

The words San Francisco uses

Reference · about 4 minutes · reviewed August 21, 2026

3R, Costa-Hawkins, Maher, blklot, CFC, Tier 4. A reference for the terms that turn up in a report and nowhere else.

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

San Francisco property records use a vocabulary that appears nowhere else. These are the terms that turn up in a report, in the order somebody meets them.

■ THE TRANSACTION

3R - Report of Residential Building Record

A document ordered from the Department of Building Inspection for a residential sale, summarising the permitted use, the number of units, and the permit history on record. A Scan the Block report covers much of the same ground from the same block and lot; it does not replace the 3R, which you should order anyway.

NHD - Natural Hazard Disclosure

A statutory California form on which a seller must state whether the property is in any of six mapped zones, including flood, fire, earthquake fault and seismic hazard zones. The report names several of the same zones. It is not the NHD.

Point of sale requirement

Anything San Francisco attaches to a residential transfer - the 3R, energy and water conservation compliance, tenant and Rent Board disclosures. The report lists which reach a given property and who settles each.

■ MONEY AND TAX

Proposition 13

The 1978 California measure that anchors a property's assessed value to its last purchase price, allowing an increase of at most about two per cent a year until it next changes hands. The consequence, constantly misread: a seller's tax bill tells you nothing about yours. Your basis is what you pay.

Assessed value

The Assessor's figure under Proposition 13. It is not a valuation, not an appraisal, and on a long-held property often far below market.

Anchored

Shorthand in the report for how many years an assessment has been fixed to a past sale. A long anchor signals a large reassessment on transfer.

■ TENANCY

Rent Ordinance

San Francisco's local law governing rent increases and evictions, administered by the Rent Board.

The 13 June 1979 line

The date a building's certificate of occupancy must predate for the Rent Ordinance's price controls to be presumed to apply. It is why the report leads with the year built.

Costa-Hawkins

The state act that exempts certain housing - notably single-family homes and condominiums, and units first occupied after February 1995 - from local price control. It does not remove just cause eviction protection, which is the distinction people merge most often.

Just cause

The requirement that an eviction rest on one of a listed set of reasons. It reaches much housing that is exempt from the rent cap.

Rent Board

The city body that administers the Rent Ordinance, receives annual rent reporting on covered units, and settles the questions this report can only give you evidence about.

■ THE BUILDING

Soft story

A building with a weak ground floor - typically garages or shopfronts under living space. Wood-frame buildings of five or more units and three or more storeys permitted before 1978 fall under the Mandatory Soft Story Retrofit Program.

Tier (1 to 4)

The compliance grouping in the soft-story program, which sets the deadline. Tier 4 includes buildings in mapped liquefaction zones.

CFC - Certificate of Final Completion

Issued when permitted work is signed off. The soft-story status Work Complete, CFC Issued means the retrofit is done and certified.

UMB - Unreinforced masonry building

A brick building, roughly pre-1948, covered by a separate San Francisco retrofit ordinance. The list is not published as data and is not in this report - the Department of Building Inspection's Seismic Safety Division holds it.

ADU - Accessory dwelling unit

A secondary unit added to a property. It appears in the permit record and changes the unit count.

Open permit

A permit filed and not recorded as finalised. It transfers with the building, and closing somebody else's unfinished paperwork is a real cost.

■ LAND AND GROUND

blklot - block and lot

San Francisco's parcel identifier, and the key almost every city dataset joins on. It appears on every report.

Maher ordinance area

An area where certain work triggers a soil investigation requirement, because of historic industrial fill and contamination.

Liquefaction zone

A state-mapped area where saturated soil may behave as a liquid during shaking. Much of San Francisco's made ground is in it. A screening designation, not a prediction about a building.

Alquist-Priolo zone

A state-mapped surface-rupture zone along an active fault. No San Francisco parcel is in one; the nearest lies south of the county line.

■ THE DATA

DataSF / Socrata

The city's open-data portal, and the software behind it. Most of this report is read from it live, at the moment you ask.

Analysis neighborhood

The city's own canonical set of 41 neighborhood boundaries, used for the neighborhood trend pages.

Ratio ("1.7x the San Francisco average")

The count inside your radius against what you would expect if the city's total for that dataset were spread evenly across the city and scaled to a circle of your size. Arithmetic about record density - not a grade, and not a verdict about a place.

■ 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.

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■ ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Last reviewed August 21, 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

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