



Community Advisory Committee: Meeting Summary

Tuesday, June 9, 2025, 5:00-7:00 pm

South San Francisco City Hall

In Attendance

CAC Members Present	
Mayor Eddie Flores (Chair)	
Nora Alvarado	
Michelle Alvarez	
Bertha Benton (<i>late</i>)	
Marjorie Blen (<i>late</i>)	
Lee Ginsburg	
Joe Napoliello	
Jennifer Siegel (online)	
Leslie Fong	
Karla Vides	
Greg Turner	
Jahan Zandi	

City of South San Francisco Staff Present	
Michael Guss	
Ernesto Lucero	
Geneva Mendoza	
Mike Noce	
Tony Rozzi	
Nell Selander	

Consulting Staff Present	
Amitabh Barthakur	HR&A (<i>online</i>)
Anna Gallicchio	HR&A
Joey Goldman	Kearns & West
Jennifer Vazconcelo	Kearns & West

Interpretation Staff Present	
Noemi Gonzalez	Spanish Interpreter
Anabella Garay	Spanish Interpreter

Members of the Public	
Rhovy Antonio	California Apartments Association
Paola Arellano-Rosques	

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Call to Order

Mayor Eddie Flores called the meeting to order, and Joey Goldman led roll call.

Public Comment

Joey invited members of the public to provide comments. No public comments were shared.

Consent Calendar

Mayor Eddie requested a motion to approve the May 5, 2025, meeting minutes. CAC members requested the following amendments to the May minutes:

- Correct the time of the July 28th meeting to 5:00 p.m. instead of 11:00 a.m.
- On page 3, correct the sentence in the notes about the definition provided by Anna regarding naturally occurring affordable housing and rent control.

After these corrections are made, the committee members agreed to approve the minutes.

Administrative Business

Joey welcomed the committee members and reminded them of the group's agreements, encouraging everyone to be mindful of them throughout the meeting. He then invited City staff members to reintroduce themselves.

A new staff member, Mike Noce, introduced himself as the City's new Housing Manager. He shared his background in local government, particularly in San Mateo County, and expressed his enthusiasm for supporting the committee. Mike noted that his division, part of the Economic and Community Development Department, focuses on affordable housing and housing policy. He emphasized the team's role in managing existing and new affordable housing agreements and aligning with City Council priorities.

After going over the meeting agenda, Anna Gallicchio from HR&A started the presentation.

Recap of Commercial Trends

Anna started by saying that the committee would review six of the 13 recommended tools related to the broader strategy, focusing discussion on those during the meeting.

The CAC was reminded that they are currently in the third phase of the roadmap. So far, they have reviewed research on commercial replacement trends in the city and completed an audit of existing policies. The group is now focused on reviewing strategies and tools related to commercial stability and displacement.

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Jennifer Vazconcelo from Kearns & West reported that the team hosted two outreach events in South San Francisco: one at Martin Elementary School's Open House on May 15, and another at the Senior Health Fair at the LPR on May 16. Key takeaways from these events included:

- A strong emphasis on affordable housing
- The importance of preserving community character
- A desire for well-maintained parks and public spaces
- Support for local businesses and a vibrant downtown

Joey mentioned that participants were primarily Latino families, young adults, and older adults—groups we might not typically hear from.

Displacement Pressures/Drivers

Anna reminded the group that previous CAC sessions have covered various factors driving business displacement, relocation, or closure. Anna outlined five key displacement pressures:

1. Redevelopment of properties occupied by businesses who rent
2. Unaffordable rents
3. Opportunity to sell for businesses who own property
4. Availability of suitable industrial space elsewhere
5. Aging business owners

Anna added that rising land values and input from small business owners and developers pointed to challenges—especially around redevelopment that benefits property owners but displaces tenants or raises rents. She also mentioned that some businesses may relocate to the East Bay due to increasing industrial space, and others may close as owners age. Upcoming slides would illustrate these trends with real-world examples.

Anti-Displacement Goals

Economic Considerations

Anna emphasized that while affordable commercial space is important, it alone isn't sufficient for small business success. Anna stressed that the combination of three factors—customer base, operational support, and capital—alongside affordable space, is necessary for small businesses to thrive. Anna mentioned the Anti-Displacement Commercial Roadmap, which focuses on four core strategies:

1. Identify a dedicated funding source
2. Provide financial support and technical assistance
3. Grow and sustain the customer base

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4. Support commercial real estate development through funding or space provision

Anna concluded by reminding the committee that these strategies are built upon the work the City is already doing.

Committee members emphasized the importance of combining financial support with business education.

- Lee stressed that without financial literacy and mentorship, funding alone may not lead to long-term success. Anna agreed, noting that City programs like the Economic Advancement Center (EAC) already integrate education with funding to help businesses grow and build capacity.
- Ernesto highlighted that the EAC has hosted a small business and entrepreneurship partnership since 2021, with high and growing demand. However, sustaining funding is a concern as initial support came from federal sources. The City is seeking alternative funding to continue and expand services. Ernesto also noted that the Renaissance Entrepreneurship Center, the EAC's current partner, is committed to staying in South San Francisco and offers mentorship, one-on-one support, and training. Additionally, SCORE—a network of retired professionals—was mentioned as a potential resource for expanding local business support.

Anti-Displacement Strategies and Tools

Anna reintroduced a set of tools categorized by cost and timeline:

1. Low-Cost/Short-Term – Quick to implement, requiring minimal funding and staff resources.
2. Medium-Cost/Medium-Term – Require additional funding and staff capacity to carry out.
3. High-Cost/Long-Term – Aspirational, transformative tools that need sustained and substantial investment.

The consultant's recommendations include both expanding existing tools and introducing new ones. Anna clarified that the implementation timeline generally spans one to three years but may vary depending on the specific tool and how the broader roadmap develops. An implementation matrix will be included in the final roadmap to guide this process.

Highlights from committee member discussion on safety are as follows:

- Safety as a Strategic Priority for Business Success
 - Emphasized that while South San Francisco is currently safe, it's essential to maintain and enhance safety as a key factor in supporting small businesses.

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- Safety concerns such as break-ins and robberies in other cities were cited as cautionary examples, underscoring the importance of staying proactive.
 - A light, routine police presence downtown was suggested to maintain visibility and reassurance without creating alarm.
 - Community responsibility was highlighted—safety should be a shared effort between residents, businesses, and law enforcement.
 - A grant program already exists to help businesses recover from incidents like property damage, showing some support mechanisms are in place in the city.
- Perception and Messaging Around Safety
 - Committee members agreed on the need to frame safety as a positive attribute: not to imply that South San Francisco is unsafe, but to emphasize its existing strengths.
 - The strategy should focus on sustaining a genuine and perceived sense of safety to support business confidence and community trust.
 - Rather than using fear-based messaging, safety should be tied to positive experiences, like walkability, community events, and placemaking.
- Growth, Activation, and Future Planning
 - As downtown continues to grow and activate new spaces, safety considerations will need to evolve accordingly.
 - Proactive planning is necessary to prevent emerging challenges that could come with increased density or activity, especially on Grand Avenue.
 - The goal is to preserve the current perceived safe environment while allowing for development and change.
- Community Engagement and Supportive Infrastructure
 - Community cohesion and civic engagement were recognized as critical to long-term safety.
 - Hosting events, encouraging placemaking, and fostering shared responsibility help create a safe and inviting environment.
 - Suggestions included establishing or partnering with an organization (e.g., BID, nonprofit, Chamber of Commerce) to maintain ongoing support for commercial safety and business development in a flexible and adaptable framework.

Anna continued the presentation with a detailed overview of the strategies and tools organized by cost and implementation timeline categories.

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Low-Cost/Short-Term

Strategy	Tool
Financial Support and Technical Assistance	• Lindenville Overlay Zone* • Downtown and Storefront Activations*
Grow and Sustain Customer Base	• Downtown and Storefront Activations* • Direct More Institutional Spending Power to Small Businesses*

Medium-Cost/Medium-Term

Strategy	Tool
Financial Support and Technical Assistance	• City Grants and Loans* • Economic Advancement Center Technical Assistance* • Create a Commercial Legacy Business Support Program • Provide Targeted Support to Legacy Industrial Businesses that Seek to Remain in South City
Commercial Real Estate Development	• Negotiate for Space for Small Businesses in Community Benefit Agreements* • Create an Affordable Commercial Set Aside on Publicly Owned Land

High-Cost / Long-Term

Strategy	Tool
Identify a Dedicated Funding Source	Create a Small Business Anti-Displacement Fund
Financial Support and Technical Assistance	Provide Relocation Assistance for Displaced Commercial Businesses Create a Commercial Small Business Property Acquisition Fund

Tools marked with an asterisk () reflect existing City efforts recommended for expansion or continuation. Highlighted tools were identified to be described in more detail by Anna.

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The CAC discussed South San Francisco's current approach to supporting businesses wanting to relocate from other cities, focusing on effectiveness, potential improvements, and the City's role in commercial real estate support.

- South San Francisco uses an intake-based model, identifying the unique needs of each business—real estate, capital access, workforce development—and connecting it with the right resources. Personalized, one-on-one support is a strength of a program that can be offered by a smaller city.
- The City uses CoStar, a commercial real estate platform, to generate listings and reports tailored to specific property needs. While the City does not act as a broker, it provides businesses with listings and contacts, along with demographic insights.
- While recent efforts have focused on assisting businesses that reach out to the City (reactive), historically, the City has taken a proactive approach, attending retail conferences and working with regional partners to attract businesses to target areas like Grand Avenue.
- There is room to expand business attraction efforts by involving additional partners, particularly in the research and innovation sectors.
- The discussion centered on whether the City is doing enough to attract new businesses, if there are gaps in its current approach, and what level of involvement is appropriate for helping smaller businesses, not just large corporations.

Low-Cost/Short-Term Anti-Displacement Strategies & Tools

Anna presented the following strategy as a low-cost, short-term approach:

1. Downtown and Storefront Activations Strategy

- a. Context and Goal
 - i. Downtown South San Francisco faces challenges from low foot traffic and commercial vacancies.
 - ii. Investing in downtown is essential for ensuring long-term economic stability and supporting small business growth
- b. Recommendations
 - i. Continue formation of a Downtown PBID and associated downtown events.
 - ii. Recruit a downtown anchor, such as a major grocer or entertainment anchor.
 - iii. Continue to learn from initial feedback from “Launch Local!”, the City’s vacant storefront activation pop-up program.



- iv. Consider leveraging the Public Art Fund to invest in downtown placemaking.
- v. Review existing parking rates and strategies, exploring opportunities to use parking as both a visitor incentive and a revenue source.
- vi. Adapt to the changing funding environment for facade improvement grant program.

Ernesto introduced the Launch Local Program, a pilot initiative offering short-term, subsidized leases in vacant downtown spaces to small businesses that lack the financial capacity for traditional long-term commitments. The program aims to help businesses, like those currently operating pop-ups or at farmers markets, to test the market and build capacity with the goal of eventually transitioning into permanent brick-and-mortar locations. Leases are typically for around 12 months, and currently, the program is limited to City-controlled properties at a rate of \$1 per square foot. While there are plans to expand to private properties and maintain similar affordability, the funding mechanism for these subsidies is still being explored. The program has seen significant demand, with approximately 25 businesses, including yoga studios, medical services, and flower shops, expressing interest in a single available location during the first application round. Ernesto emphasized that the program is flexible and can be adapted based on community and stakeholder feedback.

2. Direct More Institutional Spending Power to Small Businesses

- a. Context and Goal
 - i. Leveraging the spending power of institutions (like life science employers) and their workers can ensure that citywide economic growth benefits long-term residents and entrepreneurs.
- b. Recommendation
 - i. Encourage life science employers to use local businesses for on-site catering and other procurement opportunities.
 - ii. Encourage life science employers to drive more workers toward local businesses through local business vouchers. (e.g., Genentech Goes to Town).
 - iii. Continue to expand existing efforts by the City and South City Chamber of Commerce to convene major employers to advance these initiatives and others that support small businesses.
 - iv. Continue the new program with Glass, a shop-local platform that digitizes small businesses and encourages local procurement by the City.



Medium-Cost/Medium-Term Anti-Displacement Strategies & Tools

Anna presented the following Medium-Cost/Medium-Term approach strategies.

1. Create a Commercial Legacy Business Support Program

a. Context and Goal

- i. Outreach has identified numerous examples of legacy small businesses closing due to rising costs, a loss of customers, or an aging business owner without a succession plan.

b. Recommendations

- i. Create a discretionary legacy business designation and targeted grants to support such businesses.
 1. Officially designate legacy businesses based on age and cultural significance to the community.
 2. Provide marketing support through a Legacy Business Registry.
 3. Provide discretionary one-time financial assistance.
 4. Adapt funding for technical assistance programs through the Economic Advancement Center.

2. Provide Targeted Support to Legacy Industrial Businesses that Seek to Remain in South City

a. Context and Goals

- i. Over the last 15 years, legacy industrial businesses have been moving to the East Bay for larger, more affordable space.
- ii. Certain legacy businesses, such as food businesses that serve the airport or life science campuses, have a reason to remain in South San Francisco but may need support.

b. Recommendation

- i. Make nonconforming industrial businesses conforming uses, as was done for Gimbal's/Berrata Foods, See's Candies, and Bimbo Bakeries, to give them the ability to expand as needed.
- ii. Adapt to the changing funding environment for the Economic Advancement Center or partners to provide technical support for legacy industrial businesses, with a potential focus on food production and catering businesses that seek to stay in South San Francisco.*

3. Community Benefit Agreements Negotiations to Create Space for Small Businesses (CBAs)

a. Context and Goal

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- i. Large new developments in South San Francisco offer opportunities to create new space for small businesses.
 - ii. City priorities for community benefits include public space, enhanced connectivity, public and social services, support for local businesses, and affordable housing
- b. Recommendation
 - i. Negotiate with large-scale developments to include small, local business space onsite through a CBA process (In the future, consider contributions to a Small Business Anti-Displacement Fund).
 - ii. Developer should prioritize commercial space for legacy businesses.
 - iii. Note that tradeoffs should be considered. If CBA resources are dedicated to this tool, this leaves fewer funds for other investments such as affordable housing and infrastructure.

High-Cost/Long-Term Anti-Displacement Strategies & Tools

Anna presented the following High-Cost/Long-Term approach strategies.

1. Create a Small Business Anti-Displacement Fund

- a. Context and Goal
 - i. Most strategies to mitigate commercial displacement pressures described here will require funding.
- b. Recommendation
 - i. Explore a Small Business Anti-Displacement Fund seeded by the City as a dedicated fund. Funds could come from sources such as:
 - 1. Private developer contributions or community benefits agreements (CBAs)
 - 2. Set-aside existing or enhance Transient Occupancy Tax Revenue

Tony clarified that Transient Occupancy Tax is a tax applied to each guest room at hotels and motels. This tax serves as a source of revenue for South San Francisco, collected from guests staying temporarily in local lodging establishments.

Discussion

Before group discussion, Amitabh referred to an earlier point about the idea of using property tax abatement as an anti-displacement tool but highlighted why it's not commonly used:

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- Tenants vs. Property Owners: Most at-risk commercial occupants are tenants, not owners. While property owners pay the taxes, costs are passed to tenants through rent, and abatements may not directly benefit those tenants.
- Limited City Control: Cities receive only a small portion of property tax revenue, with most going to counties. Additionally, Proposition 13 restricts tax increases, and counties rarely partner in such incentive programs.

Because of these structural and practical challenges, cities typically use tax incentives for new developments, not as tools for displacement prevention. Still, an interesting idea worth exploring further.

Joey facilitated a group discussion by inviting participants to reflect on the tools and ideas presented earlier in the meeting. Joey asked each participant to share:

- Any missing elements they feel should be added to the strategy list.
- Which tools or strategies they would prioritize as most impactful for South San Francisco.
- Which tools, if any, they believe should not be prioritized, possibly because they may not be a good fit for the city.

Below are key themes from the discussion:

- Launch Local Program (Storefront Activation Pilot):
 - Various committee members enthusiastically endorsed the program, highlighting its potential to revitalize downtown and help entrepreneurs.
 - The need for continued support, development, and eventual expansion to private properties was a recurring theme. Jahan Zandi emphasized clear demand (25 applications for one spot), while Michelle Alvarez stressed the importance of keeping money within the city.
 - Nora Alvarado highlighted the importance of affordable rent for businesses and residents alike.
- Mentorship & Business Support:
 - Various CAC members championed mentorship as crucial, especially for new businesses lacking management and financial knowledge.
 - Karla Vides stressed the critical need for continuous monitoring and follow-up support for small businesses, not just initial training, comparing it to having a "guidance counselor."
 - Jennifer Siegel suggested strategies to engage both new and long-term struggling business owners, pairing them with highly experienced mentors.

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- Lee Ginsburg proposed connecting retiring business owners with aspiring entrepreneurs (including long-term employees) to facilitate business takeovers, potentially offering grants and education for employees.
- Financial & Funding Mechanisms:
 - Greg Turner offered an example of increasing commercial linkage fees by \$1 to generate up to \$5 million annually for downtown businesses or anti-displacement programs, acknowledging potential legislative challenges.
 - While the Launch Local Program currently offers \$1/sq ft on City property, the challenge of funding similar affordability for private properties was noted.
- Incentivizing Local Spending & Customer Base Expansion:
 - Marjorie Blen advocated for a "shop local" payment card program (e.g., pay \$150 for \$200 in value) to encourage residents to spend locally, citing a successful Hayward example. Mayor Eddie supported this, recalling a similar ARPA-funded initiative during the pandemic.
 - Marjorie also suggested leveraging the free shuttle system to improve access to local businesses and ensure local vendors are prioritized at city events like the Family Festival (Michelle also echoed this point regarding city events).
 - Anna clarified that "expanding the customer base" includes both increased foot traffic (physical shopping) and online engagement.
 - Joe Napoliello offered a long-term perspective, arguing that increasing residential density around downtown and commercial corridors is crucial for creating a consistent customer base, especially given the decline of traditional retail.
- Community Benefits & Large Employers:
 - Marjorie shared her experience with a childcare facility on City-owned land leased to Genentech, urging the City to be more assertive in negotiating community benefits (e.g., reserving spots for residents) when public land is used for private purposes. Mayor Eddie confirmed that the YMCA facility, previously limited to Genentech employees, is now open to all.
 - Michelle suggested leveraging large local employers like Genentech, Kaiser-Permanente, and Costco to encourage their employees to spend more within the community.
 - Mayor Eddie clarified that Genentech owns its property and contributes significantly to local revenues through taxes, noting a proposed expansion that could bring additional revenue to the City.
- Unprioritized/Challenging Areas:

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- Leslie Fong highlighted the significant challenge of low foot traffic downtown, especially at night and on weekdays, which impacts restaurants and small businesses. She also noted that downtown dining is often too expensive for many.
- Joe acknowledged that current short-term programs might not fully address the broader historical decline of retail due to suburbanization, malls, and e-commerce.

Next Steps

Anna thanked the group for their contributions and confirmed that all feedback is being captured. She encouraged members to continue reviewing the meeting packet and to submit any additional comments or suggestions. She outlined the upcoming steps:

- The draft roadmap will be finalized in the coming weeks, incorporating both in-meeting and emailed feedback.
- The draft (not final) version will be shared with City staff and Council for review and discussion in July.
- A public community engagement event will be held in August to gather broader input.
- The final CAC meeting is expected in September, giving members time to review the completed roadmap before reconvening for final discussion and reflection.

Anna encouraged members to attend the City Council meeting in September to demonstrate their ongoing role in shaping the roadmap and supporting the process as community representatives.

Public Comments

Rhovy Antonio, representing the California Apartment Association, expressed strong support for a robust and positive economic development strategy in South San Francisco. She emphasized that thriving local businesses are essential for apartment owners and managers, as they help attract tenants and maintain vibrant communities. Rhovy noted that members of the Association even use economic development data as a marketing tool, reinforcing how closely housing and business vitality are connected. She concluded by affirming the Association's commitment to being supportive partners in this effort.

The Mayor adjourned the meeting at 7:07 pm.