



# San Francisco Planning

This Bulletin provides an overview of the Housing Choice-San Francisco Program.

# PLANNING DIRECTOR BULLETIN NO. 11

## THE HOUSING CHOICE-SAN FRANCISCO PROGRAM (OR "THE HC-SF PROGRAM")

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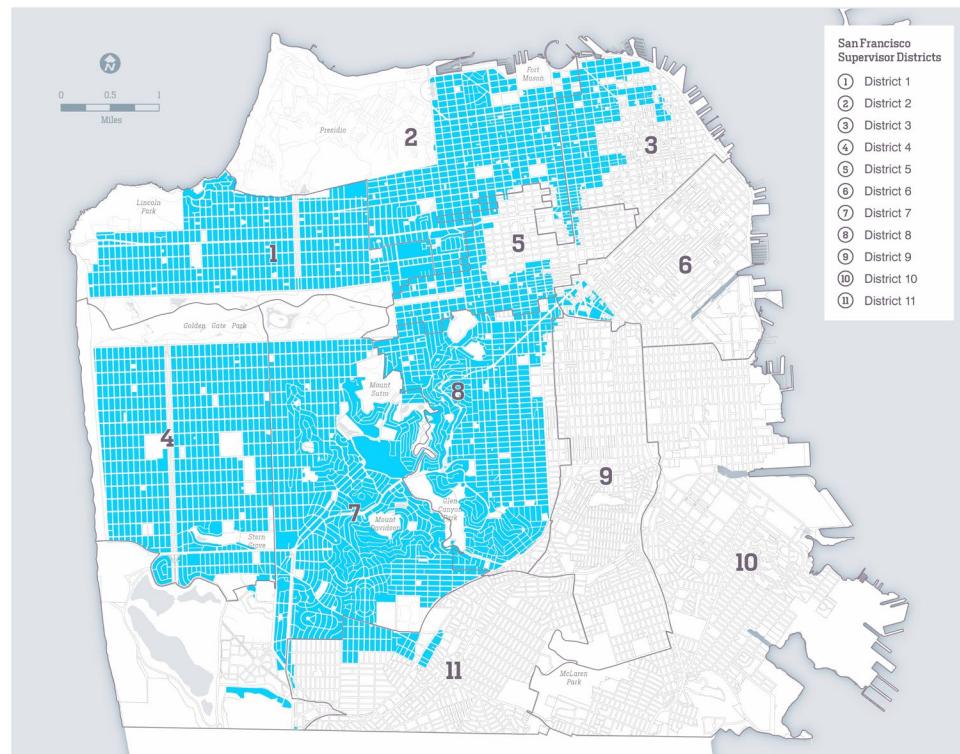
**References:**  
Planning Code 206.10

### BACKGROUND

On December 12, 2025, Mayor Lurie signed the Family Zoning Plan into law, which amended the Planning Code, Zoning Map, and General Plan to allow denser and taller housing and to introduce additional zoning changes that reduce development constraints and support other City policy objectives.

The Family Zoning Plan rezoned substantial portions of the western and northern areas of the City, illustrated in Figure 1. The Plan also established the Housing Choice-San Francisco Program (“HC-SF Program”), which provides an optional alternative to programs like the State Density Bonus Program, and offers additional development capacity for housing projects beyond what is permitted under base zoning controls.

*Figure 1.*  
*Family Zoning Plan - Rezoned Area*



Unlike some programs such as the State Density Bonus, The HC-SF Program operates within specific defined parameters, including height and bulk controls and defined modifications to base zoning and objective standards. HC-SF does not require the provision of on-site affordable housing or other mandatory project commitments in order to access the additional development capacity and code modifications. It does require projects to abide by Planning Code standards, except as modified or provided for by the program itself.

Projects utilizing the program are provided with a streamlined administrative approval pathway. Projects using the Program may also utilize various ministerial approval provisions under local and state law, subject to eligibility criteria. In addition to the modifications to development standards expressly provided in the program, projects also have the option to seek additional modifications beyond those described in The HC-SF Program through a discretionary Major Modification process.

## WHO CAN USE IT?

### Site Eligibility

Sites within the R-4 Height and Bulk District are eligible.<sup>1</sup> (Section 206.10(b)(3))

### Project Type Eligibility

General: Projects that involve new construction, additions, or building conversions, that also include both (1) a net increase in the number of Dwelling Units or Group Housing bedrooms, and (2) two or more residential units or two or more Group Housing bedrooms. Note that ADUs are not counted toward this eligibility requirement, but can be included in the Project. (Sections 206.10(b)(1) and (2))

- *For example, a project that demolishes a single-family house and constructs a new single-family house **is not** eligible.*
- *A project that involves the alteration of a single-family house and construction of one additional unit that is not classified as an ADU **is** eligible.*

Mixed-Use Projects: At least 2/3 of the project's new or converted square footage must be residential. If, however, a project includes the conversion of existing non-residential square footage to residential square footage and does not expand that non-residential use by more than 25%, at least 50% of the project's total square footage must be residential to be eligible. Note that basements do not count toward this square footage calculation. Further, if a project includes the addition to or conversion of an existing building, only the new or converted square footage is counted in the square footage calculation. (Section 206.10(b)(7))

Objective Standards: Projects must meet all Objective Standards<sup>2</sup> of the Planning Code and adopted Design Standards other than any modifications or relief from such standards as further described in this Bulletin and in Planning Code Sections 206.10 and 334. In cases where a modification to a Planning code requirement conflict with a Design Standard, the allowable modification permitted through HC-SF prevails. (Section 206.10(b)(6))

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1 Note that historic properties that are listed in Article 10 or 11 (except those identified as non-contributory to historic districts) are not included in the R-4 Height and Bulk District and are therefore ineligible.

2 Objective Standards is defined in the Planning Code generally as design standards that are not based on subjective judgement, including those in the Planning Code and any other adopted standards, such as the San Francisco Design Standards and its component parts, the Citywide Design Standards, and Preservation Design Standards.

## Exclusions from Eligibility

Projects Seeking Density/Development Bonuses or Relief from Objective Standards Using Other Programs: Projects that seek to utilize density and development bonuses or relief from San Francisco's Planning Code and adopted Objective Standards via any other program under local or state law other than HC-SF, including but not limited to the State Density Bonus Program, HOME-SF, or similar State or local program are ineligible.<sup>3</sup> (Section 206.10(b)(5))

Demolition of Existing Units: Projects that include demolition of any residential unit(s) on a site with more than two (i.e. three or more) existing rent-controlled units are ineligible. (Section 206.10(b)(9))

Demolition or Conversion of Hotel Uses: Projects that include demolition or conversion of any portion of a Hotel are ineligible.<sup>4</sup> (Section 206.10(b)(10))

Development Agreements: Except those projects within the SFMTA Non-Contiguous SUD, projects within SUDs that implement Development Agreements are ineligible. (Section 206.10(b)(8))

Demolition of Listed Historic Buildings: A project is ineligible if it would demolish any building designated as a landmark under Article 10, is listed as a contributor to an historic district in Article 10, is listed as a Significant or Contributory Building under Article 11, is listed in the California Register of Historic Resources, or is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. (Section 206.10(b)(4))

## WHAT ARE THE HC-SF PROGRAM FEATURES AND BENEFITS?

### Affordable Housing Requirement

General: The HC-SF Program provides broad flexibility in meeting the affordable housing requirement of Planning Code Section 415 and/or Section 419.<sup>5</sup> In addition to satisfying units on-site, through payment of the in-lieu fee, or through the rent-control option (Code Section 436), projects using the HC-SF Program may satisfy their affordable housing requirement through the Land Use Dedication Option and/or Off-Site Alternative. However, different from elsewhere in the City, an off-site location for any Land Use Dedication or Off-Site Alternative is required to either be within the R-4 Height and Bulk District or within ½ mile of the Project site. (Section 206.10(c)(2)).

Applicants will declare their method of compliance using the Inclusionary Affordable Housing Affidavit of Compliance.

3 Utilization of programs that disqualify projects from the HC-SF Program include but are not limited to those under California Government Code Section 659120.113(e), 65912.114(f)(1), 65912.123(b), (c), (e), (i), (j)(1), and (j)(3), and 65912.124(f), and Sections 65852.28(b)(2), 65913.4.5 and 66499.41, as may be updated from time to time; and Planning Code section 124(f), Section 202.2(f), Sections 206.3 to 206.9, inclusive, Section 207(c), Section 304, and Section 328.

4 Note that Motels are a distinct use from Hotels, as defined in Section 102, and thus projects involving the demolition or conversion of Motels may be eligible for the program.

5 Projects that utilize ministerial programs that do require on-site affordable units will still be subject to requirements under those respective programs.

## **Additional Height**

General: HC-SF projects may be built to the higher of the two R-4 height limit designations as provided in the San Francisco Zoning Map and as described in Planning Code Sections 263.19(b) and 270(i).

### Description of the R-4 Height and Bulk Designation

**General Description.** In most cases, the R-4 height designation is expressed as:

**[base height] // [HC-SF Program height]-R-4**

The allowed height for projects not pursuing the HC-SF Program is described to the left of the double slash, and heights for projects pursuing the HC-SF Program is described to the right of the double slash.

*As an example, an R-4 Designation of “50//85-R-4” indicates that the base height limit for this site is 50 feet. This is the generally applicable height limit and is used to establish the base for any bonus or code relief programs other than The HC-SF Program (e.g. HOME SF or State Density Bonus). A housing project choosing to use the HC-SF Program may use the higher height and can be built up to 85 feet tall.*

**Description of Podium and Tower Height Designations.** Where height designation includes height limits for both building podiums and for building towers, the height designation is expressed as:

**[base podium height] / [base tower height] //  
[HC-SF Program podium height] / [HC-SF Program tower height]-R-4**

The podium heights for both the base and HC-SF Program scenarios are shown to the left of the single slashes and the tower heights for both scenarios are to the right of the single slashes.

*As an example, a R-4 designation of 85/120 // 105/400 – R-4 indicates that a HC-SF Program project’s podium would be limited to 105 feet in height and its tower would be limited to 400 feet in height. A project pursued outside of The HC-SF Program would have its podium height limited to 85 feet and its tower limited to 120 feet in height. These would be the “base heights” for projects utilizing bonus programs outside of The HC-SF Program, such as the state density bonus. (Sections 206.10(d)(1)(C) and 263.19(b))*

## ***Additional Height Provisions for All Projects within the R-4 Height and Bulk District***

Five-Feet Height Bonus: Projects in R-4 Height Districts with height limits of 40, 50, or 60 feet can incorporate up to five additional feet of height where the additional height is used at the ground floor of the building to provide a taller ground floor. The additional height can only be as much as the additional height provided at the building’s ground floor. (Section 263.20)

Tower Bulk: Portions of buildings above 85 feet in height or above a given podium height limit are subject to the bulk controls of Planning Code Section 270(i) and as illustrated in Citywide Design Standards C.3. Where podium heights are *not* provided within the R-4 Height and Bulk designation, the assumed podium height is 85 feet. (Section 270(i))

Height Measurement on Sloping Lots: For HC-SF Program projects, the provisions for measuring heights on sloping lots apply to buildings with heights up to 85 feet as provided in Tables 260-1 and 260-2. (Section 260(a)(4) / Table 260-2)

#### ***Additional Height Provisions for HC-SF Projects***

RH District Height Restrictions Do Not Apply: Height restrictions otherwise required under Planning Code Section 261 that further restrict heights in RH-1 and RH-2 under conditions described therein, do not apply to HC-SF Program projects. (Section 206.10(c)(1)(C))

Heights on Corner Lot or Large Lots: Notwithstanding the mapped height limits of less than 65 feet, HC-SF Program projects on Corner Lots (see Planning Code Section 102 for Corner Lot definition) or lots that are 8,000 square feet and larger within these districts can be built to 65 feet in height. (Section 206.10(d)(1)(C))

Additional Height Provided for 100% Affordable Housing Projects: As discussed below, The HC-SF Program height limits for 100% Affordable Housing Projects are increased by 20 feet. (Section 206.10(d)(2)(B)(iv))

Additional Height, Square Footage, and other Bonuses Provided through HC-SF Program Incentives: As discussed below, projects using the HC-SF Program can provide certain land uses or project features in order to receive a height bonus above the permitted HC-SF height limits. Some of these bonuses may also provide additional horizontal square footage (for instance, allowing deviations from setback requirements). (Section 206.10(e))

#### **Form-Based Residential Density**

HC-SF Program projects are subject to form-based residential density and are not limited by a ratio of permitted units to lot area. The number of units is only limited by the allowed building envelope and by the dwelling unit mix requirement. (Section 206.10(d)(1)(A))

#### **Dwelling Unit Mix**

The Dwelling Unit Mix requirements of Planning Code sections 207.6 and 207.7 apply. Unlike elsewhere in the city, however, these requirements also apply to projects that include between four and nine units. Unless higher requirements are specified in other code sections, projects of four units are required to contain at least one two-bedroom unit. HC-SF Program projects that include between five and nine units are required to include at least 25% units with at least two bedrooms, including at least one unit with at least three bedrooms. (Section 206.10(d)(1)(B))

#### **Modified Development Standards – All HC-SF Program Projects**

The HC-SF Program includes other modified standards that apply to HC-SF Program projects. These standards supersede standards found elsewhere in the Planning Code and Design Standards and are typically less stringent, providing an incentive for projects to use the HC-SF Program. These standards may be applied without limitation and do not require findings or the satisfaction of specific criteria. These modified standards are summarized in the table below; refer to Code Section 206.10 for the detailed controls and provisions. In cases where a modification to a Planning Code requirement conflicts with a Design Standard, the allowable modification permitted through HC-SF governs.

Table 1. Modified Development Standard - All Projects

Modified Development Standard (HC-SF Program Code Section)	Description	Planning Code Section Superseded
<b>Ground Floor Setbacks Along 19th Avenue</b> Section 206.10(d)(1)(D)	Along 19th Avenue, no setback required except a setback for the first 25 feet of building height may be required to allow a 15-foot-wide sidewalk.	Section 131 and 132
<b>Rear Yard</b> Section 206.10(d)(1)(E)(i) and (ii)	Except for Lots in R Districts (aside from RTO-C), and Large Lots: 18% of lot depth or 15 feet, whichever is greater.  In NC, C, RC, RTO-C, no rear yard is required on the ground floor, 18% / 15-foot requirement above still applies to upper floors.	Section 134
<b>Lot Coverage on Corner Lots</b> Section 206.10(d)(1)(E)(iii) and (iv)	18% of Lot Area with minimum 15 feet dimension in each direction.	Section 134
<b>Usable Open Space</b> Section 206.10(d)(1)(F)	None required.	Section 135
<b>Dwelling Unit Exposure</b> Section 206.10(d)(1)(G)	No Planning Code exposure requirement applies for Local Program projects. Building Code exposure requirements still apply.	Section 140
<b>Non-Residential Use Size Limits</b> Section 206.10(d)(1)(H)	No limit and no Conditional Use Authorization required.	Section 121.2 Article 7
<b>Height Limits for Vertical Non-Habitable Architectural Elements</b> Section 206.10(d)(1)(I)	Vertical elements may exceed height limits consistent with the requirements in Section 263.21(c).	—
<b>Development of Large Lots in RTO-C Districts</b> Section 206.10(d)(1)(J)	Lot size is not limited for HC-SF Program projects within the RTO-C District.	—
<b>Ground Floor Ceiling Heights for Nine-Story Projects</b> Section 206.10(d)(1)(K)	Ground floor ceiling height requirements don't apply for projects within 85' height zones that propose nine stories.	Section 145.1(c)(4)

## Modified Development Standards - 100% Affordable Housing Projects

HC-SF Program Projects that are comprised of 100% affordable units (“100% Affordable Housing Projects”) are eligible for additional modified development standards described in the table below. Similarly, these standards can be applied without limit and do not require findings or the satisfaction of specific criteria. (See Planning Code Section 206.10(d)(2)(A) for what qualifies as a 100% Affordable Housing Project under The HC-SF Program.)

*Table 2. Modified Development Standard - 100% Affordable Housing Projects*

Provision	HC-SF Program Standard	Planning Code Section Superseded
<b>Ground Floor Ceiling Height</b> Section 206.10(d)(2)(B)(i)	Ceiling height requirements of Section 145.1(c)(4) don't apply.	Section 145.1(c)(4)
<b>Active Use Requirements</b> Section 206.10(d)(2)(B)(ii)	20% reduction of dimensional standards for active uses.	Section 145.1(c)(3)
<b>Curb Cuts</b> Section 206.10(d)(2)(B)(iii)	Curb restrictions of Section 155(r) don't apply.	Section 155(r)
<b>Height Limits</b> Section 206.10(d)(2)(B)(iv)	Height limits are increased by 20 feet relative to the otherwise “HC-SF Height” of the R-4 height designation (described above).	—

## Modified Development Standards of up to 15% for All Other Planning Code and Objective Standards

In addition to the Modified Development Standards described above, any Objective Standard may be modified by up to 15 percent, except where expressly limited below. This modification may be applied without limitation and does not require findings or the satisfaction of specific criteria. (Section 206.10(d)(1)(M))

Exclusions: This 15 percent modification does not apply to the following standards: (1) modified Development Standards listed above (i.e. standards listed in Section 206.10(d)(1)(A)-(L)); (2) standards established after applying the additional development incentives under Section 206.10(e), described below; (3) standards ineligible for Major Modifications, described below; and (4) average maximum floor plate as limited by Section 270(i). (Section 206.10(d)(1)(M))

### *Example Calculations*

For standards expressed as a maximum limit, the 15 percent additional allowance permits an increase of up to 15 percent beyond that limit. For standards expressed as a minimum requirement, the 15 percent reduction allowance permits a reduction of up to 15 percent below that requirement.

*For example, the depth of a bay window projection, which is generally limited to 36 inches pursuant to Planning Code Section 136(c), may be increased by 5.4 inches (15 percent of 36 inches), for a total projection of 41.4 inches under the 15 percent allowance.*

*As another example, the street tree standard requiring one street tree for every 20 feet of frontage would result in a requirement of 15 street trees along a 300-foot frontage. Under the 15 percent reduction allowance, this requirement may be reduced by two trees, for a total of 13 street trees (85% of 15 is 12.75, rounded up to 13).*

*The 15 percent allowance may also be applied to objective design standards, including those in the Citywide Design Standards. For example, Citywide Design Standard C.9.1.2 establishes quantitative requirements for balconies used to satisfy the Façade Articulation requirement of Standard C.9, including minimum balcony dimensions of four feet by four feet and a maximum separation of 30 feet between balconies. Where a minimum standard applies, each required dimension may be reduced by up to 15 percent (7.2 inches), resulting in a minimum balcony dimension of 40.8 inches. Where a maximum standard applies, such as the maximum separation between balconies may be increased by up to 15 percent, resulting in a maximum separation of 34.5 feet. Accordingly, under the HC-SF Program, balconies that are 40.8 inches by 40.8 inches and separated by up to 34.5 feet satisfy the requirements of Citywide Design Standard C.9.1.2.*

The HC-SF Program Supplemental Application will provide space for the project sponsor to describe each 15 percent modification being requested, including:

- the applicable base standard,
- the proposed condition, and
- the resulting deviation, expressed both numerically and as a percentage, and confirming that the deviation is within 15%.

Using the examples above, the HC-SF Supplemental Application would provide the information as follows:

*Example Table of 15% Modifications*

Project Element	Objective Standard	Code Section	Proposal	Deviation - Numerical	Deviation - Percentage
On north façade, east most bay	36-inch bay depth	Section 136(c)	41.4-inch bay depth	5.4 inches	15%
Frontage street trees	15 street trees otherwise required at one street tree per 20 feet of frontage	Section 138	13 street trees	2 trees	13.3%
Balconies on east facade	Minimum 4 feet by 4 feet (or 48 inches by 48 inches)	Citywide Design Standard C.9.1.2	40.8 inch by 40.8 inch bays	7.2 inches	15%
Balcony Separation on east façade	Maximum of 30-feet between bays	Citywide Design Standard C.9.1.2	34.4 feet	4.4 feet	15%

## ADDITIONAL HEIGHT, SQUARE FOOTAGE, AND OTHER BONUS INCENTIVES FOR CERTAIN PROJECT FEATURES

HC-SF Program projects may opt into receiving additional square footage and increases to the building envelope in exchange for providing certain land uses or project features. Projects must meet the objective requirements and limitations outlined in Section 206.10(e) to be eligible for these administrative incentives.

Table 3 summarizes the additional HC-SF Program incentives and bonuses and identifies the applicable Planning Code section, the land use or development feature to be provided, the corresponding multiplier that results in the additional square footage that the project is able to add (“square footage bonus”<sup>6</sup>), and any additional requirements or limitations, including definitions and the circumstances under which building envelope bonuses may or may not be combined. Table 3 separates those incentives that are generally non-residential in character, residential in character, or provided for preservation purposes.

The Table also identifies where the associated square footage bonus may be constructed, either through allowed additional height above the height limit (“vertical allowance”) and/or through allowed additional horizontal space beyond the building envelope established by rear and side yard requirements (“horizontal allowance”). For the sake of this Bulletin, in describing the location of vertical and horizontal allowances, the base building envelope (“base HC-SF building envelope”), beyond which the vertical or horizontal allowance would be located, is determined by applying what is otherwise permitted and required under the HC-SF Program, including the application of modified design standards of Section 206.10(d) and any applicable design standards, including those in the Citywide Design Standards.

Vertical and horizontal allowances are beyond the base HC-SF building envelope, to provide additional space to accommodate the square footage bonuses. In general, projects in Residential Districts are limited to horizontal allowances, while projects in districts other than Residential Districts can receive vertical and/or horizontal allowances, depending on the specific incentive sought.

The amount of square footage bonus and its configuration is determined through two steps. First, by calculating the amount of square footage bonus based on the incentives being provided and their related multiplier. Second, by establishing where that square footage bonus will be located.

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<sup>6</sup> The terminology of “HC-SF base building envelope”, “square footage bonus”, “vertical allowance”, and “horizontal allowance” are used in this Bulletin for the sake of providing clarity and are not specific terms defined or used in the Planning Code.

Table 3. Additional HC-SF Program Incentives and Bonuses

Use Square Footage or Feature Planning Code Section	Multiplier <sup>7</sup>	Vertical Allowance	Horizontal Allowance	Description of Incentive Use or Feature	Other Requirements and Stipulations
Non-Residential Uses and Features	<b>Micro-Retail</b> 206.10(e)(1)	1.33	Up to 10 additional feet beyond the applicable height limit.  The bonus square footage enabled by these non-residential incentives along with the unit type incentives can be cumulative but together must fit within the 10-foot vertical height allowance.	Horizontal bonus not available.	<b>Micro-Retail</b> spaces are defined as individual tenant spaces being no less than 100 square feet and no greater than 1,000 square feet, as further defined by Section 206.0(e)(1). Uses that would otherwise require Conditional Use authorization shall not require such authorization when operating within a Micro-Retail space under this incentive.
	<b>Community Benefit Use</b> 206.10(e)(1)	2.00	Up to 10 additional feet beyond the applicable height limit.  The bonus square footage enabled by these non-residential incentives along with the unit type incentives can be cumulative but together must fit within the 10-foot vertical height allowance.	Horizontal bonus not available.	<b>A Community Benefit Use</b> is a service or business that serves the greater community such as certain community services (e.g. child care), grocery stores, laundromats, and includes businesses that have been displaced. See Planning Code Section 206.10(e)(1) for all Planning Code defined uses that qualify as a Community Benefit Use.
	<b>Warm Retail Shell - General</b> 206.10(e)(2)	2.50	Up to 10 additional feet beyond the applicable height limit.  The bonus square footage enabled by these non-residential incentives along with the unit type incentives can be cumulative but together must fit within the 10-foot vertical height allowance.	Horizontal bonus not available.	<b>A Warm Retail Shell - General</b> is designed to be move-in ready for most retail operations and is required to feature specific elements as more specifically defined in Planning Code Section 206.10(e)(2).
	<b>Warm Retail Shell - Food Service</b> 206.10(e)(2)	3.00	Up to 10 additional feet beyond the applicable height limit.  The bonus square footage enabled by these non-residential incentives along with the unit type incentives can be cumulative but together must fit within the 10-foot vertical height allowance.	Horizontal bonus not available.	<b>A Warm Retail Shell - Food Service</b> space is designed to accommodate future food service use, including infrastructure sufficient to support a commercial kitchen, as defined in Planning Code Section 206.10(e)(2).
	<b>Replacement of Commercial Space</b> 206.10(e)(5)	1.50	Up to 10 additional feet beyond the applicable height limit.  The bonus square footage enabled by these non-residential incentives along with the unit type incentives can be cumulative but together must fit within the 10-foot vertical height allowance.	Horizontal bonus not available.	<b>A Replacement Commercial Space</b> is required to generally be the same size and have the same street frontage lineage (within 10%) as the commercial space being displaced as further defined by Planning Code Section 206.10(e)(6)(B). Multiple commercial spaces may replace a larger commercial space as long as they are cumulative approximately the same size as the commercial space being displaced.
Residential Features	<b>Two-Bedroom Units</b> 206.10(e)(4)	250	<b>Outside of R Districts:</b> Up to 10 additional feet beyond the applicable height limit.  The bonus square footage enabled by these units types along with the non-residential incentives provided above can be cumulative but all must fit within the 10-foot vertical height allowance.  <b>Within R Districts:</b> the 10 foot height allowance is not available.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On ground level, reduction of rear yard to 18% or 15 feet, whichever is greater;</li> <li>Above ground floor, reduction of rear yard to 25% or 20 feet, whichever is greater;</li> <li>Side yards: reduction to zero feet;</li> <li>Historic Building upper story setbacks: reduction to 10 feet</li> </ul> The bonus square footage enabled by these feature can be cumulative but cannot be greater than the square footage enabled by the horizontal building envelope bonus.	—  The 30-year timeframe requirement applies and must be memorialized with an NSR.
	<b>Three-Bedroom Units</b> 206.10(e)(4)(B)	250	<b>Outside of R Districts:</b> Up to 10 additional feet beyond the applicable height limit.  The bonus square footage enabled by these units types along with the non-residential incentives provided above can be cumulative but all must fit within the 10-foot vertical height allowance.  <b>Within R Districts:</b> the 10 foot height allowance is not available.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On ground level, reduction of rear yard to 18% or 15 feet, whichever is greater;</li> <li>Above ground floor, reduction of rear yard to 25% or 20 feet, whichever is greater;</li> <li>Side yards: reduction to zero feet;</li> <li>Historic Building upper story setbacks: reduction to 10 feet</li> </ul> The bonus square footage enabled by these feature can be cumulative but cannot be greater than the square footage enabled by the horizontal building envelope bonus.	—  The 30-year timeframe requirement applies and must be memorialized with an NSR.
	<b>Four-Bedroom Units +</b> 206.10(e)(4)(C)	400	<b>Outside of R Districts:</b> Up to 10 additional feet beyond the applicable height limit.  The bonus square footage enabled by these units types along with the non-residential incentives provided above can be cumulative but all must fit within the 10-foot vertical height allowance.  <b>Within R Districts:</b> the 10 foot height allowance is not available.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On ground level, reduction of rear yard to 18% or 15 feet, whichever is greater;</li> <li>Above ground floor, reduction of rear yard to 25% or 20 feet, whichever is greater;</li> <li>Side yards: reduction to zero feet;</li> <li>Historic Building upper story setbacks: reduction to 10 feet</li> </ul> The bonus square footage enabled by these feature can be cumulative but cannot be greater than the square footage enabled by the horizontal building envelope bonus.	—  The 30-year timeframe requirement applies and must be memorialized with an NSR.
Preservation	<b>Family Friendly Amenity</b> 206.10(e)(3)	2.00	Height allowance is not available.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On ground level, reduction of rear yard to 18% or 15 feet, whichever is greater;</li> <li>Above ground floor, reduction of rear yard to 25% or 20 feet, whichever is greater;</li> <li>Side yards: reduction to zero feet;</li> <li>Historic Building upper story setbacks: reduction to 10 feet</li> </ul> The bonus square footage enabled by these feature can be cumulative but cannot be greater than the square footage enabled by the horizontal building envelope bonus.	<b>A Family Friendly Amenity</b> is a common building amenity intended to support family households, including indoor common space, shared kitchens, overnight guest suites, or in-home childcare facilities, as further defined in Planning Code Section 206.10(e)(3).
	<b>Preservation of Historic Buildings</b> 206.10(e)(6)	1.50	Up to 20 additional feet beyond the applicable height limit.  This 20 additional feet is only to accommodate the bonus square footage by adhering to the PDS' and cannot be used for other incentives. However the 10 foot height allowance for other incentives can be added to this 20 foot height allowance for a maximum of a 30 foot height bonus for all incentives.	Generally unlimited, except where the project abuts a rear yard containing a dwelling unit, a rear yard of at least 15 feet above the ground floor shall be provided.	Forgone development potential shall be calculated as the gross floor area within the volume that would otherwise be permitted under the Planning Code and all applicable objective standards, including modifications allowed by the Local Program.
	<b>Preservation of Historic Building Storefronts</b> 206.10(e)(6)(B)	0.25	Up to 20 additional feet beyond the applicable height limit.  This 20 additional feet is only to accommodate the bonus square footage by adhering to the PDS' and cannot be used for other incentives. However the 10 foot height allowance for other incentives can be added to this 20 foot height allowance for a maximum of a 30 foot height bonus for all incentives.	Generally unlimited, except where the project abuts a rear yard containing a dwelling unit, a rear yard of at least 15 feet above the ground floor shall be provided.	—  The storefront must be preserved per the Preservation Design Standards.

<sup>7</sup> For each square foot or amount of incentive use, the project receives bonus square feet based on the square footage or quantity of the incentive provided times the below multiple.

## STEP 1: DETERMINE INCENTIVE SQUARE FOOTAGE BONUS

The first step is determining how much square footage bonus is permitted by multiplying the square footage or quantity of each incentive use or feature provided by the applicable multiplier set forth in Table 3.

### Example 1 Calculation – Project in a District Other than a Residential District

Example 1A Calculation – Project in a District other than a Residential District:

*Example 1A Calculation Table*

Use or Feature Provided	Quantity/Square Feet	Multiplier	Bonus Square Footage
Micro-Retail	1,000 sq ft	1.33	1,330
Three-Bedroom Unit(s)	1 unit	250	250
Four-Bedroom Unit(s)	1 unit	400	400
<b>Total Bonus Square Footage</b>	–	–	<b>1,980</b>

*In this example, the total bonus square footage generated by the incentives provided is 1,980 square feet.*

Example 1B Calculation – Project in a District other than a Residential District:

*A commercial space that qualifies for more than one incentive may be counted toward each applicable incentive, as identified in Table 3. For example, if the 1,000-square-foot Micro-Retail commercial space provided above also replaces a prior commercial use and is improved as a warm retail shell for food service, that may be counted toward the “Micro-Retail”, “Warm Retail Shell – Food Service”, and “Replacement of Commercial Space” incentives. In such a case, the 1,000 square feet can be counted three times with each instance multiplied by the incentives multiplier.*

*Example 1B Calculation Table*

Use or Feature Provided	Quantity/Square Feet	Multiplier	Bonus Square Footage
Micro-Retail	1,000 sq ft	1.33	1,330
Warm Retail Shell - Food Service	1,000 sq ft	3	3,000
Replacement of Commercial Space	1,000 sq ft	1.5	1,500
Three-Bedroom Unit(s)	1 unit	250	250
Four-Bedroom Unit(s)	1 unit	400	400
<b>Total Bonus Square Footage</b>	–	–	<b>6,480</b>

## Example 2 Calculation – Historic Preservation Project (in a District other than a Residential District)

*For preservation incentives pursuant to Planning Code Section 206.10(e)(6), most of the bonus square footage is based on the building area required to be forgone as a means of complying with the Preservation Design Standards.*

*For example, if a project must provide a 15-foot setback for additions above a historic resource, the area of forgone buildable space in the setback area forms the basis of the bonus square footage calculation. For example, for most typical lot conditions, this would be equal to 15 feet multiplied by the length of the setback frontage, multiplied by the number of stories that are affected by the setback requirement. Note that HC-SF projects utilizing this preservation standard are also eligible for an additional incentive if the preservation includes a storefront with character defining features. Such an incentive is based on the square footage of the related store front space.*

*Example 2 Calculation Table*

Feature	Quantity/Square Feet	Multiplier	Bonus Square Footage
Forgone square footage for required setback	100' frontage x 15' setback x 3 stories = 4,500 sq ft	1.5	6,750
Preservation of Character defining storefront	7,000 sq ft or storefront space	0.25	1,750
<b>Total</b>	–	–	<b>8,500</b>

*In this instance, the project is eligible to construct 8,500 square feet beyond the base HC-SF building envelope.*

## Example 3 Calculation – Project in a Residential District

*Example 3 Calculation Table*

Use or Feature Provided	Quantity/Square Feet	Multiplier	Bonus Square Footage
Three-Bedroom Unit(s)	2 units	250	500
Family Friendly Amenity	125 sq ft	2	250
<b>Total Bonus Square Footage</b>	–	–	<b>750</b>

*In a residentially zoned context, the offered incentives include providing multi-bedroom units and Family Amenities. See Table 3, consistent with Planning Code Section 206.10(e), for the multipliers, definitions, and other stipulations.*

*In this instance, the Project can include 750 square feet beyond the base HC-SF building envelope.*

Note that in all these cases, the square footage bonus can be occupied by any approved project use (subject to use limitation of the underlying zoning district and Planning Code section 206.10(e)) and does not need to be added specifically to the land use that establishes eligibility for the bonus.

## STEP 2: DETERMINE VERTICAL AND/OR HORIZONTAL ALLOWANCES

The second step is determining where the incentive square footage bonus will be placed: either within a vertical allowance, or a horizontal allowance, or both. As noted above, vertical and horizontal allowances are provided beyond the base HC-SF building envelope to provide additional space to accommodate the square footage bonuses. Bonus square feet must fit within either the vertical or horizontal allowances, as described in Table 3 and in Planning Code Section 206.10(e). In general, projects in R Districts are limited to horizontal allowances, projects in non-R Districts can have either vertical or horizontal allowances, depending on the specific incentive.

Below are further descriptions and stipulations of these allowances and graphics that demonstrate how square footage bonuses can be placed within vertical and/or horizontal allowances.

### Vertical Allowance Example 1 (Available in Districts other than Residential Districts)

A maximum 10-foot vertical allowance is available for any combination of the following incentives, provided such uses are principally permitted in the underlying zoning district: Micro-Retail, Community Benefit Use, Warm Retail Shell – General, Warm Retail Shell – Food Service, Replacement of Commercial Space, and two-, three-, and four-plus- bedroom units (outside of Residential Districts). These uses are not eligible for additional horizontal allowances.

*In using Example 1A above, the 1,980 square foot bonus must fit within 10 feet of additional height.*

*In this scenario, the 10 feet of additional height allows one story of 4,000 square feet (50' width 80' depth), so the square foot bonus fits within the vertical allowance.*

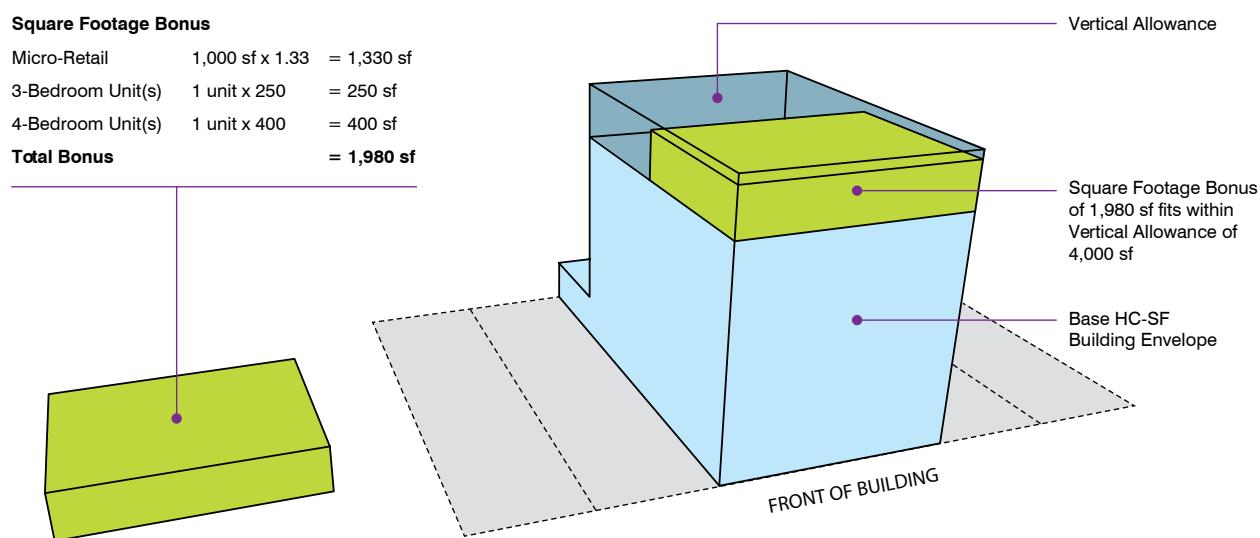


Figure 2.

Example 1A, "Project in a District other than a Residential District"

On the left is the Square Footage Bonus and its calculation. On the right is the Square Footage Bonus of 1,980 square feet fitting within the 10-foot Vertical Allowance of 4,000 square feet.

In Example 1B, where the commercial square footage is eligible for multiple incentives, the total square footage bonus equals 6,480 square feet and therefore would be constrained by the 4,000 square foot floor plate of the 10-foot allowance resulting in an ultimate square footage bonus of 4,000 square feet.

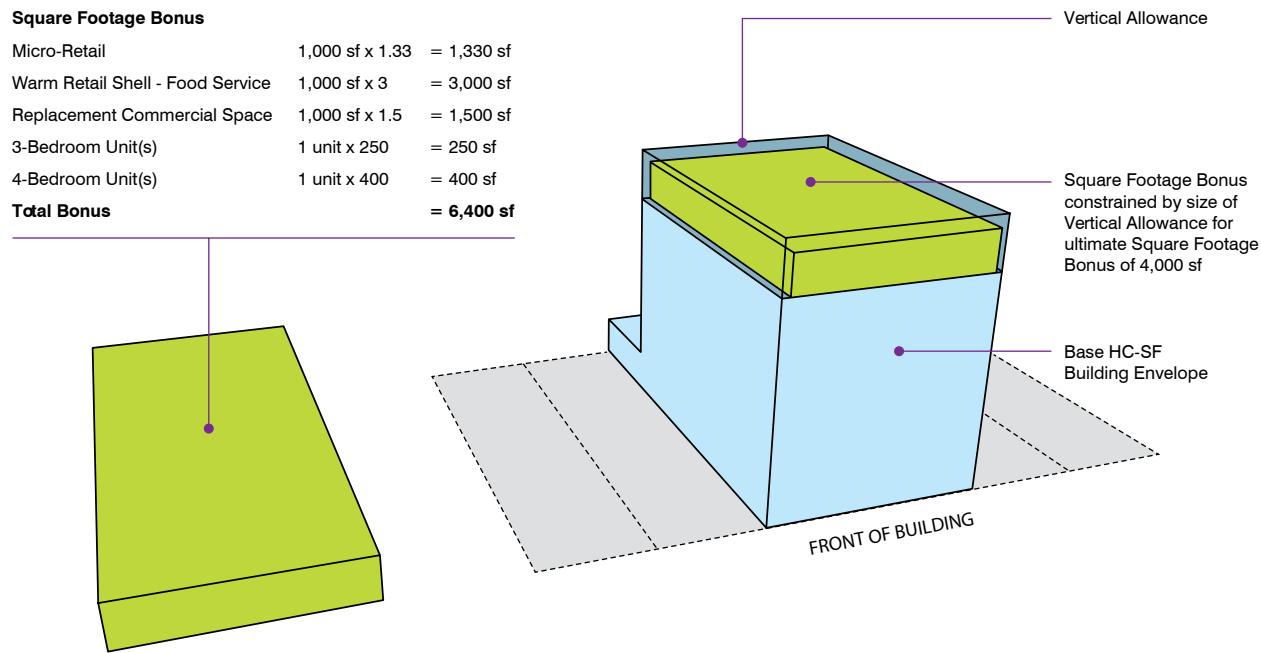


Figure 3.

Example 1B "Project in a District other than a Residential District"

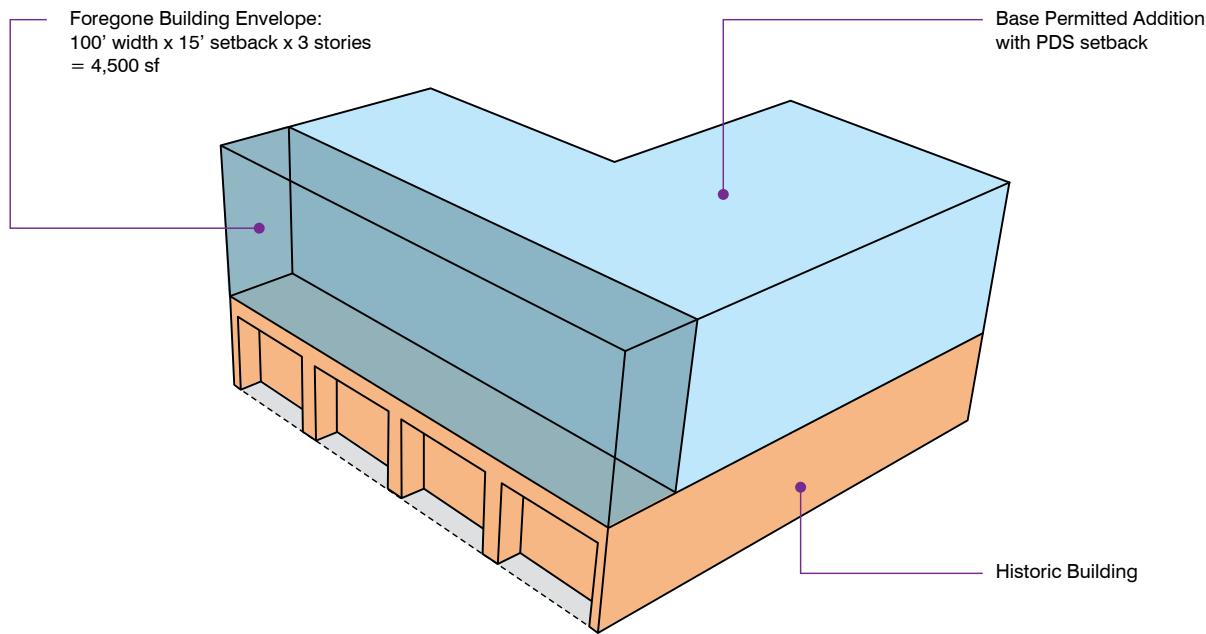
On the left is a larger Square Footage Bonus enabled by more incentive credits. However, as shown on the right, the Square Footage Bonus ultimately constrained by the Vertical Allowance's lesser square footage for an ultimate square footage bonus of 4,000 sf.

## Vertical and/or Horizontal Allowance Example 2 for Preservation Projects

A maximum 20-foot vertical allowance is available outside of Residential Districts for Preservation incentives.

In using Example 2 above, if the preservation project featured a top floor plate of 6,000 square feet, the 8,500 square foot bonus could fit within a full floor of 6,000 square feet and a partial floor of 2,500 square feet.

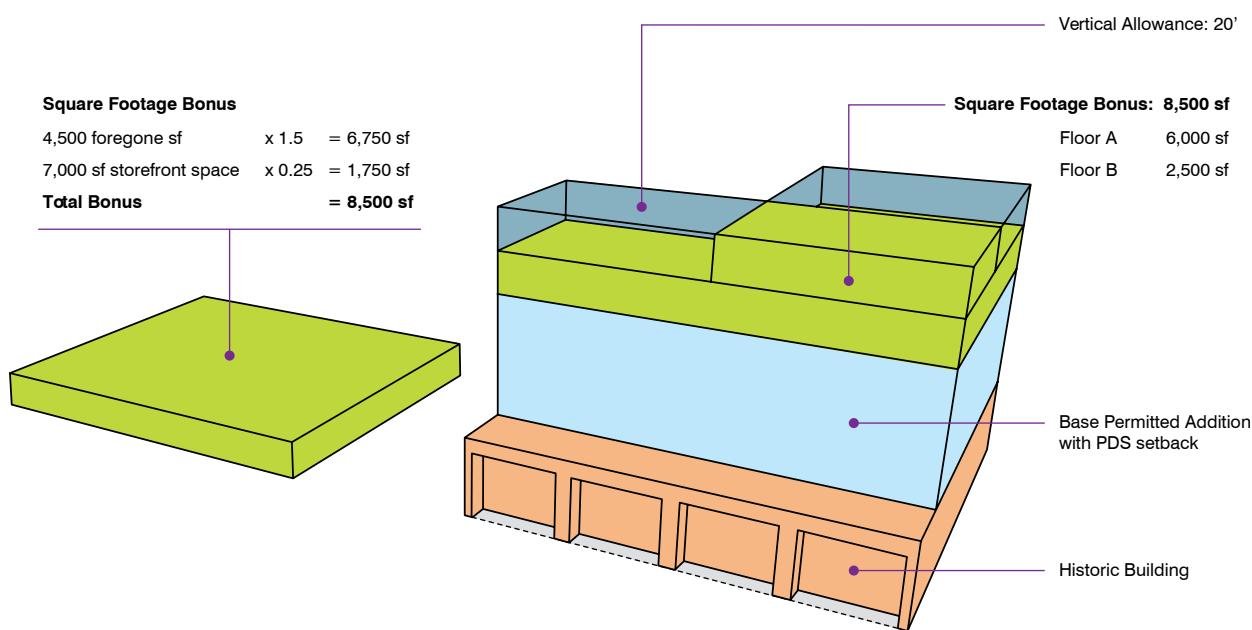
HC-SF Projects in Non-Residential Districts that feature both preservation incentives and other incentives are eligible for both 10-foot vertical allowance and 20-foot vertical preservation allowance for a total of a 30-foot vertical allowance. This bonus square footage can be accommodated in either vertical or horizontal allowances (subject to the conditions in Section 206.10(e)(6)); in this example, the square footage is depicted as a vertical allowance.



**Figure 4.**

**Example 2 "Preservation Project"**

The above shows a project including an addition to a historic property that meets the Preservation Design Standards by including a 15-foot setback above the historic building. The 15-foot setback creates the forgone building envelope which is the basis for determining most of the project's Square Footage Bonus.



**Figure 5.**

**Example 2 "Preservation Project"**

To the left is the Square Footage Bonus and its calculation, which includes the forgone area of the required front setback. To the right is the Square Footage Bonus placed within the 20-foot Vertical Allowance configured on a full floorplate and a partial floorplate.

### Horizontal Allowance Example 3: Residential Districts

In Residential districts, projects are only eligible to receive horizontal allowances, not vertical allowances. To receive the bonus, projects may provide various incentives, including Family Friendly Amenities, two-bedroom units (above the amount required), and three-bedroom or four-plus-bedroom units (including required units under applicable "dwelling unit mix" standards). See Table 3 and/or Planning Code Section 206.10(e) for the multiplier and square footage bonuses allowed for each.

Horizontal allowance will generally be located at the rear of the site and will consist of the volumetric difference between the base HC-SF building envelope and a horizontal allowance as defined by the reduction of the required rear yard pursuant to Section 206.10(e)(3)-(4). Specifically, this reduced rear yard is equal to 18 percent or 15 feet of lot depth, whichever is greater at the ground level, and equal to 25 percent or 20 feet of lot depth, whichever is greater above the ground level. Where side setbacks are otherwise required, they can be reduced to 0 feet. In addition, in historic buildings, projects may use a horizontal allowance to reduce the upper story front setback from 15 feet to 10 feet. Any bonus square footage generated by incentives must be fully fit within this additional horizontal allowance and may not exceed the square footage generated by the allowance.

*Using example 3 above, where the project is entitled to 750 square feet of square footage bonus by including two 3-bedroom units, and a Family Friendly Amenity of 125 square feet must fit within the horizontal allowance as described above. For many R-District lots, the base HC-SF Program building envelope at the rear is defined by a 30% rear yard line along with the application of Citywide Design Standard C.6, which requires reduced building volume at the rear. This example uses Citywide Design C.6.1, which requires providing two five-foot side setbacks above the ground floor and limiting the building height to 30 feet for the portion of the building between 55 percent of lot depth and 30 percent of lot depth.*

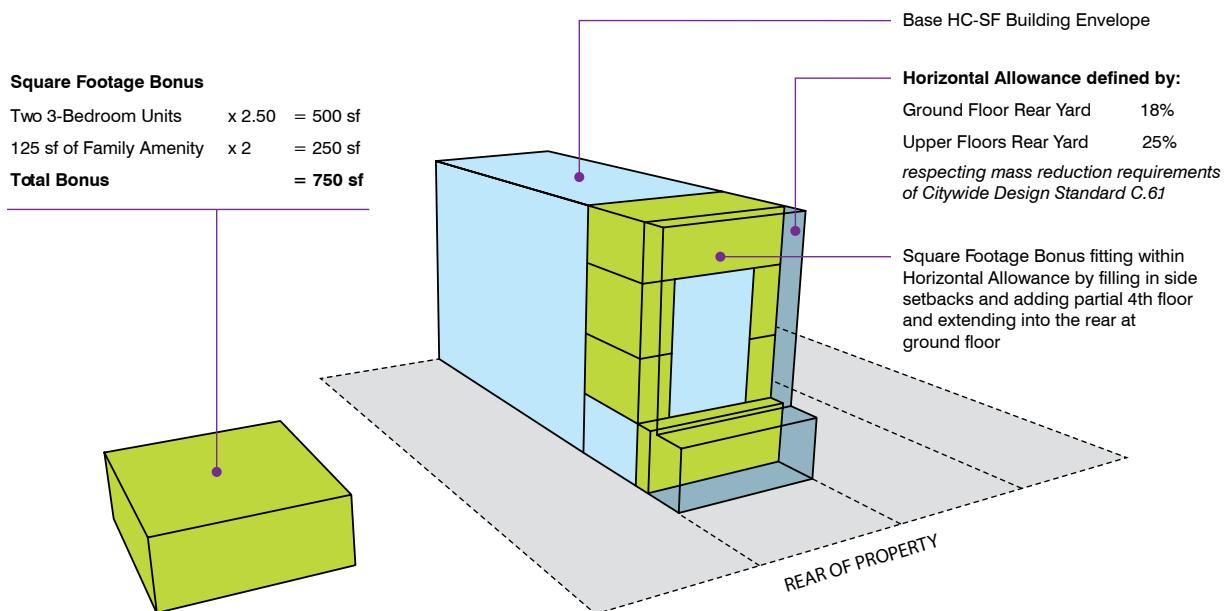


Figure 6.

Example 3 "Residential District Project"

To the left is the Square Footage Bonus and its calculation. To the right is the Horizontal Allowance defined by the space between the Base Building Envelope, which in turn features reduced massing at the rear per Citywide Design Standard C.6.1, and a reduced rear yard as described above. The diagram to the right shows the Square Footage Bonus fitting within the Horizontal Allowance and configured on four floors fitting around the Base Building Envelope's reduced rear massing.

As a part of the HC-SF Supplemental Application, projects pursuing any of these incentives will be required to itemize each incentive credit being sought, its resulting square footage bonus, and the location and configuration of the square footage bonus demonstrating that the square footage bonus fits with the respective allowance. The HC-SF Application also requires Project Sponsor to provide this information graphically either with scaled plans and elevations or with scaled 3D diagrams like those shown in this Bulletin.

## MAJOR MODIFICATIONS

Project sponsors that want to use the HC-SF Program for projects that deviate from or do not meet Planning Code and other Objective Standards in one or more ways beyond the modifications and bonuses provided through The HC-SF Program can seek discretionary approval via a Major Modification from the Planning Commission, as provided for in Section 344(d).

Major Modifications – General: Under this Major Modification process, a modification can be requested for any Objective Standard without limit both in terms of the number of modifications requested and the amount of deviation from a given standard, except for standards that are explicitly prohibited from being modified through this process (see below). Note that projects that meet the standards of the HC-SF Program, including modified development standards under Section 206.10(d) described therein and the horizontal and/or vertical bonuses permitted via incentives under Section 206.10(e), are considered code compliant and do *not* need to seek a Major Modification. (Section 334(d))

Similar to the description required to seek the 15% modification, the project sponsor will be asked in the HC-SF Supplemental Application to itemize each feature for which a Major Modification is being sought. Specifically, the sponsor must provide the project feature being modified, the base standard for the feature being modified, and the amount of deviation both numerically and as a percentage.

For example, if a project sponsor is requesting a modification of the bay depth limit, a provided table would indicate:

*Example Table of Major Modification*

Project Element	Objective Standard	Code Section	Proposal	Deviation - Numerical	Deviation - Percentage
On east façade, northern most bay	36-inch bay depth	136(c)	48-inch bay depth	12 inches	33%

Exclusions: Notwithstanding the above, Major Modification Process cannot be used to modify the following Planning Code standards: (1) maximum building height; (2) maximum permitted off-street parking amounts; (3) wind standards; (4) minimum density requirements; (5) Floor Area Ratios (FAR) limits; (6) standards provided in Section 1.7, “Compliance”; (7) standards and requirements provided Article 3, “Zoning Procedures”, (8) requirements provided Section 3.5, “Fees”; (9) satisfaction of development impact fees provided in Article 4; (10) standards regarding Historic Landmarks and Structures provided in Articles 10 and 11, (11) the Transportation Demand Management Program requirements of Section 169, (12) dwelling unit mix; and (13) any standard or provision adopted by the voters. (Section 334(d)(3))

**Major Modification Findings:** While there is no limit to the number of Major Modifications or amount of deviation from a standard that can be sought, approval of a Major Modification requires that the Planning Commission make both of the following findings (Section 334(d)(4)):

- (a) that the proposed modification achieves equal or superior design quality, and*
- (b) the project would provide a significant community benefit by producing housing near transit, or otherwise promote the general welfare.*

The Planning Commission can also subject a HC-SF Program project to conditions to address potential impacts related to the granting of the Major Modification.

**Other Modification and Variance Processes Still Available:** Processes described elsewhere in the Planning Code to modify or vary standards that cannot be modified through the HC-SF Program including the Major Modification process, can still be pursued under those respective processes where applicable. Additional applications will be required for those respective approvals. (Section 334(d)(2))

## **THE HC-SF PROGRAM REVIEW PROCESS**

The review process for HC-SF Program approval is incorporated into the Planning Department's overall review of development projects. Project sponsors are required to fill out a HC-SF Program Supplemental Application along with the Project Development Application.

Other supplemental applications, including but not limited to those for Environmental Review, Coastal Zone Permit Review, Conditional Use, including for proposed land uses not otherwise principally permitted by the HC-SF Program, Preservation approvals such as Certificates of Appropriateness, and Ministerial Review may also be required, depending on the nature of the development and the application pathway being sought. See the [Planning Approval webpage](#) for more information about the overall development review process.

### **Ministerial Review**

Projects that comply with applicable Objective Standards, including those established under the HC-SF Program, may be eligible for ministerial review processes, including the Housing Choice-San Francisco Housing Sustainability District (Section 344), which was created in parallel with the HC-SF Program. Eligibility criteria, project requirements and review procedures for these ministerial pathways are often more specific and, in some cases, more restrictive than those applicable to HC-SF Program projects that do not utilize ministerial review. In exchange, these processes provide more streamlined and time-certain review timelines. Additional information regarding ministerial review options is provided in Director's Bulletin Nos. 5, 8, and 9. Project sponsors must affirmatively apply for ministerial review programs. The Planning Department will not process a project under a ministerial review pathway unless the project sponsor has explicitly requested such review.

## Review Timelines

For Projects not seeking a Major Modification and not requiring environmental review under CEQA, the Planning Department is required to complete review within 180 days of receiving a complete application.

For Projects seeking a Major Modification, the Planning Commission is required to hold a hearing on the application within 180 days of receiving a complete application.

Note that these 180-day deadlines may not apply where the Environmental Review Officer determines that environmental review will take longer than 180 days. (Section 334(c)(6))

## Appeals

Planning Department review and determination for HC-SF Program projects under Planning Code Section 206.10 and 344(c) is not appealable.

## Discretionary Review

Pursuant to Planning Code Section 334(b)(3) and Planning Commission Resolution No. 21810, the Commission will not consider any Discretionary Review requests for projects seeking approval under The HC-SF Program.



**San Francisco**  
**Planning**

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