

2016 November Election Words You Need to Know

311 Customer Service Line (Proposition H): The phone number that the public may use to contact the City regarding non-emergency matters relating to City services, such as graffiti removal, pothole repair, illegal signs, street cleaning and illegal dumping.

Affordable housing (Propositions C, M, P, U, X): Residential units that households within a certain range of incomes would be able to afford.

Area median income (Proposition U): A level of income based on all incomes earned within San Francisco. Half of all households have incomes above this level and half have incomes below it.

Art experiences (Proposition S): Publicly accessible performances, events, educational programs, exhibitions, arts walks, and festivals, where art and culture are main components.

Beverage-dispensing machine (Proposition V): An automated device that mixes syrups or powders with liquid to make drinks. A soda fountain machine, such as those found in fast-food restaurants, is an example.

Charter amendment (Propositions D–J, L–N): A change to the City’s Charter. The Charter is the City’s Constitution. The Charter can only be changed by a majority of the votes cast.

City Attorney’s Office (Proposition H): Provides legal services to the Mayor, Board of Supervisors and other elected officials as well as the approximately 100 departments, boards, commissions and offices in the City. People may call to register complaints. The City Attorney's Office handles civil matters; the District Attorney's Office and Public Defender's Office handle criminal matters.

City-operated housing (Proposition Q): Shelters, transitional housing, and permanent housing operated by the City or third parties through contracts with the City.

Conditional use authorization (Proposition X): Authorization provided by the Planning Commission to change a property’s use. The Planning Commission may grant a conditional use authorization if it makes certain findings, such as whether the proposed new use is necessary or desirable for, and compatible with, the neighborhood or the community. Conditional use authorizations may be appealed to the Board of Supervisors.

Environmentally sustainable (Proposition A): Furthers the long-term well-being of the environment.

Ethics Commission (Proposition T): A five-member commission responsible for administering, interpreting and enforcing City ethics laws, including laws regulating campaign contributions, conflicts of interest, lobbyists, campaign consultants, whistleblowers, public records and public meetings.

General Fund (Propositions E, I–K, S, W): That part of the City’s annual budget that can be used for any City purpose. Each year, the Mayor and the Board of Supervisors decide how the General Fund will be used. Money for the General Fund comes from property, business, sales, and other taxes and fees.

General obligation bond (Propositions A, C): A promise issued by a government body to pay back money borrowed, plus interest, by a certain date. The government body repays the money, plus interest, with property taxes. General obligation bond measures must be approved by the voters.

Inclusionary housing (Proposition M): A City program that generally requires developers of market-rate housing of 10 units or more to provide affordable housing. A developer can meet this requirement in one of three ways: 1) pay an affordable housing fee; 2) construct off-site affordable housing; or 3) construct on-site affordable housing.

Initiative (Propositions O, P, S, U): A proposition placed on the ballot by voters. Any voter may place an initiative on the ballot by gathering the required number of signatures of registered voters on a petition.

Legal guardian (Proposition N): A person who has the legal authority to care for the personal and/or property interests of another person.

Legally recognized caregiver (Proposition N): A person who is at least 18 years old, responsible for a minor child, and completes a form to enroll the minor in school and consent to school-related medical care on behalf of the minor.

Local candidates (Proposition F): Candidates for local offices, including Mayor, Board of Supervisors, City Attorney, District Attorney, Treasurer, Sheriff, Assessor-Recorder, Public Defender, Board of Education of the San Francisco Unified School District, and Governing Board of the San Francisco Community College District.

Navigation Center (Propositions J, Q): A temporary housing facility that helps homeless individuals transition to permanent housing by providing shelter and a variety of services, including case managers, who connect residents to stable income, public benefits and permanent housing. On July 1, 2016, the Board of Supervisors passed a law requiring the City to open six Navigation Centers within two years, including three within the first 12 months.

Ordinance (Propositions K, O–X): A local law passed by the Board of Supervisors or by the voters.

Oversight (Propositions A, B, G, I, M): Monitoring activities to ensure that the purposes of a program are followed.

Parcel tax (Propositions A, B): A tax that is based on a flat fee for each unit of real property that receives a separate tax bill.

Proposition M (Proposition O): An initiative ordinance passed by the voters in 1986 that amended the Planning Code to restrict the amount of office space authorized for development in a given year. A total of 950,000 square feet is available for allocation each year, but any of this cap amount that is not allocated during a year is carried forward for potential allocation in future years. The Planning Department maintains a list of the Proposition M allocations made for each office development approved by the City and how much square footage remains available for additional allocation under Proposition M at all times.

Provisional ballot (Frequently asked questions): A ballot cast at a polling place that will not be counted until the Department of Elections verifies the voter's eligibility to cast that ballot.

Qualified write-in candidate: A person who has completed the required paperwork and signatures for inclusion as a write-in candidate. Although the name of this person will not appear on the ballot, voters can vote for this person by writing the name of the person in the space on the ballot provided for write-in votes and following specific ballot instructions. The Department of Elections counts write-in votes only for qualified write-in candidates.

Revenue (Propositions B, E, I–K, W): Income.

San Francisco County Public Finance Authority (Proposition K): State law allows for the creation of local public finance authorities to impose taxes to pay for drug abuse prevention, crime prevention, health care services or public education. In 1993, the San Francisco County Public Finance Authority proposed—and the voters approved—an ordinance establishing a 0.25% local sales tax to provide funding for the San Francisco Unified School District and San Francisco Community College District.

San Francisco County Transportation Authority (CTA) (Propositions J, K): The Transportation Authority is a public agency that is separate from the City, although the 11 members of the Board of Supervisors serve as members of the Authority's governing board. The Transportation Authority uses a portion of sales tax money to pay for transportation projects approved by the voters.

San Francisco Unified School District (Propositions A, E, N): The City's public school system for kindergarten through 12th grade. The district is governed by an elected seven-member Board of Education.

Seismic upgrade (Propositions A, C): Improving or renovating a structure to protect it from potential earthquake damage.

Set-aside (Propositions E, I): Designates a specific amount of funding from property taxes or other general City revenues for a particular purpose. This removes the discretion of the Mayor and Board of Supervisors regarding how the City will use the funds.

SFMTA stations (Proposition J): Any place where passengers get on or off a Muni vehicle, including platforms, bus stops or Muni Metro stations.

Transit-dependent communities (Proposition J): Low-income communities that rely heavily on public transportation to get to work, school, doctors, stores or otherwise navigate the City.

Transitional housing (Proposition J): A type of housing that helps homeless individuals and families transition from life on the street or in an emergency crisis shelter into permanent housing. People living in transitional housing may generally stay for six months to two years. Transitional housing facilities generally offer clients services such as job training and placement, substance abuse counseling, parenting classes and child care services. Navigation Centers are a type of transitional housing.

Transportation infrastructure (Proposition J): The transportation network, including, but not limited to, vehicles, tracks, overhead lines, traffic signals, transit stations, pedestrian curb extensions, bike lockers, and all San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency facilities.

Vote-by-mail ballots: Ballots mailed to voters or given to voters in person at the Department of Elections. Vote-by-mail ballots can be mailed to the Department of Elections, turned in at the Department of Elections office in City Hall, or turned in at any San Francisco polling place on Election Day. Also known as absentee ballots.