



September 30, 2025

Commission Streamlining Task Force  
San Francisco City Hall

RE: Historic Preservation Commission

Dear Commission Task Force Members Hayward, Mihal, Bruss, Harrington and Kittler:

I write in support of maintaining the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) as a decision-making body. I was a member of the predecessor body to the HPC, the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board (LPAB), appointed by Mayor Newsom. I also served as President of the LPAB.

The City's LPAB, established in 1967, was a relatively early preservation review body in the U.S., but by the late 1990s, the LPAB was anachronistic for a city the size, significance, and urban quality of San Francisco. The LPAB recommendations were sent to the Planning Commission for review and approval. However, often the recommendations of the LPAB were not accepted by the Planning Commission. Further, applicants were required to prepare for and attend two hearings instead of one, efficient hearing and decision. In short, reverting to an advisory body rather than a decision-making Commission, will not only result in an increase in the work of the Planning Commission, but also that of Planning Department staff.

It was in recognition of this reality and specifically to streamline approval processes that San Francisco voters approved Proposition J, creating the HPC in 2008 through a Charter Amendment. I am attaching the ballot arguments from that election. Please note that there was NO opposition to Proposition J. I encourage you to read the ballot arguments carefully and note that one key purpose of the proposition was to streamline decision-making. It should be noted that 56% of the city's voters approved Proposition J, making the HPC a decision-making body, and that it was approved in all but two supervisorial districts.

The HPC meets the National Park Service's Certified Local Government (CLG) program (as per the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, amended in 1980). The most significant changes between the LPAB and the HPC were the following:

- Commission members are required to have specific professional qualifications;
- Commission approval of permits for the alteration of designated historic buildings; and
- Commission ability to offer recommendations regarding proposed ordinances and resolutions concerning historic resources



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These changes, as outlined by the Certified Local Government (CLG) program, brought expertise to the disposition of historic resources, thereby making planning and development review and decision making better informed and more efficient. California has over 60 CLGs and it is a popular, valued program of the National Park Service, providing significant funding and program assistance to those local governments. In six of the last 12 years, the San Francisco Planning Department has been awarded substantial grants through the CLG program.

I urge this Task Force to retain the HPC as a decision-making body and to call on experts with knowledge of historic preservation law, policy, and practice to help inform your evaluation and recommendations.

If you follow through, and change the nature of the HPC, you will be acting directly against the will of San Francisco voters, increasing the workload of the Planning Commission and Planning Department staff, and complicating the approval process for project sponsors. Surely, this is not the goal of this Task Force.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bridget Maley', is positioned below the word 'Sincerely,'.

Bridget Maley  
Principal  
City of San Francisco Certified Local Business #CMD082717018

# J

## Creating a Historic Preservation Commission

### PROPONENT'S ARGUMENT IN FAVOR OF PROPOSITION J

HELP PRESERVE OUR WORLD-CLASS CITY. VOTE YES  
ON J

As one of the world's most-beloved historic cities, it's time for San Franciscans to adopt world-class best practices that have protected the history and vitality of other great American cities. – that's why we need Proposition J.

ADOPTS BEST PRACTICES FROM AROUND THE  
COUNTRY

San Francisco's preservation apparatus is more than forty years old, and needs serious reform. The body currently charged with preserving historic buildings has no final decision-making authority.

Proposition J adopts best practices and national standards of historic cities around the country – including New York, Boston, Chicago, and Philadelphia – that have independent preservation commissions with jurisdiction over historic buildings and neighborhoods.

STREAMLINES PERMITTING AND IMPROVES  
EFFICIENCY

Proposition J streamlines the review of applications for changes to historic resources and helps prevent the demolition of the landmark buildings and neighborhood character that make San Francisco unique.

Proposition J was drafted collaboratively with the City's Planning Department, Mayor's Office, Landmarks Board, and the California Office of Historic Preservation. The result is a good government measure that provides clear guidance to homeowners, architects, and builders, and gives city staff the best tools available to make sound decisions about our historic buildings and neighborhoods.

PROMOTES ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT

Improving San Francisco's preservation efforts will also help the City meet its environmental goals. Supporting the preservation of existing historic structures conserves resources and prevents demolition debris from ending up in California landfills. Construction and demolition waste can comprise up to thirty percent of landfill content.

IT'S TIME FOR PROPOSITION J

It's time we bring San Francisco in line with other great cities by reforming the permitting process for historic buildings and giving an independent commission a voice on preservation issues.

*San Francisco Architectural Heritage*  
*National Trust for Historic Preservation*  
*San Francisco Democratic Party*  
*San Francisco Tomorrow*

### REBUTTAL TO PROPONENT'S ARGUMENT IN FAVOR OF PROPOSITION J

NO REBUTTAL TO PROPONENT'S ARGUMENT IN FAVOR OF PROPOSITION J WAS SUBMITTED

Arguments printed on this page are the opinion of the authors and have not been checked for accuracy by any official agency.  
Arguments are printed as submitted. Spelling and grammatical errors have not been corrected.



# Creating a Historic Preservation Commission

**J**

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