

1 [Urging Expanded Free Access to Property Information Records]

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3 **Resolution urging the Assessor-Recorder to eliminate pay-gates and other barriers to**  
4 **public access to all recorded and property information records in the City and County**  
5 **of San Francisco.**

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7 WHEREAS, San Francisco, through the Office of the Assessor-Recorder maintains and  
8 makes available public records pertaining to all real property in the City and County of San  
9 Francisco, and is an important source of public information pertaining to property ownership  
10 and other relevant information regarding property in the City and County of San Francisco;  
11 and

12 WHEREAS, Property ownership records serve multiple public purposes, including  
13 during emergencies when non-resident property owners need to be contacted, and/or for  
14 monitoring the transfer of properties and providing appropriate notice to residential and  
15 commercial tenants of changes in ownership, and/or when community members are seeking  
16 to contact property owners about persistent blight, and/or when intervention is needed to  
17 resolve conflicts between building owners, managers and occupants; and

18 WHEREAS, Property ownership records also serve a valuable purpose in allowing City  
19 officials and members of the public to research the consolidation of property ownership,  
20 particularly as private equity firms have become the dominant form of financial backing among  
21 the nation's largest owners of multifamily buildings, the top 35 of which, including Blackstone,  
22 Greystar, and Lone Star Funds, collectively own roughly a million apartments; and

23 WHEREAS, Speculation concerning consolidation of property ownership in San  
24 Francisco - including the role that absentee property owners and private equity firms play in  
25 contributing to approximately 40,000 vacant residential units according to a 2022 Policy

1 Analysis by San Francisco's Budget & Legislative Analyst - has in turn fueled speculation  
2 regarding the role of international money-laundering operations in San Francisco's real estate  
3 market; and

4 WHEREAS, As efforts are made to identify assets held by the international billionaire  
5 class, particularly in the context of increased pressure to seize or otherwise leverage assets  
6 owned by Russian oligarchs during the Russian invasion of sovereign Ukraine, news  
7 publications and members of the public have been challenged by pay-gates and other  
8 technological barriers to quickly accessing information pertaining to property ownership; and

9 WHEREAS, California Government Code Section 27366 delegates authority, but does  
10 not require, California counties to set fees for copies of official records in an amount  
11 necessary to recover the direct and indirect costs of providing the product or service; and

12 WHEREAS, While California Government Code specifically exempts from online  
13 disclosure records including the home address or telephone number of elected or appointed  
14 officials, it does not otherwise restrict free and immediate access to recorded property  
15 information; and

16 WHEREAS, Copies of recorded documents, including deeds and liens, can currently  
17 be ordered from the Assessor-Recorder's Office online, by drop box, or by mail, at a cost of  
18 three dollars per page for pages one through three and 50 cents for each page thereafter, and  
19 a certification fee of one dollar per document; and

20 WHEREAS, Beginning with Fiscal Year 2018-2019, the Assessor-Recorder's Office  
21 has been the subject of a major Information Technology initiative to modernize the  
22 department's property assessment and tax system, including the design and implementation  
23 of a new system to replace the Department's former, obsolete Recorder Information System;  
24 and

1           WHEREAS, Building on these recent improvements, the Assessor-Recorder has  
2 recently committed to improving upon the Department's public-facing database of public  
3 records pertaining to property ownership and other matters of public interest; now, therefore,  
4 be it

5           RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors urges the Office of the Assessor-Recorder  
6 to expand its efforts, along with the Committee on Information Technology, to expeditiously  
7 provide immediate and remote digital public access to deeds, liens and other recorded public  
8 records, and eliminate costs for viewing said public records to the maximum extent feasible.  
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City and County of San Francisco  
Tails  
Resolution

City Hall  
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place  
San Francisco, CA 94102-4689

File Number: 220301

Date Passed: April 05, 2022


Resolution urging the Assessor-Recorder to eliminate pay-gates and other barriers to public access to all recorded and property information records in the City and County of San Francisco.

April 05, 2022 Board of Supervisors - ADOPTED

Ayes: 11 - Chan, Haney, Mandelman, Mar, Melgar, Peskin, Preston, Ronen, Safai, Stefani and Walton

File No. 220301

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED on 4/5/2022 by the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Angela Calvillo  
Clerk of the Board

\_\_\_\_\_  
Unsigned

London N. Breed  
Mayor

\_\_\_\_\_  
4/15/2022

Date Approved

I hereby certify that the foregoing resolution, not being signed by the Mayor within the time limit as set forth in Section 3.103 of the Charter, or time waived pursuant to Board Rule 2.14.2, became effective without her approval in accordance with the provision of said Section 3.103 of the Charter or Board Rule 2.14.2.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Angela Calvillo  
Clerk of the Board

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5/5/2022  
Date