

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 18, 2021

Contact: Tom Temprano, tom.temprano@sfgov.org,

San Francisco Supervisor introduces legislation to allow fourplexes in single-family neighborhoods

San Francisco Supervisor Rafael Mandelman introduces legislation to allow up to four housing units on corner lots in residential neighborhoods with restrictive density limits

SAN FRANCISCO — Today District 8 Supervisor Rafael Mandelman introduced an ordinance that would allow for small apartment buildings in areas currently reserved for single-family and low-density housing. The legislation would provide an exception to density limits and allow up to four units on corner lots in RH (“Residential House”) zoning districts that account for roughly 60% of the City’s developable residential parcels.

“The zoning in many parts of San Francisco was established in the suburbanization era of the 1970s, when San Francisco’s population was three-quarters of what it is today,” said Mandelman, who represents neighborhoods including Glen Park, Noe Valley, Diamond Heights, the Castro, Eureka Valley, Corbett Heights, Mission Dolores and Twin Peaks. “Since then, we have grown by 200,000 people and added over half-a-million jobs, but only about 70,000 new housing units. My legislation will modestly increase the housing supply in neighborhoods across the City, while maintaining their unique character.”

In February, Mandelman announced the fourplex zoning proposal along with a companion piece of legislation to limit so-called “monster homes” that is set for review by the Planning Commission in June. That legislation targets the proliferation of single family monster homes by requiring additional review for developments that propose adding new large single-family homes or significantly expanding existing homes without adding additional housing.

The fourplex ordinance introduced Tuesday would apply on corner lots in RH zoning districts that are currently zoned for a maximum of one, two, or three units per lot, and are largely reserved for single-family homes. This concept was discussed by the City’s COVID-19 Economic Recovery Task Force, which recommended zoning changes to allow for small multifamily buildings in low-density neighborhoods to support housing opportunities for middle-income San Franciscans. Participants identified corner lots in particular as a possible opportunity, given that they offer greater street frontage that can more easily accommodate multi-family buildings and based on the historical pattern throughout the City of larger, higher-density buildings on corners that were generally built before RH zoning.

“We should be making it easier to build modestly-sized housing for middle income San Franciscans in neighborhoods across the city,” Mandelman said. “Nearly all the new housing development in this city has been concentrated in eastern neighborhoods, and this is a way for

every neighborhood to do its part, including neighborhoods in my district, in addressing our housing shortage.”

The ordinance would require environmental review per the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) before it could be adopted by the Board of Supervisors, a process which is expected to take roughly six months. Mandelman explained that the proposal for corner lots is designed to be acted on this year, while he is also pursuing a broader proposal to allow up to four units on all residential lots that would require more robust environmental review, likely through the Environmental Impact Report for the City’s 2022 Housing Element update. He is currently working with the City Attorney’s office on the broader RH zoning proposal, which he plans to introduce in the coming weeks.

###