



Please complete the attached Legislative Request Summary and return to the OML offices by e-mail by Friday, July 18th. The OML Legislative Committee will review all requests and make recommendations to the OML Board of Directors. The board-approved issues will be presented to the full membership during the business meeting at the OML Annual Conference in Oklahoma City on September 11th. Please help us identify the issues of importance to your municipality by returning the completed form as soon as possible.

OKLAHOMA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE (OML)

Legislative Request Summary

Legislative Proposal Analysis: Statewide IRC Classification for Small Multifamily Housing in Oklahoma

1. Person making the request (Name/Position/Municipality/Phone No): City of Norman, Mayor Stephen Tyler Holman on behalf of the entire Norman City Council, 405-366-5404

2. Statement of the Issue: Oklahoma lacks clear statewide statutory guidance for classifying duplexes, triplexes, and quadruplexes under the International Residential Code (IRC) versus the International Building Code (IBC). This ambiguity forces municipalities across the state to apply inconsistent standards, with many defaulting to expensive commercial building requirements for small multifamily housing. The result is artificially inflated development costs that reduce affordable housing production statewide and create regulatory uncertainty for developers and municipalities.

3. What needs to be changed: Oklahoma Statutes Title 59, Section 1000 et seq. (Oklahoma Uniform Building Code Commission Act) needs amendment to explicitly define buildings with 2-4 dwelling units as residential structures subject to IRC provisions. Additionally, the statute should direct the Oklahoma Uniform Building Code Commission to adopt clear guidelines ensuring consistent statewide application of IRC standards for small multifamily buildings.

4. Why is the change needed: Oklahoma faces a statewide affordable housing crisis, with 170,000+ households paying more than 30% of income for housing. Current regulatory uncertainty forces small multifamily projects into expensive commercial building standards, adding \$45,000-85,000 per project in unnecessary costs across the state. This regulatory burden eliminates financial feasibility for small multifamily development in moderate-income communities statewide, reducing housing supply where it's most critically needed. Clear statewide IRC authority would reduce development costs, encourage small-scale housing development, and provide regulatory certainty for municipalities and developers across Oklahoma.



5. Advantages and Disadvantages:

Advantages:

1. **Statewide Housing Affordability:** Reduces development costs by \$45,000-85,000 per small multifamily project across Oklahoma
2. **Supply Increase:** Makes duplex/triplex development financially viable in rural and suburban communities statewide
3. **Economic Development:** Enables smaller contractors throughout Oklahoma to participate in multifamily construction
4. **Regulatory Uniformity:** Eliminates municipal confusion and ensures consistent application statewide
5. **Rural Development:** Particularly benefits smaller communities where commercial building expertise is limited
6. **Construction Industry Support:** Leverages existing residential contractor capacity across the state

Disadvantages:

1. **State vs. Local Control:** Reduces individual municipal discretion in building standards
2. **Perceived Safety Concerns:** Some may worry about reduced fire protection standards statewide, although the IRC covers safety requirements comprehensively.
3. **Professional Opposition:** Commercial design professionals may lose project opportunities across Oklahoma

6. Who is likely to oppose the change:

1. **Oklahoma Society of Professional Engineers:** May lose design fees from forced commercial classification
2. **State Fire Chiefs Association:** Potentially concerned about reduced fire protection requirements, although the IRC covers safety requirements comprehensively.
3. **Large Commercial Developers:** May prefer barriers that limit small developer competition statewide
4. **Some Municipal Officials:** Could oppose state-mandated changes to local building standards
5. **Commercial Construction Trade Unions:** May view this as reducing commercial construction opportunities



7. How to respond to those adversely impacted:

1. **Fire Safety Concerns:** Emphasize that IRC includes comprehensive fire safety provisions appropriate for building scale, with successful track records in other states
2. **Design Professionals:** Highlight that change creates more overall development opportunities statewide, potentially increasing total project volume
3. **Local Control Concerns:** Stress that this provides clarity and tools for local decision-making rather than restricting municipal authority
4. **Quality Concerns:** Reference successful IRC multifamily construction in comparable states like Texas and Arkansas

8. Legislators likely to sponsor/support:

1. **Sen. Mary Boren (SD-16, Norman):** Strong affordable housing advocate, represents Norman directly
2. **Rep. Jacob Rosecrants (HD-46, Norman):** Strong affordable housing advocate, represents Norman directly
3. **Rep. Annie Menz (HD-45, Norman):** Strong affordable housing advocate, represents Norman directly
4. **Rep. Jared Deck (HD-44, Norman):** Strong affordable housing advocate, represents Norman directly
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6. **House Speaker Charles McCall:** Strong economic development advocate, supports business-friendly regulation
7. **Sen. Chuck Hall (SD-20):** Rural development champion, understands housing needs in smaller communities
8. **Rep. Kevin Wallace (HD-32):** Budget committee leadership, recognizes fiscal benefits of increased housing supply
9. **Rural Republican legislators:** Generally support reduced regulation and economic development measures
10. **Legislators from growth counties:** Face direct constituent pressure on housing affordability (Canadian, Cleveland, McClain counties)



9. Legislators likely to oppose and why:

1. **Urban Democratic legislators:** May prefer maintaining stronger building standards and supporting union construction jobs
2. **Legislators with strong labor union constituencies:** Could view this as undermining commercial construction employment
3. **Some municipal government advocates:** May oppose state-level standardization over perceived lack of local flexibility
4. **Legislators philosophically opposed to development:** Could frame this as encouraging unwanted density

10. Supporting coalitions:

1. **Oklahoma Municipal League:** Benefits from clear statewide guidance and reduced regulatory uncertainty
2. **Home Builders Association of Oklahoma:** Directly benefits residential contractors statewide
3. **Oklahoma Association of Realtors:** Supports increased housing supply across all markets
4. **Oklahoma State Chamber:** Economic development through housing affordability and workforce attraction
5. **Associated General Contractors of Oklahoma:** Supports construction industry growth opportunities
6. **Oklahoma Housing Finance Agency:** Aligns with affordable housing mission
7. **Rural Development Organizations:** Small-town economic development through housing options
8. **University System Chancellors:** Student housing affordability at OU, OSU, regional universities
9. **Oklahoma Apartment Association:** Enables property development and improvement statewide
10. **AARP Oklahoma:** Supports diverse housing options for aging population
11. **Oklahoma Policy Institute:** Research organization supporting affordable housing solutions



Political Strategy: Frame this as an "economic development" and "regulatory certainty" initiative that supports Oklahoma's construction industry and addresses the statewide housing crisis. Emphasize rural development benefits and support for small business contractors across Oklahoma. Partner with Oklahoma State University and University of Oklahoma for economic impact research. Coordinate with other states that have successfully implemented similar standards. Position as part of broader housing affordability and workforce development strategy essential for competing with Texas and other neighboring states for business location and population growth.

Legislative Timing: Introduce during regular session with effective date allowing 12-month implementation period for agency rule development and municipal preparation. Consider pilot program language allowing voluntary early adoption by interested municipalities.

Respectfully,

Stephen Tyler Holman

Mayor
City of Norman