

2012 Council Study Issue

CDD 12-07 Accessibility standards for medium to high density residential developments

Lead Department Community Development

History **1 year ago** None **2 years ago** None

1. What are the key elements of the issue? What precipitated it?

Scarcity of land, escalating real estate prices and demographic shifts in the Bay Area have increased the need as well as demand for medium and higher density housing. Typically, higher density housing developments built in Sunnyvale are 3-4 stories tall.

Although older developments utilize stairs as the only means of access to upper story units, current ADA standards for accessibility design include minimum requirements for ramps, stairs, bathrooms, elevators etc. Requirements for the provision of elevators depend on occupancy loads, size of floors, number of units and other criteria outlined in the Building code. The Zoning Code requires that an elevator be provided for all developments of four or more stories (inclusive of garages). Most townhomes developed are three stories and have no elevator requirements, although building code requires a percentage of the homes to have accessible first floors. Other new multi-story developments (4 or more stories) approved in Sunnyvale in the last ten plus years have been required to provide elevator access to all floors. Not all units in older multi-family developments, however, are designed to meet the needs of the physically handicapped. It is a challenge for residents and guests to use multi-level units, or gain access to single-story units on upper floors if they have temporary or permanent accessibility issues.

This study would review current accessibility standards that apply to new multi-level, multi-family developments and identify how these standards could be improved to enable convenient circulation and access by those with physical disabilities and include whether townhome units should have alternate or expanded requirements for access to other floors.

2. How does this relate to the General Plan or existing City Policy?

CITY OF SUNNYVALE HOUSING ELEMENT

GOAL HE-5 EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES Promote equal housing opportunities for all residents, including Sunnyvale's special needs populations, so that residents can reside in the housing of their choice.

Policy HE-5.4 Continue to address the special needs of persons with disabilities through provision of supportive housing, accessibility grants, and development of procedures for reasonable accommodation.

3. Origin of issue

Board or Commission Planning Commission

4. Staff effort required to conduct study Minor

Briefly explain the level of staff effort required

Background research of other cities' approach and potential legal issues; public outreach including extensive outreach to the development community and accessibility advocacy groups; preparation of reports; and, public hearings.

5. Multiple Year Project? No Planned Completion Year 2012

6. Expected participation involved in the study issue process?

Does Council need to approve a work plan? No
Does this issue require review by a Board/Commission? Yes
If so, which? Planning Commission
Is a Council Study Session anticipated? No

7. Briefly explain if a budget modification will be required to study this issue

Amount of budget modification required

Explanation

8. Briefly explain potential costs of implementing study results, note estimated capital and operating costs, as well as estimated revenue/savings, include dollar amounts

Are there costs of implementation? No

Explanation

None to the city. New accessibility requirements can affect the cost of housing production.

9. Staff Recommendation

Staff Recommendation Drop

If 'Support', 'Drop' or 'Defer', explain

The Building Codes and ADA requirements are universally applied to all California cities, and these requirements address the provision of accessibility. New multi-story residential units are covered by these existing codes, as well as a Zoning Code requirement that newer multi-story developments (4 or more floors) are required to provide elevator access to meet the needs of the physically disabled. Staff feels these existing codes for new developments are adequate. Staff also does not support requiring a retrofitting of existing residential units to provide accessible access more extensive than in place. Requiring older multi-story residential developments to provide elevator access to units in upper floors would involve a significant expense. Multi-level homes, such as townhomes do not traditionally install elevators and would be most affected by a new accessibility requirement.

Reviewed by

[Handwritten signature]

Department Director

10/6/11
Date

Approved by

[Handwritten signature]

City Manager

10/18/11
Date