Mayor London Breed and Supervisors Joel Engardio and Matt Dorsey have introduced legislation (File #230446) to allow for faster and more straightforward housing approvals. The legislation will eliminate unnecessary processes, standardize zoning requirements to make them more consistent and predictable, and boost incentives for new affordable housing.

This proposal is part of the Mayor’s Housing for All Plan, which is the City’s effort to make San Francisco a more affordable place for people to call home. The plan allows for 82,000 new homes to be built over the next eight years, of which, over half are slated to be affordable. This legislation follows through on commitments made in the City’s Housing Element, which was unanimously approved by the Board of Supervisors in January. This legislation is a critical step towards enacting the Housing Element’s ambitious housing goals and meeting the City’s obligations under state law.

Overview
This legislation focuses on three key areas:

1. **Eliminate unnecessary hearings** for projects that comply with existing local or State standards. By eliminating unnecessary process, this legislation will provide greater certainty and reduce approval timelines for code compliant housing projects by 3 to 9 months or more. It would also save at least 300 hours of Planning Department staff time per month, which can be re-focused to support the Department’s core permitting and long-range planning functions.

• **Development on large lots.** Eliminate Conditional Use hearings (“CU”) for construction on larger parcels, making it easier to build more homes where they are already allowed.

• **Height.** Eliminate CU hearings for height in districts where hearings are currently required. Importantly, this change would not alter existing height limits but instead would eliminate unnecessary process for projects that comply with those limits.

• **Accommodation for disabilities.** Eliminate Zoning Administrator hearings for reasonable accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act and instead allow administrative review.

• **Demolitions and Increased Density.** Eliminate CU for projects that add housing units but would demolish existing vacant, non-historic single-family or two unit building that has not had a no-fault eviction in the past 5 years. These CU’s would only be eliminated outside of the City’s Equity Geographies.

• **Neighbor-vs-neighbor hearings.** Eliminate mailed notification for code-compliant housing projects to minimize “Discretionary Review Hearings”, which currently require the Planning Commission to resolve intra-neighbor disagreements over projects that comply with the City’s development standards. Mailed notice – and an appeal opportunity - will still be provided to potentially affected neighbors through the existing building permit process.

• **State Density Bonus hearings.** Eliminate purposeless hearings for projects using the State Density Bonus given that State law prevents the Planning Commission from denying or modifying a State Density Bonus project.
2. **Ease out-dated zoning requirements and geographic restrictions** that limit the form and location of new housing.

- **Senior housing.** Eliminate CU for senior housing that is located more than ¼ mile from a Neighborhood Commercial District, expanding opportunities for senior housing citywide.

- **Shelters.** Allow homeless shelters in low-density and industrial neighborhoods, consistent with the City’s current shelter policies and State requirements that shelters be allowed Citywide.

- **Group housing.** Without changing height or bulk limits, allow group housing in single-family zoning districts so long as projects do not use the State Density Bonus.

- **Home-based businesses.** Allow up to two employees at home-based businesses who do not also live in the home. For example, a person running an accountancy or caterer out of their home would be able to employ two outside employees.

- **Open space.** Ease arbitrary square footage requirements for balconies and inner courtyards while preserving basic open space requirements.

- **Ground floor uses.** Specify that the City’s requirement for ground floor “active uses” includes laundry, lobby, mail, and bike rooms, to provide the flexibility to accommodate necessary amenities and reduce residential building construction costs.

3. **Expand incentives** to enhance the City’s affordable housing supply.

- **Remove restrictions on HOME-SF.** Bolster San Francisco’s local density bonus program by eliminating restrictive eligibility criteria to make the program more competitive with the State Density Bonus program.

- **Impact fees for affordable housing.** Allow a fee waiver for all affordable housing projects that use the State Density Bonus, including workforce housing projects, to encourage more projects and better recognize the importance of affordable housing.

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**Next Steps**

This legislation will be reviewed by the Planning Commission at a public hearing on June 15, 2023, where public comment is welcome in-person and via phone and videoconference. Hearing details will be available at sfplanning.org no later than June 9.

To submit comments or ask questions in advance, contact:

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Learn more:
https://sfplanning.org/housing