

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
SAN FRANCISCO



LONDON N. BREED
MAYOR

April 3, 2024

San Francisco Planning Commission
c/o San Francisco Planning Department
49 South Van Ness Ave, Suite 1400
San Francisco, CA 94103

RE: Rezoning plan

Dear President Diamond and Members of the Planning Commission:

San Francisco is a City that is always changing. From the Gold Rush era that brought ships to our shores that would then become hotels, to the transformation of sand dunes into what we now know as the Sunset neighborhood, to the development of our Downtown and, more recently, newer neighborhoods like Mission Bay and Treasure Island. Despite these generations of growth in our 49 square miles, many parts of San Francisco were built for another time, with a smaller population, and designed for a world where cars were really our only option. Our current housing and neighborhood infrastructure no longer fully meets our values or needs. San Francisco must continue to be a place where we can grow and welcome new residents, where young people who are born and raised here can stay, and where workers can afford to live near their jobs and businesses. In order to accomplish this, we need to do what our City has always done: embrace change.

In January of last year, the State of California certified San Francisco's Housing Element, which obligates us to rezone many neighborhoods across the City to create additional capacity for more than 36,000 new homes. I also issued my Housing for All Executive Directive, where I asked the Planning Department to submit a draft rezoning proposal that reflects the requirements of our Housing Element. In order to meet our State-mandated deadlines, we need to finalize rezoning proposals that incorporate stakeholder feedback by the end of January 2026.

Planning Department staff have been doing the hard work of developing draft proposals that align with these requirements. I know it has not been an easy task, but the staff deserve our appreciation for their professionalism and efforts to engage the community by hosting numerous open houses, focus groups, workshops, online surveys, interviews, and other community conversations that have and will continue to result in valuable input on this proposal.

Throughout this process, I have heard diverse perspectives on what the City needs to do to accommodate new homes. Some believe the current proposal doesn't go nearly far enough and that we need to significantly expand its scope – others are concerned about what more height and density mean for their neighborhood and for the San Francisco that they know and love.

I have also heard from the people who plan, finance, and build housing about the realities they are facing in our post-pandemic economy. Particularly, that construction becomes significantly more challenging once a building exceeds eight stories and needs to use different materials and design approaches, and that our current financial climate will result in less high-rise development over the next decade.

With all of this in mind, I am asking the Planning Commission and Department to go back and revise the current draft proposal in several ways and solicit additional stakeholder feedback. This should include:

- Exploring the idea of removing density limits without increasing height that are currently in place on parcels within a short walk of our key transit and commercial corridors. This will help to provide more smaller-scale housing where it makes sense without increasing height limits in our neighborhoods.
- Prioritize rezoning for the type of housing that is most likely to be built by allowing more six to eight-story mid-rise buildings on and near our transit and commercial corridors. This could mean adjusting heights down in some areas currently proposed for high-rise development while also increasing heights elsewhere to allow more mid-rise development along these corridors. We should still allow for high-rise buildings on our widest and busiest streets, especially those that have large parcels and can accommodate larger housing developments.
- Take greater advantage of larger opportunity sites for housing, including parking lots and institutional sites, to maximize the potential for new affordable and mixed-income housing.

This ambitious process is fundamentally about doing what is best for San Francisco and its residents while also addressing the reality that our City, as built today, cannot meet our current or future housing needs. And I believe we can do all of this while still protecting the uniqueness of our diverse San Francisco neighborhoods.

I would like to thank everyone who has participated in this important work to date. I look forward to ongoing conversations and reviewing an updated proposal when it is available.

Sincerely,



London N. Breed
Mayor