

Community Equity Council Meeting

March 18, 2022

Facilitator: Raquel

Council members In Person: Norma, Del, William, Raquel, Mary, Rosa (CCDC for Malcolm Yeung)

Council Members Present Online: Norma, Lara, Ben, Majeid

Staff: Director Rich Hillis, Director Kate Sofis, Miriam Chion, Diana PonceDeLeon, Claudia Flores, Kamene Ogidi, Gina Simi

1. Opening

The facilitator opened the meeting, welcoming William Ortiz-Cartagena to the Equity Council and for William to share a few words. An Equity Council member read the statement acknowledging that the Equity Council's work is done on unceded Ramaytush Ohlone lands. The facilitator shared that Gabriella Ruiz was nominated to the Planning Commission to replace Deland Chan.

2. Updates

Backfilling vacated Equity Council seats: City Planning staff shared the process a Council committee proposed for backfilling Equity Council members, which was used as the process to backfill for Oscar Grande's departure and welcome William Cartagena. The process currently is that when an Equity Council member vacates their seat, current Equity Council members reach out to their networks, considering that a potential candidate is from the same community as the person vacating the seat, ensuring that the potential candidate brings community knowledge, and considering recommendations from the vacating Council member. Additionally, Equity Council members should review previous applicants for the Equity Council. All candidates submit a statement of interest which will be reviewed by a committee of three or four Equity Council members. This committee will recommend one or two candidates to the full Equity Council, and the Equity Council will accept or reject recommended candidates.

Equity Council members unanimously agreed with the backfilling process for any future vacancies.

Sharing Equity Council Strategies: Equity Council members agreed that Equity Council strategies should be shared separately with the different Cultural Districts and related community dialogues. Members suggested that Equity Council strategies should also be shared with other groups including the REP coalition. Planning staff will prepare materials to support Equity Council members in sharing their strategies.

Hiring process: Planning staff shared an update on the Equity Council Strategy related to hiring - "community access to planning jobs". Some Council members shared that if the department means to be more equitable in its hiring practices, it must address the prohibitively long hiring process. Applicants from lower-income communities and Black, American Indian, and other communities of color don't have the privilege of time when looking for employment. Staff acknowledged that the current process inherently biases current employees of the departments, and need to be streamlined to reduce applicant processing time. Planning could invite City staff from the Department of Human Resources,

who are knowledgeable about the hiring process to a conversation with the Equity Council to discuss further improving the process.

3. Community Planning & Investments Dialogue with OEWD & Planning Directors

Director Kate Sofis is invited by the facilitator to share introduce and share about herself. Director Kate Sofis acknowledged the lengthy civil service process, especially considering that she is a new city employee herself. Kate shared about her past founding and running SFMade, her experience working with OEWD, and her agency and Planning as critical partners.

Some Council members shared that American Indian, Black, and other people of color communities have been significant affected by the pandemic and will need consistent support in recovery for years to come. Kate acknowledged that businesses were already challenged pre-pandemic and that in economic recovery, it is important to delve deeper into economic stability and recovery for communities of color while also addressing city-wide structural challenges.

San Francisco's various equity priority communities are in different stages of partnership with OEWD. Some Equity Council members shared that some neighborhoods, such as the Mission, have highly developed relationships with OEWD, resulting in significant economic support. Equity Council members viewed the Mission's relationship with OEWD as a model for partnerships between Cultural Districts and OEWD.

Some Equity Council members felt that Cultural Districts like the American Indian Cultural District are far behind other, more established Cultural Districts and neighborhoods, despite being legacy residents and stewards of the land. Some Council members felt that while younger Cultural Districts are growing, decisions are being made without them. Younger cultural districts need city agencies to proactively outreach and provide support to enable them to be actively involved in decision-making alongside other, more developed Cultural Districts. OEWD can coordinate with Cultural Districts based on their CHHESS priorities.

Some Council members shared that community organizations need consistent funding to both engage in advocacy and small businesses support. Funding precarity is a significant challenge for community organizations currently working with OEWD and having the level of institutional commitment between OEWD and the Mission would help address that precarity. Additionally, the city could provide more support to community-based organizations during the citywide budget process to address funding precarity.

Some Cultural Districts need the City to provide requirements for equitable implementation as well as being held accountable to perform and deliver. A Council member shared that Cultural Districts like the Castro LGBTQ+ Cultural District are in a cultural dynamic in which white men lead conversations while Women, Black people, and trans community members are erased and underrepresented. In this case and other cases, is the responsibility of the city to require parameters for racially and socially equitable development and implementation of CCHES strategies.

The Equity Council discussed how to address vacancies in the city while protecting and supporting neighborhood corridors and local small business. Equity Council members stressed an "equity first"

approach to defining solutions to vacancies and economic development in the city's business centers. That beyond filling vacancies, it is important to be intentional about what businesses occupy formerly vacant commercial spaces.

Director Sofis shared that partnering with large businesses early in the process was critical to ensuring community protections, in addition to simultaneously providing technical assistance to small businesses. Equity Council members shared that the entrance of large businesses with lower price points would increase competition for local small businesses. Director Sofis shared that considering ecommerce, small businesses are already in competition with larger businesses and that ensuring community protections upon the entrance of large businesses is an approach to balancing the need for larger employers while preserving local small business. Creative solutions need to be developed to support the balance of large and small business, for example, collaborating with large and small businesses to create a neighborhood map of businesses in a given industry. Such a map would increase visibility for small businesses and serve as a resource for community members.

Equity Council members asked about mandates to protect communities when companies come into city neighborhoods, noting that some larger companies may not know about local hire. The City has mandates and requirements during the permitting and construction phase of projects and has significantly less jurisdiction once the building becomes occupied by a commercial tenant. Director Sofis shared that early partnership with larger commercial enterprises enabled OEWD to work out requirements and processes like local hire requirements and community benefit agreements. Equity Council members shared that the entrance of IKEA into East Palo Alto, in which community members trained IKEA workers, could serve as a model for a more community-involved partnership with the city and larger enterprises.

Equity Council members shared that diplomacy and advocacy are some of the only tools to protect communities when larger companies with more significant resources enter neighborhoods. While Planning cannot mandate commercial tenants, it can be a meaningful resource to support community needs.

It is also important that city agencies become more proactive, rather than reactive, in listening to community needs and providing support. Because of OEWD's partnerships in the Mission, it is already proactively including community needs in its budget. A challenge for OEWD's proactive support of other communities and all Cultural Districts is the department's current difficulty scaling staff and existing processes to match the growth of new programs. OEWD is currently looking for more staff to support neighborhoods like the Castro or Outer Mission, which like Downtown San Francisco, is challenged by vacancies.

For Planning, proactive engagement means understanding community needs through meaningful community partnerships and co-developing plans. Plans then become frameworks for implementing already-known community needs.

Some Council members shared that part of the City's economic dynamic and vacancy issue is that it isn't great at developing and sharing a strong narrative, leaving conservative voices to claim that the city is unfriendly to larger companies. It is also important for city agencies like Planning and OEWD that are making efforts to work collaboratively and proactively with communities, to communicate openly and widely about ongoing and successful efforts. Some Council members believe that city agencies should be

both communicating and partnering with large businesses in order to bring them into the city with respect to community needs, and communicating externally.

5. Closing

Raquel provided closing words and adjourned the meeting. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 26th at 9 AM.