SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING ANNUAL REPORT FISCAL YEAR 2023-24



We are proud to present the **2023-2024 Annual Report** of the San Francisco Planning Department, showcasing our accomplishments and initiatives as we continue driving the City's vision for a dynamic, equitable, and sustainable future.

This year, downtown revitalization and housing production have been at the forefront of our efforts. In response to the evolving needs of San Francisco's urban core, and in partnership with City officials and our sister agencies, we have implemented bold strategies to breathe new life both into underutilized spaces and into areas that have historically seen little growth. These initiatives include incentivizing the reactivation and transformation of vacant commercial properties and fast-tracking housing to bring vibrancy back to downtown and elsewhere in the City. Similarly, our core regulatory work has benefitted from generational changes, both legislative and administrative, that have dramatically accelerated the approval process for the housing and small business projects that are critical to a thriving city.

Throughout this reporting period, our plans and policies have paralleled those of the broader City. Racial and social equity has remained central to our work. We've continued to evaluate the City's cultural and historical assets thoughtfully, ensuring that new development complements and celebrates San Francisco's unique identity. At the same time, our focus on sustainability has driven initiatives that support climate resilience and environmental stewardship.

These accomplishments would not have been possible without the dedication of the Mayor, Board of Supervisors, Planning and Historic Preservation Commissions, sister agencies, community partners, and Planning Department staff. Together, we've made strides toward a more inclusive, thriving San Francisco.

Looking to the future, we reaffirm our commitment to addressing the City's challenges— including housing affordability, downtown recovery, and equitable growth—while embracing opportunities to build a brighter future. By working collaboratively, we continue to shape a San Francisco that reflects the values, aspirations, and resilience of all its residents.

Rich Hillis

Director of Planning

Planning Department Overview

The mission of the San Francisco Planning Department, under the direction of the Planning Commission, is to shape the future of San Francisco and the region by generating an extraordinary vision for the General Plan; fostering exemplary design through planning controls; improving our surroundings through environmental analysis; preserving our unique heritage; encouraging a broad range of housing and a diverse job base; and enforcing the Planning Code.

In order to implement its mission, the San Francisco Planning Department is made up of the following divisions:

- The Director's Office
- Administration
- Commission Affairs
- Community Equity
- Current Planning
- Citywide Planning
- Environmental Planning

COMMISSIONS

Planning Commission

The Planning Commission is a seven-member body that makes decisions on a wide range of development projects and advises the Mayor, Board of Supervisors, and City departments on San Francisco's long-range goals, policies, and programs on issues related to land use, transportation, and neighborhood planning, and has the specific responsibility for the stewardship and maintenance of San Francisco's General Plan. The Planning Department reports to the Planning Commission through the Planning Director.

Four members of the Commission are appointed by the Mayor, while the other three members are appointed by the President of the Board of Supervisors. They serve four-year terms.

- Sue Diamond, Planning Commission President (term ended August 2024)
- Kathrin Moore, Vice President
- Derek W. Braun, Commissioner
- Amy Campbell, Commissioner (term started June 2024)
- Joel Koppel, Commissioner (term ended June 2024)
- Theresa Imperial, Commissioner
- Sean McGarry, Commissioner (term started August 2024)
- Gabriella Ruiz, Commissioner (term ended March 2024)
- Rachael Tanner, Commission President (stepped down January 2024)
- Lydia So, Commissioner (term started May 2024)
- Gilbert Williams, Commissioner (term started March 2024)

Historic Preservation Commission

The Historic Preservation Commission is a seven-member body that advises the Mayor, Board of Supervisors, and City departments on San Francisco's historic preservation goals, policies and programs. The Commission is responsible for identifying and designating San Francisco landmarks and buildings in the City's historic districts as well as providing oversight and making decisions on the identification and treatment of properties with historic, social or cultural value to San Francisco. The Commission also convenes the Architectural Review Committee (ARC) to evaluate complex design issues.

All members are nominated by the Mayor and approved by the Board of Supervisors; they serve four-year terms.

- Diane Matsuda, Historic Preservation Commission President
- Ruchira Nageswaran, Vice President
- Hans Baldauf, Commissioner
- Amy Campbell, Commissioner (term ended August 2024)
- Chris Foley, Commissioner
- Lydia So, Commissioner (term ended July 2023)
- Robert Vergara, Commissioner
- Jason Wright, Commissioner

PLANNING DIVISIONS

Director's Office

The Director's Office is responsible for a range of executive functions, including policy analysis and decision-making, media relations, and inter-agency coordination on development strategy and projects.

Rich Hillis, *Director of Planning* Daniel A. Sider, *Chief of Staff*

Administration

The Administration Division provides the support and resources to meet the Department's mission and goals. The division includes the Finance Office, where staff oversees all financial, accounting, and budget functions, ensures compliance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) through regular financial reporting, develops the annual work program and financial budget, and manages all aspects of professional services contracts and awarded grants; Human Resources, Operations, and the Office of Analysis and Information Systems (OASIS).

Thomas DiSanto, Director of Administration

Commission Affairs

The Office of Commission Affairs serves as the liaison between the Planning Department and members of the Planning Commission and Historic Preservation Commission. Commission Affairs staff oversees Commission meeting agendas, maintains Commission reports and records, responds to Sunshine Ordinance public information requests, and drafts and maintains Rules and Regulations.

Jonas P. Ionin, Director of Commission Affairs

Current Planning

Planners in the Current Planning Division help maintain and enhance the physical development of the City. They are responsible for reviewing development applications for compliance with the San Francisco Planning Code, San Francisco's General Plan, State Law, and relevant design guidelines. They also interpret and ensure compliance with the Planning Code, implement the historic preservation work program, and comprise the core staff at the Planning Information Center.

Elizabeth Watty, Director of Current Planning

Citywide Planning

The Citywide Planning Division is responsible for long-range planning in San Francisco. Citywide planners develop policy, maintain and oversee compliance with the City's General Plan, prepare and implement community plans, and act as the urban design resource for the City. Citywide Planning develops plans and proposes policy and long-range plans on a wide range of topics, including housing, transportation, urban design, land use, and sustainability policy at the city-wide and neighborhood scales.

Rachael Tanner, *Director of Citywide Planning*Joshua Switzky, *Acting Director of Citywide Planning (until February 2024)*

Community Equity

The Planning Department prioritizes racial and social equity across all divisions, and coordinates them through the Community Equity Division. The Community Equity Division reflects upon our historical and current inequities and revises our policies and implementation strategies to reverse inequities for our American Indian, Black, and other communities of color, along with other historically marginalized communities. The Division includes four units: Racial & Social Equity Plan Team, Community Engagement and Development, Policies and Strategies, and the Tenderloin Team.

Miriam Chion, *Director of Community Equity*

Environmental Planning

The Environmental Planning Division assesses plans and projects for potential physical impacts on the environment and develops measures to mitigate those impacts. Areas of analysis include transportation, cultural resources, and air quality. The Division's work is conducted pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and local law.

Lisa Gibson, Environmental Review Officer

Highlightupowntown Revitalization

Building on the broader "Roadmap to San Francisco's Future," in March 2024, Mayor Breed set a <u>goal</u> to bring 30,000 new residents and students downtown by 2030. Her "30 x 30" <u>plan</u> outlines the strategies to achieve this goal.

The Roadmap to San Francisco's Future envisions Downtown as "everyone's neighborhood"—a vibrant, economically diverse, and bustling 24/7 community. In Union Square and Yerba Buena, the vision centers on creating new experiences, enhancing destination retail, boosting tourism, and repurposing upper floors of existing buildings with a dynamic mix of uses. The goal is to cultivate a lively, mixed-use neighborhood that welcomes both San Franciscans and visitors alike.

The Planning Department and the <u>Office of Economic and Workforce Development</u> (OEWD) are working together, along with external organizations, to address downtown recovery in both the near- and long-term, with a focus on three themes related to downtown San Francisco: expanding housing, economic diversification and public life and ground floor activation.

While far reaching, two highlights from this broader effort include:

Expanding Downtown Housing: Adaptive Reuse of Commercial Buildings

- 1. Addressing regulatory barriers: The Commercial to Residential Adaptive Reuse program (Planning Code Section 210.5) was established in July 2023 to facilitate the adaptive reuse of commercial buildings to housing. The Program allows adaptive reuse projects Downtown to waive certain Planning Code requirements that would otherwise be challenging to meet when converting an existing commercial building to housing, such as Lot Coverage, Open Space, Streetscape Improvements, Dwelling Unit Exposure, Bicycle Parking, and Dwelling Unit Mix.
- 2. Addressing financial barriers: San Francisco voters approved Proposition C on the March 2024 ballot to waive the City's transfer tax on the first transfer of a property after a commercial-to-residential conversion.

Public life and ground floor activation: Downtown Public Spaces

- 1. Develop concept design for Powell Street
- 2. Work with Union Square Alliance to identify near term improvements for Maiden Lane
- 3. Work with Downtown Partnership on a design for a Downtown Gateway at the Cable Car turnaround

HighlightuHousing Element y Affordable Housing Production

We've made significant progress to advance and enable greater affordable housing production, aligning with the Housing Element and Mayor Breed's *Housing for All* Executive Order. Through collaborative efforts with government agencies, private entities, non-profits, and philanthropic partners, the Department focused on equity, resilience, and community engagement to meet the City's ambitious housing goals. Key initiatives included:

1. Convening the Affordable Housing Leadership Council

- Established in keeping with requirements of the Housing Element, the Council was composed of leaders from community-based organizations, housing development, academia, business, and philanthropy to explore new and expanded affordable housing funding and financing tools. The Council identified new funding opportunities and provided strategic recommendations for increasing affordable housing production.
- The Council <u>published a comprehensive report in February 2024</u>, outlining actionable recommendations to boost affordable housing efforts.

2. Engaging Equity Communities on Housing Priorities

- Worked with equity communities to refine the broad requirements of the Housing Element into discrete, actionable policies and advance <u>their housing priorities</u>
- Priority efforts have included:
 - Assessing and identifying strategies to improve Single Room Occupancy (SRO) housing conditions, particularly in the Tenderloin.
 - o Investing in housing and community facilities that support the American Indian community.

SF Planning continues to lead innovative strategies and foster collaborations to meet the City's affordable housing goals, emphasizing equitable solutions for historically underserved populations.

HighlightuHousing Element y Proposed Rezoning

San Francisco is required to complete its Housing Element-mandated rezoning by January 2026 to accommodate a minimum of 36,200 additional housing units. As a key component of this, we conducted extensive public engagement throughout 2023 and 2024, issued a preliminary rezoning map in February 2024 and received extensive feedback from the public and elected officials. The Department is working to refine the proposal and address height limits, historic preservation, project feasibility, and protections for tenants and small businesses among other issues. A new proposed zoning map is likely to be issued in early 2025 and will be followed by public hearings and the legislative adoption process.

Aligned with the goals and policies of the adopted Housing Element, particularly to Affirmatively Further Fair Housing, the draft proposal would increase allowable building heights and density in well-resourced neighborhoods. The February 2024 proposed rezoning map appears below and includes the following key elements:

- New housing would be distributed across "Housing Opportunity Areas" so that no single neighborhood or set of neighborhoods would bear a disproportionate share of new housing.
- Mid-rise buildings (6 to -8 stories) would be focused on major transit routes, commercial streets, and other main thoroughfares. These areas are better served by transit, retail, and other amenities, and contain more sites that are suitable and likely to be developed into housing.

- Locate taller buildings (ranging from 140' 300', or 14-to-30 stories) in more limited areas that currently allow buildings of 80' or more (e.g. Van Ness Avenue) and at key intersections and locations along other major corridors.
- Promote "missing middle" housing and smaller multifamily homes outside of major corridors by changing density limits to allow more housing to be built within existing height limits (generally 40', or 4-stories).

HighlightuPermit Streamlining and Legislation

Working in partnership with the State's Department of Housing and Community Development ("HCD"), the Department completed broad changes to satisfy State mandates intended to shorten the development review process, provide applicants with greater certainty, and facilitate housing production.

HCD issued their "San Francisco Housing Policy and Practice Review" on October 25, 2023. This first-of-its-kind document "identifies, and seeks to remove, barriers to housing approvals and construction at all income levels." It contains 18 required actions and 10 recommended actions to resolve San Francisco's inconsistencies with state law and accelerate housing production. Through internal process improvements and local legislation, we have satisfied the vast majority of them. The City continues to partner with HCD to advance our shared goal of approving more housing, faster. These process improvements not only address state requirements but also reflect the tangible results of streamlining efforts, such as significantly reducing project review and approval times.

Since July 1st, 2023, SF Planning has made significant strides in streamlining project review times. Between 2022 and 2024 average project approval times have been cut by 47%.

The reduction in timelines is credited to a combination of legislative reforms and internal procedural improvements. The Department has implemented stricter review goals than those mandated by the State's Permit Streamlining Act, ensuring more efficient processing and predictable outcomes for project sponsors.

Key Improvements in the Review Process:

- **Faster to start work:** All applications are now reviewed for completeness within 30 days, with an average turnaround time of 14 days.
- Faster plan-checks: Compliance review is completed within the 30-day target.
- Faster approvals through new legislation: Timelines for housing approvals have been drastically reduced because of new local and State streamlining laws enacted in 2023 and 2024. Including Mayor Breed's Constraints Reduction Ordinance, these have significantly reduced bureaucratic hurdles while safeguarding transparency. Especially significant State laws that directly impact San Francisco's housing production include:
 - Constraints Reduction Ordinance (effective January 1, 2024), Mayor Breed's local legislation streamlines San Francisco's housing permitting process by simplifying code requirements, cutting bureaucratic hurdles, and introducing new incentives to boost affordable housing development.

- SB 423 (effective January 1, 2024), is an extension of SB 35 that accelerates affordable housing development by making the streamlined approval process permanent and applicable to a broader range of projects. A provision unique to San Francisco made the program more widely accessible on June 28, 2024 by increasing the types of eligible projects.
- AB1287 (effective January 1, 2024) effectively doubled the State's density bonus program by increasing the maximum density bonus from 50% to 100% for eligible projects.
- o <u>AB1114</u> (effective January 1, 2024) eliminates certain post-entitlement building permit appeals that uniquely affected San Francisco and requires strict timelines for building permit review.
- AB2011 (effective July 1, 2023), also known as the Affordable Housing and High Road Jobs Act, facilitates the development of housing in commercial zones. It establishes a streamlined, ministerial approval process provided certain affordability and labor conditions are met.

These enhancements have not only accelerated project timelines but also provided sponsors with greater predictability. A clearer and more reliable timeline allows sponsors to effectively plan and overcome construction and financing hurdles, enabling a more dynamic development environment in San Francisco.

Case ЖРегтіt Volume Trends

Application/Fee Type	FY18-19	FY19-20	FY20-21	FY21-22	FY22-23	FY23-24	% Change
Affordable Housing Bonus (AHB)	4	9	3	4	2	0	-100%
Appeal	8	6	17	4	5	1	-80%
Condominium Referral	162	130	73	77	84	33	-61%
Certificate of Appropriateness	90	71	74	82	64	49	-23%
Planning Commission Review	10	2	9	6	7	4	-43%
Coastal Zone Permit	3	0	1	6	4	2	-50%
Conditional Use Authorization	204	187	167	166	185	125	-32%
Citywide Planning	25	31	16	6	11	11	0%
Designations	8	4	14	7	6	7	17%
Downtown Exceptions (309.1, 309.2, 309.3, 309.4)	10	5	4	5	9	5	-44%
Discretionary Review - Mandatory	2	4	3	5	6	5	-17%
Discretionary Review - Public Initiated	111	108	91	72	55	43	-22%
Development Agreements	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Enforcement	713	549	307	361	383	337	-12%
Categorical Exemptions (EEC and ECA)	414	350	325	256	231	171	-26%
Environmental Review	615	571	513	476	490	389	-21%
Eastern Neighborhood Exception (329)	5	10	7	6	8	4	-50%
Environmental Time and Materials (ETM)	199	224	177	199	223	218	-2%
Federal Section (106)	15	1	0	3	2	3	50%
Development Agreement Design Review	0	3	0	0	1	0	-100%
Elevator Penthouse Height Exemption	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Environmental	4	10	5	2	1	1	0%
General Advertising Sign Relocation	0	0	0	0	0	0	
General Advertising Sign Annual Inventory Maintenance	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Generic Application w/o Hearing	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Historic Resource Assessment	1	0	0	0	0	0	
Historic Resource Assessment 5 or less units	36	112	76	126	107	17	-84%

Application/Fee Type	FY18-19	FY19-20	FY20-21	FY21-22	FY22-23	FY23-24	% Change
Historic Resource Assessment 6 or more units	1	2	5	5	4	4	0%
Planning Department	0	0	0	0	0	0	
OCII	1	0	0	1	0	0	
Pre-Application-Other	0	0	1	0	0	0	
Preliminary Plan	1	0	1	1	0	0	
Preservation	1	0	0	0	0	1	100%
Records Requests	232	235	276	398	344	301	-13%
Service Station Conversion Determinations	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Subpoena		1	1	8	12	6	-50%
Temporary Use Permits	65	46	28	35	46	59	28%
Tourist Hotel Conversions	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Generic Letters	0	0	0	0	0	0	
General Plan Amendment	0	0	0	0	0	0	
General Plan Referral	57	43	46	54	42	46	10%
In-Kind Agreement	0	1	0	0	0	0	
Institutional Master Plan	2	1	0	1	1	1	0%
Legacy Business Registry (LBR)	66	40	46	32	51	45	-12%
Lot Line Adjustment	14	30	16	17	12	14	17%
Zoning Map Amendment	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Miscellaneous Permit	2,206	1,525	1,165	1,034	685	756	10%
Mills Act	7	4	1	2	4	0	-100%
Office Allocation (321)	4	9	13	4	4	3	-25%
Planning Code Text Amendment	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Phase	4	13	10	9	10	2	-80%
Public Information Center	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Preliminary Project Assessment	59	42	40	28	15	0	-100%
Project Review Meeting	321	281	327	260	114	0	-100%
Permit to Alter (Major, Minor)	43	37	40	37	40	20	-50%
Shadow Study (295)	17	17	19	14	16	4	-75%
Preservation Survey	1	4	2	1	0	0	
Short Term Rental	1,243	1,173	600	835	764	974	27%

Application/Fee Type	FY18-19	FY19-20	FY20-21	FY21-22	FY22-23	FY23-24	% Change
Federal Section (106) / Subdivision-REF	39	29	23	32	20	12	-40%
Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) -Statement of Eligibility	4	1	2	1	0	0	
Transportation Demand Management (TDM)	55	53	36	36	21	19	-10%
Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) - Certificate of Transfer	7	12	1	0	5	0	-100%
Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) - Notice of Use	3	2	2	0	1	0	-100%
Variance	140	164	114	135	127	119	-6%
Wireless							
Zoning Administrator (ZA) - Letter of Determination	88	75	55	49	28	24	-14%
Zoning Administrator (ZA) – Notice of Special Restrictions	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Zoning Administrator (ZA) - Verification	397	278	219	340	149	331	122%
Medical Cannabis Dispensary							
Section 311	624	543					
Block Book Notification	156	146	105	91	57	55	-4%
Building Permits (New Construction)	144	189	152	120	135	81	-40%
Building Permits (Existing Alterations)	8,028	6,689	7,767	8,984	9,640	9,417	-2%
Total	16,669	14,072	12,995	14,433	14,231	13,727	-2%

Source: Permit Project and Tracking System for Planning Cases and DBI's Permit Tracking System for Building Permits

Bldg. Permits: DBI Permit Tracking System data by fiscal year may vary slightly due to permit issuance timing.

MIS: includes referrals from other agencies, such as the Police and Fire Departments, Alcoholic Beverage Control, among others.

^{*}PRJ: are project profiles and not counted towards planning volume cases.

^{*}PRL: are over-the-counter profiles and not counted towards planning volume cases.

Fiscal Year भिरास्त्रिम् Financial Report

Revenues

Revenue Type	FY18-19	FY19-20	FY20-21	FY21-22	FY22-23	FY23-24	% Change
Charges for Services	\$43,519,481	\$43,208,666	\$45,808,270	\$45,074,375	\$42,429,282	\$38,045,230	-10.3%
Grants	\$4,516,802	\$5,129,892	\$6,441,150	\$6,634,000	\$4,464,537	\$5,886,000	31.8%
Expenditure Recovery from Other Agencies	\$1,470,974	\$1,813,777	\$2,224,990	\$3,010,524	\$3,794,000	\$3,518,444	-7.3%
General Fund Support	\$3,848,730	\$5,513,149	\$5,971,704	\$7,258,681	\$13,241,614	\$11,248,160	-15.1%
TOTAL	\$53,355,987	\$55,665,484	\$60,446,114	\$61,977,580	\$63,929,433	\$58,697,834	-8.2%

Fee Revenues

Fee Revenue Type	FY18-19	FY19-20	FY20-21	FY21-22	FY22-23	FY23-24	% Change
Building Permit Alterations	\$20,896,872	\$20,371,542	\$25,021,455	\$23,586,009	\$23,596,301	\$20,828,520	-11.7%
Building Permit New Construction	\$3,067,613	\$2,971,799	\$4,355,340	\$3,545,983	\$3,470,983	\$2,955,909	-14.8%
Environmental Review Fees	\$7,666,887	\$7,261,343	\$6,123,532	\$5,252,449	\$2,365,535	\$2,300,776	-2.7%
Other Short Range Planning Fees	\$4,826,135	\$5,027,646	\$3,304,173	\$3,806,300	\$2,395,324	\$2,265,737	-5.4%
Conditional Use Fees	\$4,519,875	\$4,405,479	\$2,812,279	\$4,395,304	\$4,320,304	\$3,886,314	-10%
Variance Fees	\$751,124	\$737,810	\$714,002	\$715,935	\$715,935	\$683,963	-4.5%
Certificate of Appropriateness Fees	\$250,116	\$244,212	\$226,140	\$159,177	\$159,177	\$144,822	-9%
Sign Program & Code Enforcement	\$1,540,859	\$2,188,835	\$3,251,349	\$3,413,218	\$3,381,680	\$3,242,027	-4.1%
TOTAL	\$43,519,481	\$43,208,666	\$45,808,270	\$44,874,375	\$40,405,239	\$36,308,068	-10.1%

Expenditures

Expenditure Type	FY18-19	FY19-20	FY20-21	FY21-22	FY22-23	FY23-24	% Change
Salaries & Fringe	я35,895,959	я38,655,168	я39,241,559	я39,857,539	я39,990,197	\$37,933,925	-5.1%
Overhead	я980,944	я656,755	я965,663	я689,271	я401,241	\$458,758	14.3%
Non-Personnel Services, Materials & Supplies, Capital & Projects	\$10,042,863	я9,072,012	я12,350,718	я12,923,708	я14,692,949	\$10,818,821	-26.4%
Services of Other Depts	я6,436,221	я7,281,549	я7,888,174	я8,507,062	я8,845,046	\$9,486,330	7.3%
TOTAL	\$53,355,987	\$55,665,484	\$60,446,114	\$61,977,580	\$63,929,433	\$58,697,834	-8.2%

General Fund Support

	FY18-19	FY19-20	FY20-21	FY21-22	FY22-23	FY23-24	% Change
General Fund Support	\$3.8	\$5.5	\$6.0	\$7.3	\$13.2	\$11.2	-15.2%
Fees & Other Revenues	\$49.5	\$50.2	\$54.5	\$54.7	\$50.7	\$47.4	-6.5%
TOTAL	\$53.4	\$55.7	\$60.4	\$62.0	\$63.9	\$58.7	-8.1%
General Fund Support Percent	7%	10%	10%	12%	21%	19%	-9.5%