

**RESOLUTION NO. 20230914-082**

**WHEREAS**, the City has observed an ongoing trend in student housing developments rented by the bedroom where some bedrooms do not have access to a window; and

**WHEREAS**, windowless rooms have been permitted and constructed throughout developments in West Campus, including 222 bedrooms, or 44 percent of rooms, in the Ion Austin, and 115 bedrooms, or 22 percent of rooms, in the Legacy on Rio; and

**WHEREAS**, studies have shown that people with access to natural light in bedrooms, offices, and hospital rooms have improved mortality rates, productivity, sleep, and mental health; and

**WHEREAS**, a research study in April of 2023 surveyed 152 University of Texas at Austin undergraduates and found that students lacking a window in their bedroom reported lower satisfaction on a number of well-being indicators—including physical health, sleep, depression, and productivity—than students with access to a window; and

**WHEREAS**, the proliferation of windowless bedrooms are occurring throughout the City due to allowances in the City's Building Code; and

**WHEREAS**, other cities, such as New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Washington D.C., have amended their building codes to include minimum glazing requirements to prevent windowless bedrooms; **NOW, THEREFORE**,

**BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:**

City Council initiates amendments to Title 25 (*Land Development*) to require access to natural light for all sleeping rooms in new buildings. These requirements

should allow enough flexibility to creatively provide natural light and minimize impacts to affordability.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

City Council encourages the City Manager to consider the proposed language in Attachment A when proposing code amendments and to consider stakeholder feedback, industry practices, and requirements.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

The City Manager is directed to process the amendments necessary to accomplish the goals in this Resolution and return with a draft ordinance for Council consideration no later than August of 2024.

**ADOPTED:** September 14, 2023

**ATTEST:**



Myrna Rios  
City Clerk

## AIA Austin Proposed IBC Amendment to address Windowless Bedrooms

### 1204.1 General

Every space intended for human occupancy shall be provided with natural light by means of exterior glazed openings in accordance with Section 1204.2 and shall be provided with artificial light in accordance with Section 1204.3. Exterior glazed openings shall open directly onto a public way or onto a yard or court in accordance with Section 1205.

#### Exceptions:

1. Any room or space that is not within a dwelling unit or sleeping unit shall not be required to provide natural light in accordance with Section 1204.2.
2. Any room or space with an area of 70 square feet or less and is not a sleeping room shall not be required to provide natural light in accordance with Section 1204.2.
3. Sleeping rooms within an existing dwelling unit shall not be required to provide natural light in accordance with Section 1204.2 when alterations do not increase the total number of sleeping rooms within the dwelling unit.

### 1204.2 Natural Light

The minimum net exterior glazed opening area shall be not less than 8 percent of the floor area of the room(s) served.

#### 1204.2.1 Adjoining Spaces

For the purpose of natural lighting, any room is permitted to be considered as a portion of an adjoining room where ~~one-half of the area of the common wall is open and obstructed and~~ provides an opening of not less than one-tenth of the floor area of the interior room or ~~25-24~~ square feet, whichever is greater. Openings required for natural light in common walls can be windows and glazed doors.

Exception: Openings required for natural light shall be permitted to open into a sunroom with thermal isolation or a patio cover where the common wall provides a glazed area of not less than one-tenth of the floor area of the interior room. ~~or 20 square feet, whichever is greater.~~

#### 1204.2.2 Exterior Openings

Exterior openings required by Section 1204.2 for natural light shall open directly onto a *public way, yard, or court*, as set forth in Section 1205.

#### Exceptions:

1. Required exterior openings are permitted to open into a roofed porch where the porch meets all of the following criteria:
  - 1.1 Abuts a *public way, yard, or court*
  - 1.2 Has a ceiling height of not less than 7 feet.
  - 1.3 Has a longer side at least 65 percent open and unobstructed.
2. Skylights are not required to open directly onto a *public way, yard, or court*.