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Supervisor Gordon Mar hosts town hall to gather input on ERAF funding priorities

[San Francisco] Over 100 Sunset residents gathered Sunday morning for Supervisor Gordon Mar’s first town hall, focused on the Educational Revenue Augmentation Fund (ERAF) windfall of $415 million, $185 million of which the Board of Supervisors and Mayor will soon decide how to spend.

The program began with a presentation from City Controller Ben Rosenfield on the history of ERAF funds, why the City received extra funds from the past two fiscal years, and how the majority of the $415 million has already been allocated for set-asides and reserves per the City Charter.

The presentation was followed by remarks from Supervisor Mar, a survey on funding priorities, and breakout discussions in both English and Cantonese, with some groups focused on housing, education, and youth and young adults.

“It’s so exciting to see such a large and diverse group of Sunset residents coming together to engage with these important issues” said Mar, “and I’m committed to taking all the input from today’s town hall meeting and reflecting that with my position and my actions.”

The group discussions were facilitated by a coalition of nonprofit partners including Sunset Youth Services, Sunset Neighborhood Beacon Center, Wah Mei Preschool, the Housing Rights Committee, and the Asian Women’s Resource Center.

The ideas raised during the town hall included expanding dedicated housing for teachers, increased services for seniors, offering student loan forgiveness, and providing bridge funding for the three voter-approved initiatives from last year not yet implemented due to pending litigation: June’s propositions C and G for subsidized child care and higher wages for educators, and November’s proposition C for homeless services and supportive housing.

“Youth get to be youth once – if we’re robbing them of good teachers, we’re robbing them of a good education, and they will not get that time back,” said Matt Pemberton of Sunset Neighborhood Beacon Center, who facilitated the Education discussion group.
“We see a high need for more supportive housing, for more funds for the small sites acquisition program, for gathering better data on the housing landscape, and for developing affordable housing on underutilized public land,” added James Huynh, of the Housing discussion group.

While the suggestions were varied, most attendees agreed there are many priorities worth funding, and stressed the need for the Board of Supervisors and Mayor to engage the public and balance community needs.

In closing the event, Mar assured the attendees this was the first of many town halls and neighborhood events to come, with plans already in motion for the next:

“I’m here to serve and represent the people of the Sunset, and leading starts with listening.”