

REVISED LEGISLATIVE DIGEST

(7/10/2018, Amended in Board)

[Planning Code - Review for Downtown and Affordable Housing Projects; Notification Requirements; Review of Alterations to Historical Landmarks and in Conservation Districts]

Ordinance amending the Planning Code to streamline affordable housing project review by eliminating a Planning Commission Discretionary Review hearing for 100% affordable housing projects upon delegation by the Planning Commission; to provide for Planning Department review of large projects located in C-3 Districts and for certain minor alterations to Historical Landmarks and in Conservation Districts; to consolidate, standardize and streamline notification requirements and procedures, including required newspaper notice, in Residential, Commercial, and Mixed-Use Districts; and affirming the Planning Department’s determination under the California Environmental Quality Act, making findings of consistency with the General Plan and the eight priority policies of Planning Code, Section 101.1, and adopting findings of public necessity, convenience, and welfare under Planning Code, Section 302.

Existing Law

Affordable Housing Projects

Under Planning Code Section 315, affordable housing projects (without a density bonus) are considered principally permitted uses and could seek certain exceptions to Planning Code requirements. Affordable housing projects seeking approval under Section 315 may use exceptions that are permitted based on the size and location of the development lot. The Code does not allow an affordable housing project to seek exceptions from other project authorization types in other zoning districts, or those which apply to other lot types. The Planning Department is authorized to review and approve an affordable housing project, but an individual may request discretionary review of an affordable housing project before the Planning Commission.

100% Affordable Housing Bonus Projects (“Bonus Projects”) are not subject to density limits set by ratio, but are subject only to the constraints on density based on height, bulk, setbacks and other relevant Planning Code provisions. These Bonus Projects are eligible for certain modifications to the Planning Code related to parking, open space, rear yard, dwelling unit exposure, and loading. Bonus Projects are approved through an authorization process, Planning Code Section 328, which provides for a Planning Commission hearing and an appeal to the Board of Supervisors, but Bonus Projects are not required to seek conditional use authorization. The Planning Commission does not hear separate discretionary review requests for Bonus Projects.

Noticing Requirements

The Planning Code contains numerous notice provisions for several different kinds of approvals. Notification requirements for permit review and entitlement hearings vary throughout the Code. There are over 30 noticing processes and criteria based on the location and type of project proposed.

Planning Code Section 311 provides residential permit review procedures for RH, RM, and RTO districts, and Section 312 provides permit review procedures for all NC and Eastern Neighborhoods Mixed Use Districts and for Cannabis Retail and Medical Cannabis Dispensary Uses in all non-residential zoning districts.

Language Access

Planning Code Section 306.10 currently requires a cover sheet to be provided with mailed notifications, providing information in the Languages of Limited English Proficient Residents about how to get translated information on a permit application. It also requires a dedicated telephone number for each Language of Limited English Proficient Residents so that callers may receive information in the language spoken by the caller.

Historic buildings

Planning Code Section 1005 identifies four minor scopes of work that are exempt from Article 10 review. Section 1111.1 includes two scopes of work that are considered Minor Alterations under Article 11.

Amendments to Current Law

The legislation provides new procedures in 3 different areas, as follows.

1. Affordable Housing Projects

The proposed amendments add 2 new exceptions to Section 309 that may be requested – exposure requirements set forth in Planning Code Section 140 and usable open space requirements of Section 135. Under proposed Section 315, affordable housing projects may utilize the exceptions of Section 309, as well as other Code sections, regardless of the location of the housing project and lot size requirements. Conditional use authorization for affordable housing projects is not required. Section 315 allows the Planning Department to administratively review and approve an affordable housing project and no discretionary review hearing would occur before the Planning Commission as long as the Planning Commission delegates this review to the Planning Department. The Planning Department approval would be conducted as part of a related building permit application, and any appeal of the Planning Department’s determination would be made through the associated building permit, which appeal would be to the Board of Appeals.

For Bonus Projects, Planning Code Section 328 would be deleted and the requirements would be set forth in new Planning Code Section 315.1. Bonus Projects would continue to be eligible to use the same exceptions as previously provided in Planning Code Section 328. The Planning Director rather than the Planning Commission would review Bonus Projects and must make certain findings, and no hearing before the Planning Commission would be required. No discretionary review hearing would occur before the Planning Commission as long as the Planning Commission delegates this review to the Planning Department. The Planning Department's approval would be conducted as part of a related building permit application, and any appeal of the Planning Department's determination would be through the associated building permit, which appeal would be to the Board of Appeals.

2. General Noticing Requirements

Section 312 is proposed to be deleted in its entirety, and Section 311 would provide notice requirements and review procedures for building permit applications in Residential, NC, NCT, and Eastern Neighborhoods Districts for a change of use; establishment of a Micro Wireless Telecommunications Services Facility and a Formula Retail Use; demolition, new construction, or alteration of buildings; and the removal of an authorized or unauthorized residential unit. It also provides notice requirements for all building permit applications that would establish Cannabis Retail or Medical Cannabis Dispensary Uses, regardless of zoning district. Section 311 retains the current notice requirements for these permits, as well as the required content for such notices.

New Planning Code Section 333 sets forth procedures for all other public notifications required by the Planning Code, for hearings before the Planning Commission, Historic Preservation Commission and the Zoning Administrator for which public notice is required, and for certain building permit applications. It would provide a Notification Period no fewer than 20 days prior to the date of a hearing, or prior to the date of Planning Department approval of certain building permit applications.

Section 333 sets forth requirements for (1) the contents of notices, (2) posted notices on the site, (3) mailed notice to owners and, when practicable, occupants located within no less than 150 feet of a proposed project application, or as may otherwise be required by State law, as well as to neighborhood organizations and individuals who have made written requests for notice, (4) online notice, and (5) newspaper notice when required by State law. There are also notice requirements for legislative actions.

The Zoning Administrator may waive duplicate notice for applications that are the subject of an otherwise duly noticed public hearing before the Planning Commission or Zoning Administrator, provided that the nature of work for which the application is required is both substantially included in the hearing notice and was the subject of the hearing. The Zoning Administrator may determine the means of delivering all forms of required public notice, provided that the requirements of Section 333 are satisfied.

3. Language Access

Both Sections 311 and 333 contain a language access provision that requires all forms of notices to comply with the requirements of San Francisco Administrative Code Chapter 91. Both sections further require the contents of written mailed notice describing the proposed project to be translated in the languages spoken by a Substantial Number of Limited English Speaking Persons, as defined in Administrative Code Chapter 91.

4. Historic Buildings

Section 1005 would include five additional scopes of work that are not subject to Article 10 review. Section 1111.1 would include three scopes of work that would not require a Permit to Alter under Article 11, including certain signs that comply with the provisions of Section 1111.6. Section 1111.2 also reflects the updated review processes for signs.

Operative Dates.

The Legislation also includes 2 operative dates as follows:

The Amendments contained in Sections 3 and 5 of the ordinance, including revisions to Planning Code Sections 206.4, 309, 315, 1005, 1111.1, and 1111.2; the addition of new Planning Code Section 315.1; and deletion of Planning Code Section 328, would become operative on the Effective Date. The Amendments contained in Section 4 of the ordinance, including amendments to Planning Code Sections 202.5, 302, 303, 303.1, 305.1, 306.3, 306.7, 306.8, 306.9, 311, 317, 329, 330.7, 1006.3, and 1111.4, deletions of Planning Code Sections 306.10 and 312, and addition of new Planning Code Section 333, would become operative on January 1, 2019.

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