

*Several readers asked about the candidates' plans to reinvigorate downtown.*

### London Breed

San Francisco's downtown was never designed as a neighborhood, as it was centered on office workers traveling during the day and leaving in the evening. As we move past the global COVID-19 pandemic, we must accept reality, which is that the expectations of employers and employees have changed and that a return to a five day a week work week may not be in the cards for many employers. As part of this shift, my administration has worked with trade groups, business owners, builders, neighbors, and city departments to create the Roadmap to Downtown San Francisco's Future, a comprehensive plan for a dynamic, resilient Downtown with residents, nightlife, and businesses, a neighborhood that keeps going around the clock – Downtown 24/7.

The first year of our Roadmap focused on stabilizing: filling storefronts through our Vacant to Vibrant program, creating attractions, and delivering tax incentives. We are now recruiting new business and continuing to see new leases signed – led by AI, which alone is projected to add 12 million square feet of office space by 2030. And while I am working tirelessly with companies to develop strategies to bring employees back to office, Downtown can't be just about jobs. We need more people to live and study here. That is why I launched my 30 by 30 initiative – 30,000 more residents and students downtown by 2030. As part of this work, we are starting to see progress with leasing of commercial space increasing, vacancy rate dropping, and tenant demand almost returning to pre-pandemic numbers.

But we must also create more housing. Not only am I open to more office-to-residential conversions, I've led the efforts to make them happen. I passed local laws to remove and reduce fees and barriers for office conversions. I've worked on state law changes with Senator Scott Wiener to spur conversions and speed up housing production Downtown. I wrote Prop C on the March ballot to reduce the burden on these conversions and I've now introduced legislation with Supervisor Matt Dorsey to eliminate inclusionary fees and impact fees for buildings converting from office to housing. Just this week I attended an event at 785 Market Street, one of the first buildings going through this conversion process.

Additionally, I've prioritized investing in citywide events to connect neighborhoods and celebrate San Francisco's diversity and vibrancy. It's one reason we placed Prop B on the November 2024 ballot, a bond aimed at enhancing public spaces, and worked to create California's first Entertainment Zone. I've passed laws to ease and reduce costs for office-to-housing conversions and am working to bring a university downtown. And now we are reforming the business tax structure (Prop M, November 2024) while making planning and permitting processes more flexible and streamlined, ensuring new businesses can open quickly and affordably.

I am working to bring about a new future for our downtown office buildings. One where workers mix with students and residents. Where there are a plethora of activities and arts and culture

activities, not just during happy hour but all weekend as well. So Yes! Let's require more office work, let's convert more office buildings to housing, let's bring new and exciting concepts to fill up our ground floor spaces and let's bring about the future of San Francisco's downtown.

### Daniel Lurie

I have a plan to attract businesses of all sizes back to San Francisco. First, I will ensure downtown is clean and safe so workers feel comfortable returning to their offices. Second, I will reform outdated and hostile regulations that force small businesses to shut their doors. Third, I will bring taxes in line with other major cities so that companies will once again bring their headquarters here.

The high downtown vacancy rates are a symptom of a broader economic struggle. The pandemic has reshaped how we work and do business. We need innovative strategies to revitalize our downtown, foster entrepreneurship, and attract businesses. This includes reimagining spaces and collaborating with local entrepreneurs to create a vibrant urban core.

We must better consolidate City Hall's available tools and resources to revitalize downtown and increase support for small businesses in the form of tax breaks, grants, loans, and marketing. And we need safe and clean streets, smart investments, and a vision for economic recovery that builds on the talent of our local small businesses. Together, we will start the San Francisco comeback.

We have to make it easier for business owners to succeed. San Francisco should be in the business of cutting red tape to expedite the path to opening small businesses. My administration will make sure we are driving the permit process for small businesses instead of expecting small businesses to navigate the bureaucracy.

This means streamlining the permitting and inspection process to ensure that businesses are not delayed by bureaucratic inefficiency, better leverage our tools and resources to revitalize downtown, increase support in the form of grants, loans, and marketing, and invest in workforce development programs that actually meet the needs of the employers of today and tomorrow.

### Aaron Peskin

As Supervisor, I passed legislation making it easier and more affordable to transition unused office space to housing, as well as create 12 new Entertainment Zones for arts & culture activation. As Mayor, I will implement my middle-class financing plan to lower interest rates on construction and speed these conversions even faster. I will work with large businesses to keep them downtown, and attract new business start-ups through a Center for Tech Diplomacy. We must use a combination of lower office costs, residential conversions, and new amenities such as parks, libraries and art, to bring people back to downtown.

### Mark Farrell

Under Mayor Breed's tenure, San Francisco is facing one of the [slowest](#) post-pandemic recoveries in the country, with downtown recovery projected to take nearly [two decades](#) to return to pre-pandemic levels. Commercial vacancies are at an [all-time high](#), exacerbated by massive, iconic retailers like Macy's [departing](#). Large conventions have been [canceled](#) indefinitely with no plans to return. With an anemic number of employees returning to the office, downtown is struggling to bounce back, reducing city tax revenues and economic growth.

I am committed to cutting the commercial vacancy rate in half by the end of my first term. I believe San Francisco has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to completely reimagine the possibilities and vision for our downtown neighborhoods. My vision for downtown is one that is safe, clean, and thriving 24/7. To get us there, I will:

- Provide aggressive tax-increment financing and local incentives to speed up the production of housing and conversion of commercial office to residential housing.
- Repurpose downtown buildings to create “anchor projects” – mixed-use projects for residential housing, commercial offices, open space, entertainment spaces, and other small business opportunities.
- Create new tax incentives for employers who mandate employees go into the office at least four days a week.
- Offer a City tax credit for new employers if they establish their business in a designated downtown zone.
- Allow sales tax generated in Tenderloin and Mid Market to be kept in those neighborhoods for public safety infrastructure and services.