

Residential Expansion Threshold & Tantamount to Demolition

Fact Sheet for Residents

What is Tantamount to Demolition?

In 2005, the Planning Department noticed a trend of project applications that weren't proposing to demolish entire residential properties, but *were* proposing to remove a significant portion of the building. To address this, they created "Tantamount to Demolition". Now, any project application that proposes one or more of the following criteria is considered "Tantamount to Demolition" and subject to San Francisco Planning Code Section 317:

- A major alteration of a residential building, removing more than 50% of the front and rear façade (combined) and removing more than 65% of all exterior walls, or
- A major alteration of a residential building removing more than 50% of the Vertical Envelope Elements and more than 50% of the Horizontal Elements of the existing building, as measured in gross square feet of actual surface area

What are the problems with Tantamount to Demolition?

The Department has found that the current controls have led to project sponsors designing just short of the criteria triggering Section 317. This means a project that significantly expands the size of the existing housing and/or delivers an inferior design can be approved administratively (no Commission hearing required) because it technically avoids Tantamount to Demolition regulations.

What is the Residential Expansion Threshold (RET)?

The Department is proposing to remove the Tantamount to Demolition calculations from the Planning Code and replace them with a Residential Expansion Threshold, which establishes a standard that would limit the size of the finished project to be more consistent with neighborhood character. Planning believes that limiting the overall size of a single family home can ultimately help balance the character of the neighborhood with a property owner's rights to improve and expand their property. This new standard will provide clarity for project sponsors and their neighbors and will streamline the overall process; effectively saving time for both sponsors and staff.

Next Steps:

Planning Code Section 317 is intended to address the ongoing shortage of affordable housing and loss of residential units. The Department recognizes projects that are currently designing to the Tantamount to Demolition thresholds are not more affordable, and is therefore proposing to separate the policy issue of large alterations from the preservation of existing housing. As part of this effort, projects that would be subject to this new standard would be reviewed in a new section of the code. These proposed changes do not affect any policies related to the review of mergers or proposed demolitions of any units under rent control.

Important Dates:

Please join us for further discussions regarding the Residential Expansion Threshold effort. For additional information, past presentations, documents, and important updates, please visit sf-planning.org/residential-expansion-threshold.

Meeting/Hearing:	Date/Time:	Location:
Community Meeting hosted by Sup. Fewer with Mandarin Chinese Interpretation Available	November 30th, 6pm	Richmond Rec Center 251 18th Avenue
District 7 Community Meeting	December 5th, 6:30pm	Midtown Terrace Clubhouse Clarendon Ave & Olympia Way
Bayview Hunters Point Citizen Advisory Committee	December 6th, 6pm	Bayview YMCA 1601 Lane Street
Informational Presentation at Planning Commission Hearing	December 7th, no earlier than 1pm	City Hall, Rm 400
Planning Commission Hearing to Initiate the RET Legislation	January 11th, no earlier than 1pm	City Hall, Rm 400
Planning Commission Hearing to Adopt the RET Legislation	February 15th, no earlier than 1pm	City Hall, Rm 400