



BUILDING A BETTER BAY AREA

SAN FRANCISCO OFFICIALS INTRODUCE PLAN TO CONVERT VACANT DOWNTOWN OFFICES INTO HOUSING



By Suzanne Phan

Tuesday, April 4, 2023 7:50PM PT



San Francisco's mayor and other leaders introduced a legislation to convert empty downtown offices into housing.

SAN FRANCISCO (KGO) -- With more workers and companies choosing to work from home, the future of Downtown San Francisco is still up in the air. But, San Francisco's mayor and other leaders are considering a proposal to reinvigorate the downtown area.

San Francisco's Downtown is an economic hub for the Bay Area.

Leaders say empty office spaces hurt the city.

Mayor London Breed just introduced new legislation Tuesday to the Board of Supervisors. It could

pave the way to convert downtown office buildings into housing.

"Yes we need more housing. I'm not sure how to make it work," said Judith Hearst in San Francisco.

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Many people agree, the City of San Francisco needs more affordable housing.

Mayor London Breed and Supervisor Aaron Peskin believe one answer could be converting empty office buildings in downtown into housing.

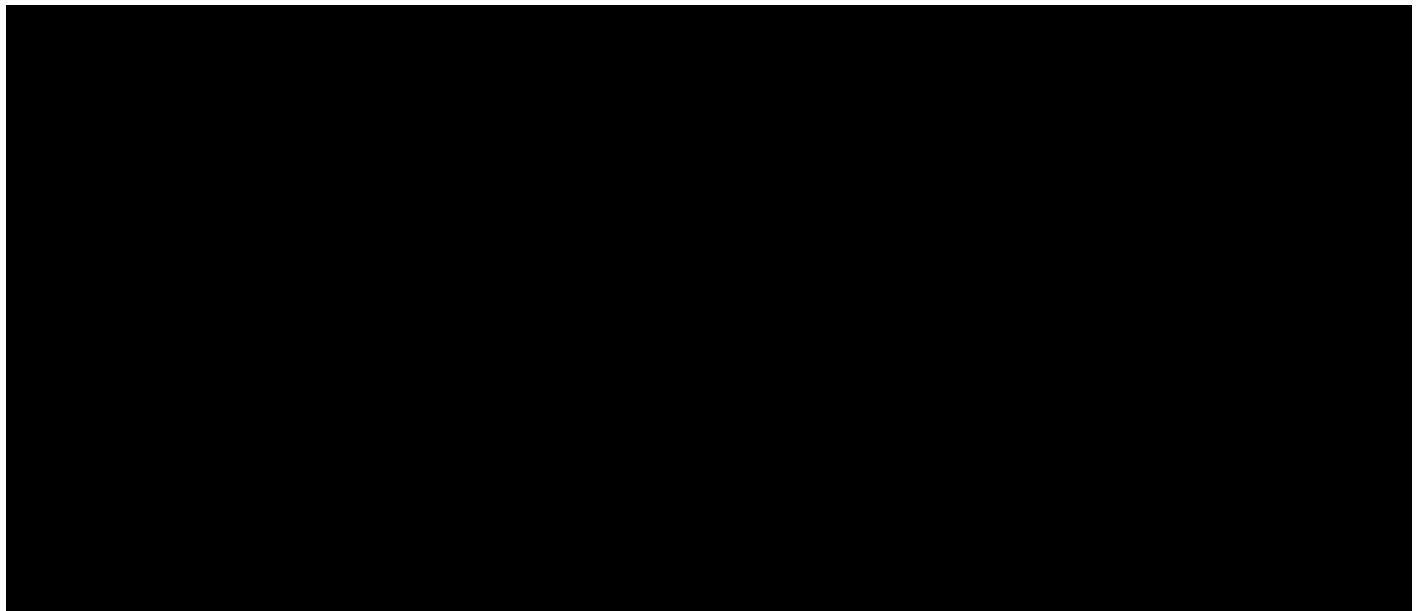
"I think it's a great idea. The buildings are empty anyway with tech moving out and a lot of vacant spaces. People need housing. You might as well utilize the space," said Laleth Gonzalez, an East Bay resident.


On Tuesday, the mayor submitted legislation to the Board of Supervisors designed to change an old planning code to make it easier and less expensive to convert vacant commercial spaces into residential spaces. Supervisor Peskin worked with the mayor for the past month on this legislation.

"I'm excited! San Francisco's Downtown may have challenges. There are also opportunities for remaining (vibrant) and this is one of them," said Supervisor Board President Aaron Peskin.

"When you think of conversion, it'll be Class C buildings that will be looked at," said Robbie Silver, executive director of Downtown SF Partnership. "They're typically much older, smaller foot plates than like your Salesforce Tower."

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how much it could cost, the end game could be promising says Downtown SF Partnership.


"You think amount of utility work alone that needs to go into converting this building. But with the right incentives from the city, the right incentives from the state, we could look at mini lower Manhattan level," said Silver.

"It's an excellent idea," said Sarith Dillard-Selico. "Being a mom myself, I think it's a great idea because you occupy a building with families and they'll be happy they have someplace to stay. I don't think any family wants to be homeless," said Dillard-Selico.

Economic experts say the office vacancy in San Francisco is about 30%.

According to SPUR, a policy research group, the city's empty office space could hold nearly 11,000 new homes.

But, the city would need to lower fees and affordable housing requirements.



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