



Board of Supervisors
Member, District 4

City and County of San Francisco

GORDON MAR

March 10, 2022

Housing Stability Fund Oversight Board
c/o Chair Shanti Singh

Submitted by: **Supervisor Gordon Mar**

Contact email address: Li Lovett, legislative aide

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RE: Site Acquisitions for Affordable Social Housing in the Sunset

YIGBY Social Housing Project

Statement of Need: The Sunset District has long been overlooked by federal, state, and local affordable housing programs yet there has been and is now a growing unmet need for affordable housing for working families, seniors, and others lacking stable and secure homes.

One explanation offered for the lack of permanently affordable housing in the Sunset is that the neighborhood lacks sites to build housing. This perception is at best half true. Traditional affordable housing programs favor larger sites often associated with large scale redevelopment plans that do not exist in the Sunset. And previous land use policies excluded higher density housing.

Now changes in state and local laws create an opening for 'in fill' affordable housing development targeted to address unmet needs. Our City needs more inclusive affordable housing programs designed to match the types of sites actually available, not only in the Sunset but also in other districts.

One of the most significant opportunities for neighborhood scaled affordable housing in the Sunset are underutilized church sites. Generations ago, before the advent of megachurches and the internet, small neighborhood churches proliferated. District 4 alone has about fifty churches and while some are thriving others have declining church membership. Today currently our District has half a dozen vacant church sites with more expected in the coming years. These sites represent the largest group of developable sites in District 4 offering great potential for providing the needs of working families, seniors, and others in need of permanently affordable housing.

Our office has been in in conversations with church leaders and a diverse stakeholders including affordable housing developers, unions, and neighborhood groups about launching what we call a Yes in God's Back Yard Social Housing Pilot Project.

Project Proposal:

The YIGBY Social Housing Pilot Project will be led by the Westside Affordable Housing Advocacy Network in coordination with our office, San Francisco Interfaith Council, SF Building and Construction Trades Council and other partners.

In order for this social housing pilot to be successfully implemented, resources are needed from concept to completion. In the pre-acquisition phase, this entails site identification, assessment of housing development potential and processes, negotiations with potential sellers including churches that retain a stake in the property, and stakeholder engagement in a community-led process. The City would need to implement a program that allows for acquisitions of these properties with the alacrity and transparency that serves the interests of this social housing project, as well as an ongoing source of funds for moving through a years-long process toward the goal of social housing construction. Community stakeholders would remain engaged as partners in design, outreach, and implementation of the affordable housing and social services created through this pilot.

[Here's an SF Chronicle article](#) that provides background for this pilot project.

Example of a current opportunity:

At one church in the Outer Sunset that is currently vacant, church leaders have been in discussions with a CBO in the Sunset about potential re-use of the site as affordable housing for transitional aged youth exiting the justice system.

Requested support for the YIGBY project:

- 1) Pre-acquisition support is necessary in which an SF-based nonprofit affordable housing developer takes on the work of: engaging with church and community stakeholders and with the City, assessing the real estate potential of a specific site, addressing SF Planning requirements for acquiring sites where historic preservation issues must be considered in building design or demolition, identifying options for acquisition and long-term leasing, working through contractual agreements with the church entities that retain ownership, maintain operations adjacent to the project, or engage in shared governance.
- 2) The City needs a program for site acquisitions in this portfolio of HSF supported developments that provides transparency and accountability, and mechanisms for interim and long-term financing with the nonprofit or Community Land Trust as the developer. The program should include a process, whether through City staff or an intermediary such as SF Housing Accelerator Fund, to evaluate proposed site acquisitions.
- 3) An affordable housing acquisition fund upon which community-based initiatives can build a plan with the leadership of a church for an acquisition that may take a year or more to finalize. Without a clear and predictable source for acquisitions our City will forever lose the historic opportunity to secure the land that is needed to address our affordable housing needs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'GM' or similar initials, written in a cursive style.

Gordon Mar,
District 4 Supervisor