REENVISIONING THE PLANNING COMMISSION
“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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scholar of urban planning, Harvard University
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Redlining was “planned”

Redevelopment was “planned”

Gentrification was “planned”
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
Democracy

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“...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.”
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Beyond Outreach
Frontline Planners
Neighborhood Hearings
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Beyond Outreach

Frontline Planners

Neighborhood Hearings
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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Strengthened Hyper-(*hella*)localities

Sustainable Communities
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
“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
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
M A I N T A I N

• 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
S E A T S - 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
SF ARTS COMMISSION

- Planning Commission President = ExOfficio
- Civic Design Committee
CHINATOWN IS
NOT FOR SALE!
EVICT THE PROFITERS OF
MSS DISPLACEMENT

For the last several months there have been widespread public protests in response to the displacement of many residents in Chinatown. These protests, which are ongoing, are currently organized around the issue of gentrification and the displacement of lower-income families. The protests are led by the residents of Chinatown who are concerned about their safety and the future of their community. The protesters are calling for the evictions of the profiters of mass displacement, who are using the profits from the displacement of these families to fund their own projects.

RACISM DISGUISED AS ART
以藝術為名的種族歧視
RACISMO DISFRAZADO DE ARTE

In the wake of this successful effort, we call on all community organizations to report being held and participate in our actions against racism.

On Friday, May 13th we invite you to join us as we participate in a protest against racism and police brutality.

XUÂN HƯƠNG

BUILD COMMUNITY
NOT CONDOS!

KÔDA OUT!
NO 17 STORIES

Racism is a severe social problem that affects all communities. We must continue to work together to address this issue and create a more just and equitable society.
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
Public as the client
Learn the city
Learn neighborhoods
DISPLACEMENT TYPOLOGIES

LOWER INCOME (LI) TRACTS
1. NOT LOSING LI HOUSEHOLDS, OR VERY EARLY STAGES
2. AT RISK OF GENTRIFICATION OR DISPLACEMENT
3. UNDERGOING DISPLACEMENT
4. ADVANCED GENTRIFICATION

MODERATE TO HIGH INCOME (MHI) TRACTS
1. NOT LOSING LI HOUSEHOLDS, OR VERY EARLY STAGES
2. AT RISK OF DISPLACEMENT
3. UNDERGOING DISPLACEMENT
4. ADVANCED EXCLUSION
TYRA FENNELL
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 YARNE
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

Quality over Quantity!
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.
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.

Source: Bloomberg
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

IMPROVING PERMITTING

FUNDING FOR SUBSIDIZED AFFORDABLE

CHANGING BAD INCENTIVES

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

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

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

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

*EXCEPT EVERYONE HATES ONE ANOTHER

PLANNING COMMISSIONERS
APPOINTED BY MAYOR & SUPS

PLANNING DEPARTMENT HEAD
MAYOR'S OFFICE

PLANNING STAFF

COMMUNITY MEMBERS WHO CAN SHOW UP

LAWS ON THE BOOKS

DISTRICT SUPERVISOR
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.
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
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
If this sounds good to you, you’ll love the mayor’s charter amendment to streamline housing!

AffordableHomesNow.com
WANT TO CHAT MORE?

1 Become a member: yimbyaction.org/join

2 Email me at: laura@yimbyaction.org
JOHN RAHAIM
SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT
THE SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING COMMISSION
THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE
1. Department Oversight

2. Policy Direction

3. Project Approvals
1. Project Approvals

2. Policy Direction

3. Department Oversight
THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT: BUDGET

- Development Impact Fees: 7%
- Expenditure Recovery: 1%
- General Fund: 4%
- Grants: 2%
- Application Fees: 86%

Total Expenditure: $53 MILLION
Should we re-order Planning Commission priorities?
- More policy?
- More oversight?
  - (as director? Maybe not...😊)
- Less project review?
REENVISIONING THE PLANNING COMMISSION