



**SPUR**

**POLICY BRIEF**  
APRIL 2025

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# The Next 100 Days

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An urbanist decision-making framework  
for San Francisco's new mayor



# Acknowledgments

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## **Special thanks to**

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# Introduction

A new mayoral administration offers opportunities for San Francisco to do things differently. In his first 100 days in office, Mayor Daniel Lurie's administration has already made a significant change to reorganize his office to be more effective, implementing one of the recommendations from SPUR's report *Designed to Serve*.<sup>1</sup> Mayor Lurie has announced that he will launch a new initiative to streamline permitting to make it easier to build housing and open a small business. The mayor has also co-sponsored legislation to reduce the costs of converting office buildings to housing and creating new nightlife venues downtown.

Mayor Lurie and his administration aim to get a lot done quickly, which means they will need to set priorities. What should the administration's *next* 100 days focus on? The first half of 2025 is likely to bring new issues for the mayor to tackle, such as a budget deficit, Muni's fiscal cliff, and severe climate events. At the same time, threats from the federal administration, including immigration enforcement, deep funding cuts, rollbacks to civil rights laws, and the dismantling of many social and economic programs that support San Franciscans, will be difficult to predict and manage. These rapidly evolving challenges will require the new mayor's attention and city resources.

To maintain the momentum for change while acknowledging the demands on the mayor's time and resources, we believe it is essential to shine a light on the most critical issues facing the city and continue making progress in the first half of 2025. Part of SPUR's role is to articulate clear principles and goals for urban policymaking. For example, to secure economic vitality, the city needs high-functioning public transit. To sustain a diverse, culturally rich community, it needs housing for all income levels. And most of all, for San Franciscans to have a high quality of life, their government needs to function well.

San Francisco's governance structure has gradually become more byzantine and redundant, often distributing decision-making authority across multiple offices and departments. As a result, it takes far too much time and effort to implement policy changes, even if they will measurably improve services for San Franciscans. Simplifying governance structures would allow the City and County of San Francisco to allocate resources more equitably and deliver better services. By revising governance structures, the city could begin to address other issues that create barriers to effective government, including contracting, land use planning, permitting, transportation, and long-term investments in resilient buildings and infrastructure.

What we offer in this brief is not an exhaustive list of actions and interventions but a framework for the mayor as he leads the city in developing policies for streamlining operations, downtown revitalization, housing, transportation, hazard resilience, and fossil fuel reduction over the next few months. This framework is grounded in SPUR's principles for good government and in our previous policy research, developed through engagement with community leaders, subject matter experts, and partner organizations.

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<sup>1</sup> Nicole Neditch, *Designed to Serve: Resetting the City's Governance Structure to Better Meet the Needs of San Franciscans*, SPUR, July 2024, <https://www.spur.org/publications/spur-report/2024-07-31/designed-serve>.

# Reforming San Francisco's Governance Structure

SPUR believes that city and county government plays a critical role in human well-being. The decisions government makes — and its capacity to implement those decisions effectively — directly affect the lives of hundreds of thousands of people every day.

As mentioned above, the structure of government encumbers the city's ability to coordinate its efforts and be nimble as it responds to important issues. San Francisco can choose to design a better system of governance that supports leadership and empowerment with clear lines of accountability. The City of San Francisco needs to increase the mayor's ability to manage departments effectively, create clear lines of authority and accountability that everyone understands, and support effective policymaking by improving legislative processes.

SPUR recently reported on ways that San Franciscans could benefit from changes to the city's processes for buying goods and services. San Francisco spends more than one in every three dollars of its roughly \$16 billion annual budget on procurement. The magnitude of this spending means that the city can use its purchasing power not only to improve service delivery in the city but also to support local vendors and small businesses. But in pursuing these goals, the city has added hundreds of layers of rules, resulting in a confusing maze of requirements and ineffective processes that reduce competition and benefit organizations with preexisting relationships, experience, and knowledge of the process.

## What values and principles should guide decision-making?

Reporting structures and roles and responsibilities should be more clearly defined and organized to better address complex citywide challenges. The city should look at how operations are resourced across the organization and consider opportunities for enhanced resource sharing wherever possible.

Instead of a rules-based system that seeks to control for every possible risk up front, the city should move to a culture of trust-based accountability, ensuring that processes are commensurate with potential risk. Doing so would allow the city to invest fewer resources in the process and more in achieving better outcomes and services for the public. Rather than reacting with policy exemptions and developing workarounds to rules, the city should shift to a proactive focus on structural changes that reduce requirements and streamline processes.

To implement programs and services that are responsive to changing circumstances and that meet community needs, elected leaders, departments, commissions, and government employees should have clearly defined roles, unambiguous and consistent guidance for city staff, and the ability to make informed decisions that support the achievement of shared objectives.

## What will long-term success look like?

- There are clear lines of authority and accountability throughout city government. The purpose, roles, and responsibilities of elected leaders, boards, and commissions are clear.
- Processing times for city contracts, permitting, and hiring are reduced, and the quality of services is higher.
- San Franciscans can access city services easily and swiftly.

## What are the most important actions to focus on in the next 100 days?

**Clarify the government structure by merging departments with similar functions and constituencies.** For the government to respond nimbly to residents' needs and emerging issues, its organizational structure needs to be clear. The overlapping functions of some of San Francisco's current departments make it hard to make decisions internally and align the delivery of government services. They also make it difficult for residents to figure out how to access these services. Departmental consolidations are challenging and should be done in phases. This approach would be an about-face from the current practice of adding layers of governance, with a new focus on reducing those layers where possible. The city services auditor (CSA) in the Controller's Office currently evaluates the performance of departments. The CSA should support departments through a change management process when departmental consolidations are proposed.

**Empower the City Administrator's Office to execute on long-term cross-departmental projects and core operational functions.** The City Administrator's Office (CAO) should be realigned to accord with the City Charter and should be empowered by the mayor to serve as the city's chief operating officer, focusing on implementing the mayor's priorities and executing long-term projects and core operational functions. As an apolitical professional leader, the city administrator should be given the authority to convene departments, set direction, and manage performance to address essential city concerns, such as contracting reform, capital planning, and climate resilience. The city administrator should have the power to make citywide decisions when departments cannot agree about approach or the best course of action. Programs and functions outside the CAO's clarified purview should be moved to other departments with similar constituencies and services.

**Make it a citywide priority to reform procurement policies and practices.** Build on recent efforts — such as Board of Supervisors President Mandelman's Open for Business Contract Streamlining Act,<sup>2</sup> the Fentanyl State of Emergency Ordinance,<sup>3</sup> and the ongoing work of the Gov Ops team to

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<sup>2</sup> City and County of San Francisco, Office of the City Administrator Government Operations Contracting Reform Team, "Open for Business Contract Streamlining Act of 2025," April 3, 2025, [https://media.api.sfgov/documents/Open\\_for\\_Business\\_Streamlining\\_Act\\_of\\_2025.pdf](https://media.api.sfgov/documents/Open_for_Business_Streamlining_Act_of_2025.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Office of the Mayor, "Mayor Lurie, Supervisors Celebrate Overwhelming Vote in Support of Fentanyl State of Emergency Ordinance," February 4, 2025. <https://www.sfgov.gov/mayor-lurie-supervisors-celebrate-overwhelming-vote-in-support-of-fentanyl-state-of-emergency-ordinance>.

streamline portions of the procurement process — and take a deeper, systemwide look at what is causing the challenges in the first place. Policies that are not having their intended impact should be amended, consolidated, or eliminated. This effort will require conversations about trade-offs as well as alignment and coordination between those who create policy and those who implement it.

## Reimagining Downtown

SPUR believes that vibrant downtowns are critical to the economic and cultural health of cities. San Francisco's post-COVID downtown recovery has lagged behind that of most major North American cities. In large part, this is because the downtown core is dominated by office uses, with little housing and entertainment nearby. The reduction in workers commuting into the city center has caused many customer-serving businesses to fail. Cities with a more diverse economic base and shorter commute times are faring much better.<sup>4</sup> Transforming downtown into a bustling, 24-hour world-class destination will require implementing policies to diversify land uses and activities, developing new programs to ensure that small businesses and artists can operate successfully downtown, making investments in transit operations and safer streets, and creating incentives to drive economic development.

### What values and principles should guide decision-making?

Instead of making short-term investments that apply only to specific types of employers, tenants, or development projects, the city should focus on structural fixes to governance and financing tools that benefit a variety of users.

San Francisco needs to make strategic investments to bring more activity back downtown. Given the city's current budget constraints, economic incentives should be evaluated to ensure that they build long-term value to the city and can be fiscally positive over the long run.

Muni and BART are essential for the city's downtown recovery. Ensuring that buses and trains continue to serve downtown commuters and visitors is vital to the downtown revitalization effort. There can be no recovery if the transit system collapses.

### What will long-term success look like?

- An inclusive downtown offers more workforce housing, affordable housing, and commercial spaces that accommodate small businesses and artists.
- Strategic public incentives spur private investment to bring more economic and social activity downtown. (For example, the city provides incentives that lead to more housing downtown or invests in public realm improvements that attract small businesses to downtown storefronts.)

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<sup>4</sup> Karen Chapple et al., "The Death of Downtown?: Pandemic Recovery Trajectories Across 62 North American Cities," Institute of Governmental Cities, UC Berkeley, June 2022, updated January 2023, [https://downtownrecovery.com/death\\_of\\_downtown\\_policy\\_brief.pdf](https://downtownrecovery.com/death_of_downtown_policy_brief.pdf).

- A variety of growing small, medium, and large businesses contribute to a resilient downtown economy.
- The city receives more revenues from downtown uses and has a more stable fiscal position.
- The number of people riding transit downtown goes up, and the number of drivers goes down.

## What are the most important actions to focus on in the next 100 days?

**Form a new downtown revitalization authority that can enter into public-private partnerships to invest in downtown projects.** The public sector can play an important role in economic development by providing regulatory relief and economic incentives for revitalization projects. However, the loss of redevelopment agencies has left a gap in the city's capacity to respond to the problems facing downtown. Downtown recovery will require a stronger public or quasi-public authority that is empowered to implement creative public financing tools, such as tax increment financing, that make revitalization projects financially feasible to build and that can be invested in community priorities such as affordable housing, infrastructure, parks, and affordable spaces for small businesses, community organizations, and the arts.

**Engage stakeholders in the revitalization strategy.** To be successful, the downtown revitalization strategy should include the engagement of a diverse set of stakeholders, including downtown business organizations, property owners, community organizations, arts groups, and many others that have been actively working on these concepts and strategies for years. The mayor can play an important role in convening these interests on a regular basis to leverage their shared knowledge and expertise and to gain widespread support for downtown revitalization.

**Create more transparent permit application processes for small businesses.** San Francisco has long been known for its lengthy and complex business permitting, licensing, and approvals process. A 2022 Arizona State University study that scored North American cities on the ease of operating small and medium-size businesses ranked San Francisco 78 out of 83. Starting a business in San Francisco involves navigating complex bureaucratic processes that often stretch far beyond public health and safety concerns. Complying with local rules consumes capital and time, which are precious resources for any entrepreneur. Business owners often need clarification on what they must do to obtain permits because the materials provided by city departments can be confusing. Staff at the Permit Center should be empowered to "triage" applications to make it easier for entrepreneurs to obtain permits. In addition, staff should be directed to help business owners find solutions when problems arise, thus enabling small businesses to navigate the system without hiring professional expeditors. Improvements in the city's permitting processes could significantly reduce costs and make it easier for businesses to open and expand downtown.



**Push for operating funds for Muni and other transit operators.** San Francisco is unique in the region and critical to the state's economy. It not only has the greatest concentration of jobs but is also currently the region's largest transit hub and the most accessible center of activity. Nearly 800,000 jobs lie within a 15-minute walk of a BART station, according to a study from Fehr & Peers.<sup>5</sup> Although the commercial office market has not recovered, the top-performing downtown office buildings are all within a 15-minute walk of a BART station, according to a report from the commercial real estate firm Jones Lang Lasalle.<sup>6</sup> In addition, transit is important for San Francisco's restaurants and arts and culture sites. Even though people are making fewer commute trips, they are taking transit more often to go to restaurants, bars, museums, concerts, sporting events, and entertainment.<sup>7</sup> Small businesses in particular will suffer without high-quality transit access. As city leadership makes the case for transit funding, it is imperative that the communications strategy connect this investment to the health of downtown and the city's economic recovery.

## Changing Zoning to Maximize Housing Opportunities

SPUR believes that housing is a human right and should be affordable to everyone. Living in San Francisco presents an incredible opportunity to engage in a rich local culture informed by a historic past, enter a thriving job market, pursue education and job training for economic mobility, and build community ties with people of diverse backgrounds and lived experience. However, the lack of available and affordable housing prevents people from pursuing their dreams and future in San Francisco. As the city embarks on a rezoning plan to affirmatively further fair housing and reverse decades of underbuilding, SPUR is working to ensure that the plan results in the number of new homes needed while maximizing housing opportunities for all in resource-rich neighborhoods.

Every eight years, the state requires each California city to adjust its zoning to accommodate a target amount of new housing. The process can become contentious when residents don't welcome new housing in their neighborhoods, and San Francisco is no exception. We believe that San Francisco must aggressively pursue its housing target of planning for more than 82,000 new homes by 2031 to support the Fair Housing Act, improve affordability, and reduce racial segregation. The city already has planned projects and remaining zoning capacity to add 58,100 housing units and now needs to add capacity for at least 36,200 more to reach the immediate target.<sup>8</sup> In order to strengthen San Francisco's case to state regulators that the city is indeed following its legal obligations under housing element provisions, it is essential that the feasibility and size of the rezoning plan be validated by a credible, independent economic analysis.

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<sup>5</sup> BART, "BART's Role in the Region," June 2024, [https://www.bart.gov/sites/default/files/2024-07/2024-07-03\\_RITR\\_Report.pdf](https://www.bart.gov/sites/default/files/2024-07/2024-07-03_RITR_Report.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Jones Lang Lasalle, "Demand for Transit-Accessible Offices Remains Strong," 2022.

<sup>7</sup> BART, "BART's Role in the Region," June 2024, [https://www.bart.gov/sites/default/files/2024-07/2024-07-03\\_RITR\\_Report.pdf](https://www.bart.gov/sites/default/files/2024-07/2024-07-03_RITR_Report.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> These figures include the 15% state-mandated buffer above San Francisco's state target, totaling 94,300 new housing units.

## What values and principles should guide decision-making?

The city should focus rezoning efforts in parts of San Francisco that are rich in resources and have not seen significant development over the last half century. Zoning is not the biggest barrier to new development downtown and in other eastern neighborhoods; however, it is the major barrier to new housing development in the low-density western and northern neighborhoods. Furthermore, San Francisco — like all California cities — has a responsibility under state law to modernize land use codes in a manner that reverses and repairs historic patterns of segregation. As a result, the rezoning plan should focus on unlocking housing potential in San Francisco’s wealthier and lower-density residential neighborhoods and their nearby commercial streets.

The city should keep the plan and related codes simple for those who will execute them. San Francisco has had a tendency to overengineer planning and zoning codes during political negotiations. The fewer bells and whistles included in a local rezoning plan, the easier it will be for builders to use.

Building new housing is a high priority for San Franciscans. Upzoning for more apartments, even in low-density residential neighborhoods, consistently wins majority support with a generous margin in public opinion polls. San Franciscans also support building higher-density homes near transit. While there is no clear consensus path to making everyone happy when changing land use rules, the city should hold equity outcomes, majority opinion, and complying with state mandates as its guiding principles.

## What will long-term success look like?

- San Francisco creates new housing opportunities in resource-rich western and northern neighborhoods for people of all income levels, with expanded access to transit, jobs, schools, and amenities.
- Additional residents support local businesses, increase transit ridership, grow local tax revenues, and boost enrollment at local schools.
- Before January 2026, San Francisco passes a robust rezoning plan that makes it likely that at least 36,200 new apartment units will be built by 2031. The plan should be validated by an independent economic analysis.

## What are the most important actions to focus on in the next 100 days?

**Set clear mayoral expectations for the Board of Supervisors to pass the rezoning ordinance.** The Mayor’s Office should express the above priorities and expectations to the planning director, director of citywide planning, and Board of Supervisors as they proceed through public hearings with a clear, concise timeline.

**Ensure that the rezoning process is independently validated by a trusted source.** The city should work with an independent and trusted economic analyst to validate the methodology used to determine that the rezoning can feasibly lead to the development of at least 36,200 units. Doing so will strengthen the city's case to state regulators that the plan complies with mandates and minimize the risk of decertification, lawsuits, or other penalty.

**Work with state regulators along the way.** Close collaboration with the fair housing, technical assistance, and legal enforcement divisions in the California Department of Housing and Community Development will ensure that the path to rezoning is pre-approved, minimizing surprises, confusion, and debate later on.

## Closing the Transit Funding Gap

SPUR believes that walking, biking, and taking transit should be the safest and most convenient options for people to move around the region, regardless of their age or ability. To get there, we need to ensure that our transit system remains healthy and that road space is prioritized for pedestrians, bicycles, and buses.

The top goals are to address Muni's budget shortfall and to participate in regional solutions to address funding challenges for BART and Caltrain. Muni has suffered due to the lingering effects of the pandemic and to structural challenges that predate 2020. The biggest hits to Muni's budget are the loss in parking revenues due to remote work, the decline in tourism and conventions, and the slowing rate of growth in the city's General Fund. Together, parking revenues and the General Fund comprise two-thirds of the agency's budget. Beginning in fiscal year 2025–2026, the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) faces a roughly \$50 million deficit, which will increase to nearly \$320 million in fiscal year 2026–2027. To close this deficit, SFMTA is cutting service, deferring vehicle maintenance, and delaying capital investments. These actions are simply borrowing against the future. BART and Caltrain have also seen ridership and fares decrease in the post-COVID era, and pandemic-related emergency funding is about to run out. San Francisco needs to engage with and support a regional solution to avert major shortfalls and service cuts on these systems, which are also projected to hit in 2026. The magnitude of Muni's challenge will require solutions at both the local and state level.

### What values and principles should guide decision-making?

There is no single solution to the transit funding challenge. The city will need to pursue strategies at the local, regional, and state levels to be able to continue operating Muni trains and buses.

Operational cost efficiency is important, and transit operators should continue to look for opportunities to reduce costs. However, the magnitude and nature of the transit operating deficit is

a result of deeper structural issues that cannot be remedied entirely through short-term efficiency measures. The cost of providing service has increased faster than revenue due to escalating health care costs, electricity costs, policing and crisis intervention, and other inflationary pressures. These dynamics are complex and not easily addressed by operators without help from local and state government. Just as diet and exercise can prevent heart disease, achieving greater efficiencies is crucial, but it is a longer-term effort that should not distract from the present crisis. The current situation requires the equivalent of open-heart surgery — in this case, a significant injection of funding.

## What will long-term success look like?

- Muni, Caltrain, and BART have sufficient funding to sustain and improve their quality of service, making them convenient options for people to get around the region.
- San Francisco residents can access their daily needs within a 15-minute trip by walking, biking, or riding transit.
- Most residents can get to their jobs within 30 minutes without driving.
- Traffic fatalities and severe injuries are eliminated.
- Emissions from transportation are reduced, resulting in cleaner air for all neighborhoods.

## What are the most important actions to focus on in the next 100 days?

**Lead an effort to secure funding from the state budget as a bridge to creating more sustainable resources.** The mayor should lend support to Senator Arreguín and Senator Wiener, who are currently leading an effort to secure \$2 billion from the state budget for transit funding. This effort is coordinated by SPUR, the California Transit Association, and the Service Employees International Union, in close coordination with SFMTA.

**Secure longer-term funding from the state through the California Cap-and-Trade Program's Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund and from the California High-Speed Rail Program.**<sup>9</sup> Longer-term, sustainable funding from the state would grow the pie overall and create more flexibility for transit operations, maintenance, and capital reinvestment. Additional funding from the California High-Speed Rail Program would benefit projects, such as the Portal, that serve the high-speed rail project and the existing rail transit system. The city should be vocal in advocating for sustainable funding sources from the state to support transit operations.

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<sup>9</sup> The Cap-and-Trade Program was established to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions in California. It is a market-based "auction" system that allows entities that generate greenhouse gas emissions, such as oil refineries, to purchase credits to offset their emissions. The proceeds from the auction are deposited into the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund to fund a variety of projects that include affordable housing, clean transportation, and land conservation.

**Independently pursue revenue strategies at the local level.** To be successful in securing funding in Sacramento, San Francisco needs to outline a clear path to financial stability and display a willingness to help itself. Efforts could include a local ballot measure for Muni, charter reform to make it easier for the city to fund critical infrastructure needs during difficult budget years, or increased parking fees to generate more revenues.

## Building a Resilient City

SPUR believes in the importance of making Bay Area cities resilient to climate change and other hazards and in reducing carbon emissions for the health of people and the planet. San Francisco is known for its natural beauty, and yet many of its neighborhoods are vulnerable to flooding, sea level rise, extreme heat, and earthquakes. Many of these hazards are likely to become more frequent and destructive as the climate changes. But the city has many opportunities to devise strategies that simultaneously address multiple hazards as described in SPUR's 2020 report *Safety First*.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, San Francisco must work to eliminate fossil fuel use in the city's existing buildings and create a pathway for greener building construction to meet its Climate Action Plan target of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2040.<sup>11</sup> Doing so will require eliminating gas furnaces and water heaters, which make up a majority of the climate-warming and health-harming pollution from buildings. Moving the city away from this type of equipment is crucial for meeting the city's climate mitigation goals and for ensuring that San Franciscans live and work in green buildings with sustainable energy sources. It is also critical for providing all San Franciscans with access to clean air so they can avoid the dire health impacts of nitrogen oxide (NOx) pollution.

As the city embarks on a post-COVID economic recovery, it must simultaneously pursue policies that advance resilience in the face of natural hazards and climate change.

### What values and principles should guide decision-making?

Preparation and mitigation are much less expensive and socially disruptive than earthquakes and climate disasters. Safety from natural and unnatural disasters is often not at the forefront of our minds as we manage our daily needs. But when disasters occur, it puts what's important into sharp focus: Without prioritizing safety, preparedness, and our ability to recover from shocks, we are unable to return to our normal activities — sometimes for a very long time. Even when the cost of retrofits makes it hard to advance hazard mitigation and resilience, it is critical that we continue to prioritize these goals. Using tools such as land use planning, building codes, and emergency response, the city can implement policies that go beyond what individuals can achieve by themselves. Preparing for

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<sup>10</sup> Laura Tam, *Safety First: Improving Hazard Resilience in the Bay Area*, SPUR, March 2020, <https://www.spur.org/publications/spur-report/2020-03-18/safety-first>.

<sup>11</sup> Environment Department, City and County of San Francisco, *San Francisco Climate Action Plan*, 2021, <https://www.sfenvironment.org/climateplan>.

shocks and implementing risk mitigation measures will not come cheap or easy, but inaction will be far more costly.

Decarbonizing San Francisco's building stock is urgent. This transition is necessary to meet the city's climate, clean air, and resilience goals. High-efficiency heat pumps, district energy systems with ground-source heat pumps, microgrids, electric vehicle charging stations, and integrated home energy systems with batteries and solar power will not only make San Francisco clean but also lower energy costs for residents.

## What will long-term success look like?

- San Francisco residents are well informed about the risks of climate change and earthquakes and aware of the city's strategies to mitigate and respond to hazards.
- Residential and office buildings remain functional after a major earthquake or flood, thus reducing economic disruption and residential displacement.
- San Francisco has eliminated, or nearly eliminated, polluting equipment from buildings.
- Building owners can affordably and equitably retrofit their buildings to be greener and more resilient to earthquakes and floods.
- Under-resourced and environmental justice communities are not left behind or overburdened by the costs of retrofits.

## Where the most important actions to focus on in the next 100 days?

**Explore local funding opportunities to address federal funding uncertainties.** The withdrawal of federal funds for climate initiatives will leave a gap in advancing San Francisco's climate resilience and adaptation plans, making the city vulnerable to climate or earthquake disasters. For example, most of San Francisco's downtown is built on landfill protected by a three-mile seawall underneath the Embarcadero. The 100-year-old seawall is the only thing protecting downtown, BART, and Muni against flooding from sea level rise — and it's in desperate need of repair. San Francisco currently needs more than \$13 billion to upgrade the seawall and complete other adaptation projects. The Port of San Francisco, in partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, is currently awaiting congressional approval and funding for 65% of the project cost. With support from the federal government increasingly uncertain, San Francisco must identify new local funding streams, such as municipal bonds, to advance this critical waterfront resilience project. The more the city delays addressing at-risk infrastructure, the more likely a disaster, such as a major earthquake, could disrupt San Francisco's downtown and the broader economy.

**Follow through on the city's previous commitments to earthquake safety.** In 2010, San Francisco launched the Earthquake Safety Implementation Program (ESIP), a 30-year work plan and timeline

for implementing its Community Action Plan for Seismic Safety.<sup>12</sup> As the halfway point of ESIP's planned timeline approaches, many critical earthquake safety and mitigation measures have yet to be implemented. Most recently, San Francisco has been exploring development of a concrete building retrofit ordinance. In the next 100 days, the new administration should focus on advancing retrofits of at-risk concrete buildings, a priority of the ESIP's work plan.<sup>13</sup> The city has already completed much of the stakeholder outreach and technical work for concrete building retrofits.<sup>14</sup> Given limited resources, the city should prioritize funding to retrofit at-risk city-owned concrete buildings, especially those that house vulnerable San Franciscans (e.g., homeless shelters). SPUR encourages the mayor to support Supervisor Melgar's recently proposed ordinance to evaluate and provide voluntary retrofit standards for concrete buildings and follow up with mandatory retrofit legislation.

**Advance ordinances to ensure that San Francisco transitions incrementally toward high-efficiency, zero-pollution buildings.** These ordinances include requiring the replacement of gas-powered heating equipment with efficient and electric options. A proposed ordinance authored by Board of Supervisors President Mandelman would extend all-electric requirements beyond new buildings to include buildings undergoing major retrofits. The ordinance would seek to remove polluting and health-harming gas equipment and install zero-pollution high-efficiency equipment when building owners are preparing to undertake costly renovations and are well positioned to ensure that buildings are electrified in a smart and planned fashion. This ordinance would be a major step in increasing the pace of building decarbonization in San Francisco in a cost-effective way.

**Adopt the Building Performance Standards proposal developed by the San Francisco Environment Department.** Cities like Seattle and Boston have already developed building performance standards that will gradually require larger buildings to take steps to improve their energy efficiency, with an end goal of moving those buildings to net-zero pollution. The San Francisco Environment Department's proposed standards have gone through extensive technical development and vetting with the Building Operations Taskforce and provide a flexible pathway for building owners to meet the requirements. Supporting strong standards will be essential to meeting the city's climate targets, cleaning up the air, and ensuring that buildings use clean and sustainable energy sources.

**Streamline city planning codes, permitting, and inspection processes.** This action will ensure that installers can smoothly install clean heating equipment, such as heat pump water heaters and heat pump HVAC systems. SPUR has proposed solutions for municipalities to streamline permitting for heat pumps.<sup>15</sup> Solutions particularly relevant to San Francisco include creating a single

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<sup>12</sup> Community Action Plan for Seismic Safety, City and County of San Francisco, "CAPSS," <https://www.sfgov.org/sfc/esip/capss>.

<sup>13</sup> CAPSS Earthquake Safety Implementation Program, City and County of San Francisco, *Workplan 2012-2042*, September 13, 2011, <https://www.sfgov.org/sfc/sites/default/files/ESIP/FileCenter/Documents/9765-esipplan.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> ONESF, City and County of San Francisco, "Concrete Building Safety Program," <https://onesanfrancisco.org/concrete-building-safety-program>.

<sup>15</sup> Sam Fishman, "Smoothing the Transition to Heat Pumps, Part 2: Permitting and Inspections," SPUR, October 21, 2024, <https://www.spur.org/news/2024-10-21/smoothing-transition-heat-pumps-part-2-permitting-and-inspections>.

nondiscretionary permit for single appliance installations and eliminating inspection wait times for contractors through interventions such as virtual inspections or asynchronous inspections by either an inspector or a self-certification system for installers.

## Conclusion

In the first half of 2025, the city faces a range of complex and evolving challenges. From addressing a growing budget deficit to navigating climate-related threats and unpredictable federal policies, the demands on the mayor's administration will be significant. In order to sustain progress, it is essential to prioritize the most pressing issues while also improving the efficiency of government operations.

A well-functioning city requires fast and reliable public transit, a strong employment base, diverse housing options, and a nimble governance structure designed to solve emerging problems. However, San Francisco's current system of governance is often hindered by overlapping authority, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and delays in critical processes such as permitting, land use planning, and contracting. By streamlining these systems, the city could better allocate resources and deliver essential services more effectively.

This brief has outlined a strategic framework to guide the administration in its policymaking over the next 100 days, focusing on downtown revitalization, transportation improvements, hazard resilience, housing expansion, and fossil fuel reduction. These priorities, grounded in SPUR's principles for good government, provide a road map for ensuring that San Francisco remains a dynamic, inclusive, and forward-thinking city. By taking decisive action in these areas, the administration could lay the foundation for long-term success and a brighter future for all San Franciscans.





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