

San Francisco Housing Action Coalition

2014 HOUSING ACTION PLAN

The San Francisco Housing Action Coalition (SFHAC) believes our City must increase the supply of well-designed, well-located housing at all levels of affordability. What we need most, however, is a civic spirit of experimentation and innovation that will increase production of middle-income housing.

Nine changes that will help improve affordability:

- Reform Entitlements Process
 - All Neighborhoods Should Help Increase Housing Supply
 - Increase the Flexibility of Our Rules
 - Encourage Innovation in Housing
 - Start Planning Along Transit Corridors
 - Adopt Density Bonus Rules
 - Find New Funding Resources for Housing
 - Unused City Land Should Support Housing
 - Put Hunters Point, Treasure Island and Parkmerced Into Production
1. **Reform Entitlements Process.** Our City's "process" greatly impedes the efficient production of new housing which has exacerbated our affordability crisis. Proposed new housing that complies with our extensive planning rules and that pays expensive City fees and taxes deserve timely approval without unwarranted delays, as other cities do. We believe these reforms should apply to all types of housing to have the necessary impact on supply. We badly need more supply to reduce the surging demand for housing.
 2. **All Neighborhoods Should Help Increase Housing Supply.** Questions of fairness arise when 80 percent of new development takes place on only 20 percent of the City's land as it does now. The SFHAC believes that density and development should be distributed fairly across the City and that district supervisors can help carry this message.
 3. **Increase the Flexibility of Our Rules.** There are many housing ordinances and regulations that, while well intentioned, have not worked as they were intended. They deserve review.
 - **Add an Inclusionary "Dial".** This program would allow higher numbers of on-site, permanently affordable homes than the City currently requires

under the Inclusionary Housing program, and designate them for middle-income residents.

- **Reform Off-Site Inclusionary Rules.** Because of the rigidity of its rules, the off-site option of the Inclusionary Ordinance is rarely used. We see this program as an opportunity to incentivize building more permanently affordable housing.
- **Increase Flexibility of Planning and Building Rules.** Many of our design-related rules increase building costs. In order to contain the escalating costs of building housing and providing parking, it is time to review these rules without sacrificing basic health and safety or livability needs. We support a public discussion that examines this issue.

4. **Encourage Innovation in Housing.** There is no “magic bullet” that will solve our affordability crisis by itself. We need many kinds of new housing, including:
 - **Micro-Units.** Small homes (between 220 and 290 square feet) are a logical response to an extremely expensive housing market. Many cities around the world are building them. Currently, City rules only allow the construction of 375 total units before a building moratorium is triggered. In light of our affordability crisis, we question whether this cap makes much sense.
 - **Student Housing.** We currently have an estimated 60,000-bed shortfall for students attending the many institutions of higher learning in San Francisco. These schools offer very little housing for their own students which leads to competition with other San Francisco residents for scarce rental housing. While SFHAC helped pass legislation that created incentives for student housing builders, it has not resulted in much production. We can do better.
 - **New Accessory Dwelling Units.** This housing, also called “in-law units,” are inherently affordable and environmentally sound. If built within the existing building envelope, they have virtually no effect on neighborhood character. While much work needs to be done in order to legalize the estimated tens of thousands of existing illegal units, a new supply of legal ones deserves support as a sensible response to our housing affordability crisis.
5. **Start Planning Along Transit Corridors.** Neighborhood planning is our best civic tool for producing new housing as well as designing livable, desirable neighborhoods. Commercial corridors along Geary, Taraval and Judah Streets, other streetcar lines and the Outer Mission are logical choices for increased transit-oriented housing production. Modestly increasing density on underutilized land along neighborhood transit corridors is a logical way to improve housing affordability.
6. **Adopt Density Bonus Rules.** The SFHAC believes that San Francisco does not comply with an important, recent California legal decision that gives new housing a density bonus or other concessions if it meets certain housing affordability mandates. Our City already has significant requirements under the

Inclusionary Housing Ordinance. The City must adopt rules that bring us into conformance with this law.

7. **New funding resources for housing.** Traditional sources of federal and state funding that support housing have been in sharp decline for many years. Our Inclusionary Housing Ordinance only helps a relatively small number of very lucky people and cannot scale sufficiently to address the problem we actually face. It is time to discuss new funding resources to support housing affordability, especially for renters.
8. **Unused City Land Should Support Housing.** There are numerous surplus City-owned sites (SFUSD, SFPUC, MTA, CCSF), many vacant for decades, which could be used to help provide housing for folks at risk of being priced out. It's time to find the political will to put this land to better use.
9. **Put Hunters Point, Treasure Island and Parkmerced Into Production.** Enormous effort and time, including SFHAC's, were put into adopting these large plans. Combined, they total over 25,000 homes, a significant fraction of which would be permanently affordable. It is a shame that, given our inadequate supply, these projects are not moving more quickly. Are there impediments to getting these large projects underway? Are there new policies or rule changes needed that might accelerate their commencing? This is an enormous supply of planned and entitled housing sitting in limbo that should become a very high priority for the City.