

Designed to Serve

Resetting the city's governance structure to better serve the people of San Francisco

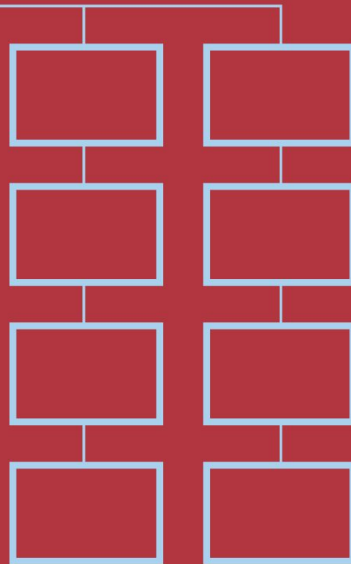


Ideas + Action
for a Better City

SPUR SPUR REPORT
AUGUST 2024

Designed
to
Serve

Resetting the
city's governance
structure to
better meet
the needs of
San Franciscans



Approach + Task Force

Worked with a task force, conducted 40+ expert interviews, researched peer cities, and conducted a best practice review

Task Force:

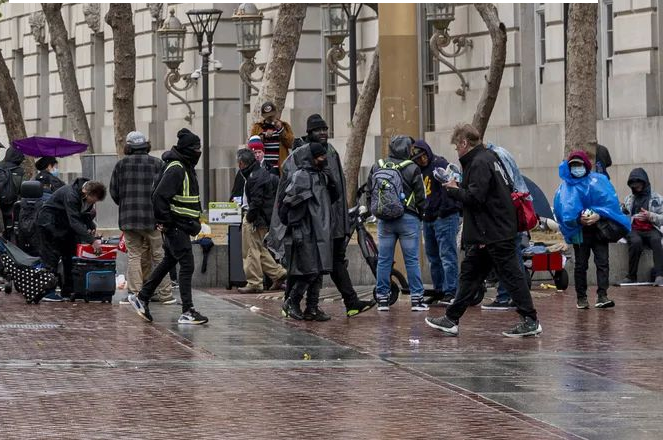
- **Kelly Dearman**, Director, San Francisco Department of Disability and Aging Services
- **Jean Fraser**, Chief Executive Officer, Presidio Trust
- **Bob Gamble**, Former Budget Director; Former Director, Redevelopment Agency
- **Ed Harrington**, Former Controller, Controller's Office; Former Director, Public Utilities Commission
- **Dawn Kamalanathan**, Former Deputy of Operations, San Francisco Unified School District
- **John Rahaim**, Former Director, San Francisco Planning Department
- **Ben Rosenfield**, Former Controller, Controller's Office
- **Noelle Simmons**, Former Deputy Director, Human Services Agency and the Homelessness and Supportive Housing Department; Budget Director, Mayor's Office



The City and County of San Francisco is a complex organization

- 34k+ employees
- \$15B+ budget
- 50+ Departments

Larger than many state governments



Consolidated City-County

EXHIBIT 2

City and County Functions

San Francisco is California's only merged city and county government. It not only runs city functions such as parks, libraries, and fire and police departments but also manages county functions that include public health, social services, and jails.

Source: SPUR

City

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT:

- Parks and recreation
- Libraries
- Housing services
- Public works
- Building inspection
- Streets

PUBLIC SAFETY:

- Police
- Fire

County

SOCIAL SERVICES:

- Homelessness and supportive housing
- Public health
- Public transportation

JUSTICE AND COURT SYSTEM:

- District Attorney
- Public Defender's Office
- Sheriff

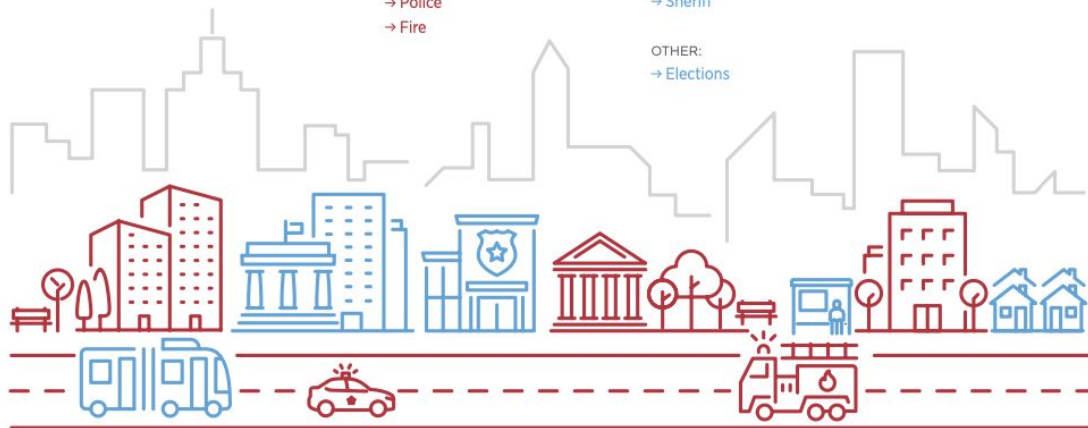
OTHER:

- Elections

Both

INTERNAL FUNCTIONS:

- Human resources
- Legal
- Financial management



Timeline of Charter Reform

The first city charter is adopted, creating a “strong mayor” form of government and establishing the Civil Service.

1898

Numerous incremental charter changes make governing arrangements more complex.

Several attempts at revising the charter result in little change.

1932

A new charter establishes a chief administrative officer to direct most of the city’s departments, shifting authority away from the mayor.

1980

Passage of Proposition N requires the development of a committee to conduct a thorough review and revision of the charter.

1993

1996

Proposition E is adopted, instituting a new charter with the goal of clarifying the powers of the mayor and the Board of Supervisors.

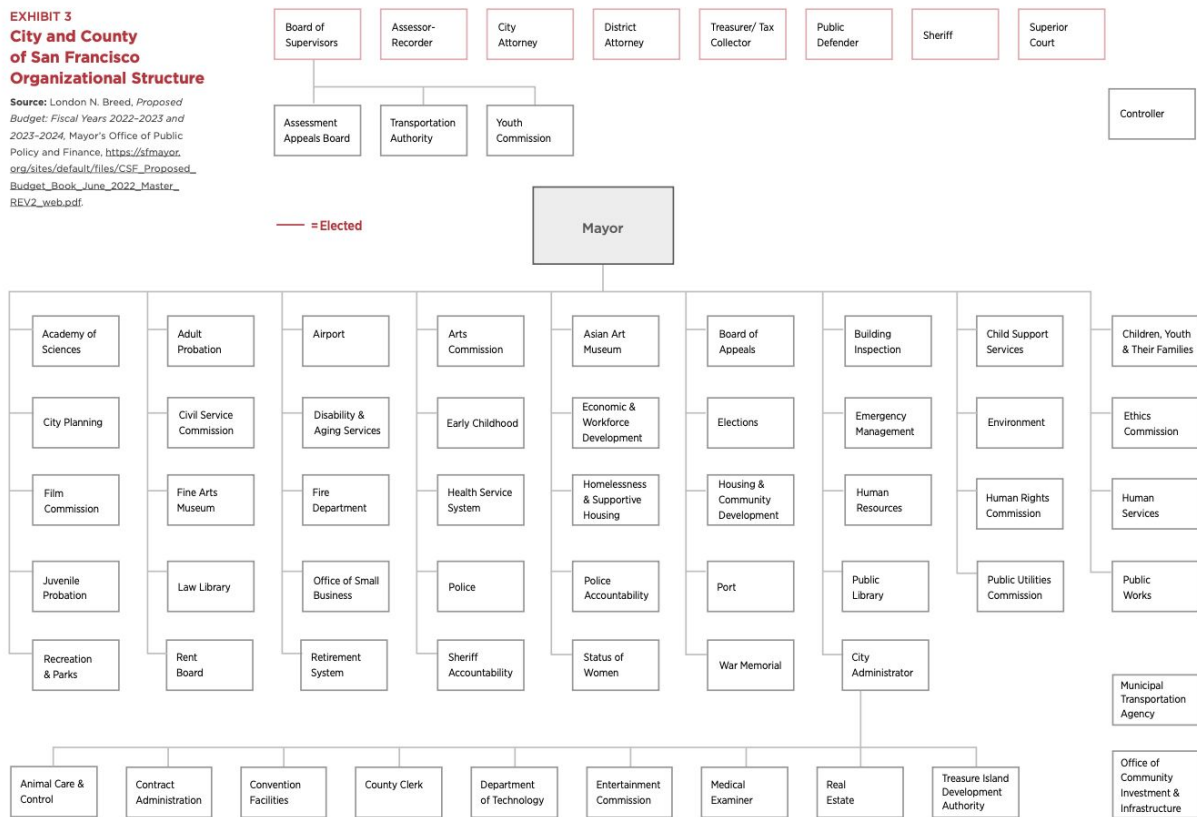
Since adoption in 1996, the charter has been updated dozens of times

Comparable Cities

San Francisco	848,019	Combined City/County	“Strong-Mayor” Mayor-Council	11-member Board of Supervisors (elected by district)
Oakland	440,646	1/14 cities in Alameda County	Hybrid/ Mayor-Council	8 council members (7 members elected by district; 1 member elected at-large)
San José	1,013,240	1 of 15 cities within Santa Clara County	Council-manager	11 council members, including the mayor (10 members elected by district; mayor elected at-large)
Los Angeles	3,898,747	1 of 88 cities within Los Angeles County	“Strong-Mayor” Mayor-council	15 council members (elected by district)
New York City	8,804,190	5 counties (boroughs) within New York State	“Strong-Mayor” Mayor-council	51 council members (elected by district)
Washington, D.C.	689,545	Considered a county-equivalent for data collection	“Strong-Mayor” Mayor-council	13 council members (8 elected by district; 5 elected at-large)
Denver	715,522	City-county	“Strong-Mayor” Mayor-council	13 council members (11 members elected by district; 2 elected at-large)

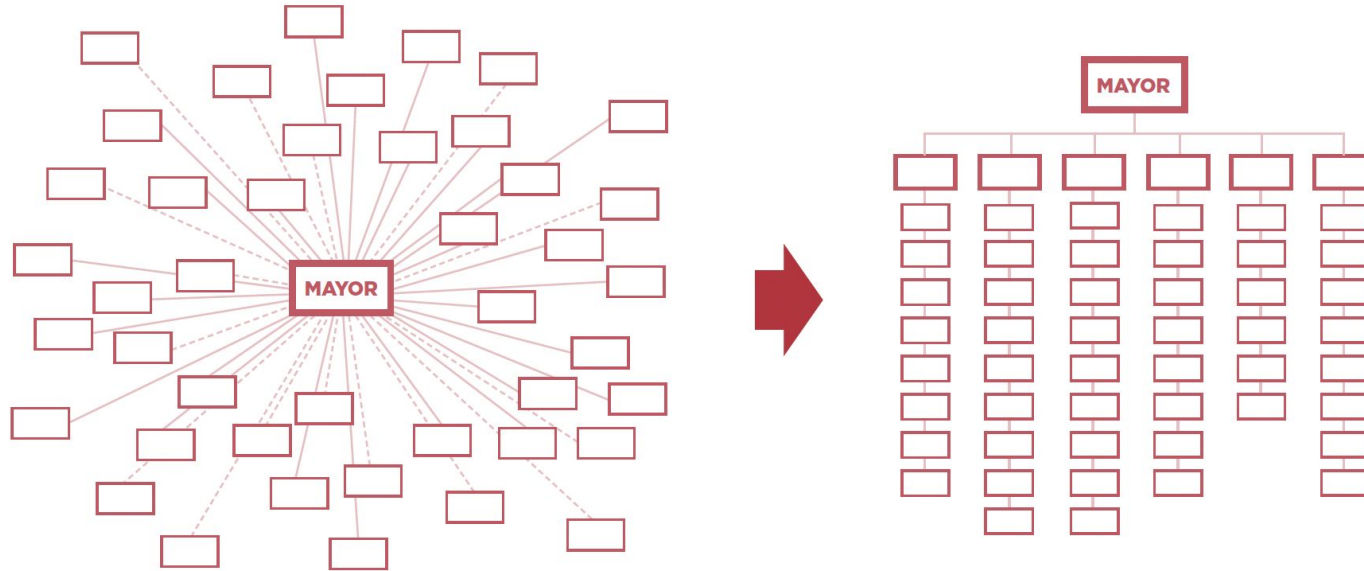
EXHIBIT 3
City and County
of San Francisco
Organizational Structure

Source: London N. Breed, *Proposed Budget: Fiscal Years 2022-2023 and 2023-2024*, Mayor's Office of Public Policy and Finance, https://sfmayor.org/sites/default/files/CSF_Proposed_Budget_Book_June_2022_Master_REV2_web.pdf



Over time, we've diffused authority across a sprawling system of boards and commissions

We have a choice to make: optimize for diffused power, or for leadership and empowerment with clear lines of accountability



Key Findings

1. The charter limits the mayor's ability to set up an executive office that is adequately staffed to manage a large and diverse set of direct reports.
2. Achieving shared goals is difficult with diffused reporting structures and conflicting mandates.
3. The role of the City Administrator's Office is not clearly defined, and it is not organized to address complex citywide challenges.
4. The purpose, roles, and responsibilities of the city's many boards and commissions are often unclear.
5. The legislative process lacks the proper structure to ensure that policy can be effectively implemented.
6. Once created, governmental entities and legislation are difficult to remove.

**Designed to Serve
Recommendations**

Increase the mayor's ability to effectively manage departments

The following recommendations align management authority with the public's perception of the mayor as the chief executive. They focus on giving the mayor the needed authority, resources, and staffing to manage the city effectively.

- **Recommendation 1:** Remove the charter language that restricts mayoral staffing and management.
- **Recommendation 2:** Reorganize the Mayor's Office for a more manageable number of direct reports.
- **Recommendation 3:** Restore the mayor's authority to hire and fire most department heads.

Create clear lines of authority and accountability that everyone understands

The following recommendations seek to ensure clear roles and responsibilities while consolidating entities and reducing duplication where possible.

- **Recommendation 4:** Focus the City Administrator's Office on long-term cross-departmental projects and core operational functions.
- **Recommendation 5:** Merge departments with similar functions and constituencies.
- **Recommendation 6:** Define the purpose and role of commissions and reduce their overall number.

Support effective policymaking by improving legislative processes

The following recommendations seek to improve the city's processes for developing and implementing policy.

- **Recommendation 7:** Build an in-house Legislative Analyst's Office to support the Board of Supervisors.
- **Recommendation 8:** Raise the bar to put ballot measures before voters.

Boards and Commissions

57 commissions have decision-making authority in San Francisco.

Many of these commissions have authority to make operational decisions about key staffing, public assets, resources, and budget and have broad policy-setting powers. When commissions are responsible for departmental oversight and policy direction, their authority can overlap or conflict with mayoral authority

Varying Levels of Mayoral Authority

Mayor has complete authority	Mayor must select from commission shortlist	Mayor appoints; Board of Supervisors confirms	Mayor selects from commission shortlist; Board of Supervisors confirms
Housing & Community Development Children, Youth & Their Families Economic & Workforce Development Emergency Management	Fire Homelessness and Supportive Housing Airport Human Rights Human Services Juvenile Probation Office of Small Business Police Disability & Aging Services Early Childhood Entertainment Port Public Health Public Library Public Utilities Public Works Recreation & Parks Rent Arbitration Status of Women Environment City Planning	Controller City Administrator Animal Care & Control Convention Facilities County Clerk Medical Examiner Purchaser/contract Administration Real Estate Technology	Police Accountability Human Resources

No Mayoral Authority

Board or Commission appoints	Elected by voters	Other boards appoint
Building Inspection Board of Appeals Child Support Services Elections Ethics Health Service System Retirement System Arts Commission Asian Arts Museum Civil Service Municipal Transportation Agency War Memorial	Assessor-Recorder Treasurer-Tax Collector District Attorney Public Defender City Attorney Board of Supervisors Sheriff Superior Court Adult Probation	Sheriff Accountability Law Library Fine Arts Academy of Sciences Office of Community Investment and Infrastructure

San Francisco's 126 boards and commissions have inconsistent basic procedures.

The way a commission or board fills its seats depends on its charter, as does the way it removes a member. For the public, this inconsistency translates as a lack of transparency about who is accountable for decisions.

- In some cases, the mayor's nominees must be approved by the Board of Supervisors, but nominees by the Board of Supervisors do not need to be approved by the mayor.
- In many cases in which appointments are split between the mayor and the Board of Supervisors, one or more other parties also appoint member(s).
- A few entities, such as the California Academy of Sciences Board of Trustees, appoint their own members.

Managing the current commission system of 126 bodies and more than 1,200 commissioners requires a large investment of city staff time.

Staff support includes:

- Onboarding new members
- Responding to questions/directives from commissioners
- Planning, scheduling, and developing materials for public meetings
- Following public posting requirements
- Hosting, presenting, and providing staffing support at meetings, which can go on for many hours
- Managing subcommittees of the advisory body
- Compiling responses to information requests, preparing reports, writing briefing memos, and drafting motions/resolutions

Multiple commissions and boards can cover services in one area and many San Francisco departments have more than one board or commission to manage.

- In November 2022, voters passed Proposition C, a charter amendment that the Board of Supervisors introduced to create the Homeless Oversight Commission. The seven-member commission oversees the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing and approves its budget. Today, the voter approved Homeless Oversight Commission exists alongside the Local Homeless Coordinating Board, the Our City, Our Home Oversight Committee, and the Shelter Monitoring Committee, all of which oversee different aspects of the homelessness response system.
- The Department of Disability and Aging Services within the Human Services Agency currently supports at least six commissions/advisory bodies with a total of 102 members. Five of these entities meet monthly; one meets quarterly.

SPUR Recommends: Define the purpose and role of commissions and reduce their overall number.

- Develop a process to clarify the purpose of San Francisco's boards and commissions
- Reduce their overall number
- Streamline the appointment process
- Set sunset dates so that commissions can fold once they have served their purpose

Develop a process to clarify the purpose of San Francisco's boards and commissions.

To clarify roles and responsibilities, the city needs to understand when a commission is needed.

- **Governance:** Entities that shape how a department is executing its mission.
- **Regulatory:** Entities that have regulatory authority to approve rates, permits, contracts, and projects or otherwise have approval or authority related to some aspect of government operations.
- **Advisory:** Entities that provide technical assistance, policy guidance, and best thinking on policy areas.

Reduce the number of commissions

There is no ideal number of commissions, boards, and advisory bodies for San Francisco. However, the more entities the city manages, the greater the strain on city resources. The task force could evaluate commissions on the basis of the following questions:

- Which bodies serve similar constituents/customers?
- Is there more than one body per department, policy area, or both?
- Where is there duplication or a good rationale for consolidation?
- Is the body related to one specific funding source or to a small interest group?
- Is the body facilitating public engagement, providing transparency, and helping hold the city accountable for providing equitable access to public services?
- Is public engagement reflective of the communities that the commission serves?
- Does the body help drive positive outcomes for the city?

The city should develop a rational and standard member appointment process, reflective of bodies' defined roles and responsibilities.

The current process is not clearly mapped to function and can fall under the purview of the mayor or the Board of Supervisors or other entities.

- **Governance and regulatory bodies:** Because the duties of these bodies are aligned with the management and day-to-day operations of the city, appointments to these bodies should be made by the mayor. Exceptions include commissions that should be independent from mayoral oversight, such as the Elections Commission and Ethics Commission.
- **Advisory bodies:** The legislative and executive branches of government should each make half of the appointments to these bodies.
- **All appointments:** Appointing authorities should directly appoint and remove their own commissioners, with no approvals required.

Periodic Commission Review

Recognizing that more commissions will be created, the city should proactively establish a regular review by a trusted nonpolitical authority.

- Build on the Prop E taskforce if it works well or decide who takes on this long-term task.
- Sunset dates should be identified for any new commission.

Q&A