Supervisor Gordon Mar Pushes for Fixes to SB 50 and Resources for Equitable Local Community Planning

Amendments to legislation support local planning for more affordable housing, protections against displacement and gentrification

San Francisco -- At Thursday’s Government Audit and Oversight committee meeting of the Board of Supervisors, Supervisor Gordon Mar reaffirmed San Francisco’s objections to Senate Bill 50 and advocated for significant changes to the bill should it move forward, including exemptions for local community planning, increased affordability requirements, and more robust protections against displacement. SB 50, authored by State Senator Scott Wiener, would upzone large parts of San Francisco without community input or increased affordable housing requirements. It was put on hold in the state legislature earlier this year following the passage of Mar’s resolution opposing the measure, but is expected to return in January.

“The developer giveaways in SB 50 won’t solve our problems,” said Mar. “We need to give communities a seat at the table in planning for more housing in their neighborhoods; to capture the value created when we upzone, to use that value for more affordable housing and community benefits; and to provide meaningful, enforceable protections against displacement and gentrification.”

The updates were part of two resolutions Mar moved forward Thursday: a resolution opposing SB 50 unless significantly amended, and a resolution expanding the City’s Priority Development Areas to make San Francisco eligible for regional funding for local community planning.

In April, Mar passed an earlier resolution to oppose SB 50 unless amended that passed with a 9-2 vote, and Thursday went further to include specific amendments to the state bill. The updated resolution is co-sponsored by a supermajority of the Board of Supervisors, and is supported by affordable housing developers, tenants rights advocates, neighborhood associations and members of the San Francisco labor community.
“My office recently released the City’s first-ever Jobs-Housing Fit Report, and it shows that not only is our housing production not keeping pace with job growth, but the housing we do build isn’t meeting the needs of low and moderate income San Franciscans. We’re actually set to exceed our luxury housing needs, while falling 18,000 units short of our need for truly affordable housing over the next six years. This is the kind of data we should use to make land use and planning decisions, it’s the kind of data that wasn’t available when SB 50 was written, and it should make us rethink the approach we’re taking in letting the private market drive housing production,” said Mar. “As written, SB 50 won’t correct that imbalance, it’ll exacerbate it. The Jobs-Housing Fit report also shows that we’re seeing huge amounts of displacement of middle-class people from San Francisco -- people who need the kind of housing that luxury development simply isn’t going to provide, but could further displace.”

Mar included amendments in the SB 50 resolution demanding that the state bill be significantly amended to exempt local San Francisco community plans and provide sufficient opportunity to create local community plans that will increase housing development, increase affordability requirements, and protect tenants. It also asks that SB50 exempt “sensitive communities” to protect vulnerable tenants, require higher affordability contributions above existing local standards, tie transportation incentives to housing increases, and adequately protect tenants with funding and enforcement.

Supervisor Hillary Ronen commented, “I understand why Senator Wiener might want to push unwilling cities to step up and do their share to address our regional and statewide housing crisis. But we in San Francisco are not dragging our feet; on the contrary, we have a pipeline of more than 75 thousand units. What we are lagging on is housing that is affordable to our workforce and low-income families. We have to be sure that SB50 addresses those specific needs and that we are not simply adding to the profit potential of private developers.”

Supervisor Sandra Lee Fewer added, “We know that upzoning to allow for more market-rate housing will increase land values and displacement pressures, so it’s critical that upzoning is tied to an equitable increase in the amount of affordable housing and community benefits we get from developers who reap the additional profits. To ensure development without displacement, we must also have strong and enforceable tenant protections to prevent existing communities from being priced out.”

Following calls for SB 50 to respect local community plans and future community planning, Supervisor Mar heard a resolution designating Priority Development Areas in San Francisco and passed an amendment to expand them to westside neighborhoods for the first time. PDAs are voluntary designations by local governments to access dedicated funding for local community planning and development, transit improvements, and infrastructure through ABAG, the Association of Bay Area Governments. To date, San Francisco has received $88 million in PDA Transportation Funding and $4.3 million in PDA Planning Grants, not including additional funding for major transit projects allocated to PDAs.
Comments Mar: “We are not waiting for state mandates, and will continue to move forward true community-driven planning. We know all neighborhoods in San Francisco need to do our part to build and preserve affordable housing, infrastructure, other community needs. The resources provided through PDAs is one step we are taking.”

Both resolutions will be heard at the Full Board Tuesday, December 17th.

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