

What San Francisco files every day

For anyone watching the record daily · about 4 minutes · reviewed August 22, 2026

The kinds of filing San Francisco publishes against its buildings and storefronts, how far behind each one runs, and why a list built on the filing date misses most of what was filed.

From Scan the Block

Every public record on one San Francisco address, in a single report: the Assessor's file, permits and violations, zoning, hazards and the published earthquake maps, rent-control indication, and ten years of the surrounding blocks - each count compared with an average San Francisco area of the same size, and none of it scored. scantheblock.com

Every weekday San Francisco publishes what has been filed against its buildings. It is one of the most complete municipal records in the country and one of the least-read, largely because it arrives as several dozen unrelated datasets with no common shape and no notion of what a reader might be watching for.

■ WHAT ACTUALLY GETS FILED

The filing types worth watching individually fall into six groups by the question they answer.

The building is being emptied

- Ellis Act withdrawals - the owner removing the whole building from the rental market. The strongest published signal that a building is being emptied, and it usually precedes a sale.
- Ellis intent petitions - earlier still: the landlord telling the Rent Board what they intend before the notice itself.
- Owner move-in evictions - a unit leaving the rental stock, often before a sale.
- Demolition evictions - rare and unambiguous.
- Tenant buyouts - a landlord paying a tenant to leave, by agreement, filed with the Rent Board since 2015. These appear in no eviction figure anywhere: a building emptied this way leaves that record completely untouched, which is why almost nobody is watching them.
- Substantial rehabilitation petitions - a gut renovation declared in advance.

What is being built

- Demolition permits, new construction with its proposed unit count, and major work over half a million declared.

Condition and compliance

- Notices of violation from building inspection - an inspector found something, as distinct from a complaint anybody can file.
- Fire violations and orders to abate from the Fire Department, a separate register that is never added to the building inspection record.
- Tenant habitability petitions - a failure to repair, or services that stopped. A filing, not a finding.

Work outstanding

- Condo buildings with open violations and soft-story retrofits outstanding - standing obligations somebody has to organize and pay for, rather than events.

Rent and income

- Capital improvement passthroughs and Costa-Hawkins exemption petitions - petitions that change what a building can lawfully charge.

Storefronts and leases

- Storefronts opened and closed on the commercial corridors - a signed lease made visible, and a vacancy before it is listed. Corridor locations only, deliberately: the register also holds sole proprietors at their own home addresses, and those are never published here.
- Development applications opened with the Planning Department - the earliest public signal a site is in play, months before any building permit.

■ THE PUBLISHING LAG IS THE THING TO UNDERSTAND

A filing appears in the city's data days after it happens, and the delay differs by record. Measured against the city's own published dates: permits and violations run about two days behind, Rent Board petitions about three, eviction notices about eight, and buyout agreements nearer twelve.

This breaks the obvious way of building a daily list. "Everything filed yesterday" returns almost nothing every morning, and then permanently misses those filings - because by the time an eviction notice appears, the day it was filed is a week and a half gone and the window has closed behind it.

The only approach that works is to track what you have already seen by the record's own identifier, and to treat a filing as new on the day it appears, whatever date it carries. It is a small distinction that decides whether a watch list works at all.

■ READING A COUNT HONESTLY

Volumes differ by three orders of magnitude between these lists, and the sharpest signals are the rarest. Notices of violation arrive in the hundreds each week; Ellis Act withdrawals arrive about one. A list sorted by volume is a list of notices of violation, which is why these are kept as separate streams - one filing type each - rather than merged into one feed.

A count is also uninterpretable without its own baseline. Four Ellis withdrawals in a week is either ordinary or remarkable depending on a normal that takes months of reading to acquire - and any comparison has to be measured behind the publishing lag, or the most recent week is always under-filled and every list appears to be falling.

■ WHAT THE CITY DOES NOT PUBLISH

- No foreclosure, notice of default, lien or tax-default record appears in the open data at all. Those live with the Recorder and the tax collector and are found by title search.
- Rent Board filings are anonymised to the hundred-block - "1200 Block Of Florida Street". That is deliberate on their part and cannot be reversed; the most that can honestly be done is to name the buildings on that block as candidates.
- No filing names a person in anything published here, and none of it is scored, ranked or sorted by how promising it looks. A filing begins a process rather than concluding one.

■ WHY WATCH IT AT ALL

Because these are facts about buildings that become widely known weeks later, and because the combinations are where the signal is. One building with a notice of violation is ordinary. The same building with a violation and an eviction filed in the same week is a different situation, and nothing in the city's own publishing puts those two records next to each other.

■ READ THE RECORD ON AN ACTUAL ADDRESS

Everything described in this guide comes out of one report on one San Francisco address. Type an address at scantheblock.com and it takes a few seconds; re-opening a report you have already run is free, always. Reports are a web page and a PDF you can share, and every figure carries the caveat that qualifies it.

Run a report

Every guide, free to read

The 41 neighborhoods, a decade each

Plans

Questions, or a correction

scantheblock.com

<https://scantheblock.com/guides>

<https://scantheblock.com/sf>

<https://scantheblock.com/#plans>

hello@scantheblock.com

■ ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Last reviewed August 22, 2026. Every rule described here is San Francisco's, not ours, and the city changes them - where a date or a threshold matters to a deal, confirm it against the city. This is general information about public records and not legal, tax or investment advice.

Scan the Block compiles and compares public records; it does not produce, review or endorse them. Reports describe a place and never a person, are not a consumer report and may not be used to screen tenants, and are not a valuation or a statutory hazard disclosure. Read this guide online at <https://scantheblock.com/guides/filings>