



London N. Breed
Mayor

CERTIFICATE OF PREFERENCE PROGRAM

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Frequently Asked Questions

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1. What is a Certificate of Preference?

A Certificate of Preference (COP) is a document that was issued by the former San Francisco Redevelopment Agency to residents displaced by the Agency in the 1960s and 1970s when the Agency was implementing its federally-funded urban renewal program. This Certificate gives holders preferential consideration for former Redevelopment Agency-sponsored and City-sponsored housing opportunities in San Francisco. In 2012 the responsibility of overseeing the Certificate of Preference Program was transferred to the Mayor's Office of Housing.

2. How do I get information about the Certificate of Preference Program?

For information about the Certificate of Preference Program please visit our website at [www.https://sf.gov/learn-about-certificate-preference-cop](https://sf.gov/learn-about-certificate-preference-cop).

If you have additional questions, you can contact the Certificate of Preference Team at LotteryPreferences@sfgov.org or the COP Hotline at 628-652-5801.

3. Who is eligible for a Certificate?

You are eligible for a certificate if:

- Your household was displaced by the former SF Redevelopment Agency in the 1960s and 1970s; or
- You are a direct descendant of someone who was displaced by the former SF Redevelopment Agency in the 1960s and 1970s.

4. What is the process to obtain a certificate?

To complete the process for the Certificates, we undertake the following steps:

1. **Apply.** Please [complete the online application](#).
2. **Connection to displaced household.** We will need to connect you to the Head of Household that was displaced by the former Redevelopment Agency. For example, you will need to provide your birth certificate to show your relationship to the displaced Head of Household.

To do so, please provide the following records from the list below.*

- A copy of your ID
- A copy of your Birth Certificate
- A copy of your parent's Birth Certificate or Death Certificate (if applicable) to connect you and them to the Head of Household (if your parent is not a Certificate holder)

You may upload the requested documentation can be safely uploaded to the secure Box link at <https://sfmohcd.app.box.com/f/a19644b6e69e4cc18d41835bdca72b4d>.

You may also mail or deliver the documents to the office:

Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development
1 South Van Ness Avenue, 5th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94103

3. **Application Review.** The research and application review process may take between 30-60 days. To expedite your search, please make sure that all of the information you present is accurate and up to date. To verify your eligibility, you may be asked to submit additional documentation.
4. **Application Review Results.** Based on research and review outcomes, City staff will contact you with your results. If you qualify, you will receive your Certificate of Preference and affordable housing resources. If you do not qualify, we will send you a letter outlining why you are ineligible at this time. Applicants can appeal the outcome of the application process.

**Learn more about required documentation and where to request it here:*

<https://www.sf.gov/learn-about-certificate-preference-cop>

5. How can I apply for a COP certificate?

If you were displaced by the former Redevelopment Agency, simply [fill out this application](#). After Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development's (MOHCD) initial review, you may be asked to provide a document showing that you lived at an affected address at the time of displacement and a valid state-issued ID or passport to confirm your identity.

If you are a direct descendant of someone who was displaced by the former Redevelopment Agency, [please fill out this application](#). You will also need to provide official birth record(s) that connect you to the family member that was displaced and a valid state-issued ID or passport to confirm your identity.

MOHCD will use this information to search former Redevelopment Agency records to determine eligibility. If MOHCD is unable to confirm eligibility, you will be asked to provide additional documents.

6. Can I apply for a Certificate of Preference by mail?

If you need a paper application, you may contact the MOHCD front desk at 415-701-5500 or pick one up in person at:

Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development
1 South Van Ness Avenue, 5th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94103

7. My family member has a Certificate of Preference, do I automatically have one?

Certificate issuance is not automatic. If you believe you are eligible for a Certificate, please

[please fill out this application](#) and contact the COP team if you have any questions at: 628-652-5801 or lotteryPreferences@sfgov.org.

8. What type of documentation would I need?

We will need to connect you to the Head of Household that was displaced by the former Redevelopment Agency. For example, you will need to provide your birth certificate to show your relationship to the displaced Head of Household.

To do so, please provide the following records from the list below.*

- A copy of your ID
- A copy of your Birth Certificate
- A copy of your parent's Birth Certificate or Death Certificate (if applicable) to connect you and them to the Head of Household (if your parent is not a Certificate holder)

You may upload the requested documentation can be safely uploaded to the secure Box link at <https://sfmohcd.app.box.com/f/a19644b6e69e4cc18d41835bdca72b4d>.

**Learn more about required documentation and where to request it here:*

<https://www.sf.gov/learn-about-certificate-preference-cop>

9. How does a Certificate of Preference help me get housing?

A Certificate gives you priority consideration over non-certificate holders to obtain a housing unit in an Office of Community and Infrastructure (OCII) funded housing project (formerly SFRA) or a city-funded housing project. The Certificate holder must still meet the program eligibility rules for any particular housing unit including maximum income levels.

Also, the City and County of San Francisco uses a lottery to distribute its city sponsored affordable housing. The City uses [DAHLIA, San Francisco Housing Portal](#) to advertise and accept applications for available affordable housing. Applications submitted on DAHLIA for each housing opportunity are then entered into a lottery.

Having a lottery preference improves your chances in a housing lottery and a Certificate of Preference gives you the best chance in most lotteries. After the lottery, all the applicants are ranked, and then sorted by preference. Applicants are then processed in lottery rank order starting with Certificate of Preference applicants. Processing will involve the submission of documents to assess the applicant's income, credit, rental history, and criminal background eligibility.

Please review the housing opportunities on DAHLIA since each housing opportunity has its own set of eligibility criteria and the Certificate of Preference holder must still meet the program eligibility requirements.

10. What is the difference between the Certificates of Preferences?

There are three residential certificates: Residential A, Residential C, and Residential Certificates.

- **Residential A** Certificate is given to the head of household that was displaced by the former Redevelopment Agency action.
- **Residential C** Certificate is given to an eligible family or other household member residing in the household of Residential A Certificate holders at the time of the displacement.
- **Residential D** Certificate is given to an eligible family member or other household member who are descendants of the original Certificate of Preference holder.

The use of Residential C Certificates is no longer tied to the Residential A Certificate Holder. Residential C Certificate Holders are allowed to use their Certificate for either assisted rental or assisted ownership units, regardless of whether the Residential A Certificate was exercised.

11. Can I use my Certificate in all City sponsored affordable housing lotteries?

While the City and County of San Francisco is working to adopt the descendant category to the COP program, descendants (Residential D) are eligible to receive priority in Office of Community Investment and Infrastructure (OCII and former Redevelopment Agency), funded housing lotteries and waitlists.

Below is a reference table describing the different types of certificates and the current types of affordable housing lotteries where each category receives priority.

Certificate Type	Who is Eligible	Certificate holders will receive priority in....
Residential A	Head of Households displaced by former Redevelopment Agency action	All City Sponsored Affordable Housing Lotteries on DAHLIA, San Francisco Housing Portal (DAHLIA) and Waitlists Click here to view these properties: https://housing.sfgov.org/ .
Residential C	Household members displaced by former Redevelopment Agency action	All City Sponsored Affordable Housing Lotteries on DAHLIA and Waitlists Click here to view these properties: https://housing.sfgov.org/ .
Residential D	Direct descendants of those displaced by former Redevelopment Agency action	All OCII/former Redevelopment Agency-Sponsored Affordable Housing Lotteries on DAHLIA and Waitlists Click here to view these properties: COP Dashboard

12. Does a Certificate of Preference have a subsidy?

No. The Certificate provides the holder with priority consideration for housing. There is no monetary value associated with the Certificate. MOHCD has separate loan programs to assist first-time homeowners.

13. Is a Certificate of Preference the same as a Section 8 Certificate?

No, the Section 8 Program is administered by the San Francisco Housing Authority (SFHA). Please contact the SFHA at 415-715-5200 or CustomerCare@sfha.org for more information on the Section 8 Program.

14. If I am denied a Certificate, what is the appeals process?

You should write a letter of appeal to Certificate of Preference Team requesting an informal settlement meeting. You will be notified in writing of a date for the informal meeting. At this meeting you should submit any additional information or documentation concerning your appeal. A summary of the informal settlement will be prepared by the Mayor's Office of Housing and be delivered personally to you or sent by regular mail to your address or such other address as you specify no later than sixty (60) days from the date of the meeting.

If you want to appeal the decision made as a result of the Informal Settlement meeting, you would submit a written request for a hearing addressed to: Maria Benjamin, Mayor's Office of Housing & Community Development Director, no later than two weeks from the date of the Informal Settlement meeting summary. Your written request for a hearing must state the specific facts you believe entitles you to a Certificate of Preference.

A Hearing Officer, outside the Mayor's Office of Housing & Community Development, will then hear your appeal. (05.2017)

15. What resources are there for residents who are at risk of being unhoused?

For immediate housing needs, we recommend contacting [The Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing](#). They can be reached at (415) 252-3232.

Here are some of their services:

- [Accessing Shelter](#)
- [Housing Assistance](#)
- [Accessing Prevention](#)
- [Drop-in Centers and Other Resources](#)

Nonprofit Housing Agencies & Counselors

- Need Assistance? Find Housing Counselors [HERE](#).
- MOHCD recommends the [SF Service Guide](#). These agencies can assist with your particular case.

- Contact [Homeownership SF](#) for program questions and opportunities.

Home Sharing Programs

- Home Match - <https://covia.org/programs/home-match/find-your-home/>
- HIP Housing - <https://hiphousing.org/>
- San Mateo County Home Sharing Program <https://www.smcgov.org/housing/home-sharing-program>

Other affordable housing:

- CCDC housing - <https://www.chinatowncdc.org/our-housing/apply-for-housing>
- TDNC housing - <https://www.tndc.org/find-home>

[Coordinated Entry](#) is a key component of the Homelessness Response System (HRS) that treats homelessness as an emergency to be responded to quickly and effectively. CE is a consistent, community wide intake process to match people experiencing homelessness to available housing focused community resources, that are the best fit for their situation. It includes a clear set of entry points, a standardized method to assess and prioritize people needing assistance, and a streamlined process for rapidly connecting people to a solution to their homelessness.”

Once you contact their department and have been through their access point, ask about their [Local Operating Subsidy Program](#) (LOSP) units and availability. You can find more information on this program [HERE](#).

16.If I have more questions, who can I contact?

If you have additional questions, you can contact the Certificate of Preference Team at LotteryPreferences@sfgov.org or the COP Hotline at 628-652-5801