FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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State Announces New Review of San Francisco Housing Policies and Practices

Sacramento – The Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) today announced that its Housing Accountability Unit (HAU) will conduct a first-ever Housing Policy and Practice Review of San Francisco, aimed at identifying and removing barriers to approval and construction of new housing there.

According to San Francisco’s self-reported data, it has the longest timelines in the state for advancing housing projects to construction, among the highest housing and construction costs, and the HAU has received more complaints about San Francisco than any other local jurisdiction in the state. A recent article points out that U.S. Census data shows that Seattle – a city of comparable size – approves housing construction at more than three times the rate of San Francisco.

“We are deeply concerned about processes and political decision-making in San Francisco that delay and impede the creation of housing and want to understand why this is the case,” said HCD Director Gustavo Velasquez. “We will work with the city to identify and clear roadblocks to construction of all types of housing, and when we find policies and practices that violate or evade state housing law, we will pursue those violations together with the Attorney General’s Office. We expect the cooperation of San Francisco in this effort.”

Over the next nine months and beyond, the HAU, in partnership with others, including the U.C. Berkeley Institute of Urban and Regional Development, will conduct a comprehensive analysis of San Francisco’s housing approval policies and practices. This review will synthesize and update existing research with new data and examine discretionary decision-making patterns that lead to abnormally long housing delays. The Policy and Practice Review will identify barriers to the approval and development of housing at all income levels, including housing that is affordable to lower- and moderate-income households.

HCD will collaborate with San Francisco to secure legally enforceable commitments to boost housing production and will apply the lessons learned to jurisdictions across the state.

“In California, we are facing a housing crisis of epic proportions, and it’s going to take all of us, working together, to solve it,” said Attorney General Rob Bonta. “The California Department of Justice’s Housing Strike Force is working closely with state and local partners to enforce and defend state housing laws and support California families wrestling with the high cost of housing. We will continue to work with HCD to enforce our housing laws to alleviate this ongoing crisis.”
San Francisco continues to fall far short of meeting its regional housing goals for lower- and moderate-income housing. The city is currently working with HCD to complete a housing element update to plan for more than 82,000 new housing units by 2031 – one of the largest housing goals in the state.

Yesterday HCD sent a detailed letter to San Francisco emphasizing the work that remains for the city to achieve a compliant housing element. HCD has provided specific findings to San Francisco, which city planners can use to revise their housing element. The city is statutorily obligated to have an adopted, compliant housing element by January 31, 2023.

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The California Department of Housing and Community Development is dedicated to the preservation and expansion of safe and affordable housing, so more Californians have a place to call home. Our team works to ensure an adequate supply of housing for Californians and promotes the growth of strong communities through its leadership, policy and program development. For more information, please visit www.hcd.ca.gov and follow us on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn.