must comply with the Massachusetts State Building Code, Boston faces unique considerations as the Commonwealth's most densely populated city and as a municipality with its own fire prevention regulations; *and*
- WHEREAS,** Reforming state building code provisions to allow single-stair mid-rise buildings has the potential to unlock more affordable and efficient housing developments across the city; ***NOW THEREFORE BE IT***

***ORDERED:*** That the appropriate Committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing to examine potential reforms to the Massachusetts State Building Code related to single-stair residential construction; to discuss Boston's role in advocating for and shaping such reforms before the Board of Building Regulations and Standards and the Massachusetts Legislature; and to evaluate the potential impact of these reforms on housing production, affordability, and safety in the City of Boston.

Filed: February 27, 2026