

SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Executive Summary Planning Code Text Change

HEARING DATE: SEPTEMBER 22, 2011

1650 Mission St. Suite 400 San Francisco, CA 94103-2479

Reception:

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Planning Information: 415.558.6377

Project Name: Reconstruction of Buildings Damaged by Fire or Acts of God

Case Number: 2011.0707T [Board File No. 11-0590]

Initiated by: Supervisor Cohen: Introduced June 14, 2011
Staff Contact: AnMarie Rodgers, Manager Legislative Affairs

anmarie.rodgers@sfgov.org, 415-558-6395

Recommendation: Recommend Approval with Modifications

PLANNING CODE AMENDMENT

The proposed Ordinance would amend San Francisco Planning Code Section 181(d) to provide

- a process for the reconstruction of nonconforming uses or buildings damaged or destroyed by fire or acts of God and
- 2) a retroactive operative date of August 1, 2009.

The Way It Is Now:

Section 181 of the Planning Code currently addresses enlargement, alteration, and reconstruction of nonconforming uses.¹ With certain exceptions, generally, these nonconforming uses cannot be enlarged, intensified or relocated under the controls of Section 181. That said, subsection 181(d) does provide that a nonconforming use may be restored to its former condition and use in the event that the use is damaged or destroyed by fire, or other calamity, or by Act of God, or by the public enemy. The restoration may occur "provided that such restoration is permitted by the Building Code, and is started within one year [emphasis added] and diligently prosecuted to completion".

The Way It Would Be:

Currently, restoration of nonconforming uses that are damaged or destroyed by fire, calamity, Act of God, or public enemy may currently occur if permitted by the Building Code and is "started within one year". The proposed Ordinance would amend Section 181 to clarify the definition of "within one year."

Under the proposed Ordinance, "started within one year" shall mean that within one year of the fire or other calamity or Act of God the building's owner or agent shall have either

(1) <u>filed an application</u> for a building permit for alteration, repair, or replacement of the damaged or destroyed building, or

¹ Section 180 defines a "nonconforming use" to generally be "a use which existed lawfully at the effective date of this Code, or of amendments thereto. . . <u>and</u> which fails to conform to one or more of the use limitations under Articles 2, 6, 7 and 8 of this Code that then became applicable for the district in which the property is located".

- (2) submitted to the Planning Department <u>evidence of a resolution</u> with the insurance company accompanied by a <u>reasonable schedule of payments</u> to the owner and a <u>commitment by the insurance company</u> to pay, or
- (3) submitted to the Planning Department prepared <u>design plans</u> and <u>evidence of efforts by the owner or agent to conduct a pre-application review</u> with the Department of Building Inspection or the Planning Department.

REQUIRED COMMISSION ACTION

The proposed Ordinance is before the Commission so that it may recommend adoption, rejection, or adoption with modifications to the Board of Supervisors.

RECOMMENDATION

The Department recommends that the Commission recommend *approval with modifications* of the proposed Ordinance. Specifically, the proposed Ordinance should be modified in two ways. First, it should allow a reasonable degree of flexibility for those who have experienced a calamity but not to be overly permissive in allowing rebuild of nonconforming uses. Second, the Ordinance should be modified to include the retroactive date of retroactive operative date of August 1, 2009. The Department recommends that these changes be articulated as drafted below. Shaded text shows the Department recommendations:

SEC. 181. NONCONFORMING USES: ENLARGEMENTS, ALTERATIONS AND RECONSTRUCTION.

(d) Notwithstanding the foregoing provisions of this Section 181, a structure occupied by a nonconforming use that is damaged or destroyed by fire, or other calamity, or by Act of God, or by the public enemy, may be restored to its former condition and use; provided that such restoration is permitted by the Building Code, and is started within one year eighteen months and diligently prosecuted to completion. The age of such a structure for the purposes of Sections 184 and 185 shall nevertheless be computed from the date of the original construction of the structure. Except as provided in Subsection (e) below, no structure occupied by a nonconforming use that is voluntarily razed or required by law to be razed by the owner thereof may thereafter be restored except in full conformity with the use limitations of this Code.

For purposes of this Subsection (d), "started within eighteen months" shall mean that within eighteen months of the fire or other calamity or Act of God, the structure's owner shall have filed a building permit application to restore the structure to its former condition and use.

Section 3. This Section shall be uncodified.

If the fire or other calamity or Act of God occurred between July 1, 2009 and June 14, 2011, "started within eighteen months" shall mean that within eighteen months of the effective date of this Ordinance the structure's owner shall have filed a building permit application to restore the structure to its former condition and use.

Hearing Date: September 22, 2011

BASIS FOR RECOMMENDATION

Extension of Window to File a Valid Permit: Under the Department's recommendation, the length of time to file a building permit would be extended from one year to 18 months. The building permit process would not need to be completed during this time, it would merely have to be started with a valid building permit.

Retroactive date. While the retroactive operative date of August 1, 2009 was discussed in the legislative title, it is not included in the actual Ordinance. The Department, therefore, recommends adding an uncodified portion of the Ordinance to indicate this retroactive date. Further, this uncodified part of the Ordinance would allow a grace period for those who have recently suffered a calamity to have an addition 18 months to file a permit after the effective date of the Ordinance. This would allow any party who recently encountered difficulty in proceeding under the existing rules to have an additional opportunity to rebuild.

The Department believes these modifications present a more graceful legislative solution for the future and for those who may have suffered a recent calamity.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The proposed amendments to the Planning Code are exempt from environmental review under a CEQA Guidelines Section 15060(c)(2).

PUBLIC COMMENT

As of the date of this report, the Department received two signed declarations from past Zoning Administrators for the Department.

RECOMMENDATION: Recommendation of Approval with Modifications

Exhibit A: Draft Planning Commission Resolution Exhibit B: Board of Supervisors File No. 11-0590

Exhibit C: Declarations from Robert Passmore and Larry Badiner

Planning Commission Draft Resolution Planning Code Text Change

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1650 Mission St. Suite 400 San Francisco, CA 94103-2479

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Project Name: Reconstruction of Buildings Damaged by Fire or Acts of God

Case Number: 2011.0707T [Board File No. 11-0590]

Initiated by: Supervisor Cohen: Introduced June 14, 2011
Staff Contact: AnMarie Rodgers, Manager Legislative Affairs anmarie.rodgers@sfgov.org, 415-558-6395

Recommendation: Recommend Approval with Modifications

RECOMMENDING THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS ADOPT A PROPOSED ORDINANCE WITH MODIFICATIONS THAT WOULD AMEND PLANNING CODE SECTIONS SECTION 181 TO CLARIFY THE DEFINITION OF "WITHIN ONE YEAR", ADOPTING FINDINGS, INCLUDING ENVIRONMENTAL FINDINGS, SECTION 302 FINDINGS, AND FINDINGS OF CONSISTENCY WITH THE GENERAL PLAN AND THE PRIORITY POLICIES OF PLANNING CODE SECTION 101.1.

WHEREAS, on June 14, 2011, Supervisor Cohen introduced a proposed Ordinance under Board of Supervisors (hereinafter "Board") File Number 11-0590 which would amend Planning Code Section 181 to clarify the definition of "within one year." Under the proposed Ordinance, "started within one year" would mean that within one year of the fire or other calamity or Act of God the building's owner or agent shall have either (1) filed an application for a building permit for alteration, repair, or replacement of the damaged or destroyed building, or (2) submitted to the Planning Department evidence of a resolution with the insurance company accompanied by a reasonable schedule of payments to the owner and a commitment by the insurance company to pay, or (3) submitted to the Planning Department prepared design plans and evidence of efforts by the owner or agent to conduct a pre-application review with the Department of Building Inspection or the Planning Department.

WHEREAS, The Planning Commission (hereinafter "Commission") conducted a duly noticed public hearing at a regularly scheduled meeting to consider the proposed Ordinance on September 22, 2011; and,

WHEREAS, the proposed Ordinance has been determined to be categorically exempt from environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act Section 15060(c)(2); and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission has heard and considered the testimony presented to it at the public hearing and has further considered written materials and oral testimony presented on behalf of Department staff and other interested parties; and

WHEREAS, all pertinent documents may be found in the files of the Department, as the custodian of records, at 1650 Mission Street, Suite 400, San Francisco; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission has reviewed the proposed Ordinance; and

MOVED, that the Planning Commission hereby recommends that the Board of Supervisors approve with modifications the proposed ordinance. Specifically, the proposed Ordinance should be modified in two ways. First, it should allow a reasonable degree of flexibility for those who have experienced a calamity but not to be overly permissive in allowing rebuild of nonconforming uses. Second, the Ordinance should be modified to include the retroactive date of retroactive operative date of August 1, 2009. The Commission recommends that these changes be articulated as drafted below. Shaded text shows the Commission recommendations:

SEC. 181. NONCONFORMING USES: ENLARGEMENTS. ALTERATIONS AND RECONSTRUCTION.

(d) Notwithstanding the foregoing provisions of this Section 181, a structure occupied by a nonconforming use that is damaged or destroyed by fire, or other calamity, or by Act of God, or by the public enemy, may be restored to its former condition and use; provided that such restoration is permitted by the Building Code, and is started within one year eighteen months and diligently prosecuted to completion. The age of such a structure for the purposes of Sections 184 and 185 shall nevertheless be computed from the date of the original construction of the structure. Except as provided in Subsection (e) below, no structure occupied by a nonconforming use that is voluntarily razed or required by law to be razed by the owner thereof may thereafter be restored except in full conformity with the use limitations of this Code.

For purposes of this Subsection (d), "started within eighteen months" shall mean that within eighteen months of the fire or other calamity or Act of God, the structure's owner shall have filed a building permit application to restore the structure to its former condition and use.

Section 3. This Section shall be uncodified.

If the fire or other calamity or Act of God occurred between July 1, 2009 and June 14, 2011, "started within eighteen months" shall mean that within eighteen months of the effective date of this Ordinance the structure's owner shall have filed a building permit application to restore the structure to its former condition and use.

FINDINGS

Having reviewed the materials identified in the preamble above, and having heard all testimony and arguments, this Commission finds, concludes, and determines as follows:

1. Extension of Window to File a Valid Permit: Extending the length of time to file a building permit from one year to 18 months would assist those who have suffered a calamity by providing more time to settle matters with the insurance company and file appropriate permits with the City. The building permit process would not need to be completed during this time, it would merely have to be started with a valid building permit.

2

- 2. Retroactive date. While the retroactive operative date of August 1, 2009 was discussed in the legislative title, it is not included in the actual Ordinance. The Commission therefore, recommends adding an uncodified portion of the Ordinance to indicate this retroactive date. This uncodified part of the Ordinance would allow a grace period for those who have recently suffered a calamity to have an addition 18 months to file a permit after the effective date of the Ordinance.
- 3. The Commission believes these modifications present a more graceful legislative solution for the future and for those who may have suffered a recent calamity.
- 4. General Plan Compliance. The proposed Ordinance and the Commission's recommended modifications are consistent with the following Objectives and Policies of the General Plan:

I. COMMERCE & INDUSTRY ELEMENT

THE COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY ELEMENT OF THE GENERAL PLAN SETS FORTH OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES THAT ADDRESS THE BROAD RANGE OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES, FACILITIES, AND SUPPPORT SYSTEMS THAT CONSTITUE SAN FRANCISCO'S EMPLOYMENT AND SERVICE BASE.

GOALS

THE THREE GOALS OF THE COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY ELEMENT OF THE GENERAL PLAN RELATE TO CONTINUED ECONOMIC VITALITY, SOCIAL EQUITY, AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY.

OBJECTIVE 1

MANAGE ECONOMIC GROWTH AND CHANGE TO ENSURE ENHANCEMENT OF THE TOTAL CITY LIVING AND WORKING ENVIRONMENT

OBJECTIVE 6

MAINTAIN AND STRENGTHEN VIABLE NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL AREAS EASILY ACCESSIBLE TO CITY RESIDENTS.

POLICY 6.10

Promote neighborhood commercial revitalization, including community-based and other economic development efforts where feasible.

II. HOUSING ELEMENT

OBJECTIVE 2

RETAIN EXISTING HOUSING UNITS, AND PROMOTE SAFETY AND MAINTENANCE STANDARDS, WITHOUT JEOPARDIZING AFFORDABILITY.

POLICY 2.1

Discourage the demolition of sound existing housing, unless the demolition results in a net increase in affordable housing.

Commission Finding: The Ordinance and the modifications recommended by the Commission will strengthen the vitality of existing uses that were destroyed by calamity

SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT 3

- 8. Planning Code Section 101 Findings. The proposed amendments to the Planning Code are consistent with the eight Priority Policies set forth in Section 101.1(b) of the Planning Code in that:
 - 1. That existing neighborhood-serving retail uses be preserved and enhanced and future opportunities for resident employment in and ownership of such businesses enhanced;
 - The proposed amendments will encourage the replacement of neighborhood-serving retail uses unintentionally destroyed by calamity.
 - 2. That existing housing and neighborhood character be conserved and protected in order to preserve the cultural and economic diversity of our neighborhoods;
 - The proposed amendments will encourage replacement of existing housing unintentionally destroyed by calamity.
 - 3. That the City's supply of affordable housing be preserved and enhanced;
 - The proposed amendments may provide the opportunity to rebuild housing lost through calamity. The City's supply of existing housing is often the most affordable housing.
 - 4. That commuter traffic not impede MUNI transit service or overburden our streets or neighborhood parking;
 - The proposed amendments will not result in commuter traffic impeding MUNI transit service or overburdening the streets or neighborhood parking as it will merely allow the rebuild of a use unintentionally destroyed through calamity.
 - 5. That a diverse economic base be maintained by protecting our industrial and service sectors from displacement due to commercial office development, and that future opportunities for resident employment and ownership in these sectors be enhanced;
 - The proposed amendments would not cause displacement of the industrial or service sectors due to office development, in fact it will allow these existing uses to be rebuilt if unintentionally destroyed by calamity.
 - 6. That the City achieve the greatest possible preparedness to protect against injury and loss of life in an earthquake;
 - Preparedness against injury and loss of life in an earthquake is unaffected by the proposed amendments. Any new construction associated with a use destroyed by calamity would be executed in compliance with all applicable construction and safety measures.
 - 7. That the landmarks and historic buildings be preserved;
 - Landmarks and historic buildings would be unaffected by the proposed amendments. Should a use that was destroyed by calamity be located within a historic district or context, such site would be evaluated under Planning Code provisions and comprehensive Department policies.

Draft Resolution September 22, 2011

CASE NO. 2011.0707T Reconstruction of Buildings Damaged by Fire or Acts of God

8. That our parks and open space and their access to sunlight and vistas be protected from development;

The City's parks and open space and their access to sunlight and vistas would be unaffected by the proposed amendments.

8. Planning Code Section 302 Findings. The Planning Commission finds from the facts presented that the public necessity, convenience and general welfare require the proposed amendments to the Planning Code as set forth in Section 302.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Commission hereby recommends that the Board ADOPT the proposed Ordinance with modifications as described in this Resolution and in the proposed Ordinance with the modification outlined above.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was adopted by the Commission at its meeting on September 22, 2011.

Linda D. Avery Commission Secretary

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ADOPTED:

BOARD of SUPERVISORS



City Hall
Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 244
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TDD/TTY No. 554-5227

June 27, 2011

Planning Commission Attn: Linda Avery 1660 Mission Street, 5th Floor San Francisco, CA 94103

Dear Commissioners:

On June 14, 2011, Supervisor Cohen introduced the following proposed legislation:

File No. 110590

Ordinance amending the San Francisco Planning Code Section 181(d) to: 1) provide a process for the reconstruction of buildings damaged or destroyed by fire or acts of God; 2) provide a retroactive operative date of August 1, 2009; and 3) adopt findings, including environmental findings and Planning Code Section 302 findings.

The proposed ordinance is being transmitted pursuant to Planning Code Section 302(b) for public hearing and recommendation. The ordinance is pending before the Land Use & Economic Development Committee and will be scheduled for hearing upon receipt of your response.

Angela Calvillo, Clerk of the Board

AlisaSomera

By: Alisa Somera, Committee Clerk

Land Use & Economic Development Committee

Attachment

c: John Rahaim, Director of Planning Scott Sanchez, Zoning Administrator Bill Wycko, Chief, Major Environmental Analysis AnMarie Rodgers, Legislative Affairs Nannie Turrell, Major Environmental Analysis Brett Bollinger, Major Environmental Analysis

1	[Planning Code - Reconstruction of Buildings Damaged or Destroyed by Fire or Acts of God]
2	
3	Ordinance amending the San Francisco Planning Code Section 181(d) to: 1) provide a
4	process for the reconstruction of buildings damaged or destroyed by fire or acts of
5	God; 2) provide a retroactive operative date of August 1, 2009; and 3) adopt findings,
6	including environmental findings and Planning Code Section 302 findings.
7 8	NOTE: Additions are <u>single-underline italics Times New Roman</u> ; deletions are <u>strike through italics Times New Roman</u> . Board amendment additions are <u>double-underlined</u> ; Board amendment deletions are <u>strikethrough normal</u> .
9	board amendment deletions are striketinough normal .
10	Be it ordained by the People of the City and County of San Francisco:
11	Section 1. Findings.
12	(a) The Planning Department has determined that the actions contemplated in this
13	ordinance comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (California Public Resources
14	Code Section 21000 et seq.). Said determination is on file with the Clerk of the Board of
15	Supervisors in File No and is incorporated herein by reference.
16	(b) Pursuant to Planning Code Section 302, this Board finds that these Planning Code
17	amendments will serve the public necessity, convenience, and welfare for the reasons set
18	forth in Planning Commission Resolution No and the Board incorporates such
19	reasons herein by reference. A copy of Planning Commission Resolution No is on file
20	with the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors in File No
21	Section 2. The San Francisco Planning Code is hereby amended by amending Section
22	181(d), to read as follows:
23	SEC. 181. NONCONFORMING USES: ENLARGEMENTS, ALTERATIONS AND
24	RECONSTRUCTION.
25	

1	(d) Notwithstanding the foregoing provisions of this Section 181, a structure occupied
2	by a nonconforming use that is damaged or destroyed by fire, or other calamity, or by Act of
3	God, or by the public enemy, may be restored to its former condition and use; provided that
4	such restoration is permitted by the Building Code, and is started within one year and
5	diligently prosecuted to completion. The age of such a structure for the purposes of Sections
6	184 and 185 shall nevertheless be computed from the date of the original construction of the
7	structure. Except as provided in Subsection (e) below, no structure occupied by a
8	nonconforming use that is voluntarily razed or required by law to be razed by the owner
9	thereof may thereafter be restored except in full conformity with the use limitations of this
10	Code.
11	For purposes of this Subsection (d), "started within one year" shall mean that within one year
12	of the fire or other calamity or Act of God the building's owner or agent shall have either (1) filed an
13	application for a building permit for alteration, repair, or replacement of the damaged or destroyed
14	building, or (2) submitted to the Planning Department evidence of a resolution with the insurance
15	company accompanied by a reasonable schedule of payments to the owner and a commitment by the
16	insurance company to pay, or (3) submitted to the Planning Department prepared design plans and
17	evidence of efforts by the owner or agent to conduct a pre-application review with the Department of
18	Building Inspection or the Planning Department.
19	Section 3. Effective Date. This ordinance shall become effective 30 days from the
20	date of passage.
21	APPROVED AS TO FORM:
22	DENNIS J. HERRERA, City Attorney
23	By:
24	JUDITH A. BOYAJIAN Deputy City Attorney

BEFORE THE PLANNING COMMISSION

CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

DECLARATION OF ROBERT PASSMORE

- I, Robert Passmore, declare as follows:
- 1. I served as Zoning Administrator for the City and County of San Francisco from 1977 to 1999. I make this Declaration in support of the proposed ordinance amending Section 181(d) of the San Francisco Planning Code to provide a process for the reconstruction of buildings damaged or destroyed by fire or acts of God.
 - 2. I have personal knowledge of the facts set forth in this Declaration.
- 3. Current Section 181(d) of the Planning Code allows a structure that is damaged or destroyed by fire or by act of God to be restored to its former condition and use, provided that such restoration is started within one year and diligently prosecuted to completion. During my tenure as Zoning Administrator, I routinely interpreted the phrase "started within one year and diligently prosecuted to completion" to mean that the property owner proceeded with due diligence to timely commence the necessary steps toward the reconstruction of the building, including the filing of claims with insurance carriers, submitting plans to the Building, Planning and Fire Departments, and filing applications with the Building and Planning Departments.
- 4. It was my experience that insurance claims often present difficult challenges as well as substantial time periods to process to a conclusion. Due to the need for resolution with the insurance carrier, necessary review times, and Planning Department backlogs, I did not require the owner to complete the entire application process within one year of the fire. Rather, diligent steps toward advancing the process

were routinely accepted by the Planning Department as sufficient to satisfy the requests of Section 181(d). Settlement with the insurance company often takes more than one year, and necessary pre-application meetings with the Building Department and Planning Department, and review of reports such as geotechnical reports and other required submittals, can often take more than one year.

- 5. The proposed change is necessary because a rigid interpretation would prevent the Planning Department from following the intent of the legislation.
- 6. The proposed ordinance is an attempt to clarify Planning Code Section 181(d) in accordance with longstanding practice of the Planning Department as described above.

I hope that the Planning Commission will favorably consider the proposed legislation.

Executed this __/2^{t/s} day of August, 2011 at San Francisco, California.

By:

Robert Passmore

BEFORE THE PLANNING COMMISSION

CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

DECLARATION OF LAWRENCE BADINER

- I, Lawrence Badiner, declare as follows:
- 1. I served as Zoning Administrator for the City and County of San Francisco from 2000 to 2010. I make this Declaration in support of the proposed ordinance amending Section 181(d) of the San Francisco Planning Code to provide a process for the reconstruction of buildings damaged or destroyed by fire or acts of God.
 - 2. I have personal knowledge of the facts set forth in this Declaration.
- 3. Current Section 181(d) of the Planning Code allows a structure that is damaged or destroyed by fire or by act of God to be restored to its former condition and use, provided that such restoration is started within one year and diligently prosecuted to completion. During my tenure as Zoning Administrator, I routinely interpreted the phrase "started within one year and diligently prosecuted to completion" to mean that the property owner proceeded with due diligence to timely commence the necessary steps toward the reconstruction of the building, including the filing of claims with insurance carriers, submitting plans to the Building, Planning and Fire Departments, and filing applications with the Building and Planning Departments.
- 4. When the language of Section 181(d) was drafted, the insurance and permitting process was relatively simple. In contrast, it was my experience that insurance claims often present difficult challenges as well as substantial time periods to process to a conclusion. Due to the need for resolution with the insurance carrier, necessary review times, and Planning Department backlogs, I did not require the owner to complete the