

## Community Equity Council Meeting

August 23, 2022

Facilitator: Anni

Councilmembers In Person: Majeid, Will, Norma, Ben

Councilmembers Online: Raquel, Tiffany, Del, Lara

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

### 1. Opening

Anni opened the meeting followed by a brief mariachi performance by Miguel in celebration of William's birthday. The council then read a land acknowledgement, reminding all that we are on unceded Ramaytush Ohlone land.

### 2. Integrated Community Strategies - Tenderloin

Miriam Chion began the discussion on integrated community strategies by sharing statistics and updates on the intervention in the Tenderloin – a recent example of integrated community strategies. Miriam highlighted some of the many resources and assets the Tenderloin has, such as its extreme diversity in race, language, and age and its strong community networks. Tenderloin residents also face some of the largest challenges of any neighborhood, with 30% of Tenderloin households in poverty and about 35% of the city's overdose cases.

Given these unique and dire challenges, the city has launched several interventions in the last few years with the Tenderloin Emergency Initiative (TEI) being the most recent program. Miriam explained the Planning Department's central role in the final phases of the TEI and the ongoing implementation of the Tenderloin Community Action Plan. Planning will be responsible for the participation of all city agencies and community members, including tasks such as reporting data and organizing community stakeholder meetings.

Miriam invited Del and Lara to speak to their own reflections on and experiences with advocacy and coordinating with the City in the Tenderloin. Del, the founder of Code Tenderloin, spoke emphatically about the need for long-term economic stability for Tenderloin residents delivered through workforce development and employment. Jobs contribute to subsequent benefits, such as housing stability and food security. Del argued that one City agency needs to manage the City's intervention in the long-term. He shared concerns that the current shared responsibility between Planning, Department of Public Health, and Department of Emergency Management will cause community members to be rerouted between departments without response. Del also believes that the federal policies which prevent immigrants from working particularly deprive those communities and encourage them to turn to illegal markets to make a living.

Lara shared her experience advocating for and serving Arab residents, many of which live in the Tenderloin, as Executive Director of AROC. Immigration and foreign policy set at the federal level, she pointed out, play out at the local level in communities like the Arab immigrant communities she serves.

This results in violence and exploitation committed against Arab communities in the Tenderloin. In the City's and Census's data, however, Arab Americans are counted as "white," meaning that their population isn't accurately counted. Without that data, Lara argued, the city is not aware of the Arab community's need for resources and language services.

The Equity Council's discussion following this grounding featured several major themes:

**Citywide solutions instead of pushing problems from neighborhood to neighborhood** – One councilmember expressed their satisfaction regarding positive changes they identified on Tenderloin's streets in the past months. In their experience, many of the open-air drug markets and tent encampments were now gone. However, he also believed that these activities and conditions had been pushed into other neighborhoods, like SoMa and 24<sup>th</sup> St Mission. Another councilmember agreed that the City had a history of shuffling homeless populations across the city rather than meaningfully housing or helping people. Councilmembers shared the belief that the clearing of streets feels prompted by well-placed requests by connected and privileged parties rather than to solve challenges homeless and poor residents face.

**Solidarity over division** – At several points in the conversation, councilmembers shared frank beliefs and feelings about quality of life and immigration issues. While some statements did bring up tensions between marginalized groups and highlighted unique barriers faced by their community, all were shared respectfully. In the vein of identifying structural and citywide issues, councilmembers also shared that they valued working together in solidarity. Categories like "immigrant" and "citizen," for example, were highlighted as constructed categories that could be utilized to divide groups with otherwise shared interests. Another councilmember believed that the focus of their advocacy should focus on the elite, who continue to accumulate power and capital at the expense of marginalized people.

**Unified city response & interagency coordination** – One councilmember observed that the city often left it up to communities to navigate its bureaucracy to access resources and services. This was an unfair burden to shrug onto communities experiencing their own crises. This was despite, as several councilmembers observed, the City and County of San Francisco being one of the most well-resourced municipalities in the country. Director Hillis added that the one consistent positive thing he'd heard regarding the city's COVID-19 response was that it was the first time that the federal, state, and municipal agencies acted in coordination. Councilmembers agreed that it was the City's responsibility to provide a unified response to community needs and that it had failed to do so many times in the past.

### 3. Updates

#### *Housing Element*

Following a recent letter submitted to the city from the state, Miriam summarized feedback from California's Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) review of San Francisco's Draft Housing Element. Their comments primarily identified three areas of improvement for future drafts of the Housing Element: identifying clear housing stability and affordability actions, improving the analysis of sites for future housing, and assessing the approval process for housing projects. Miriam and Rich emphasized that HCD's feedback was not a rejection of San Francisco's Housing Element. In fact, Planning received positive feedback about the Housing Element's racial and social equity framework.

Separate but parallel to the Housing Element drafting and review process, Miriam explained that the state is also conducting an audit of San Francisco's entitlement process. HCD is only conducting this review in San Francisco because of unique complaints HCD received about San Francisco's housing entitlement process.

Councilmembers expressed continued interest in the Housing Element's drafting and review process. One councilmember emphasized, however, that they only wanted to be consulted if the Housing Element could still be changed based on councilmember and community feedback. Miriam clarified that the Housing Element was still very much in draft phase and proposed that the Equity Council delve into the topic again in September.

#### *OEWD "Economic Core" Economic Development Grant*

Following last month's discussion on economic development and downtown, Miriam brought forward a new economic development grant for development in the economic core that OEWD shared earlier in August by a councilmember. Several councilmembers expressed interest in applying for this grant or other OEWD grants with their organizations. Councilmembers will coordinate with one another on potential partnerships.

#### *Community Equity Updates at Planning Commission*

Miriam shared that Planning is scheduling several presentations to update the Planning Commission on progress towards the [Equity Resolution](#) and [Equity Plan](#). Some councilmembers shared support for these public updates and added that they believe that Equity Council members or partner community organizations should also participate in these presentations to ensure the department is being accountable on delivering.

## 4. Closing

Anni closed the meeting and reminded councilmembers that the next Equity Council meeting will take place on September 27, 2022 from 4-6pm.