



Dear Mayor Watson, Mayor Pro Tem Vela, and Council Members:

In February of this year, AIA Austin sent [a letter](#) of strong support for a proposed Houseplex Technical Code Amendment. The proposed resolution directing staff to amend the International Residential Code (IRC) and International Building Code (IBC) before you is even stronger, safer, and more appropriate as a result of consultation and review. I again write to express our strong support for this resolution.

Our professional duty is to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public; we therefore do not take life safety code amendments lightly. However, the current codes place unreasonable burdens on the more affordable missing middle and gentle density housing types because they fall in a gap between the IRC and IBC. As a result, a modest increment in hazard level between two and three units currently forces a massive change in engineering requirements, protection systems, review times, development fees, insurance, subcontractor rates, and other costs that are wildly disproportionate, driving the cost of smaller homes up or pushing developers to continue to build even larger, more expensive homes. The proposed code amendment will provide a proportional increase in life-safety protection, but still an increase compared to current single-family homes of the same size, by requiring active sprinkler systems and/or higher assembly ratings.

All the safety provisions necessary to implement this amendment already exist within the IRC in Section R302.3. This modest proposal does not invent new solutions or procedures and does not need to incorporate language from the IBC; it simply expands the scope of the existing provisions from duplexes to triplexes and quadplexes.

As a technical building code amendment, we confirm that this does not change entitlement or zoning in any way. But adopting this amendment will unlock opportunities for more diverse, small-scale housing that fits seamlessly within Austin's neighborhoods, supporting affordability while upholding life-safety standards. I respectfully urge you to support the Houseplex Technical Code Amendment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "N Gelles".

Nkiru Gelles, AIA
AIA Austin President