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November 21, 2017

Mr. Jeff Joslin
Planning Department
1650 Mission Street, Suite 400
San Francisco, CA 94103

via electronic submission

Subject: Opposition to Adoption of Urban Design Guidelines (UDGs)

Dear Mr. Joslin:

Despite the neighbors and the public being engaged with the Planning staff for over a year regarding the Urban Design Guidelines, and the Coalition for San Francisco Neighborhoods (CSFN) having last written a letter on September 25, 2017 to Planning with absolutely no response, CSFN finds it very disrespectful to the public to find out recently, and only upon inquiring, that a new iteration will be released on November 22, 2017 – 1 day before the Thanksgiving holiday – with only 19 business days for comments on it at the height of the holiday season for an adoption date of December 21, 2017. CSFN urges the Planning Department to postpone the UDGs to at least the end of January 2018 or February 2018 when people will not be on holiday hiatus.

In CSFN's September letter, we outlined many concerns with the UDGs including exceptions allowed. CSFN asked for changes and supplied suggested text as the last iteration from March 2017 is problematic including that it goes against various sections of Planning Code as-is. CSFN continues to oppose any inclusion of waivers or exceptions that would essentially allow almost anything to go in next door contrary to the diversity of existing zoning. Problematic issues include definitional changes to words that nobody in their common understanding of the English language would imagine could be taken as an alternate meaning of these words.

Another key issue was to state in the UDGs that they would not apply to RH-, RM-, RTO- and PDR districts yet negate that very statement in the next sentence with yet another exception which would allow the UDGs to apply in these very same RH-, RM-, RTO- and PDR districts.

Much of the criteria for the proposed approval of projects using UDGs are much too vague for anybody to discern what could be approved as a "high-quality design" project. The public will find themselves looking at some odd building next door and think how this could possibly be something that "fits" the neighborhood and will not give certainty to what would be allowed.

As the UDGs will be the "overarching" document applicable to the entire city, it requires more work to allow the individual diverse neighborhoods to not disintegrate into one homogenous Manhattan-ville.

In fact, one supervisorial district was allowed to create its own design guidelines for its neighborhood district. Would that every other neighborhood be so empowered and allowed to do so before adoption of these vague, generalized UDGs.

Please read CSFN's September 25, 2017 letter regarding the UDGs posted at CSFN's website:
www.csfm.net

Again, please postpone the meeting until the public has had with Planning substantive dialogue which has not occurred. As the UDGs do *not* need supervisorial approval to take effect if Planning Commission passes them as planned on December 21, 2017, it is essential that prior to any adoption, thorough communications with all residents of the city take place and modifications incorporated.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

/s
George Wooding
President

/s
Rose Hillson
Chair, Land Use Committee

cc: John Rahaim, Director
Scott Sanchez, Zoning Administrator
AnMarie Rodgers, Citywide Planning Director
Elizabeth Watty, Asst. Director of Current Planning
Anne Brask, Planning Staff
Planning Commission
Jonas Ionin, Commissions Secretary
Board of Supervisors
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors