

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:

SECTION 1. Legislative declaration. (1) The general assembly finds and declares that:

(a) During the mid-twentieth century, the International Building Code, which many state and local governments in the United States use as the model for their building codes, began requiring buildings over 3 stories to have at least 2 separate stairway exits accessible from all points on each floor;

(b) Multifamily buildings constructed under the current International Building Code must have 2 stairways, leading to most new multifamily buildings in the United States being constructed with housing units off a single corridor with a stairway at each end. This limits the feasibility of 2-and 3-bedroom units since all units except corner units only have windows on one side, according to "Exit Strategy: The Case for Single-Stair Egress" in the Architectural Record;

(c) Multifamily buildings with single stairway exits can dedicate more interior space to create larger family-sized units, with multiple bedrooms and improved ventilation due to enabling most housing units to have windows on multiple sides, according to "The Seattle Special: A US City's Unique Approach to Small Infill Lots" Mercatus Center Policy Brief;

(d) Multifamily buildings with 2 stairways typically need more than a quarter of an acre per floor to meet underwriting requirements in North American markets, which is far bigger than many small infill lots in Colorado cities, even before accounting for setbacks, landscaping, and other design criteria that limit the buildable area of a lot;

(e) Single stairway designs enable economically feasible construction on small infill sites, whereas buildings constructed under the International Building Code with 2 interior stairways and a corridor take up such a significant portion of the allowable floor space that they are typically not physically or economically viable;

(f) On a typical infill lot of 5,000 square feet, a second stairway and the hallway to connect it to the first stairway are estimated to take up about 10% of the potentially rentable or sellable floor space, resulting in an additional 10% of housing cost;

(g) The city of Seattle, Washington, allowed up to 6 story residential buildings to be constructed with a single stairway in 1977, following the recommendations of a building code advisory board to encourage infill redevelopment;

(h) New York City began allowing single stairway buildings up to 6 stories several decades ago, and in 2012, the city of Honolulu adopted nearly identical amendments to its building code with regard to egress as Seattle;

(i) Small multifamily buildings enabled by eliminating the requirement for 2 stairways would shorten the distance to an egress compared to large multifamily buildings with housing units on both sides of a long corridor;

(j) In Colorado, there are 18 Commission on Fire Accreditation International Accredited agencies that serve 48 local governments. Accredited agencies are community-oriented, data-driven, and outcome-focused and exemplify organizations that are strategic-minded, well-organized, and properly equipped, staffed, and trained

(k) The International Code Council, which crafts the International Building Code relied upon by states and cities in the United States, is in the process of drafting a code to enable more housing options served by a single stairway;

(l) Single stair buildings also support quality of life, health, and energy efficiency by enabling cross ventilation in most units, which enables residents to use operable windows to bring in fresh air to improve indoor air quality and draw in cool air in the summer in an energy-efficient way;

(m) Larger jurisdictions in Colorado with a population over 100,000 are all considered urban by the federal census and have significant opportunities to develop smart stair buildings on smaller lots in infill areas; and

(k) Therefore, the general assembly declares that increasing the housing supply through more flexible construction design for small multifamily buildings is a matter of mixed statewide and local concern