



# SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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## Memo

### Centering Planning on Racial & Social Equity

HEARING DATE: JULY 30, 2020

*Project Name:* **Racial & Social Equity Initiative**  
*Case No.:* 2016-003351CWP  
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*Recommendation:* **None, Informational**

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This memo is to brief the Commission on the Department's priorities in response to the June 11, 2020 Resolution Centering Planning on Racial and Social Equity (Equity Resolution), and the next steps on the Racial & Social Equity Initiative (Initiative), including progress on the Phase I Action Plan implementation and the status of the Phase II Action Plan.

#### 1. BACKGROUND

The San Francisco Planning Commission passed the Equity Resolution in response to one of the latest murders, among countless of others of Black men and women and other People of Color, by law enforcement. The COVID-19 pandemic has already shone a brighter light and deepened existing disparities in the community that this Initiative is aimed at addressing. The murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020 and the ensuing community pain and unrest further highlighted the importance and necessity of this work. As a response, on June 11, 2020, the Planning Commission and, on July 14, 2020, the Historic Preservation Commission passed resolutions centering the Department's work on equity, reinforcing the Department's Initiative and directing the Department to prioritize certain tasks to further advance this work.

Our work is anchored by our Racial & Social Equity Initiative, which is fulfilling the citywide mandate to advance equity in an explicit and comprehensive way within our internal and external work. Board of Supervisors Ordinance 188-19<sup>1</sup> created the San Francisco [Office of Racial Equity](#)<sup>2</sup> (ORE) as a Division of the Human Rights Commission with authority to create a citywide Racial Equity Framework, require City departments to create Racial Equity Action Plans informed by community by December 2020, analyze the impact of Board of Supervisor ordinances and carry out other various policy and reporting functions regarding racial equity, among other responsibilities.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://sfgov.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=7586870&GUID=9E0222B9-7A4D-4082-8CCE-3F397520FC82>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.racialequitysf.org/>

## 2. EQUITY RESOLUTION IMPLEMENTATION

The June 11 Planning Commission resolution centering equity in planning directed the department to reallocate resources and revise work programs centered on the needs of American Indian, Black and other communities of color through a collaborative process. It called out the following specific tasks (*updates on status following each bullet*):

- Expand funding and implement **Racial and Social Equity Action Plan** – *underway, detail on the Department’s initial ideas to prioritize this work departmentwide to be shared during the hearing.*
- Use the Racial and Social Equity tool to **assess budget** – *underway. The Department submitted an initial Vulnerable Populations Assessment to ORE on July 13, and we have been re-assessing our proposed budget in relation to the commissions’ resolutions and the city’s fiscal emergency using the draft equity criteria included in the June 4, 2020 [FY20-22 Update to the Proposed Budget Memo](#)<sup>3</sup>. There will be changes to projects and staffing shifts based on this re-assessment.*
- Amend **hiring and promotion practices** to address diversity at all levels – *underway as part of phase I. This work had slowed down initially due to the pandemic. DHR’s Diversity Equity and Inclusion team is fully staffed and will begin meeting with Departments again at the end of July.*
- Build equity accountability through **metrics and reporting** – *underway. Staff is developing metrics. This work will continue through early fall. ORE also released a draft toolkit for departmental action plans and metrics, which staff will utilize as additional guidance. The Department will also issue comprehensive, annual reporting through our annual report.*
- Develop targeted **policies and programs** on health, economic and housing recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic– *underway. The department has drafted a Housing Recovery Strategy, is weighing in on policy and equity through the Mayor’s Economic Recovery Task Force and other similar efforts.*
- Amend the General Plan to **explicitly prioritize racial and social equity** – starting with the Housing Element – *underway, along with coordinated Environmental Justice updates as required by CA. Senate Bill 1000.*
- Expand and fund **community engagement and community planning** to ensure these communities’ representation and participation in plans and policies – *underway, details to be shared during the hearing.*

In addition to reinforcing the Planning Commission’s equity resolution, the HPC equity resolution directed the department to advance racial and social equity through historic preservation work and consider actions in collaboration with communities of color and other marginalized communities in the following work areas:

### Research and Publications

- Complete the African American, Chinese American and Latin-x **Historic Context Statements**
- Create an **inclusive research** and evaluation process

### Historic Resource Designations

- Determine best practices for identification and preservation of **intangible resources**
- Prioritize Landmark and Legacy Business **designations** in underserved communities

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<sup>3</sup> [https://commissions.sfplanning.org/cpcpackets/2019-023608CRV\\_Update.pdf](https://commissions.sfplanning.org/cpcpackets/2019-023608CRV_Update.pdf)

- Assess historic resource inventories for **omissions, biases, and disparities**

#### Access and Representation

- Assess **our incentive, funding, and education programs** to make them more accessible to underrepresented communities and preservation incentives less burdensome
- Address **training** needs and **representation** of historic preservation consultants and professionals

#### San Francisco's Citywide Racial Equity Framework (ORE)

In addition, in July 2020 the Office of Racial Equity issued a draft citywide [Racial Equity Framework](#)<sup>4</sup> and baseline strategies for all City agencies to address within their racial equity work and racial equity plans. Our work is in substantial alignment with the guidance ORE released. Our Phase I Action Plan and Phase II key ideas include many of the below strategies. Our Phase I Action Plan is also highlighted as an example for other agencies in ORE's materials. The strategies in the draft Framework include:

- Lead with race and center intersectionality. Programs and policies must expand to acknowledge and include the needs and lived experiences of our beloved community.
- Investigate and challenge "race-neutral" or colorblind policies with positive intentions that may have negative, disparate impacts in practice on people of color.
- Commit to reviewing and conducting all internal policies and practices with a racial equity lens, specifically: hiring, recruitment, promotions, discipline, compensation, and leadership appointments.
- Disaggregate and transparently share departmental data by race and gender for management and staff. This also includes disaggregating racially-monolithic classifications such as "Asian."
- Strengthen racial and ethnic diversity of employees at all levels from staff positions to managerial and director level positions.
- Create and maintain responsive systems and feedback loops for employees to safely voice their concerns to maintain internal accountability.
- Base data and decision-making around local and regional demographics that acknowledge the historical segregation, outmigration and displacement of people of color, especially the Black, Latinx and indigenous community from San Francisco and the Bay Area.
- Provide continuous, standardized supervisorial, implicit/explicit bias, and anti-racism training opportunities for all staff, especially Department leadership, mid-level managers and other individuals in a position to hire, fire, manage, and develop teams.
- Adopt policies and strategies that will dismantle occupational segregation, which funnels and concentrates Black, Latinx and indigenous workers into lower classification positions.
- Develop action plans that redress workplace issues that enact harm upon employees, but do not meet Equal Employment Opportunity standards.
- Evaluate, review, and update existing disciplinary and separation protocols to eliminate racial inequity, specifically around anti-Black bias.
- Assess and re-establish fair pay structures that disrupt racial and gender pay gaps.
- Review data around training, travel and professional development funds distribution and create intentional strategies to support the professional development of staff from historically marginalized communities.

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<sup>4</sup><https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ed18d943016244d3e57260c/t/5efbe89e247faf024e6fdaca/1593567402561/ORE+SF+Citywide+Racial+Equity+Framework+Phase+1.pdf>

- Provide support for departmental affinity groups for historically marginalized communities to create safe spaces at work.
- Invest in training, mentorship, and professional development opportunities for vulnerable groups with barriers to employment, including but not limited to: previously justice-involved people, transitional-aged youth, people with disabilities, immigrants, older workers, transgender and gender non-conforming people.
- Increase membership and representation of historically marginalized communities throughout the ranks of the 26 Building Trades by reducing employment barriers and increasing career preparedness.
- Leverage existing apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeship programs to advance racial equity goals.
- Create culture of inclusion and belonging, free from micro-aggression and micro-inequities and dismantles white-dominant work culture.

### **3. SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING'S INITIATIVE**

San Francisco Planning's Initiative includes the following key components:

- a. Phase I (2016 to 2019): Development of a Racial & Social Equity Action Plan for our internal facing processes and practices.
- b. Phase II (2019 – late 2020): Development of a Racial & Social Equity Action Plan, with input from the community, for our external-facing work.
- c. Ongoing: Integration and application to existing work; implementation and monitoring of the Plan; coordination with other City agencies; and annual reporting and updates to the Plan.

The San Francisco Planning Commission adopted the Department's Phase I Racial & Social Equity Action Plan in November 2019 and is working to issue a Phase II draft framework this fall. The Historic Preservation Commission endorsed the Phase I Action Plan in December 2019. The Phase I Action Plan will be updated with the recently issued direction from ORE.

#### **STATUS OF PHASE I IMPLEMENTATION**

To date, several Phase I action are already underway. This includes:

- Utilizing an equity budget tool and criteria to our proposed FY20-22 budget. In addition, the Department is exploring using a participatory budget process next fiscal year, in coordination with the Office of Racial Equity and other departments.
- Began applying a Racial & Social Equity Assessment Tool to do equity impact analysis and integrate this lens to our work. Before the end of the calendar year, we will be refining racial and social equity tools for respective teams and types of work. The tools will evolve as we learn from communities and the commissions in their application and outcomes.
- Began working with DHR's Diversity Equity and Inclusion Team to analyze our outreach and hiring practices and ensure equitable and consistent processes and outcomes.
- Fairness in Hiring Training is now required for all staff involved in any hiring.
- Racial Equity foundational training is required for all new hires. This is being coordinated with the Office of Racial Equity.
- Included Racial & Social Equity objectives in performance plans for all staff. This will be revisited each year to ensure objectives are specific, measurable, and actionable.
- Evaluating our internships and youth engagement work to reach a diverse set of future planners.

- Established ongoing brown bags/staff discussions to continue to normalize conversations about equity in our work, provide space for staff to exchange new ideas and best practices, and learn about the Initiative's progress.

Additional priorities for implementation from the Phase I Action Plan over the next fiscal year include:

- Advanced training for all managers.
- Updating outreach / recruitment list to ensure job announcements reach a diverse audience.
- Develop hiring and recruitment guidelines in collaboration with DHR's Diversity Equity & Inclusion Team to ensure equitable and consistent hiring processes and pay practices across teams.
- Training staff in community engagement with an equity lens and working with underserved communities.
- Updating outreach list for consulting opportunities with the Department and develop guidelines and criteria for reviewing consultant proposals with an equity lens.

#### **STATUS OF PHASE II DEVELOPMENT**

Phase II of the Action Plan will include goals, objectives and strategies for the department's external functions under the following broad areas: A) Community outreach, engagement and communication; B) Regulatory and design review (permitting, CEQA and design and enforcement work); C) Historic preservation ; and D) Policy, community plans, and legislation (see Exhibit A for draft Phase II overview of structure).

To date, staff have undertaken the following activities to gather feedback and inform Phase II:

- 1) Held initial focus groups and interviews with several community members (See Exhibit B for summary).
- 2) Held several brainstorms with functional staff teams.
- 3) Conducted the second bi-annual staff survey in 2019 and a follow up survey in 2020 to understand the staff perspectives on the equity impacts of COVID-19 on our work.
- 4) Conducted an all-staff discussion in the aftermath of George Floyd's murder.
- 5) Summarized the public comment from the June 11 and July 15 commissions' hearings.

Staff had previously proposed to release a draft Phase II this spring. However, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic staff delayed this until community engagement could resume in coordination with ORE. In addition, based on the Equity Resolution, staff will seek more specific input from community leaders on content and priorities of Phase II. Staff will release a framework for discussion in coordination with ORE in the fall and a draft of the Plan in December. In addition, given the urgency of this work in light of the impacts of the pandemic and the equity resolutions, staff proposes to prioritize the following for action while the Phase II Plan is complete:

- Prioritize high-impact, systemic level changes to produce more impactful change – to be identified with community input.
- Continue to build staff capacity to apply the Racial & Social Equity Assessment Tool and conduct equity impact analysis.
- Continue to make progress on the tasks directed by the Planning and Historic Preservation Commissions during their June and July 2020 hearings.

#### **4. NEXT STEPS**

The Department will prioritize the following steps to address the Equity Resolution based on the Racial and Social Equity Plan:

1. Convene community representatives to discuss equity definition and equity framework for Planning. This Planning Department-specific conversation would occur sometime in September (date to be coordinated with ORE).
2. Coordinate with the Office of Racial Equity on further community engagement for the Citywide Framework.
3. Prioritize community equity within the organization of the Department and, in consultation with community partners, define priority issue areas (which may also include project identification) and priority geographies and populations to serve.
4. Release a Phase II Draft Framework in the fall, and subsequent Phase II Draft Action Plan for submission to the Office of Racial Equity, the Mayor and the Board of Supervisors by December 2020 per Ordinance 188-19. Commission approval in early 2021 (following ORE's score card rating of the Plan and community review).

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**RECOMMENDATION: None, informational**

**Exhibit A:** Phase II Action Plan Draft Structure

**Exhibit B:** Summary of community engagement to date

## Exhibit A - Racial and Social Equity Phase II Draft Structure

Phase II of SF Planning's Racial & Social Equity Action Plan will focus on the Department's external-facing programs, policies and processes. It will include four or more overarching, high-level goals that line up with our Department work functions. Under each goal there will be objectives and actions for the Department to advance racial and social equity in our work with communities in the city. These strategies are being developed in collaboration with community partners and staff possessing expertise in different areas of the Department's work. The four draft goal areas are as follows:

### Community Outreach, Engagement, and Communication

Community outreach, engagement, and communication includes how the Department conducts notifications, communicates and shares information with the public, and engages community members in all our work. *Planning Divisions: All*

### Regulatory and Design Review

Regulatory and design review relates to how we determine, review, and regulate uses of land and property (such as permits to open a business, construct or alter a building or structure), or make changes to the built environment to implement the Planning Code, the Administrative Code, General Plan, State and Federal Law (environmental or other), design guidelines, and other pertinent local laws. *Planning Divisions: Current Planning, Environmental Planning, Zoning & Compliance, Short-Term Rentals, and Citywide*

### Historic Preservation

Historic preservation relates to how we identify, document, protect, and manage cultural and historic resources such as cultural practices, histories, spaces and buildings. *Planning Divisions: All*

### Policy, Community Plans, and Legislation Development

Policy, community plans, and legislation development is about how the department creates, advises on, and amends policy, community plans, and legislation such as the Planning Code, the General Plan, other relevant City or department policy, plans and law. *Planning Divisions: Environmental Planning, Current Planning, Citywide Planning, Legislative Affairs*

Each of these four or more topic areas will include:

- **Vision:** An aspirational idea of the future.
- **Goal:** An action-oriented statement we are working towards.
- **Root Causes:** The source or why of racial and social inequities exist as they relate to each Department area of work accompanied by **background data** to illustrate the problems we are trying to address.
- **Performance Measures:** For accountability and measuring success on our goals and community results of actions. These will help adjust the Department's actions if success is not being met.
- **Objectives:** Overarching, topic-oriented ideas that will organize the more specific actions.
- **Actions:** Activities we will take in each topic area to advance equity in this area to meet our goals.

## Exhibit B – Racial & Social Equity Phase II Initial Community Engagement and Outreach Summary

In late summer 2019, the Department began an initial round of community engagement and outreach to shape and inform the Racial and Social Equity Phase II Action Plan. The purpose of community engagement and outreach is to:

- Educate the public on the Initiative by sharing the purpose of the outreach effort, outlining the process, and communicating how information will be gathered, used, and reported;
- Equitable and meaningful engagement and input from a diverse group of stakeholders, with a focus on underrepresented communities; and,
- Organize and build capacity by ensuring community members can and know how to participate in the process and engage in implementation, if they desire.

Community engagement efforts to date have included and will continue to include focus groups, information sessions, community meetings, public hearings, interviews with key stakeholders, and potentially an online survey. To date, staff has shared information about the project through calls to some community leaders, presentations at organizations' standing meetings and email updates in addition to developing a one-page summary sheet, a webpage, and an email listserv.

### Summary of Initial Themes

#### Community Outreach, Engagement, and Communication

- **Information can be inaccessible to certain community members**  
Notices, public hearings, and public postings are typically in English and are written in language that can be inaccessible to some community members. Participants shared that the Department and Commissions' communications are overly technical and monolingual unless someone understands how to request interpretation. Additionally, communications, including notification systems, are at times not distributed in a timely manner, difficult to understand and navigate, and inconsistently across geographies. A number of communication methods are not relevant to low-income community members (e.g. mailings, postings, and webpages) and the Department's website is complex to navigate for many people.
- **Access to meetings and workshops can be challenging**  
Pre-application engagement that includes vulnerable populations and is not designed by developers is recommended by community members. Many project sponsors do not know where, when, and how to engage certain community members. Many low- to moderate-income residents find it challenging to engage in Commission and public meeting times, format, and content. The lack of financial compensation, food, and childcare at many meetings do not adequately reimburse people for their time and feedback. Often the Department and City's meetings are uncoordinated. Participants would prefer the Department to direct outreach to existing community groups rather than host a meeting.
- **Limited Department staff cultural competency**  
There is an opportunity to enhance the cultural competency of Department staff through training in community engagement and racial equity. In many cases, Department staff differs racially, ethnically,

and culturally from the communities that they engage. Community members suggested hiring members of the community and partnering with community organizations to enhance cultural competency.

- **Inclusion in outreach and decision-making process can be inadequate**

Community members do not feel adequately included or listened to in engagement efforts, particularly regarding critical housing and transportation issues. Participants perceive the Department to often have a Department-originated idea, to make a decision, and then to come to the community and disregard their ideas afterwards. Participants expressed feelings of disempowerment and being undervalued and suggested enhancing the role and purview of community advisory committees and opportunities to collaborate with the Department. Participants would like for outreach to be a two-way conversation. They would like their voices better elevated to the Board and State.

- **Need for a bold equity voice**

Participants encouraged the Department Director, Planning and Historic Preservation Commission, and the Board of Supervisors to be bold in its action to advance racial equity. Community members suggested adjusting the Department's mission statement.

### Regulatory and Design Review

- **Project and permit application review process is limited in openness to change and socio-economic information**

Participants feel that Department decisions are mostly influenced by a limited number of people who are not socioeconomically or ethnically diverse. Additionally, the design review and implementation processes feel exclusionary, allowing involvement of vulnerable populations to influence decisions too late in the process. The Commissions' decision-making process and case reports do not include a socioeconomic and racial equity assessment when reviewing project applications. Community members would like processes to be more flexible to act quickly and meet community needs. Lastly, community members feel that they lack sufficient access and influence during the pre-application phase to adjust a project to better benefit vulnerable communities.

- **Development influence, design, and location is not sufficiently accessible to all community members**

Participants to date perceive the development community to have tremendous power in the process and receive exceptions from the Department. Community members see the majority of new development being designed for wealthy, single people, for future residents and not current ones or low- and moderate-income residents, and for upscale businesses. Some projects decrease exterior communal spaces in exchange for rooftop or patio spaces that feel exclusionary to some. New market-rate development is disproportionately approved in low-income, communities of color. Participants suggested using the Racial and Social Equity Assessment Tool to review major development projects. They also suggested the Department play a larger role in the community benefit agreement process.

- **Need for community-serving, small business and nonprofit support**

Some participants feel that legacy, small, and community-serving businesses and nonprofits aren't protected or supported sufficiently in the permit process, and that they may experience disparate treatment and less access to the Department compared to developers. Participants suggested creating a process for expediting permit approval for these businesses and nonprofits and a sliding scale for fees.

### Historic Preservation

- **Limited historic and cultural preservation of vulnerable communities**

Some participants feel that the experiences of communities of color are not sufficiently captured in the Department's context statements. They also find it difficult to prove historic and cultural significance to

the Department. They feel that this is in part due to historic preservation lacking in cultural competency and being for and run by mostly wealthy, white people that lacks diversity and equity. Most participants would like histories in the city to be documented, created, and told by cultural historians, community members, and people of the respective cultures. Participants suggested redefining historic preservation with the racial and social equity lens, holistically review preservation decisions, among other ideas.

#### Policy, Community Plans, and Legislation

- **Community planning process is disjointed**  
Participants feel that the Department develops policy and plans in a fragmented fashion and engages the community on a project-by-project manner. The Department could more adequately take cultural norms and practices of an area and community into account when planning. Community members shared that this can further demoralize and marginalize vulnerable communities. Community plans can take too long to develop and become outdated quickly, and lack sufficient actions to counter inequities. Participants suggested community-based plans and housing strategies for each neighborhood facing displacement pressures. Other ideas include a community planning tool similar to the racial and social equity assessment tool and more staff time dedicated to vulnerable communities.
- **Supervisors' projects can be unreliable**  
Community members shared that Supervisor projects and turnover can be challenging for vulnerable communities. Often times, Supervisors develop projects or strategies, manage the community engagement, then leave office and their projects and strategies change or stop altogether. The Department, when involved, could more adequately mitigate this cycle and keep efforts consistent.
- **Need for additional enforcement resources**  
Participants feel that the enforcement function of the Department is severely under-resourced. Community members are concerned that without enforcement, the Department's equity work will not move forward. Participants suggested adjusting enforcement of the Planning Code and zoning violations to be more pro-active.
- **Affordable housing and density bonus projects could better advance equity**  
Community participants feel that more affordable family units could be required. Several would also like a higher affordable inclusionary rate to be reviewed. Some feel that density bonus concessions and waivers give away too much value that disadvantaged communities could benefit from.

#### Staff, Commissioner, and Community Advisory Committees

- **Lack of diversity among staff, Commissioners, and Community Advisory Committees**  
Participants perceive the Department staff to be mostly white, non-local, and of privilege. Community members suggested increasing diversity among staff, create youth internship opportunities, and recruit more Native American, Black and other people of color to work at the Department. Commissioners and Community Advisory Committee members could be diversified by designating seats for community leaders and youth.