

***Regular Meeting of the
Building Inspection Commission
August 20, 2025***

Agenda Item 5



August 15, 2025

Building Inspection Commission
49 South Van Ness Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94103

Re: Health Code – Enhanced Ventilation Requirements for Urban Infill Sensitive Use Developments

Honorable Members of the Commission:

On August 13, 2025, the full Code Advisory Committee (CAC) met to consider adoption of File No. 250806, amending the Health Code to clarify the City has enhanced ventilation standards for buildings containing a sensitive use certify that the building's ventilation system is capable of maintaining positive pressure. After a review and discussion of the proposed changes, the CAC voted to unanimously to make a recommendation to the Building Inspection Commission to approve File No. 250806 as written.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas Fessler
DBI Technical Services
Secretary to the Code Advisory Committee

cc. Patrick O'Riordan, C.B.O. Director
David Kane, Deputy Director
Mary Wilkinson-Church, Permit Services Manager
Christine Gasparac, Assistant Director
Tate Hanna, Legislative Affairs Manager
J. Edgar Fennie, Chair, Code Advisory Committee

Attach: File No. 250806

[Health Code - Enhanced Ventilation Requirements for Urban Infill Sensitive Use Developments]

Ordinance amending the Health Code to clarify the City's enhanced ventilation standards by codifying the requirement that all new buildings and major renovations of buildings that contain a sensitive use certify that the building's ventilation system is capable of maintaining positive pressure; limiting applicability of the City's enhanced ventilation standard to single family homes, effective January 1, 2026, to align with state law; making findings under the California Health and Safety Code; affirming the Planning Department's determination under the California Environmental Quality Act; and directing the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors to forward this Ordinance to the California Building Standards Commission upon final passage.

NOTE: **Unchanged Code text and uncoded text** are in plain Arial font.
Additions to Codes are in *single-underline italics Times New Roman font*.
Deletions to Codes are in *strikethrough italics Times New Roman font*.
Board amendment additions are in double-underlined Arial font.
Board amendment deletions are in ~~strikethrough Arial font~~.
Asterisks (* * * *) indicate the omission of unchanged Code subsections or parts of tables.

Be it ordained by the People of the City and County of San Francisco:

Section 1. General Findings.

(a) The Planning Department has determined that the actions contemplated in this ordinance comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (California Public Resources Code Sections 21000 et seq.). Said determination is on file with the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors in File No. ____ and is incorporated herein by reference. The Board affirms this determination.

1 (b) On _____, the Building Inspection Commission considered this
2 ordinance at a duly noticed public hearing pursuant to Charter Section 4.121 and Building
3 Code Section 104A.2.11.1.1. A copy of a letter from the Secretary of the Building Inspection
4 Commission regarding the Commission's recommendation is on file with the Clerk of the
5 Board of Supervisors in File No. _____.
6

7 Section 2. Findings Regarding Local Conditions.

8 (a) California Health and Safety Code Sections 17958.7 and 18941.5 provide that local
9 jurisdictions may enact more restrictive building standards than those contained in the
10 California Building Code, provided that the local jurisdictions make express findings that each
11 change or modification is reasonably necessary because of local climate, geologic, or
12 topographical conditions and that the local jurisdictions file the local amendments and
13 required findings with the California Building Standards Commission before the local changes
14 or modifications can go into effect.

15 (b) The Board of Supervisors hereby finds and declares that the following
16 amendments to the San Francisco Health Code and implemented through the Building Code
17 are reasonably necessary because of local climatic, topological, and geological conditions as
18 discussed below.

19 (1) The topography of San Francisco leads to development of high density of
20 multi-unit buildings on small lots, and often in close proximity to major roadways, necessitating
21 special provisions for ventilation.

22 (2) The City's geography and weather patterns create microclimates,
23 influenced by fog, topography, and urban development, which can exacerbate air pollution
24 and trap pollutants in certain areas, necessitating special provisions for ventilation.
25

1 (3) Positive pressure in units and habitable spaces protects public health by
2 reducing the infiltration and exposure of air pollution entering indoors through gaps in walls,
3 floors, and windows.

4 (c) Pursuant to the applicable California Health and Safety Code Sections, the
5 Board of Supervisors finds and determines that these local conditions give rise to the need for
6 modification to the ventilation provisions in the Building Code published by the Building
7 Standards Commission. Further, the Board finds and determines that the proposed
8 modifications are reasonably necessary based on these local conditions.

9
10 Section 3. Article 38 of the Health Code is hereby amended by revising Sections 3804,
11 3807, and 3809, to read as follows:

12 **SEC. 3804. DEFINITIONS.**

13 For the purposes of this Article 38, the following words shall have the following
14 meanings:

15 "Air Pollutant Exposure Zone" means those areas within the City which, by virtue of
16 their proximity to air pollution emissions sources, including Freeways, have substantially
17 greater concentrations of air pollutants. The Air Pollutant Exposure Zone shall be modeled
18 according to specific risk factors defined in the Rules and Regulations, and will include at a
19 minimum, criteria for maximum allowed excess cancer risks and maximum PM2.5
20 concentrations; these criteria shall be more stringent in Health Vulnerable Locations, as
21 defined below.

22 "Building" means a building that contains a "Sensitive Use" and that is either:

- 23 (1) a new building; or
24 (2) a building undergoing a "Major Alteration to Existing Building" as defined by
25 the San Francisco Green Building Code; or

1 (3) a building undergoing a Planning Department permitted change of use.

2 "City" means the City and County of San Francisco.

3 "Department" means the San Francisco Department of Public Health.

4 "Director" means the Director of the San Francisco Department of Public Health or the
5 Director's designee.

6 "Enhanced Ventilation" means a ventilation system capable of achieving the protection
7 from particulate matter (PM2.5) equivalent to that associated with a Minimum Efficiency
8 Reporting Value (MERV) 13 filtration (as defined by American Society of Heating,
9 Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) standard 52.2), and capable of
10 maintaining Positive Pressure in dwelling units and habitable spaces from the external environment.

11 "Freeway" refers to freeways as defined in the San Francisco General Plan,
12 Transportation Element.

13 "Health Vulnerable Locations" means those San Francisco zip codes, census tracts or
14 other defined locations having the highest percentage of health vulnerable residents, based
15 on criteria such as State discharge data from respiratory and cardiovascular related
16 hospitalizations, non-accident mortality, or other criteria as determined by the Director and
17 specified in the Rules and Regulations enacted under this Article.

18 "Positive Pressure" means the maintenance of higher air pressure inside a specific area than
19 the air pressure outside, which reduces the infiltration and exposure of air pollution entering indoors
20 through gaps in walls, floors, and windows.

21 "PM2.5" means solid particles and liquid droplets found in the air, that are less than or
22 equal to 2.5 micrometers (µm) in diameter.

23 "Sensitive Use" means:

24 (1) any building or facility designed for residential use, including but not
25 limited to those defined by City, state or federal law and regulations, excluding Tourist Hotels.

1 except that effective January 1, 2026, the definition of "sensitive use" under this subsection (1) shall
2 mean single family residential buildings only;

3 (2) any facility serving specific populations, including but not limited to
4 California Department of Social Services (CDSS)-licensed Adult Day Care Centers, Adult
5 Support Centers, Child Care Centers, Family Child Care Homes, Infant Care Centers, School-
6 Aged Child Care Centers, and Community Treatment Centers;

7 (3) any California Department of Education (CDE)-licensed schools;

8 (4) any California Department of Public Health (CDPH)-licensed Health Care
9 Facilities with 24-hour care, except for CDPH-licensed hospitals, which are subject to specific
10 regulations;

11 (5) any ~~California~~ Building Code Section 305-defined occupancies of
12 Educational Group E;

13 (6) any ~~California~~ Building Code Section 308-defined occupancies of
14 Institutional Group I; and

15 (7) any ~~California~~ Building Code Section 310-defined occupancies of
16 Residential Group R.

17 "Site" means a parcel of land as defined in the San Francisco Building Code.
18

19 **SEC. 3807. ENHANCED VENTILATION REQUIREMENT.**

20 (a) Any person or entity to whom this Article 38 applies, as defined in Section 3805,
21 shall submit to the Director an Enhanced Ventilation Proposal, prepared by, or under the
22 supervision of, a licensed mechanical engineer or other individual authorized by the California
23 Business and Professions Code Sections 6700-6799 (Professional Engineers Act) to design
24 mechanical ventilation systems that meet the requirements of this Article 38 and San
25

1 Francisco Building Code Section 1203.5. An Enhanced Ventilation Proposal shall include the
2 name, title and license number of the person submitting such proposal.

3 (b) The Enhanced Ventilation Proposal shall explain how the project will achieve the
4 standards mandated by this Article 38 and accompanying ~~the~~ Rules and Regulations as
5 described and updated according to Section 3809, San Francisco Building Code Section
6 1203.5, and any relevant amendments or revisions thereto. The Enhanced Ventilation
7 Proposal shall include a statement signed by the person who prepared it, in accordance with
8 the requirements of Section 3807(a), certifying that in ~~his or her~~ the person's judgment, the
9 ventilation system proposed will be capable of achieving the protection from particulate matter
10 (PM2.5) equivalent to that associated with MERV 13 filtration (as defined by ASHRAE
11 standard 52.2) and the Positive Pressure requirement for Enhanced Ventilation. Where maintaining
12 Positive Pressure in residential units is infeasible, the person submitting the Proposal shall provide
13 documentation of the infeasibility, and shall certify that the ventilation system proposed will be capable
14 of achieving Positive Pressure in all common areas.

15 ~~In updates to the Rules and Regulations, the Director may specify additional or alternative~~
16 ~~protective equivalents as technology and research dictate.~~

17 (c) The Director shall review the Enhanced Ventilation Proposal and may require
18 additional modification or justification prior to the Director's approval. The Director shall issue
19 a letter to the Department of Building Inspection Permit Services Energy/Mechanical Plan
20 Review Section identifying and attaching the letter describing the approved Enhanced
21 Ventilation Proposal.

22 (d) Building permit documents submitted to the Department of Building Inspection
23 shall incorporate all designs and details necessary for the construction of the approved
24 Enhanced Ventilation system. The Department of Building Inspection shall review submitted
25 plans to assure compliance with the Director-approved Enhanced Ventilation proposal and

1 shall not issue permits for the construction, installation, or modification of the Enhanced
2 Ventilation systems unless it is in compliance with the approved proposal.

3
4 **SEC. 3809. VENTILATION STANDARDS; RULES AND REGULATIONS.**

5 (a) ~~Within 90 days after the effective date of Ordinance No. 224-14, amending Article 38,~~
6 The Director shall issue Rules and Regulations necessary to effectuate the purposes of this
7 Article and to protect public health and safety. Any person or entity as defined in Section 3805
8 shall comply with this Article, the Rules and Regulations, and all applicable local, state, and
9 federal laws.

10 * * * *

11
12 **Section 4. Effective Date**

13 This ordinance shall become effective 30 days after enactment. Enactment occurs
14 when the Mayor signs the ordinance, the Mayor returns the ordinance unsigned or does not
15 sign the ordinance within ten days of receiving it, or the Board of Supervisors overrides the
16 Mayor's veto of the ordinance.

17
18 **Section 5. Scope of Ordinance.** In enacting this ordinance, the Board of Supervisors
19 intends to amend only those words, phrases, paragraphs, subsections, sections, articles,
20 numbers, punctuation marks, charts, diagrams, or any other constituent parts of the Municipal
21 Code that are explicitly shown in this ordinance as additions, deletions, Board amendment
22 additions, and Board amendment deletions in accordance with the "Note" that appears under
23 the official title of the ordinance.

Section 6. Directions to Clerk. Upon enactment of this ordinance, the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors is hereby directed to transmit this ordinance to the California Building Standards Commission pursuant to the applicable provisions of State law.

APPROVED AS TO FORM:
DAVID CHIU, City Attorney

By: /s/
ADAM RADTKE
Deputy City Attorney

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SF Health Code Article 38

Jen Callewaert, MPH, REHS

SF Department of Public Health

Environmental Health Branch

August 20, 2025



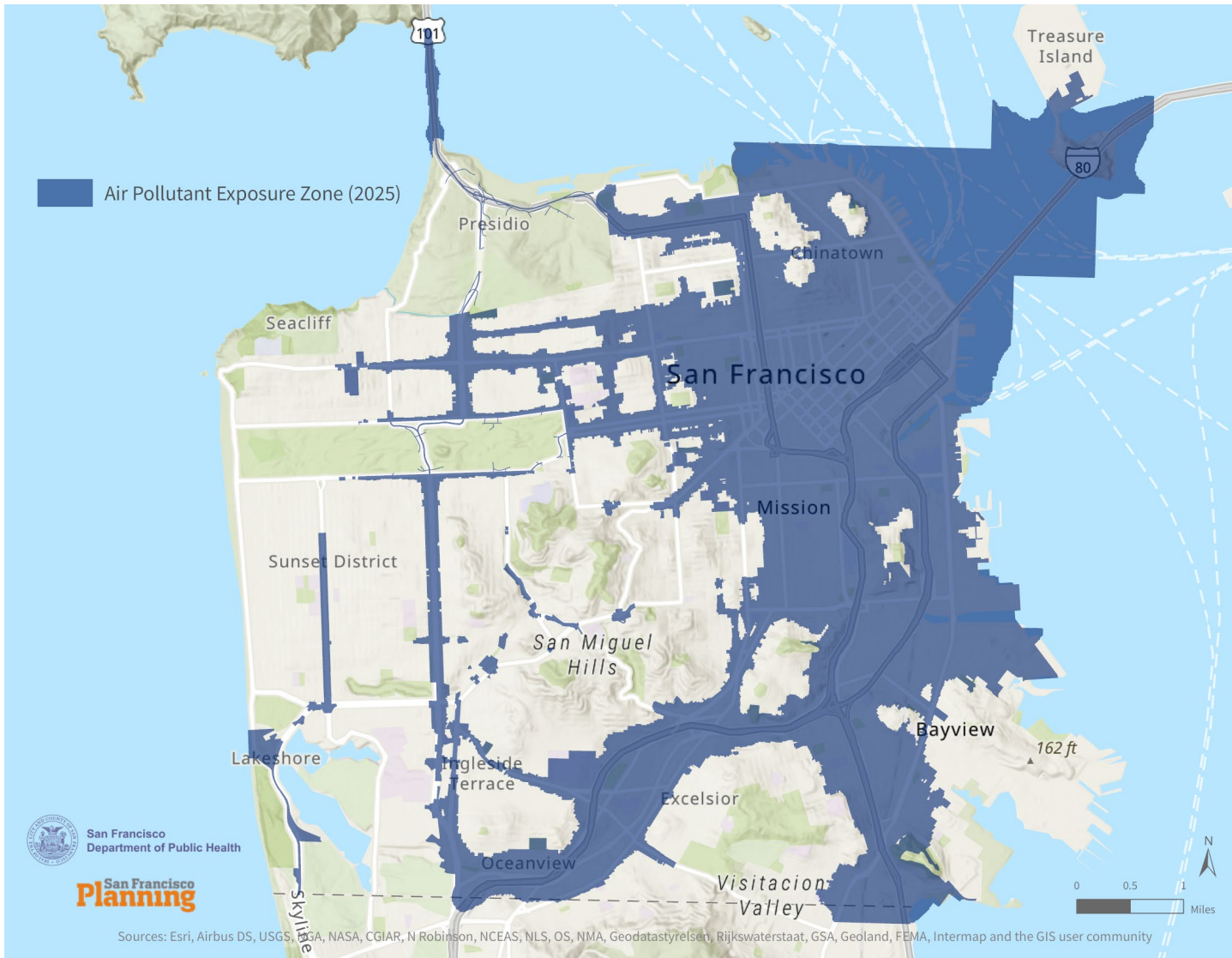
POPULATION HEALTH DIVISION
SAN FRANCISCO DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Protecting Public Health through Air Pollution Exposure Zone (APEZ)

- **Health Code Article 38** requires **New developments or major renovations within the APEZ with sensitive receptors, like housing or preschools**, to include a ventilation system that sufficiently removes fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) (MERV 13 or equivalent filtration) and provides positive pressure in every unit.
- **Environment Code Chapter 25** requires public works projects within the APEZ to use the cleanest construction equipment available defined by the CA Air Resources Board.
- Air Pollutant Exposure Zone is also considered when evaluating projects subject to environmental review under the **California Environmental Quality Act**.

State Legislation + Article 38 Amendments

1. 2025 California Building Energy Efficiency Standards – Merv 13 required for all multi-unit residential dwellings
2. Amend Sensitive Use definition to remove multi-unit residential and define positive and balance pressure
3. Clarify positive pressure is required under code when in APEZ
4. Amendments will not affect the APEZ or use by other agencies



Thank you!
