November, 12, 2019

The Honorable London Breed
Commissioner Myrna Melgar
City Hall, Room 200
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Mayor Breed and Commissioner Melgar:

On behalf of the 300 businesses, organizations and individuals that represent the San Francisco Housing Action Coalition (SFHAC) membership, I am writing today to ask that you consider our input on qualities we would like to see in the next Planning Director as you make this very important appointment.

First and foremost, we believe the Planning Director needs to understand that San Francisco is experiencing an affordability and displacement crisis that has been primarily caused by a 30-year underproduction of housing at all levels of affordability. San Francisco’s Chief Economist, Ted Egan, has stated multiple times that San Francisco needs to be adding 5,000 homes a year to simply keep the cost of housing consistent with the rate of inflation. Averaging 1,900 new homes a year for the last 30 years has placed us in approximately a 95,000 unit hole.

To address this underproduction of housing, the new Planning Director needs to be able to maneuver effectively through the bureaucracies of the Planning Department and City Hall. Too often, significant numbers of new homes get caught in San Francisco’s labyrinth of red tape. He or she must hold staff accountable to deadlines and processes and try to partner with commissioners so they too have a clear understanding of the city’s priorities and the need for expediency in the hearing process itself.

Furthermore, the new Planning Director needs to recognize that a large portion of San Francisco’s neighborhoods have not done their share to build new housing. It would be helpful for the Planning Director to be aware of the historical reasons for this disparity, but most importantly the Planning Director should be committed to ending this practice - and to supporting development proposals that advance this effort.

We also need a Planning Director who understands that complete local control has directly contributed to policies that have created San Francisco’s affordability and displacement crisis. The Planning Director should be willing to partner with the state to embrace policies that will bring new housing at all levels of affordability to all San Francisco neighborhoods.

And finally, we do not need an advocate nor an ideologue as the new Planning Director. To the contrary, we need someone who will roll up their sleeves and do the day-to-day work to speed up housing production at all levels of affordability in all San Francisco neighborhoods, to provide
certainty on timelines and processes, to facilitate dialogue with planning commissioners, and to serve as a voice for sound planning policies that benefit all San Franciscans.

Sincerely,

Todd David
Executive Director