

CITY APPROVAL OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The Way It Is Now

Development of new housing must comply with the City's Planning Code and Building Code. Also, under City law, to approve or deny the development of new housing, various City boards, commissions, and officials generally are allowed to make discretionary decisions, giving them the authority to use their own judgment. These City boards, commissions, and officials may include:

- the Planning Commission and the Planning Department;
- the Board of Appeals;
- the Historic Preservation Commission;
- the Arts Commission; and
- the Board of Supervisors.

For a new housing development that is subject to the City's discretionary decisions, State law generally requires the development to undergo a review process that analyzes the development's impacts on the environment. The City must complete that environmental review before any of its boards, commissions, or officials may consider whether to approve the development. Because many new housing developments require that the City make discretionary decisions, it may take from several months up to several years to complete environmental review.

Affordable housing generally means housing that has restrictions on rent or sales price so that an occupant spends about 30% of household income on housing. Affordable housing may have other restrictions, such as maximum household income for people to be eligible to live there.

For certain new development projects with affordable housing, State law limits the City's discretion to approve or deny them. The City must approve, without discretionary review, housing developments that comply with the City's Planning Code and that make at least 50% of the units affordable to households earning no more than 80% of the area median income. State law also exempts projects that meet these criteria from environmental review.

The Proposal

This proposal would change City laws to expedite approval of three types of affordable housing:

1. Multi-family housing where 100% of the residential units are affordable.

2. Multi-family housing with 10 or more residential units and that provides at least 15% more on-site affordable housing units than the minimum number City law otherwise requires.
3. Multi-family housing, or a development that includes housing and other commercial uses, where 100% of the residential units are for households that include at least one San Francisco Unified School District or City College employee, and where at least 80% of the residential units are affordable.

The proposed measure would exempt these affordable housing developments from any discretionary approvals by City boards, commissions, and officials, if those developments comply with the Planning Code. The City would have six to nine months to approve these developments, depending on the number of units.

By eliminating City discretionary approvals for these affordable housing projects, the proposed measure would also allow these developments to proceed without environmental review under State law, as is the case with other affordable housing developments that State law exempts from the City's discretionary decisions.

These affordable housing projects would remain subject to the City's review under the Planning Code and Building Code.