

Communication from Public

Name: Anthony Dedousis
Date Submitted: 01/15/2021 02:51 PM
Council File No: 19-0603
Comments for Public Posting: Hello, Please see attached for Abundant Housing LA's letter OPPOSING the proposed ban on wood-frame construction. Thank you, Athony Dedousis



January 15, 2021

Los Angeles City Council
200 North Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

[CF 19-0603](#) - City Building Code Fire District 1 Expansion - OPPOSE

Dear Councilmembers,

Abundant Housing LA is a pro-housing, nonprofit advocacy organization working to help solve Southern California's housing crisis. Our organization supports more housing at all levels of affordability and reforms to land use and zoning codes, which are needed in order to make housing more affordable, improve access to jobs and transit, promote greater environmental sustainability, and advance racial and economic equity.

We write to express our strong objection to the proposed motion to restrict wood-frame construction in Los Angeles. This ill-advised measure would worsen the City's housing and homelessness crises and undermine our climate change mitigation goals.

Abundant Housing LA supports policies to expand the availability of homes of all types. We also support measures to improve the safety and quality of new homes. **This motion, however, does not focus on the real safety risk of fires in parts of the city exposed to wildfires.** It would ban type IV (heavy timber) and V (wood-frame) construction in areas with 5,000 of more residents per square mile - which includes a large majority of the city, including many of Los Angeles' most walkable and transit-rich communities, where we should be encouraging new housing.

New type IV and type V structures, including multi-family residential buildings, are fire-safe under current building codes. They are also less costly to build than type I, II, and III structures. The cost to build new homes in Los Angeles is already too high, reducing the amount of permanent supportive, affordable, and market-rate housing constructed in recent years and contributing to a severe increase in homelessness and housing costs.

Banning type IV and type V construction would also increase greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to climate change which in turn intensifies wildfires. This motion would undermine climate change goals in two ways:

- First, by increasing housing costs, it would worsen the exodus of lower- and moderate-income households from Los Angeles. Families that are pushed out of Los Angeles due to high housing costs often move to exurban parts of Southern California or to cities like Las Vegas, Phoenix, Austin, or Dallas. In both cases, these households' greenhouse gas emissions rise, due to longer driving commutes and hotter climates associated with life in these regions.
- Second, this motion would preemptively outlaw new, sustainable mass timber building systems. Mass timber construction is a promising new building technology that has been

embraced in Europe, Canada, Oregon, and Washington. In January 2019, the International Code Council (ICC) authorized adding three new type IV construction types, allowing taller buildings using mass timber with additional fire protections. These new building types will be included in the 2021 International Building Code (IBC). Mass timber offers a solution to climate change because wood from properly managed forests absorbs carbon dioxide, while production of concrete is responsible for 8% of global greenhouse emissions.

Additionally, according to Henry Fung, PE, "Tall mass timber building construction has been reviewed by engineering experts worldwide and found to be as safe as existing construction. We should encourage innovative ways of building new housing because the need is just too great."

Los Angeles should not preemptively ban a new construction method that could help meet our city's housing needs and its climate change goals, and should not raise building costs unnecessarily. We encourage you to consult with the Department of Building and Safety and the Fire Department and reorient this proposal towards more impactful solutions for reducing risk from wildfires.

Sincerely,

Leonora Camner
Executive Director
Abundant Housing LA

Anthony Dedousis
Director of Policy and Research
Abundant Housing LA