

# Introducing 85 West Portal

## What is Being Proposed

85 West Portal is a proposed mixed-use project that will create 64 new units of housing intended for individuals and families of all ages in the West Portal neighborhood. This project comes at a time when additional housing is critically needed across San Francisco, and will offer not only housing but neighborhood-serving retail space. The proposal envisions a mix of unit sizes, including three-, two-, and one-bedroom units to suit households and individuals at different stages of life.

85 West Portal has been owned by the Appleton family of San Francisco for a century, and the family remains committed to ensuring it serves an important use within the community. Following the departure of the theater operator in 2021, Jesse Appleton, a fifth-generation owner, formed a partnership with family friend Alex Vartan to purchase the site. They began reviewing alternative uses for the property, eventually proposing an innovative housing project that will contribute to local social and economic vitality through new retail space and bring new housing to West Portal. The project is designed by Handel Architects, a renowned firm with decades of experience in mixed-use development in San Francisco. The redevelopment is also supported by DM Development, a respected San Francisco-based firm with team members local to West Portal and a reputation for beautifully designed residential projects.

The proposal envisions a 9-story building with 64 residential, for-rent units. The design prioritizes larger, family-sized homes in keeping with the demographics of the neighborhood and incorporates ground-floor retail space. With four generations of architects in the Appleton family and a best-in-class design and development team, the proposal is thoughtfully crafted to redevelop the aging site and meet the current needs of the community.



## By the Numbers



**9**  
stories



**64**  
high-quality  
apartment homes



**1, 2 & 3**  
bedrooms



**10**  
below market rate  
units



**4,094**  
square feet  
of retail space

## Project Zoning

The project utilizes state laws SB330 and AB2011 as well as the State Density Bonus Law (AB 1287) to increase density and streamline approvals.

Under these laws, no discretionary hearings are required; the project will be reviewed by planning staff and assessed for compliance. Given the critical housing need across the region, utilizing these laws to streamline approvals creates the most certainty for the homes to be built in the near future, and also guarantees key public benefits, including doubling the City's requirement for on-site affordable housing, providing qualifying commercial tenants with relocation assistance, and ensuring prevailing wage standards for construction.

AB2011 is specifically designed for commercial sites near transit, making it well suited to this location.

The legislation also allows for larger units suitable for families, which the project team determined to be the best for the neighborhood; with the cost of a home averaging \$2 million in West Portal and \$3.3 million in St. Francis Wood, homeownership is out of reach for many—current housing options are severely limited for new families, young professionals, and older residents who wish to downsize while remaining in the communities they have long called home.

## Timeline

The SB330 application was submitted on January 5, 2026, after which the development team has 180 days to file a formal planning application. The Planning Department will then have up to 30 days to determine completeness, followed by up to 60 days to determine the applications comply with objective planning standards. After determining the applications comply with objective planning standards, the City must approve the project within 60 days. The project is currently anticipated to break ground in early 2027.

## Community Updates

Although community outreach is not required under SB330 and AB2011, the project team is committed to clear and transparent communication with the community. Neighbors can expect to receive project updates as well as information on potential impact and neighborhood benefits. The team will also conduct community outreach when it comes time to fill the new retail space, engaging the community to determine what businesses would be best suited to the neighborhood's needs.



For questions, please contact  
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