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My name is Pamela Tau Lee, our family has resided in the Richmond District since 1960. Last week you heard testimony focused on land use and housing. Residents addressed the role of the Planning Department in pushing a market based housing policy, ie. The Mayor's Housing Element which places profits over the need for affordable housing. An alternative housing plan has been submitted, titled Race & Equity in all Planning Coalition (REP-SF). It includes an intentional process that brings in the voices of residents, community and agencies whereby they can concretely be a part of policy making.

For me the issue of land use and housing in San Francisco began on March 16, 1969 when a fire swept through the top floor of the International Hotel, located on the edge of the Financial District in the historic neighborhood of Manilatown/Chinatown on Kearny Street. Three tenants, Rio Rosete, Marcario Salerno and Robert Knauff were killed. At the time these tenants and the other tenants were protesting plans by developers to construct a multilevel parking lot. The fire gave the developers their excuse to evict the tenants by declaring the building "unsafe." The tenants were predominately elderly Filipino and Chinese longtime residents who called Manilatown and Chinatown home.

This act angered the public. Over 6,000 individuals signed up to be on a phone tree to stop the eviction; to do this, they would physically become a part of a human barrier between the sheriff deputies and the tenants inside. I was a part of this historic mobilization from 1969 to the night of the eviction August 4, 1977.

While the tenants and the community storefronts of the hotel such as the Chinese Progressive Association, Kearny Street Workshop, Everybody's Bookstore were evicted at 3 am, the developers did not get their way. Today the Kearny Street block provides housing, safety, culture, and learning opportunities in the form of low income housing, a school, and the Chinatown campus for CCSF. This is what can happen when the public, neighborhood organizations, governmental agencies engage with a focus on community needs over profit.

I am not against change in the Richmond District but change needs to be centered on racial and social equity with a process that intentionally brings in residents, community members, neighborhood groups, community organizations and homeowner groups.

The current process for addressing land use and housing is being shoved down our throats. It completely caters to developers, the banks, the Planning Department and the Mayor.

I am appalled at how community and resident voices are deliberately shut out with decisions being made in back rooms. At least during the International Hotel struggle we were able to attend and participate in public hearings.

I join with others to call on you to facilitate a Planning process that ensures that equity is centered and that resident and community engagement is policy making is real.

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