

Condo boards, HOAs, and the work outstanding

For HOA boards and property managers · about 4 minutes · reviewed August 22, 2026

Which buildings the Assessor classes as condominium, what the city has cited them for and never closed, and how an association finds the capital obligations it has inherited before they find it.

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

An owners' association inherits obligations it did not create, from a city that files them against a parcel rather than sending them to a board. This is where those filings live and how to find the ones already attached to a building.

■ WHICH BUILDINGS THE CITY TREATS AS CONDOMINIUM

The Assessor classes just over fifty thousand San Francisco parcels as condominium - about a quarter of the roll. That classification is the closest thing the public record has to a marker for an association, and it is the join that makes everything below possible: the departments that cite buildings do not record whether a building has a board.

Note

The roll is not always self-consistent. A meaningful minority of parcels are recorded as a single-family home in one field and a condominium in another, which is a real disagreement in the source rather than a display problem. Where it happens the report shows both.

■ VIOLATIONS ATTACH TO THE BUILDING, NOT TO A TERM OF OFFICE

A notice of violation stays active until an inspector closes it. Nearly thirty thousand are open across the city and the oldest date from 1993, which means a board taking over a building can inherit citations that predate every current member.

Two things make these worth finding early. They do not expire, and they compound: a building with several open items from separate inspections is carrying a maintenance backlog that has already been described, in writing, by the people who will come back to check it. The notice text names the specific fault - a drain, a handrail, mold, a missing gas shut-off tool - and the division that issued it.

Fire citations are a separate register from a separate department and are never merged into the building inspection record. Alarms, sprinklers, standpipes and obstructed escapes are the common items, and an order to abate means the department has moved from noting a condition to requiring it fixed.

■ THE RETROFIT PROGRAM IS THE LARGEST SINGLE ITEM MOST BOARDS FACE

Wood-frame buildings of five or more units and three or more storeys, permitted before 1978, are on the mandatory soft-story program. Roughly five thousand buildings were placed on it; the great majority have completed, and the remainder are published by name, address and tier.

For an association this is not a repair. It is a structural capital project with engineering, permits, a special assessment or a loan, a contractor, and a deadline set by ordinance rather than by the board's own planning cycle. A building still reading Non-Compliant has all of that ahead of it, and the fact is public - which means a prospective buyer's agent can read it as easily as the board can.

■ PAYING FOR IT, IN THE OPEN

Where a landlord intends to charge building work through to rents, the lawful route is a capital improvement passthrough petition to the Rent Board, and those petitions are published. For a mixed building, or for a manager comparing how neighboring buildings have funded similar work, they are a useful and rarely-read record of what was spent and on what.

■ WHAT A MANAGER CAN WATCH RATHER THAN LOOK UP

All of this is filed daily rather than annually, so the practical form is a watch rather than a search. Two lists in particular answer a management question directly:

- Condo buildings with open violations. Active notices on parcels the Assessor classes as condominium - deferred maintenance an association is carrying and has not closed. This needs a join the city does not publish: the department that files the violation does not know the building is a condominium, and the roll that knows does not know about the violation.
- Soft-story retrofits outstanding. A standing list rather than a stream - named buildings that have not finished a mandatory project.

For the buildings in your own book there is a simpler form still: watch them by address. Every watched building gets one Monday email with whatever was filed on or near it that week - permits, complaints, violations, eviction notices beside it - deduped, and silent on a quiet week. Add a building from its report, or under History to Buildings.

■ WHAT THIS RECORD DOES NOT CONTAIN

No owner is named, no board member is named, and there is nothing here about any individual. Association governing documents, reserve studies, budgets, minutes and litigation history are not public records and are not in the city's data; they come from the association itself or through a resale disclosure package. The public record tells you what the city has required of the building. Everything about how the association is run comes from somewhere else.

■ 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 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.

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