

# REENVISIONING THE PLANNING COMMISSION

**MILLICENT  
JOHNSON**

**SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING COMMISSION**

















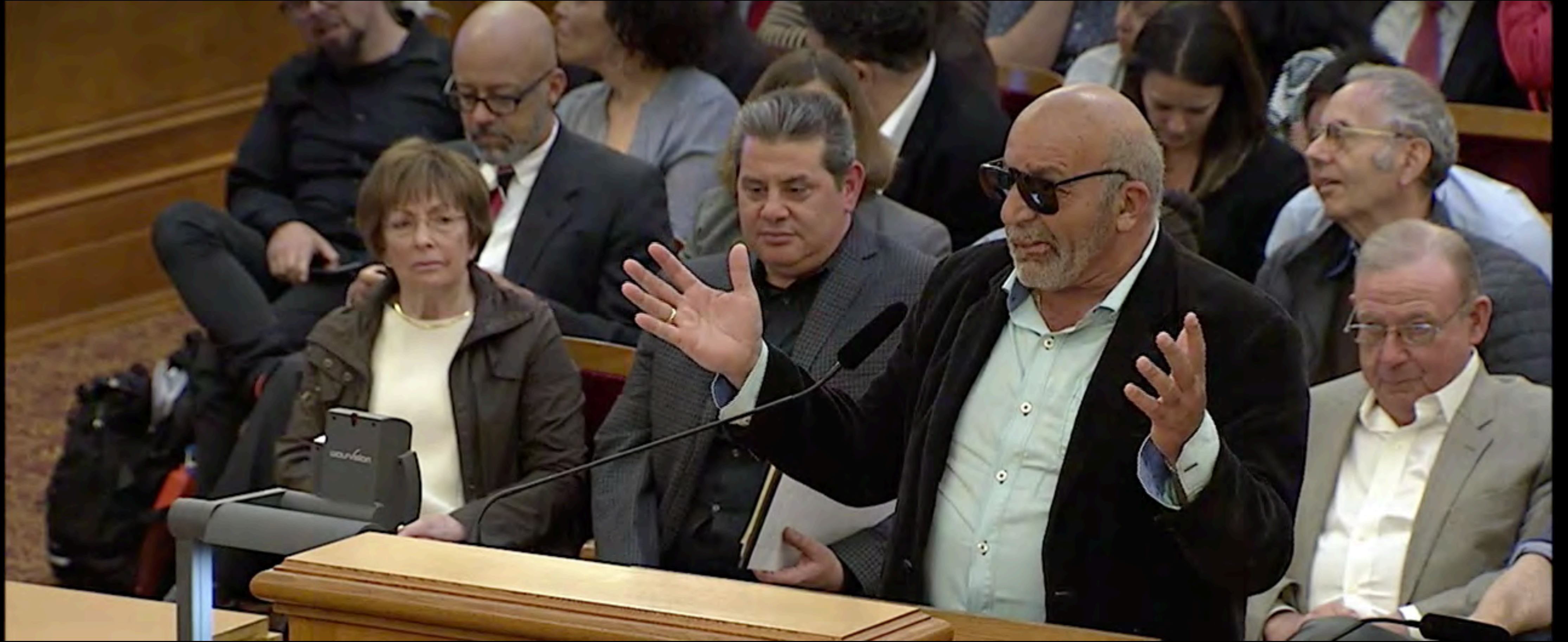




























# CHIRAG BHAKTA

MISSION HOUSING

**“REVOLUTION IS BASED ON LAND.**

**LAND IS THE BASIS OF ALL INDEPENDENCE.**

**LAND IS THE BASIS OF FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND**

**EQUALITY.”**

**Malcolm X**



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**“PLANNING IS NOT SIMPLY A TECHNICAL OCCUPATION,  
IT’S A POLITICAL OCCUPATION; THAT PLANNING EFFECTS  
WHO WINS AND LOSES WITHIN THE PHYSICAL, SOCIAL,  
AND ECONOMIC STRUCTURE OF A CITY.”**

**Susan Fainstein**

scholar of urban planning, Harvard University

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FIGURE 20.  
Cumulative Percent Change in Number of Households Since 1990 by Income Group in 2000 and 2015, San Francisco and Bay Area

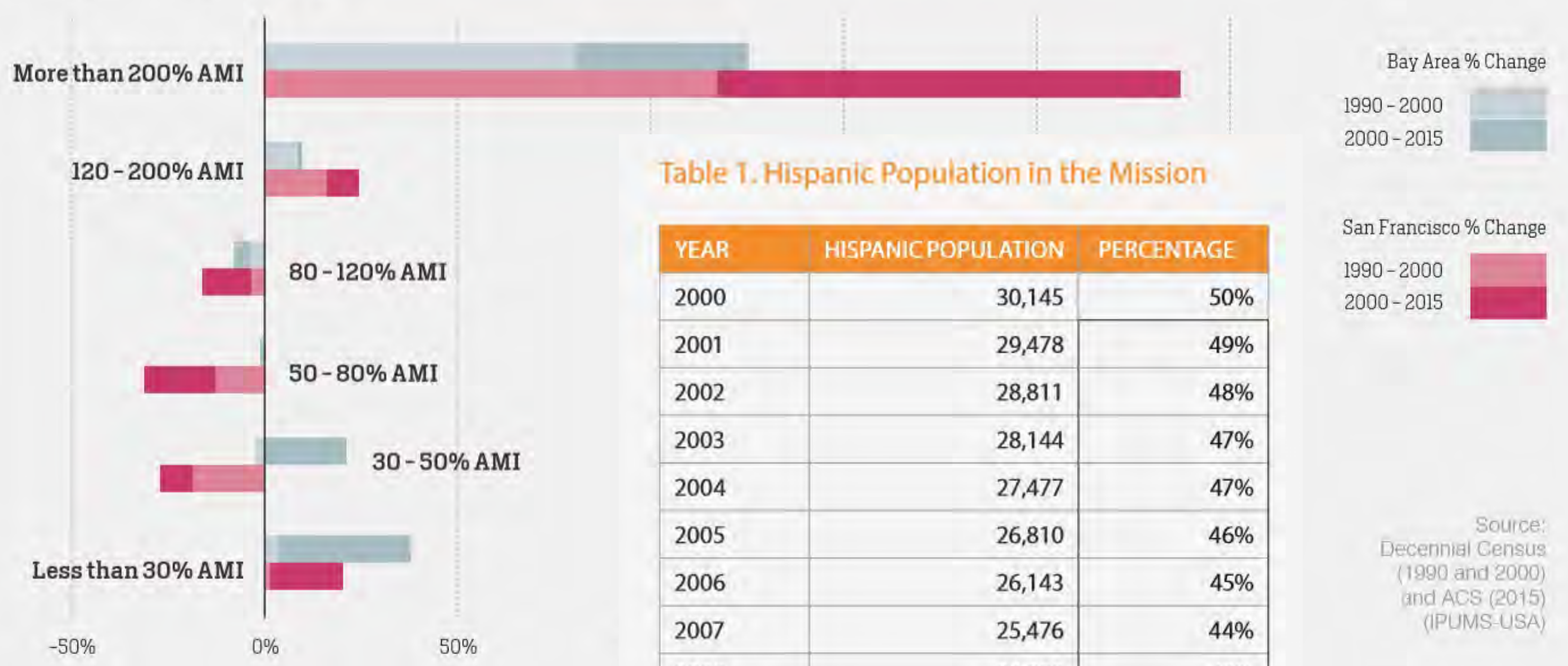


Table 1. Hispanic Population in the Mission

YEAR	HISPANIC POPULATION	PERCENTAGE
2000	30,145	50%
2001	29,478	49%
2002	28,811	48%
2003	28,144	47%
2004	27,477	47%
2005	26,810	46%
2006	26,143	45%
2007	25,476	44%
2008	24,809	43%
2009	24,066	41%
2010	23,475	41%
2011	21,043	38%
2012	21,623	39%
2013	21,893	38%
2014	22,058	39%
2015	22,707	39%
2016	22,694	39%

Source:  
Decennial Census  
(1990 and 2000)  
and ACS (2015)  
(IPUMS-USA)

“PLANNING IS NOT SIMPLY A  
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**REDLINING WAS “PLANNED”**

**REDEVELOPMENT WAS “PLANNED”**

**GENTRIFICATION WAS “PLANNED”**

**DEMOCRACY.**

**COMMUNITY.**

**ADAPTABILITY.**

## Democracy

*“the right to participate as equal partners at every level of decision-making, including needs assessment, planning, implementation, enforcement, and evaluation.”*

**Remove Barriers**

**Elected Positions**

**Accessible + Participatory**

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## Community

*“...by establishing the criteria and content of justice by submitting the issue to the people who have to live in the societies to which it is applied.”*

**Beyond Outreach**

**Frontline Planners**

**Neighborhood Hearings**

## Community

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# Community



## Adaptability

*“There is a strong predilection these days to regard the future of urbanization as already determined by the powers of globalization and of market competition.”*

**Strengthened Hyper-*(hella)*localities**

**Sustainable Communities**

## Adaptability

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**Sustainable Communities**

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Strengthened Hyper-*(hella)*localities

Sustainable Communities





- Land exploitation
- Gentrification
- Twitter Urbanists / Nextdoor Racism

*marginalized communities systematically disenfranchised by exploitative political and economic structures*

**“AWARENESS OF EXPLOITATION, AND ATTEMPTS TO CHALLENGE IT, BRING US CLOSER TO REALIZING THE OFTEN UNFULFILLED PROMISE THAT CITIES HAVE LONG REPRESENTED—THE PROMISE OF LIBERATION AND OPPORTUNITY.”**

**James Connolly**

Barcelona Lab for Urban Environmental Justice and Sustainability

**Justin Steil**

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

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# **RON MIGUEL**

**BETTER MARKET STREET  
COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

# NEIGHBORHOOD ACTIVIST

Planning Association for the Richmond  
Dogpatch Neighborhood Association  
Potrero Boosters

Planning Commission – Past President

# PLANNING COMMISSION

- ADVISE RECOMMEND
- Mayor
- Board of Supervisors
- Departments

# ISSUES

- LAND USE
- CURRENT PLANNING
- TRANSPORTATION

# MAINTAIN

- SAN FRANCISCO
- GENERAL PLAN



# GENERAL PLAN

- Land Use
- Circulation
- Housing
- Open Space
- Noise
- Safety
- Conservation

# WHO INITIATES CHANGE ?

Board of Supervisors ? ? ?

- Department ? ? ?
- Commission ? ? ?

# COMMISSION

- *Passive -- After the fact*
- *Active – Original Input*

# COMMISSION

- Reactive to BoS – Department
- Proactive / Initiate / Make the First Move

# SEATS - POLITICAL

- Mayor / Board of Supervisors
- Four-year term
- Overlap terms

# SEATS -- GEOGRAPHIC

- SEVEN DISTRICTS ???

# TERM LIMITS ?

- TWO
- 4-YEAR TERMS

# SEATS -- DESIGNATED

Architect

- City Planner

- Landscape Planner



# SEATS - GEOGRAPHIC

- Divide San Francisco into 7 “Planning Districts”

# COMMITTEES ? ?

- DRs - Discretionary Review
- Legislation Review
- Code Changes – Review / Propose

# CODE CHANGES

- Conditional Use
- Form Based Design
- NCD – Neighborhood Commercial Districts

# QUESTION DELAYS

- LARGE PROJECTS

- Parkmerced

- Treasure Island

- Hunters Point

- 2011

# ENFORCEMENT

- Sign Ordinance = great
- Academy of Art violations = years & years & years

# INTERFACE

STAFF

- EARLY

- MID-PROJECT

# TERM LIMITS ?

- 2 - 4-year terms

# S F ARTS COMMISSION

- Planning Commission President = ExOfficio
- Civic Design Committee



# **CINDY WU**

**CHINATOWN COMMUNITY  
DEVELOPMENT CENTER**





**CHINATOWN IS NOT FOR SALE!**  
**EVICT THE PROFITEERS OF MASS DISPLACEMENT**

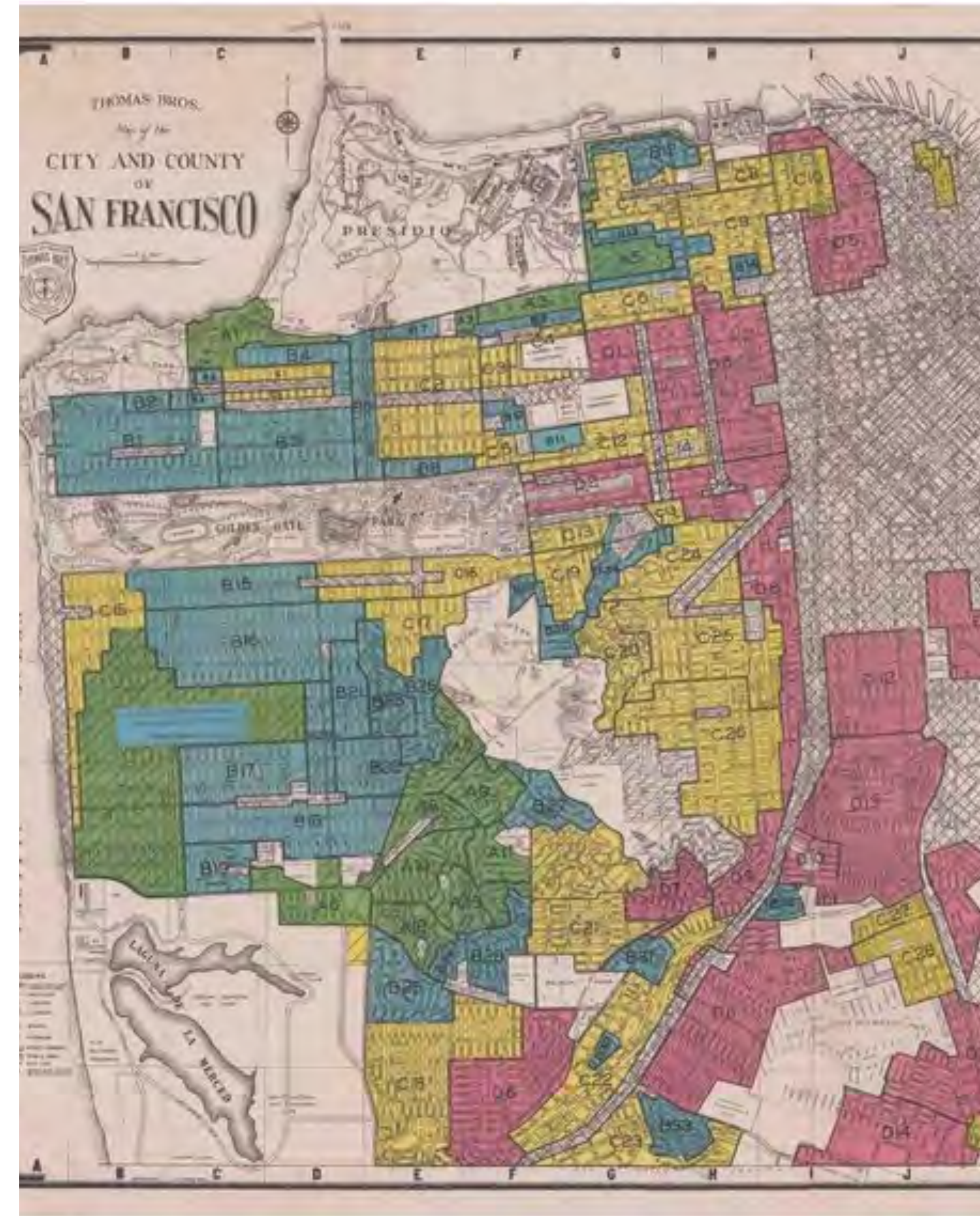
For the last several months there has been widespread public pressure demanding the removal of Warren B. Kanders from the board of The Whitney Museum. Kander's company Safariland manufactures tear gas used on migrants at the Mexican border; and supplies military equipment to the NYPD and U.S. military forces. Museums, like the Whitney that take public funds, have no business allowing a war profiteer of state violence on their board. Millionaires like Kanders, who profit from making weapons that are used against our communities have no place on the Boards of our public institutions, museums and schools.

On the heels of this successful effort, we call on all cultural institutions to resist being tools and profiteers of state violence, of mass displacement and gentrification.

On Friday, May 17th we invite you to join us on an anti-displacement walking tour and public action in Chinatown.



We must recognize that government and the planning profession have historically played a significant role in creating and allowing racial and social inequity to continue, and therefore have a large responsibility to change inequitable practices.





A block bounded by Turk, Laguna, Eddy and Buchanan streets is cleared out in 1953.



**HIP! HURRAH!**  
**CHINESE EXCLUDED**  
—The—  
Democratic Chinese Exclusion Bill  
Has Been Signed by  
**OUR DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENT**  
Hip! Hurrah! The White Man is on Top.  
Let every DEMOCRAT and all other GOOD Citizens turn out and Ratify this  
**DEMOCRATIC MEASURE**  
At the  
**HORTON HOUSE PLAZA**  
This Wednesday Evening at 8 O'clock.  
**To-Night**



PROFESSION  
DEPARTMENT  
COMMISSION







# PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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Public as  
the client

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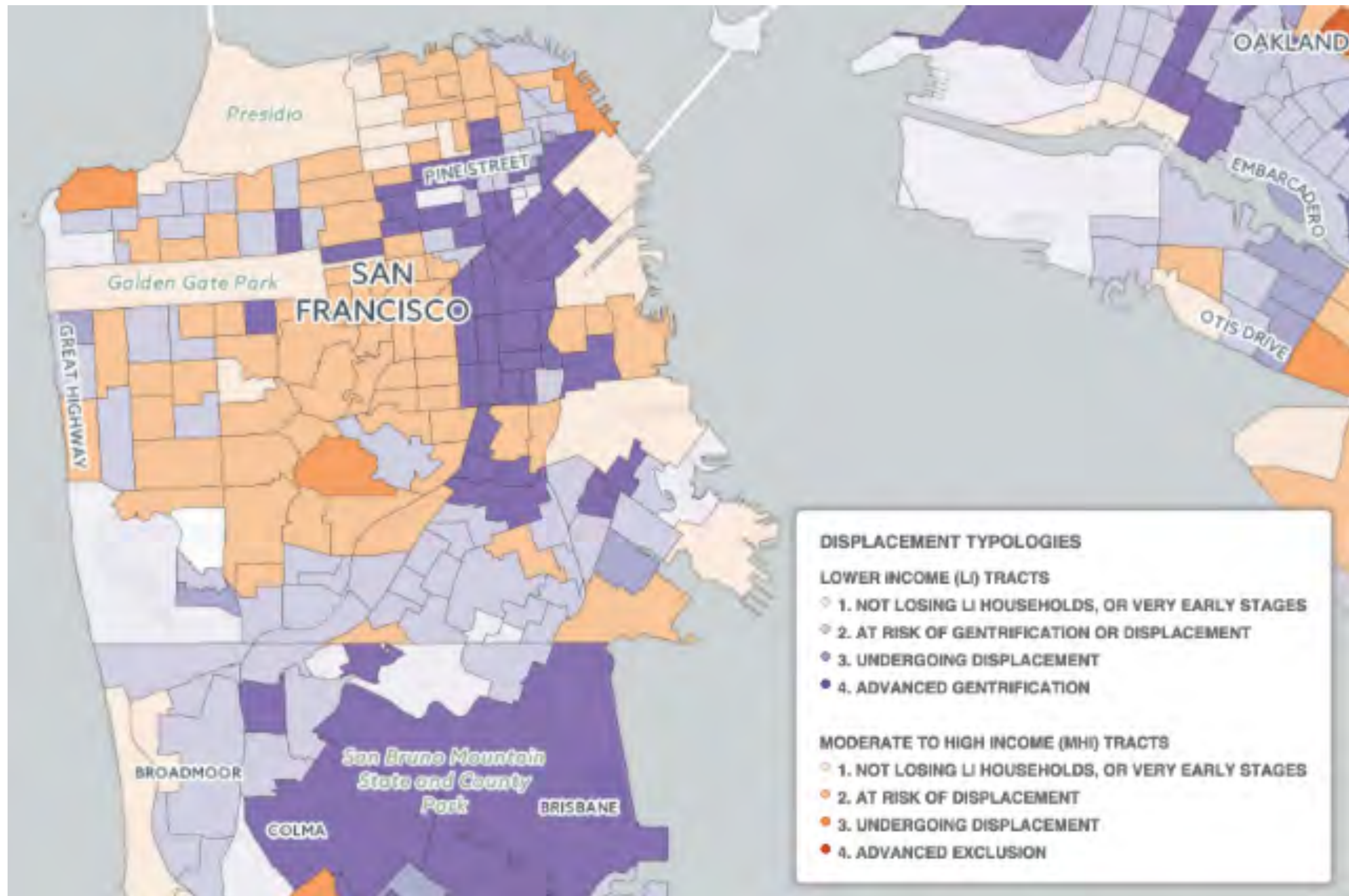
Learn the city

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# Learn neighborhoods

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# PLANNING COMMISSION















**TYRA  
FENNEL**

**IMPRINT CITY**



IMPRINT·CITY



**IMPRINT·CITY**





**IMPRINT·CITY**





**IMPRINT·CITY**



First hand  
experience  
with the  
planning  
process





- The City should provide better access to planning process information for small developers.
- What's the Mobile P.I.C.?
- A better formula for how community benefits are leveraged from all developers.

**MICHAEL  
YARNIE**

**SOCIAL CONSTRUCT**

*Less is more*

# - Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1947)





but, in some circumstances,  
more is better.  
not all circumstances.



more process & time does not  
guarantee better outcomes



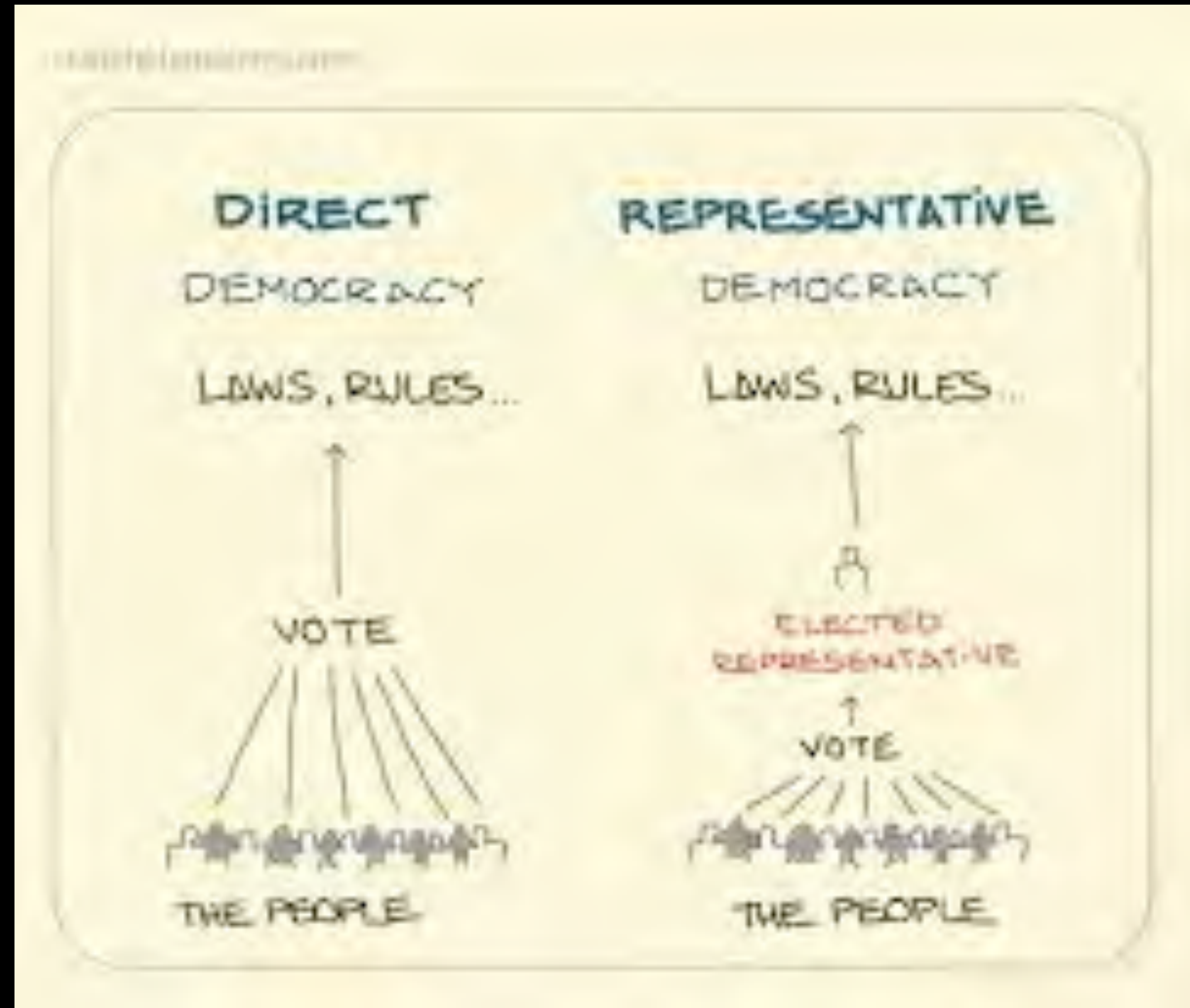
less time, more quality



less direct democracy



# more representative democracy



less public “participation”  
after plan adoption



more public engagement &  
collaboration  
during plan adoption





more goal-setting & policy-making



# more plan-making & deliberation



# more plan implementation & fiscal accountability tools



less “neighborhood first” thinking



more citywide & regional  
perspective



fewer planning code pages



fewer discretionary decisions  
after plan adoption



fewer discretionary decisions  
after plan adoption





more “as-of-right” approvals  
after plan adoption



“More” is not better.

It takes discernment to do less.

Do less.

# LAURA FOOTE

**YIMBY ACTION**



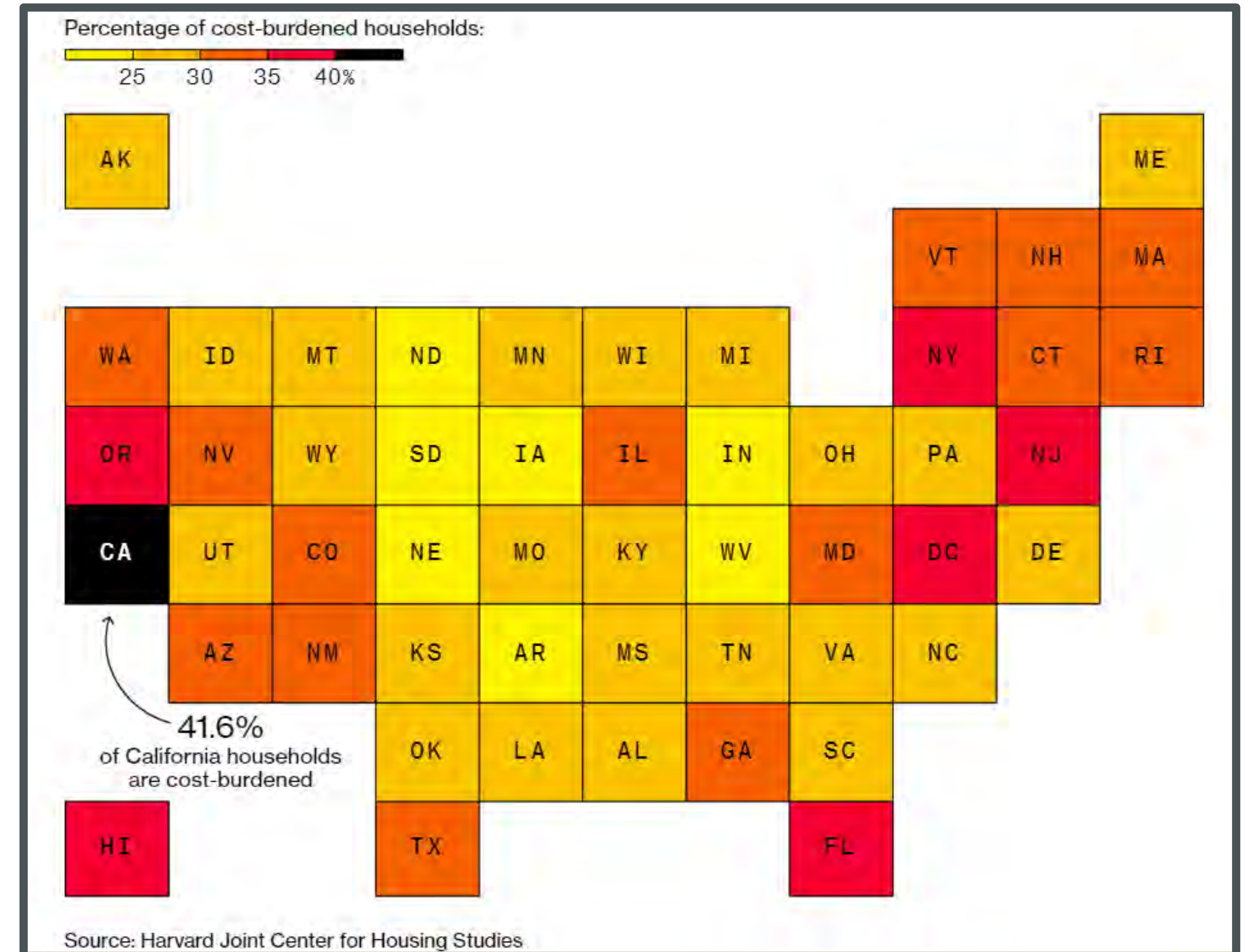
**YIMBY**  
**ACTION**

# HOUSING IS WAY TOO EXPENSIVE

## SIGNS OF A HOUSING SHORTAGE INCLUDE:

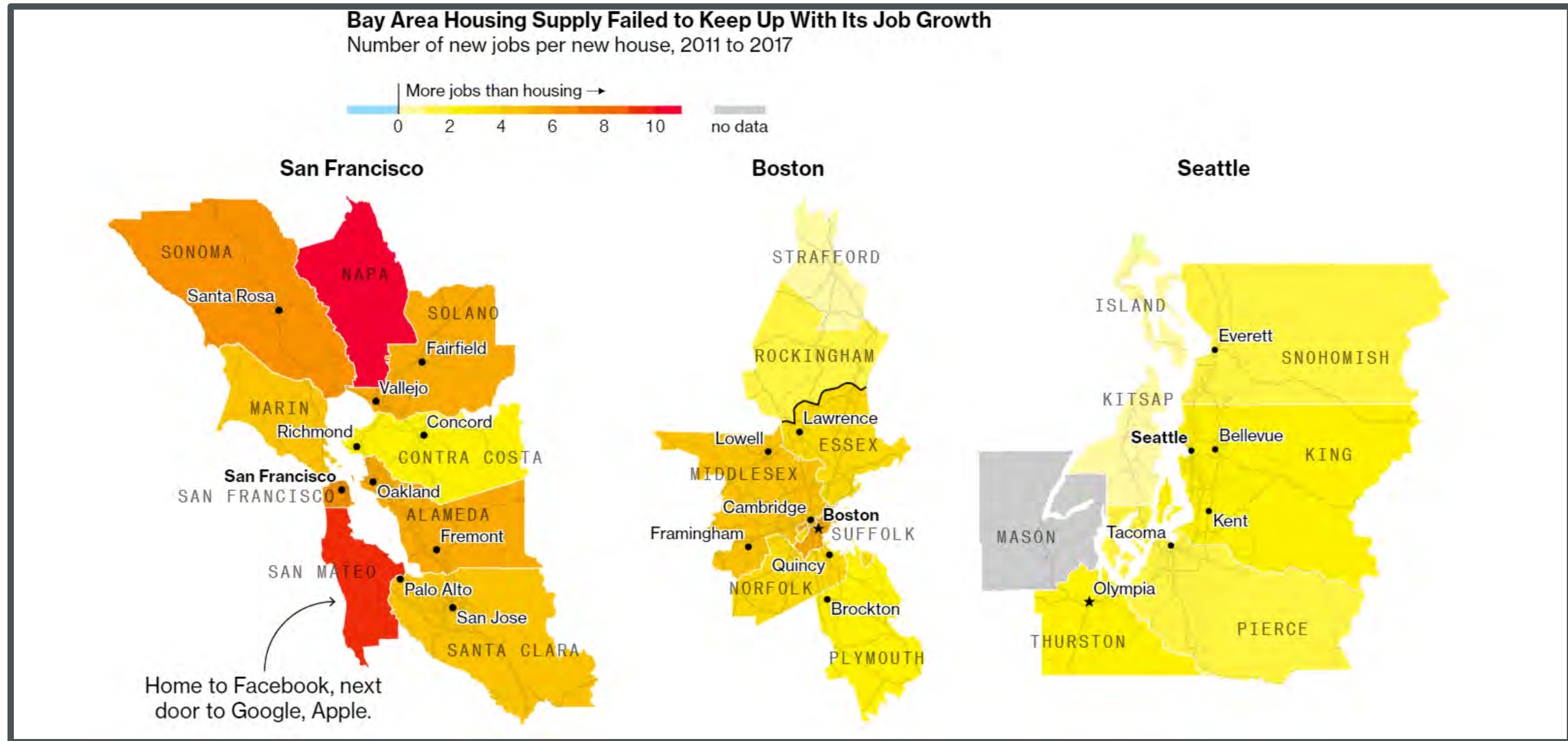
- RENT SPIKES
- LONG WAITING LINES
- SPECULATION
- DISPLACEMENT
- OVERCROWDING
- HOMELESSNESS

WORKING FAMILIES ARE PUSHED OUT AND DOWN.



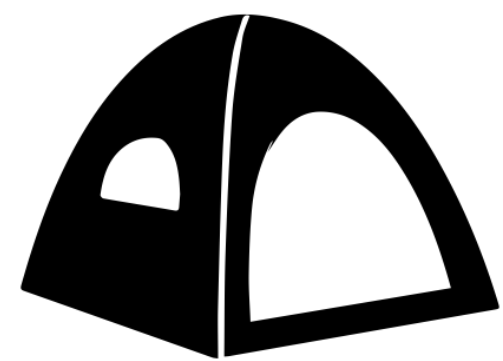
# SHORTAGE OF HOMES NEAR JOBS

## HIGH PRICES & LONG COMMUTES

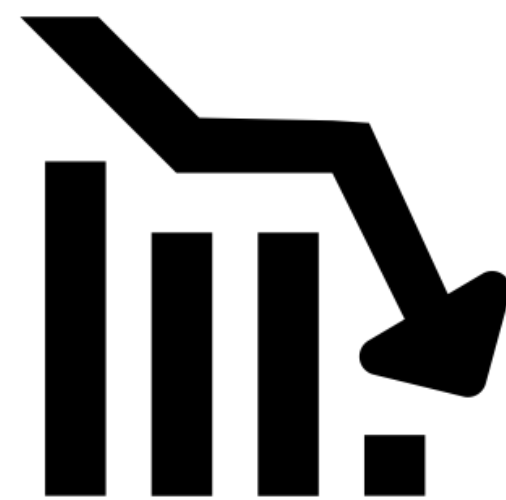


Source: [Bloomberg](#)

# THE HOUSING SHORTAGE IS BAD FOR...



PEOPLE



THE ECONOMY



THE ENVIRONMENT

# YIMBY POLICIES FOR ABUNDANT HOUSING

## THE CORE FOUR



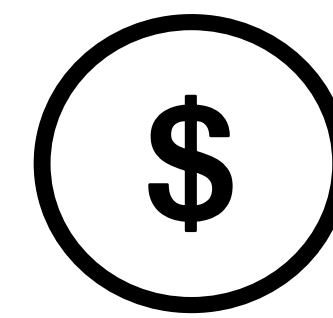
### INCREASING ZONED CAPACITY

Often called "upzoning" this includes legislation ranging from legalizing Accessory Dwelling Units to ending apartment bans.



### IMPROVING PERMITTING

This legislation includes CEQA reform, "by right" or "as of right" permitting, and post-entitlement reform.



### FUNDING FOR SUBSIDIZED AFFORDABLE

This legislation includes bonds for Affordable Housing and increasing Section 8 funding.

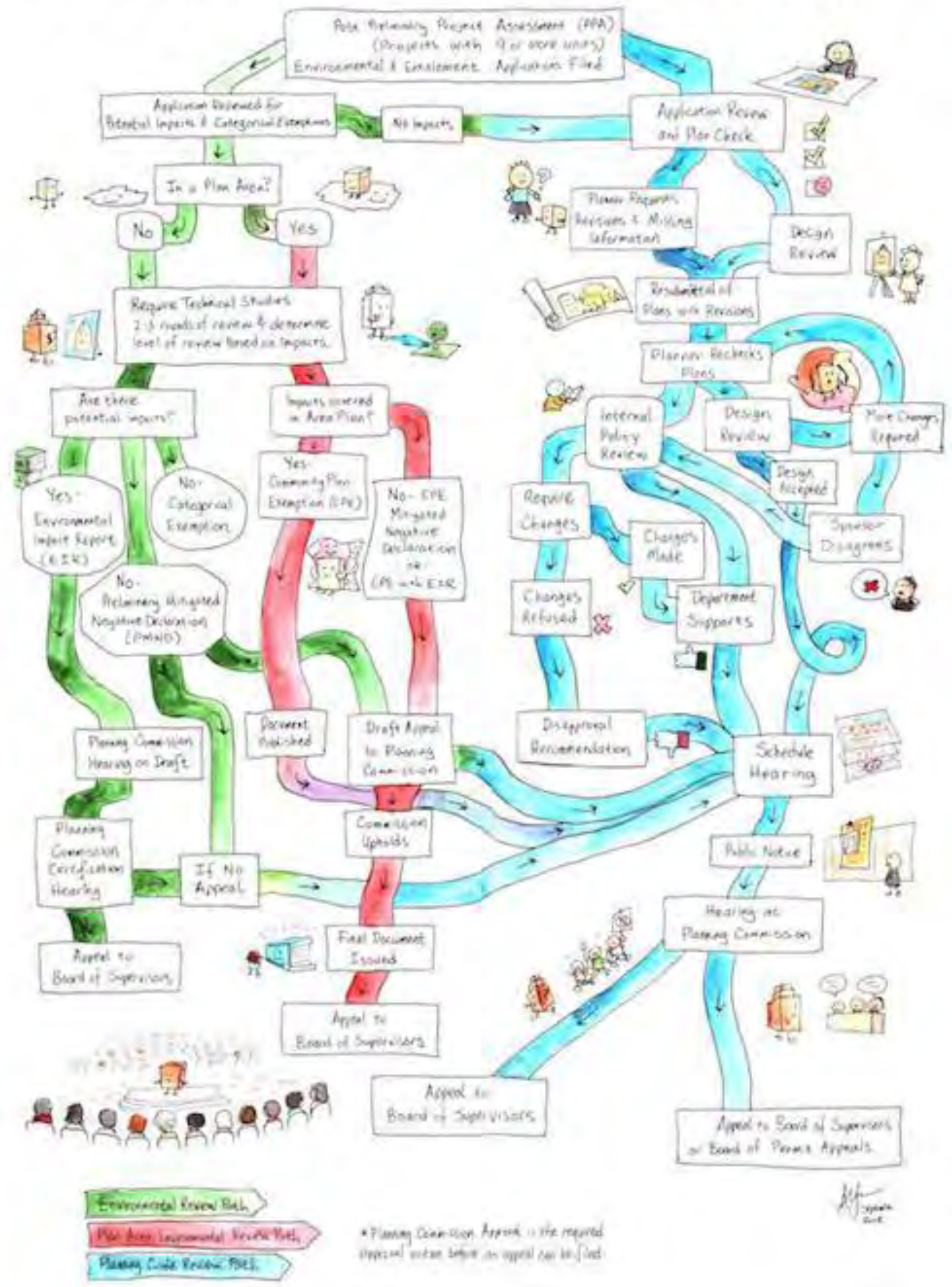


### CHANGING BAD INCENTIVES

Bad incentives range from requiring parking to be built with housing to tax policies like Proposition 13.



# San Francisco Planning Approvals Process



**THE SAN FRANCISCO PERMITTING PROCESS IS...**

**ABUSED,  
OPAQUE,  
UNJUST,  
ARBITRARY,  
TIME-CONSUMING,  
EXPENSIVE,  
CORRUPT,  
BIASED,  
INEQUITABLE,  
AND UNPREDICTABLE.**

# HOUSING ENDS UP AT THE UNELECTED PLANNING COMMISSION...



**The Planning Commission  
adjudicates projects  
one at a time  
without consistent rules.**

**Decisions are easily  
influenced.**

# WHO'S THE BOSS?\*

PLANNING COMMISSIONERS

APPOINTED BY MAYOR & SUPS

COMMUNITY MEMBERS WHO CAN SHOW UP

PLANNING DEPARTMENT HEAD

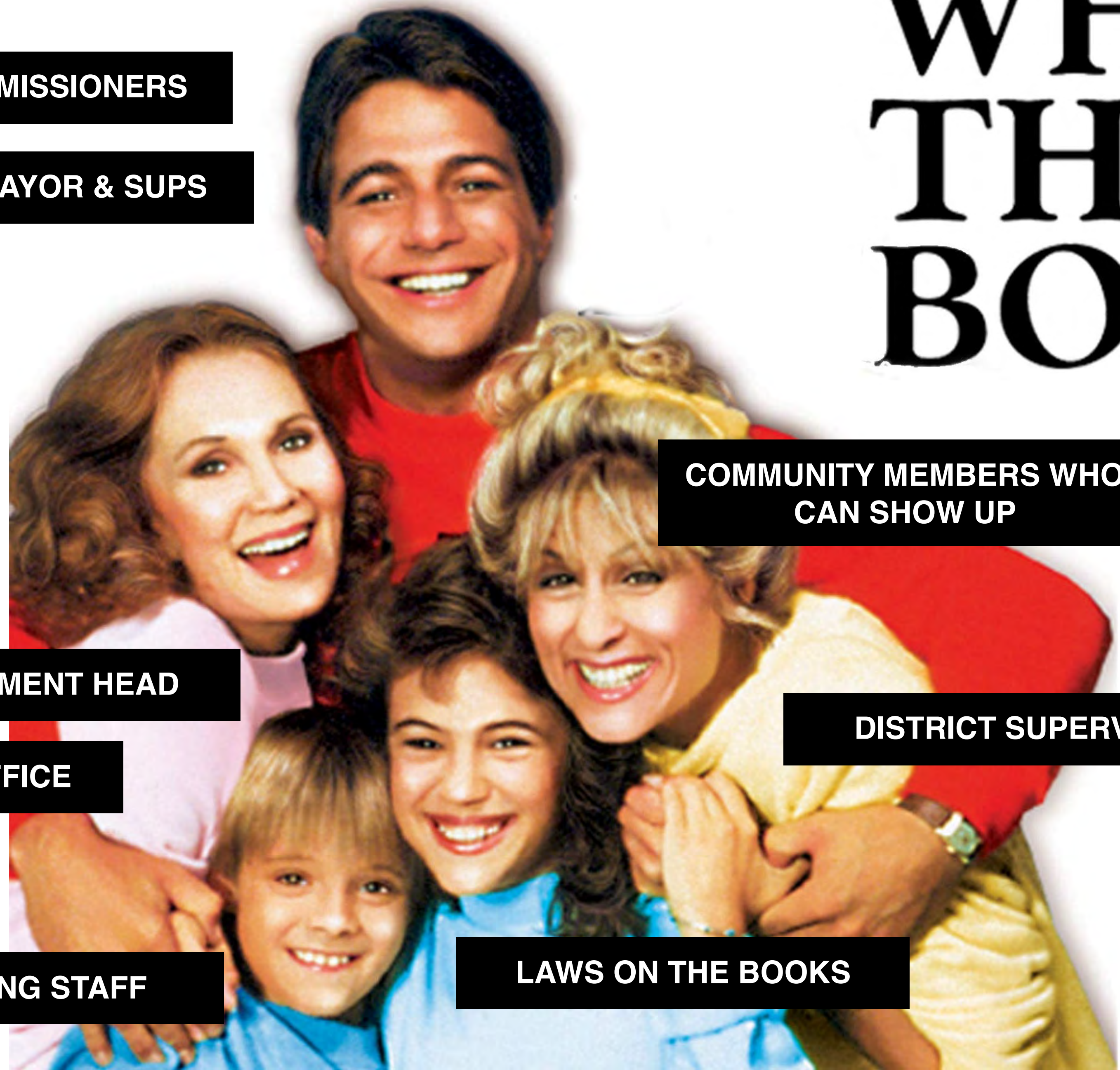
MAYOR'S OFFICE

DISTRICT SUPERVISOR

PLANNING STAFF

LAWS ON THE BOOKS

\* EXCEPT EVERYONE HATES ONE ANOTHER



## **Creates bias in participation.**

How can we ever accurately interpret disinterest in participating in project-by-project decisions?

## **Increases cost of housing production.**

Both Affordable and Market Rate Developers have greatly inflated costs due to unpredictability.

## **Enables corruption in the system.**

What exactly are the rules? Who do you have to pay off to get your project approved?

## **Facilitates favoritism and even more costs**

If a developer has to hire someone to teach them how things work, the system is failing. Permit Expediter should not be a job.

# **Project-by-project decision-making is breaking us.**

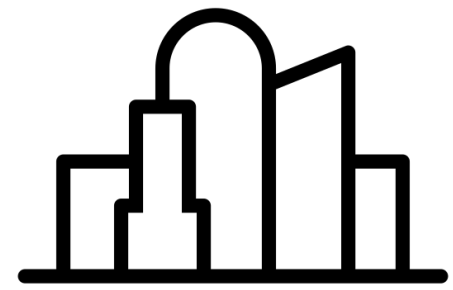
**AND IT MAKES  
ADDRESSING THE  
HOUSING SHORTAGE IMPOSSIBLE.**

everyone gets a sense of corruption  
neighbors get paid off  
inconsistent rules  
planners cannot give accurate advice  
advocates are exhausted  
well-connected can manipulate the system  
wealthy can engage better  
non-working have disproportionate power  
people who care “in general” are unheard  
cottage industry of permit expeditors  
obstructionists win  
ever-shifting standards for developers  
missing middle housing is lost  
housing construction costs go up  
nda’s are commonplace  
vital projects are scaled back  
many projects are never proposed  
wealthy neighborhoods have more power  
reinforces racist land use patterns  
graft is commonplace  
city-wide needs are disregarded  
meetings are exhausting and boring  
rich neighbors fight over who gets a deck  
politically connected win  
rookies give up  
lawyers make lots of money  
planners hate their jobs  
affordable housing is scaled back  
homeless housing requires organized support  
everything feels petty and sad  
everyone yells

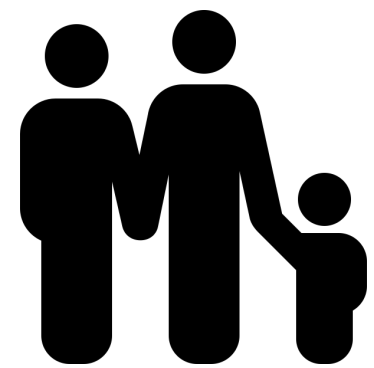
**THE PLANNING COMMISSION  
SHOULD...**

**PLAN**

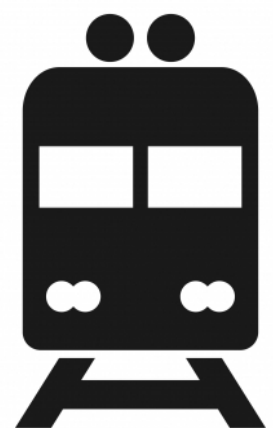
# PLAN ON A BIG SCALE!



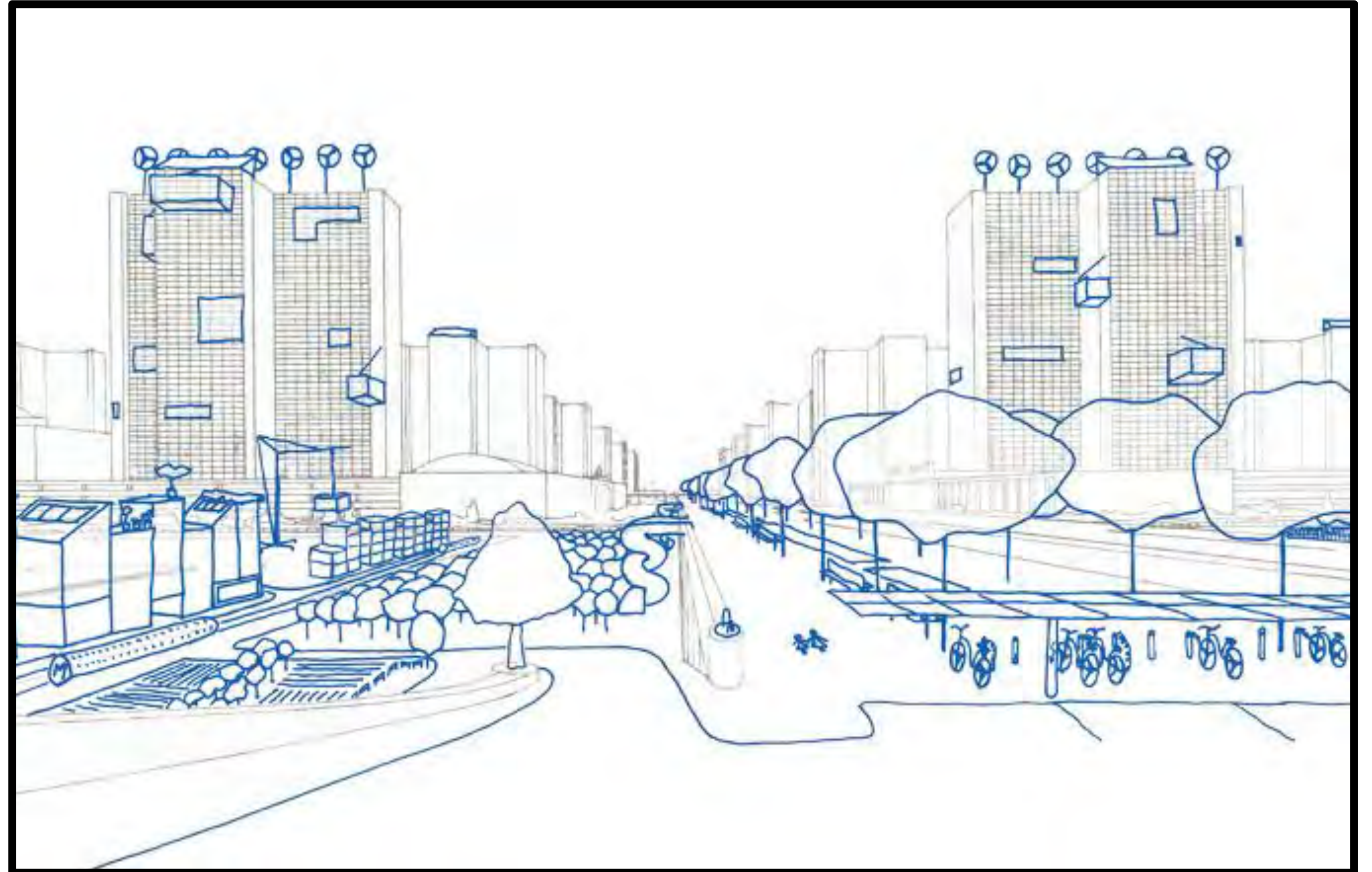
WHAT DO WE NEED  
FOR THE LONG  
TERM?



HOW CAN WE MEET  
CITY-WIDE POLICY  
GOALS?

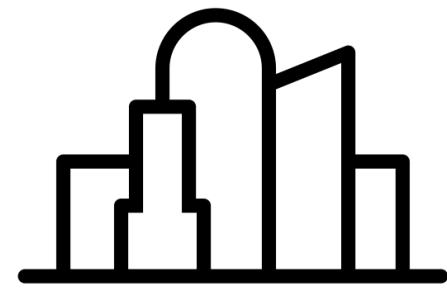


HOW WILL OUR  
INFRASTRUCTURE  
GROW?

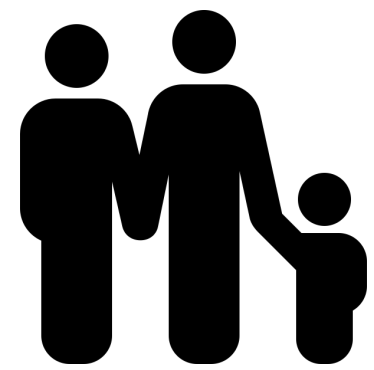




# MAKE A JUST PLAN



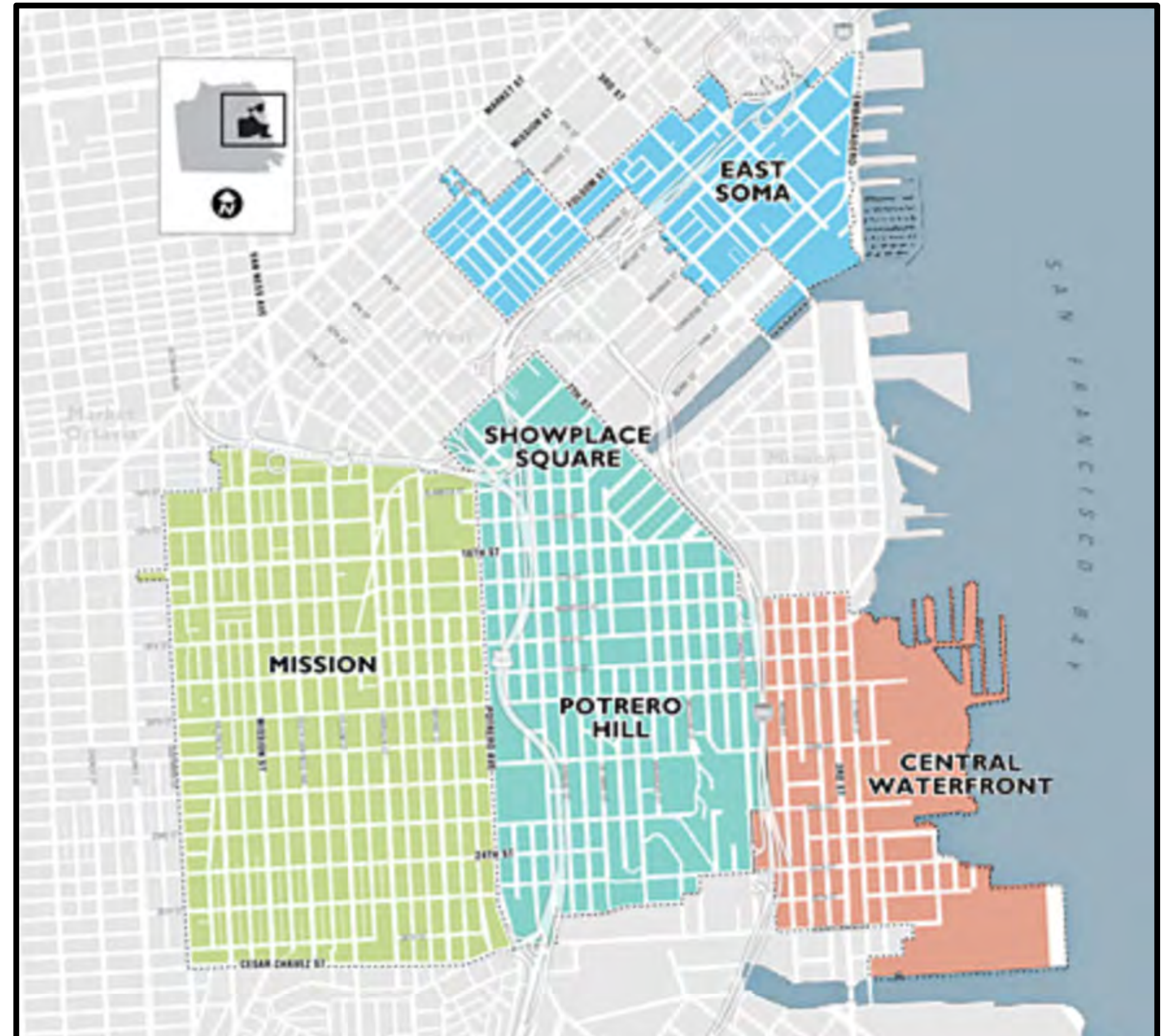
**THE EASTERN  
NEIGHBORHOODS  
PLAN IS UNJUST**



**LAWS MUST APPLY  
EQUALLY TO  
EVERYONE**



**MEASURE  
OUTCOMES AND  
ASSESS PROGRESS**



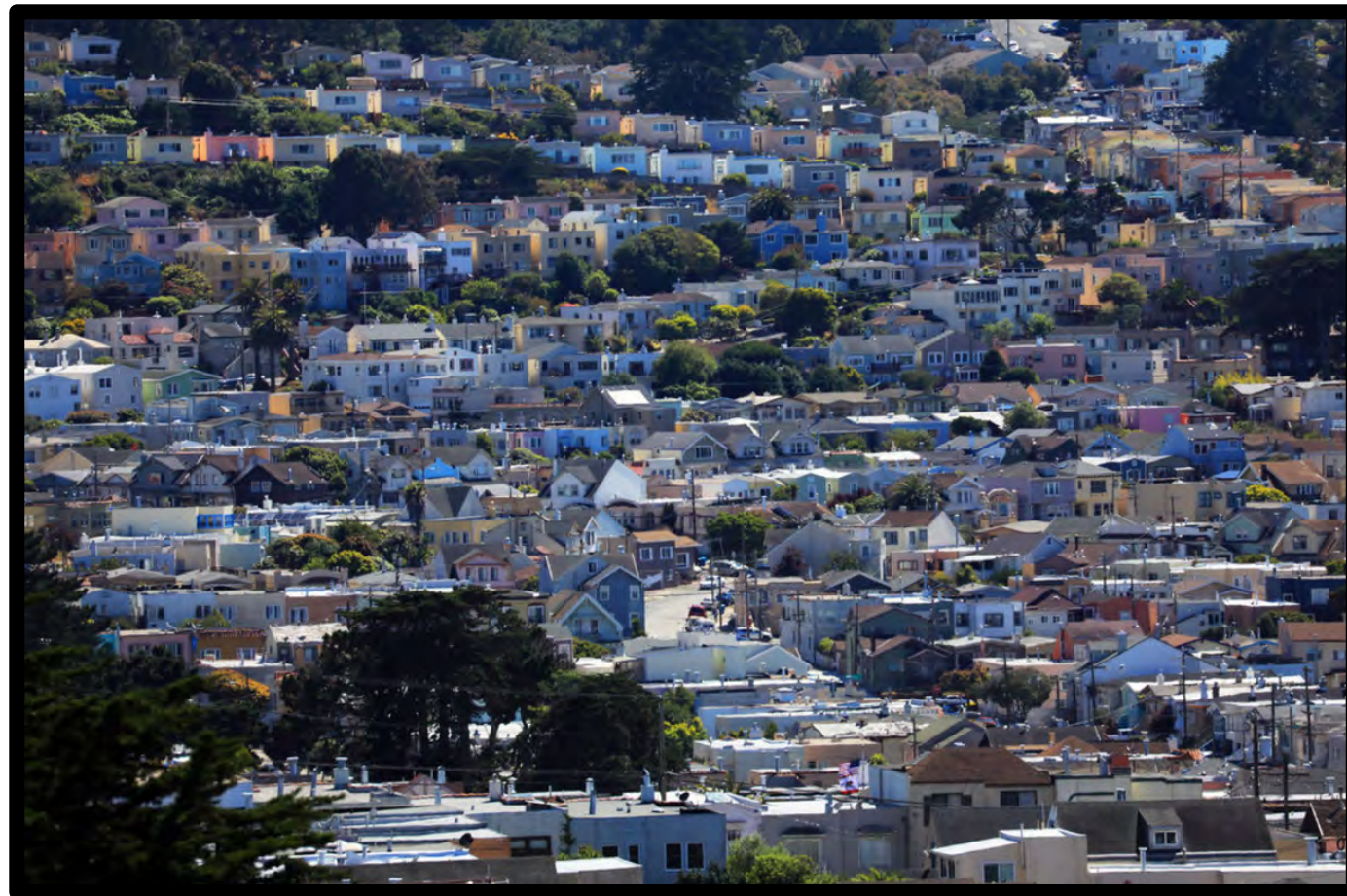
# IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

The technical term for this proposal is **BY RIGHT permitting for all housing.**

Once you have set aside project-by-project decisions, the Planning Commission should focus on proposing rules that apply equally to every neighborhood and investigate if our regulations are working to achieve our stated policy goals.

# WHO MIGHT OBJECT TO THIS CHANGE?

**BUT MY VIEWS!**



**Kinda just NIMBYs.**

**EQUITY IN HOUSING!**



**These folks are not NIMBYs**

**FAIR WAGES!**



**Organized Labor**

# **SOLUTIONS MIGHT INCLUDE:**

**DIRECT RECURRING GOVERNMENT  
INVESTMENT IN AT-RISK COMMUNITIES  
THAT THEY DON'T HAVE TO FIGHT FOR.**

**RULES THAT PROTECT TENANTS  
AND A RENTAL REGISTRY**

**STANDARD LABOR AGREEMENTS**

**HOUSING IN EVERY NEIGHBORHOOD**



**PLANNING IS SUPPOSED TO  
HELP US MANAGE CHANGE.**

**Building housing is complicated.  
Not building housing is way more complicated.**

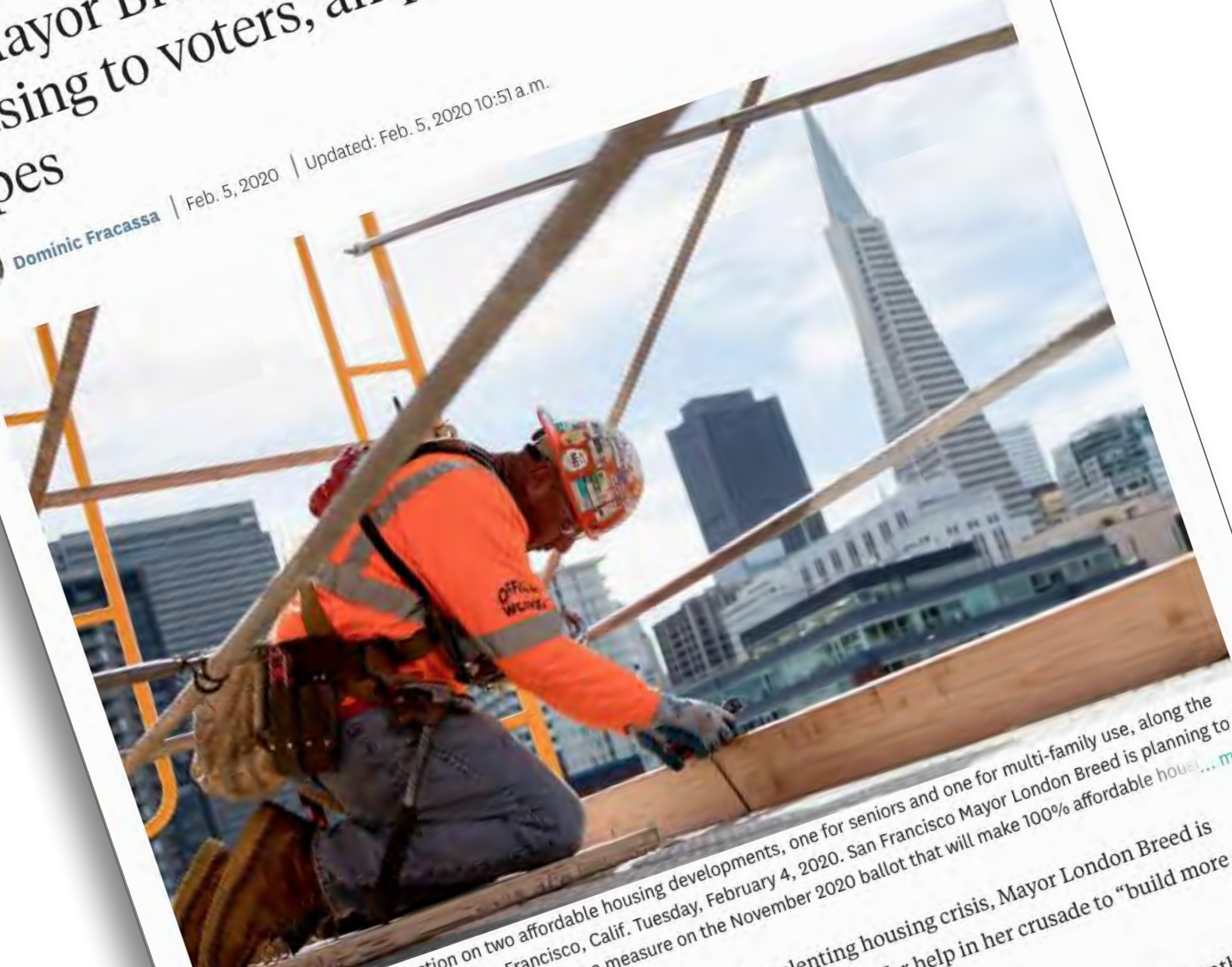
*Illustration by YIMBY artist Alfred Twu*

San Francisco Chronicle

LOCAL ELECTION 2020 SPORTING GREEN FOOD BIZ+TECH CULTURE DESK DATEBOOK US & WORLD OPINIO

# SF Mayor Breed wants to take battle for housing to voters, amping up fight with supes

Dominic Fracassa | Feb. 5, 2020 | Updated: Feb. 5, 2020 10:51 a.m.



... construction on two affordable housing developments, one for seniors and one for multi-family use, along the way in San Francisco, Calif. Tuesday, February 4, 2020. San Francisco Mayor London Breed is planning to effort to put a measure on the November 2020 ballot that will make 100% affordable hous... more

... of an unrelenting housing crisis, Mayor London Breed is voters for help in her crusade to "build more faster."

... signature-gatherin

If this sounds good to you,  
you'll love the mayor's  
charter amendment to  
streamline housing!

[AffordableHomesNow.com](https://AffordableHomesNow.com)

CURBED

SAN FRANCISCO CITIES HOMES NEIGHBORHOODS MC f y i r SUBSCRIB

## SAN FRANCISCO CONSTRUCTION NEWS SF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

# SF voters asked to decide whether to speed up housing construction

Mayor's bid will make development easier, but only if it wins at the ballot box

By Adam Brinklow | Feb 6, 2020, 9:31am PST

f t SHARE



The New York

# WANT TO CHAT MORE?

**1**

Become a member: [yimbyaction.org/  
join](https://yimbyaction.org/join)

**2**

Email me at:  
[laura@yimbyaction.org](mailto:laura@yimbyaction.org)

**JOHN  
RAHAIM**

**SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT**





# THE SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING COMMISSION



San Francisco  
**Planning**

# THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE



COMMISSIONS



DEPT. DIVISIONS

**Planning Commission**

**Commission Affairs**  
Custodian of Records

**Historic Preservation Commission**

**Planning Director**

**Administration**

---

Finance

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Human Resources

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Information Technology

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Operations

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Technology Projects

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Training

**Citywide Planning**

---

Housing and Land Use Policy

---

Transportation

---

Neighborhood Plans and Major Projects

---

General Plan and Policy

---

Resilience and the Waterfront

---

Plan Implementation and Core Functions

**Current Planning**

---

Development Review Teams

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Preservation

---

Planning Information Center

---

Permit & Design Review

**Environmental Planning**

---

Environmental Impact Analysis

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Transportation Impact Analysis

**Executive Programs**

---

Communications

---

Legislative Affairs

---

Special Projects and Policy

**Zoning & Compliance**

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Zoning Administrator

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Code Enforcement

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Board of Appeals

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Transportation Demand Management

A photograph of the San Francisco State Capitol building, a grand neoclassical structure with a prominent blue dome and white columns. The building is set against a clear blue sky. In the foreground, there is a green lawn and a paved walkway lined with young trees. Several people are seen walking on the path. The text "1. Department Oversight" is overlaid in large white font at the top of the image.

**1. Department Oversight**

**2. Policy Direction**

**3. Project Approvals**

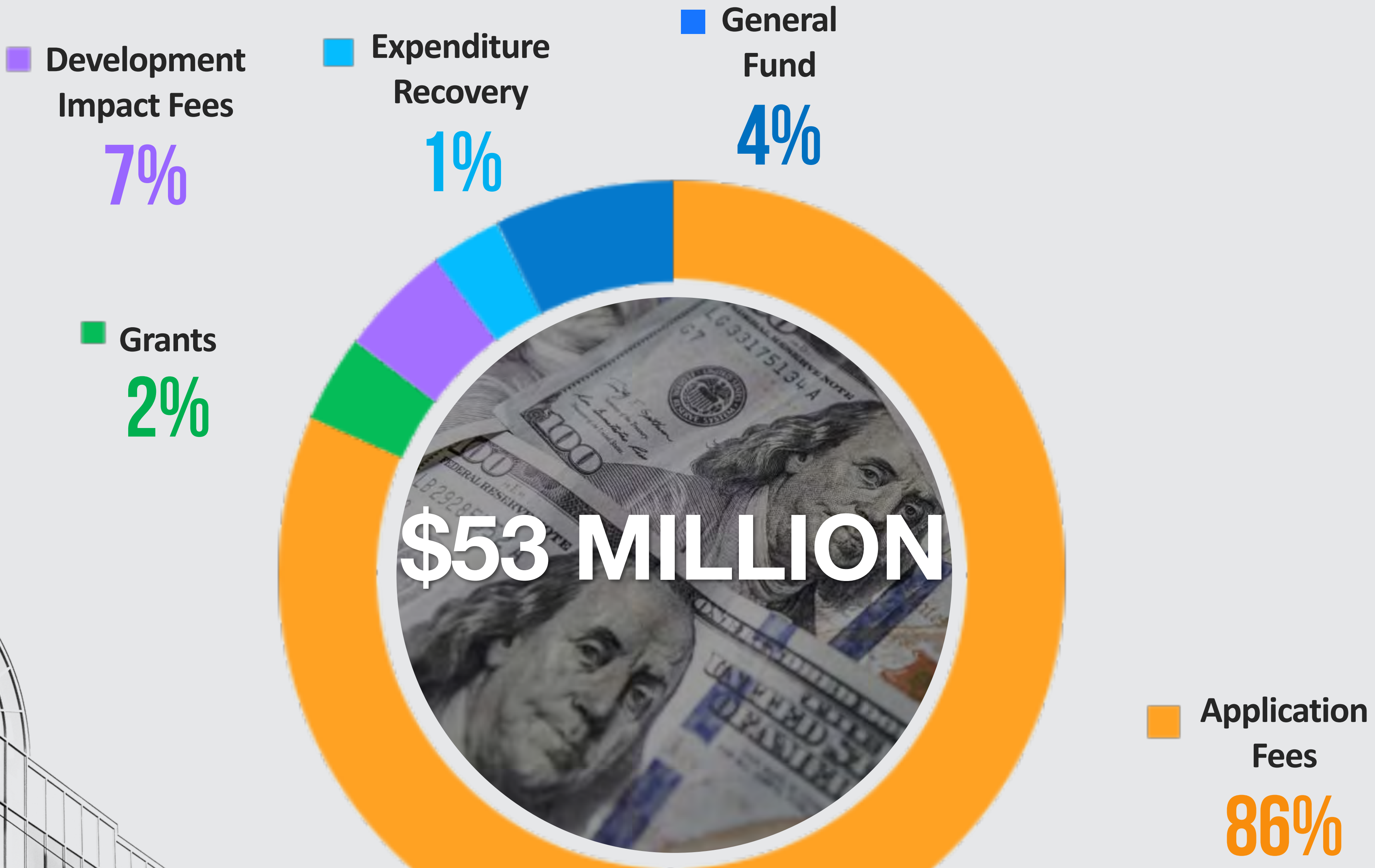
**1. Project Approvals**

**2. Policy Direction**

**3. Department Oversight**



# THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT: BUDGET



- 
- An aerial photograph of a city street scene. In the foreground, there is a parking lot filled with cars. To the right, a large, ornate white building with many arched windows is visible. In the background, a dense urban landscape with various buildings and hills under a clear sky is shown. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.
- Should we re-order Planning Commission priorities?
  - More policy?
  - More oversight?
    - *(as director? Maybe not... 😊)*
  - Less project review?

# REENVISIONING THE PLANNING COMMISSION