

BOARD of SUPERVISORS



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MEMORANDUM

Date: December 3, 2024

To: Brad Russi, Deputy City Attorney, Office of the City Attorney
Rich Hillis, Director, Planning Department
Sandy Tong, Interim Chief, Fire Department
Patrick O'Riordan, Director, Department of Building Inspection

From:  Angela Calvillo, Clerk of the Board, Board of Supervisors

Subject: Urging the Establishment of the Sensible Density Working Group
(File No. 241047)

On October 29, 2024, the Board of Supervisors adopted Resolution No. 547-24 sponsored by Supervisor Aaron Peskin (File No. 241047, Urging the Establishment of the Sensible Density Working Group); enacted on November 8, 2024.

Please find the attached courtesy copy of the Resolution for your office's information and consideration.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Office of the Clerk of the Board at (415) 554-5184, or by email: board.of.supervisors@sfgov.org.

- c: Members of the Board of Supervisors; Supervisors Aaron Peskin, Connie Chan
Tom Paulino, Mayor's Liaison to the Board of Supervisors
Andres Power, Mayor's Policy Director
Dan Sider, Planning Department
Corey Teague, Planning Department
Tina Tam, Planning Department
Lisa Gibson, Planning Department
Aaron Starr, Planning Department
Josh Switzky, Planning Department
Joy Navarrete, Planning Department
Debra Dwyer, Planning Department
Elizabeth Watty, Planning Department
Theresa Ludwig, Fire Department
Patty Lee, Department of Building Inspection
Tate Hanna, Department of Building Inspection

1 [Urging the Establishment of the Sensible Density Working Group]

2
3 **Resolution urging the establishment of the Sensible Density Working Group; urging**
4 **the Fire Marshall, Department of Building Inspection, and Planning Department to**
5 **convene a working group to study how to safely allow single-stair building typologies**
6 **on four, five and six story buildings, and make recommendations for the promulgation**
7 **of local building code equivalencies.**

8
9 WHEREAS, San Francisco is required by state housing element law to rezone for an
10 additional 36,000 units in order to have the zoned capacity to accommodate 82,000 additional
11 housing units, 46,000 of them affordable to low and moderate income households, by 2032,
12 and

13 WHEREAS, San Francisco is required to rezone in higher resourced neighborhoods
14 which are substantially built out with few large sites available for development, and

15 WHEREAS, Assembly of large sites in dense neighborhoods is neither easy nor
16 desirable because it increases land value and is disruptive to the fine grain character of San
17 Francisco neighborhoods, and

18 WHEREAS, Both state and local building code requires the construction of two
19 staircases for buildings over three stories.

20 WHEREAS, Adding two stairs to a four to six story building on a standard 25' wide lot
21 in San Francisco takes up a large amount of a floorplan and makes medium density projects
22 infeasible; and

23 WHEREAS, San Francisco has ended single family zoning, and significantly increased
24 its zoned capacity, by allowing fourplexes in every single-family zoned parcel in the city, and
25

1 sixplexes on corner lots, however very few fourplexes have been built, in large part because
2 of the infeasibility of the requirement for two staircases above three stories; and

3 WHEREAS, San Francisco's fourplex ordinance alone doubled, tripled or quadrupled
4 the zoned capacity of 120,000 parcels formerly zoned for single family homes, however very
5 few developers have chosen to use to use this option, in part because the infeasibility of the
6 two-stair requirement; and

7 WHEREAS, Most other countries in the world allow single-stair buildings, alternatively
8 called "Point Access Blocks;" and

9 WHEREAS, Seattle modified it's building code to allow single-stair buildings up to six
10 stories, since 1977 without any major safety concerns, with similarly dense residential
11 neighborhoods and hilly topography; and

12 WHEREAS, Single-stair buildings can achieve the same or greater level of safety
13 through decreased travel distance to a fire-rated stairwell, in sprinklered buildings, compared
14 to a large floorplate building with double-loaded corridors; and

15 WHEREAS, Single-stair buildings allow more light and cross-ventilation, by allowing
16 living space to be pushed to the exterior, and can allow new development to protect rear
17 yards and open space; and

18 WHEREAS, Single-stair buildings lower the cost of construction by saving space on
19 stairs and corridors; and

20 WHEREAS, Safely allowing single-stair buildings can facilitate modest infill
21 development on small sites around the city that more closely matches our development
22 patterns; and

23 WHEREAS, Single-stair buildings allow affordable housing developers to build smaller
24 scale projects, more likely to result in mixed income neighborhoods; now, therefore, be it
25

1 RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors urges the creation of a Sensible Density
2 Working Group comprised of members of the Department of Building Inspection, Fire
3 Department, and Planning Department, with legal support from the City Attorney's Office, for
4 the purpose of studying how to safely allow single-stair building typologies on four, five and six
5 story buildings; and, be it

6 RESOLVED, That the Board urges the Sensible Density Working Group to develop
7 recommendations to inform a bulletin on building code equivalencies to allow single-stair
8 buildings of four, five or six stories and recommended planning code changes; and, be it

9 RESOLVED, That the Board urges the Sensible Density Working Group to produce a
10 written report to the Board within 60 days of the Resolution passing the Board on its efforts to
11 create a bulletin with building code equivalencies, make any necessary planning code
12 changes or otherwise how to safely allow single-stair building typologies on four, five and six
13 story buildings; and, be it

14 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Clerk of the Board shall transmit a copy of this
15 Resolution to the City Attorney, Planning Director, Fire Marshal and Director of Building
16 Inspections.



City and County of San Francisco
Tails
Resolution

City Hall
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102-4689

File Number: 241047

Date Passed: October 29, 2024

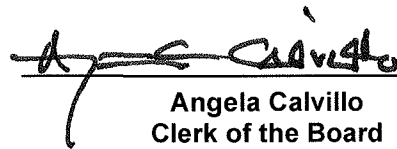
Resolution urging the establishment of the Sensible Density Working Group; urging the Fire Marshall, Department of Building Inspection, and Planning Department to convene a working group to study how to safely allow single-stair building typologies on four, five and six story buildings, and make recommendations for the promulgation of local building code equivalencies.

October 29, 2024 Board of Supervisors - ADOPTED

Ayes: 11 - Chan, Dorsey, Engardio, Mandelman, Melgar, Peskin, Preston, Ronen, Safai, Stefani and Walton

File No. 241047

**I hereby certify that the foregoing
Resolution was ADOPTED on 10/29/2024 by
the Board of Supervisors of the City and
County of San Francisco.**


Angela Calvillo
Clerk of the Board

Unsigned

London N. Breed
Mayor

11/08/2024

Date Approved

I hereby certify that the foregoing resolution, not being signed by the Mayor within the time limit as set forth in Section 3.103 of the Charter, or time waived pursuant to Board Rule 2.14.2, became effective without her approval in accordance with the provision of said Section 3.103 of the Charter or Board Rule 2.14.2.


f Angela Calvillo
Clerk of the Board

11/08/2024

Date