

**J. Edgar Fennie Jr. AIA**, Chair of the Code Advisory Committee to the Building Inspection Committee

August 5, 2025

**San Francisco Commission Streamlining Task Force  
City and County of San Francisco**

Re: Department of Building Inspection and the Code Advisory Committee to the Building Inspection Commission

Dear Chair Ed Harrington and Commission Streamlining Task Force,

I respectfully submit this letter in support of continuation of both the Building Inspection Commission (BIC) and the Code Advisory Committee (CAC) as they are both crucial city government bodies for the protection of life, safety, and welfare of the residents of San Francisco and our built environment.

The CAC serves as the technical review body for all building codes, regulations, and processes for regulating the development of our built environment in San Francisco. Legislation that is reviewed and approved by the CAC is forwarded to the BIC for their review and approval before going to the Board of Supervisors and the Mayor. This public process is a well-tuned, open, democratic, and efficient methodology for improving safety and streamlining government processes. Our committee has the full support by the Department of Building Inspection, regularly interacts with their Technical Services personnel, and is a model of good government.

The CAC consists of seventeen members representing the entire spectrum of expertise within the building industry with representatives of ownership, tenancy, design, and construction. The CAC meets publicly every month, along with monthly public subcommittee meetings to review proposed regulations, modifications to existing rules, and other building-related legislation.

All CAC members provide their valuable time and invaluable expertise on a volunteer basis with no compensation and most members have been serving for more than five years.

We rarely, if ever, fail to have a quorum present at our public meetings and it is not uncommon for members to review and take action with input from members of the public on multiple proposed ordinances at every meeting. To my knowledge no other agency or organization is singularly focused on the regulatory framework and building issues that face us on a regular basis.

To adapt building codes and regulations which incorporate new knowledge, technologies, and science, national model codes are updated and published on a typical three-year cycle. Subsequently, California will then update the CA Building Code (California Title 24, Part 2) and San Francisco is then allowed to make local modifications to recognize our unique topography, geology, climate, and the attendant risks to our residents and building environment.

This three-year code change cycle necessitates a thorough review of any existing SF code amendments to conform with the newly revised state regulations and/or may require new SF regulations or amendments. These updates to the San Francisco code address model code amendments across California Title 24, including Part 2 (Building Code), Part 3 (Electrical Code), Part 4 (Mechanical Code), Part 5 (Plumbing Code), Part 6 (Energy Code), Part 8 (Historical Building Code), Part 9 (Fire Code), Part 10 (Existing Building Code), and Part 11 (Green Building Code), to align with the new code cycle.

The Building Inspection Commission and the Code Advisory Committee are specifically charged with processing these regular code changes. Without our local amendments, construction and renovation in our city would be severely and negatively impacted, as many state regulations do not account for our specific and unique local conditions.

To name a few of the recent and significant pieces of legislation that have been thoroughly reviewed, modified and approved by the CAC and the BIC include:

- The SF Existing Building Code changes for Concrete Buildings Assessment and Volunteer Seismic Retrofit Design Criteria (Appendix Chapter A6) to address seismic vulnerabilities in existing concrete frame buildings
- The SF Awing Amnesty Program to allow small businesses to legalize existing building awnings built without permits
- Changes to the SF Existing Building Code to adopt CA Existing Building Code Chapters 6 through 11, allowing, among other things, the “Work Area Method” to be utilized in renovations giving building permit applicants flexibility in defining the scope of renovation work and the applicable regulations
- The SF Housing Code amendment requiring continual elevator service in buildings with existing elevators to provide accessibility for building residents

Over the years there have been countless significant safety provisions that were developed and implemented through the CAC and the BIC. Some notable highlights include:

- The 2013 Soft Story Seismic Upgrade regulations resulting in the upgrading of hundreds of buildings to resist earthquake forces and improve our city’s resilience
- The 2016 Façade Inspection and Maintenance Ordinance to reduce risk to the public from deteriorating facade components of tall buildings
- The 2016 and 2025 updates for the Accessible Business Entrance program, requiring public accommodation to have all primary entrances accessible for people with disabilities

In addition to new regulations, the CAC and the BIC issue, review, and revise Administrative Bulletins and Information Sheets issued by the Dept. of Building Inspection to assist Building Permit applicants with guidance on navigating complex and overlapping building regulations that

allow them to submit and obtain permit approvals without delay. This is a very important public service that deserves regular attention by technical experts to ensure that these documents are up to date and accurate.

In summary, both the Building Inspection Commission and the Code Advisory Committee are indispensable components of our city governance and are absolutely necessary for the continued protection of the safety of our residents and built environment. They deserve to be retained and supported as key components of our local government.

Thank you for your consideration and support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JEF' followed by a horizontal line and a small flourish.

J. Edgar Fennie AIA – Chair  
Code Advisory Committee to the Building Inspection Commission

cc: Patrick O’Riordan, C.B.O. Director  
Sonia Harris, Secretary to the BIC  
Thomas Fessler, Secretary to the CAC