

HOW TO EXPEDITE THE CONDOMINIUM CONVERSION PROCESS

BY: APRIL M. ALDERISO, ESQ.
(Email April at: april@zulpc.com)
Zacks Utrecht & Leadbetter, PC
235 Montgomery Street, Suite 400
San Francisco, CA 94104
www.zulpc.com

One of the number one questions existing and potential condo conversion clients ask me, is “How can I expedite the condo conversion process?” Especially for lottery bypass applicants, who generally are not allowed to sell or rent before their map is recorded, time delays could significantly affect an applicant’s plans. Although unfortunately there is no method to skip to the front of the line—and be wary of those that may promise you that there is—there are actions you can take to minimize the processing time of your application.

1. Get Started Early

There are pesky owner-occupancy qualification periods that must be followed in order to be eligible to condo convert, but getting started on your application as your one-year or three-year occupancy anniversary approaches will help to ensure that your application is submitted as close as possible to your eligible submission date. For instance, I frequently advise potential clients to come in for a free consultation to go over the necessary items 1-2 months before their eligible submission date. A potential applicant can start gathering many of the items before their eligible date, for instance an applicant can: apply for building inspection during this time thereby placing themselves on the waiting list ahead of schedule, can hire surveyors to come and survey the property so that the parcel maps are ready by the submission date, can obtain their 3R report and confirm that there are no issues with it, etc. Gathering all of the necessary items in order to apply can sometimes take a few months, so applicants that start gathering on their submission date, rather than beforehand, are not likely to submit as soon as those that planned ahead.

2. Hire an Attorney

The City does not require that applicants hire an attorney for the process, although they do suggest it. No preferential treatment will be obtained by hiring an attorney, however, an attorney experienced in condominium conversions will likely be able to catch problems early thereby saving you time in the long run. If an applicant fills out a part of the application wrong, or does not submit the right materials, these errors will take time to clear up once the application has been received by the City and will in turn likely cause your application to take extra time processing. Further if your application does run into a problem, an attorney will likely be able to advise you on how to resolve it and which city employees to contact.

3. Complete Building Repair Work ASAP

In addition to applying for your building inspection before your eligible submission date, once you have your inspection promptly complying with all necessary repair work will ensure that your application continues processing. There comes a point during the application process where the City requests an item from your surveyor called the checkprints, which are basically redlined versions of the parcel maps. Your surveyor will not be able to submit the checkprints until you have received the CFCO (Certificate of Final Completion and Occupancy) from the Department of Building Inspection. Once the checkprints are received, it takes another 4-5 months until your map will be ready to record. A delay in completing your building repair work will in turn cause a delay

in your surveyor's ability to submit the checkprints, which will ultimately cause a delay in the recordation of your map.

4. Keep in Contact with your Surveyor

When you have received your CFCO, forward it to your surveyor. It is a good idea to ask your surveyor when he will submit the checkprints. Following up with your surveyor to ensure that the checkprints were indeed submitted will help ensure that your application continues to progress.

5. Be Prepared to Pay Your Taxes

In order for your map to record, the City will require you to obtain a tax certificate showing that all tax liens have been paid. Often applicants will have to pay an installment in advance. If your group has a tight budget, I recommend that you put that money aside ahead of time so that when you are at the last stage of the process and it is necessary, it will be there. If your group does not have this money available, recordation of your map will be put on hold.

Condominium conversion can at times be a long and arduous process. Adhering to the suggestions above, should help to ensure that your application does not face any time delays that could have been prevented in advance.