

## Community Equity Council Meeting

April 26, 2022

Facilitator: William

Councilmembers In Person: Mary, William

Councilmembers Online: Norma, Lara, Majeid, Raquel, Del, Tiffany, Mahsa

Staff: Director Rich Hillis, Miriam Chion, Claudia Flores, Lauren Hiller, Oscar Grande

### 1. Opening

William, as the facilitator, opened the meeting. Mary read the statement acknowledging that the Equity Council's work is done on unceded Ramaytush Ohlone lands. In acknowledgement of National Arab Heritage Month, Lara shared a few words about the Western Asian and North African communities in San Francisco.

### 2. Neighborhood Economic Vitality

Staff opened the conversation about neighborhood economic vitality by first grounding the conversation in the Equity Council strategies that relate to economic vitality. Brief context was provided on what economic vitality strategies are important to our communities, what community components make up a sense of economic vitality, and what strategies and programs exist for SF Planning to support economic vitality.

Then staff and facilitator posed three questions to councilmembers to begin discussion:

- *What strategies should the city prioritize?*
- *What would success look like in your community?*
- *What role could each of you play?*

During the discussion, several recurring themes emerged:

**Equity, not equality** – Councilmembers acknowledged the diversity and unique needs of communities within San Francisco. This diversity in need is summarized in the repeated usage of “equity” - understanding that communities need different types of resources in order to reach the same outcome. One councilmember highlighted that the American Indian community, for example, has been set back and needs targeted resources to identify and capture data about their population. Another councilmember highlighted the need for cultural planning in the Bayview commercial district to support a Black business and cultural community. Some councilmembers advocated the need for neighborhood-specific strategies and resources in service to reaching equity.

**Finding commonality, not fracturing ourselves** – Some councilmembers focused on the need to find inter-community commonalities. They shared concerns about relying too heavily on community- or neighborhood-specific strategies. The reasons for these concerns included a desire to think beyond neighborhood boundaries for their community members, a strategic choice to more effectively advocate for resources and funding, and to avoid fracturing San Francisco, an already small geography, into

smaller neighborhoods. Councilmembers who agreed with this perspective did not deny the unique and disparate needs of communities, like those mentioned above.

**Allowing our communities to be whatever they want to be** – One councilmember shared the example of supporting a Black barber shop choosing a place in San Francisco to open up shop – should they encourage it to open in a historically Black neighborhood when right now it could get more business or possibly better leases in other parts of the city? They didn't think it should be limited in its area, and pointed to examples in Detroit and Atlanta where Black culture and businesses had a vibrant presence across the city rather than limited to a geography. Many councilmembers resonated with this point. Another acknowledged they had focused their work on the Mission but hoped future generations could think beyond those boundaries. Another councilmember affirmed that the community members the Equity Council represents should be able to live across the city, but also chose to make their mark in specific neighborhoods as well. One councilmember summarized this as the desire for a right to self-determination for their communities, the ability to live to their fullest potentials. From Planning, Director Hillis expressed that he hoped the Equity Council could help direct Planning on how to restructure the department's work as to allow communities to drive the conversation.

**Projected scarcity of city resources** – Councilmembers expressed a shared frustration in advocating for funding from the City. While San Francisco reported a budget surplus this year, councilmembers advocating for funding from City Hall were told that this surplus had already been committed, leaving nothing for community asks. This response creates scarcity and contributes to competition between communities. This was one reason why some councilmembers want to focus on citywide or common strategies instead of neighborhood specific, as they are concerned this exacerbates conflicts between communities. One councilmember oriented the issue as not one coming from communities, but one coming from developers and city agencies that hold power and resources. Another further contextualized community asks, stating that their funding proposal to support small businesses in the Mission totaled to only 0.017% of the annual budget. Even that request had been rejected. Director Hillis added that city agencies also get the same message that resources have already been committed, so it is not just a message to community organizations.

### 3. Updates

#### *Community Engagement Resources*

Staff shared a proposed framework to approach how to allocate the \$750,000 budget SF Planning has dedicated to community engagement work with the Planning Department and partner agencies. They identified the nine existing Cultural Districts and four community planning projects, including MAP 2020, Tenderloin Community Action Plan, Fillmore/Western Addition community planning, and Sunset Forward, as current geographies for investment. Staff had also identified three categories to describe the types of programs this budget could support – community reports and data collection, coordination and strategy co-development, and community dialogues and learning.

Councilmembers shared their initial reactions to this framework. They advised SF Planning on the role the department should play in engagement, encouraging more independence from city politics and appointees and critiquing Planning for tokenizing communities in previous engagement campaigns. One councilmember specifically asked for a dedicated Planner to be assigned to work with each Cultural District. Councilmembers Raquel and Mary volunteered to work as a subgroup to further discuss the

allocation of this community engagement budget. Staff will return to this topic with specific proposals in June.

#### *Sharing Equity Council Strategies*

Staff announced that we will continue coordinating with Cultural Districts and other community groups to present the Equity Council's work and strategies in the coming months, aiming to conduct presentations throughout the summer.

#### *Equity Council Member Selection*

Staff announced that they are continuing to compile a list of possible candidates for the Equity Council to consider to replace Malcolm's seat. Staff reminded councilmembers to nominate candidates via an online poll.

#### *Community Access to Planning Jobs*

Staff shared updates on hiring in the department. The department reported increased diversity in recent hires. Equity Council members continue to be involved in the hiring of two Community Equity Division roles - the Communications & Engagement Specialist and the Community Engagement Manager. Upcoming roles will be a Community Development Specialist for the Racial & Social Equity Plan Team and three positions for Tenderloin strategies. Staff reminded councilmembers to suggest community members who may want to participate in the hiring via an online poll.

#### *Oral Histories Project*

Oscar Grande delivered updates from the oral histories project. Filming of councilmembers is almost complete and remaining councilmembers will be scheduled in the coming weeks. SF Planning will also be hosting a community event in June to present the oral histories. Three councilmembers expressed interest in supporting with the community event – Majeid, Del and Mahsa.

## 4. Closing

William closed the meeting with words of gratitude for councilmembers' rich dialogue during the meeting. The next Equity Council meeting will take place on May 24, 2022 at a to be determined time (due to rescheduling needs).