WESTSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

November 28, 2023

Dear Members of City Council:

On behalf of the Westside Neighborhood Association Board, we want to express our opposition to the Westside Heritage Urban Renewal Plan CD-CPC-2023-00141.

Here are some of our key concerns:

- **Lack of Public Engagement:** While WNA board members have collectively spent many hours dissecting the plan, many Westside residents have not been able to understand the 27-page plan document. WNA was never directly contacted by HEDC or the EDC to facilitate public engagement. An information session was held on 11/6 after WNA contacted HEDC. Given that this plan would be in effect for 15 years, our neighbors deserve to understand it.
- **Lack of Transparency:** While the proponents of the plan met with some groups of neighbors, the neighbors who attended those sessions were given an excerpt of the plan, not the complete document. Neighbors were asked to sign printed letters of support after only having read a small portion of the full plan. While we respect the right of individuals to express their views and opinions through petitions and letters of support, it is crucial that they do so with a comprehensive understanding of what they are endorsing. In this case, we have evidence that individuals who signed letters of support were not given the opportunity to review the complete document, including all its provisions and implications for our neighborhood. Additionally, during and after our public engagement session on 11/6, neighbors were given conflicting and misleading information by HEDC. (See attachments)
- **Redundant and Unnecessary:** Tax incentives for the most vulnerable homeowners in our neighborhood already exist with the 353 plan. Homeowners can pay a lot less for a much longer tax incentive with the 353 plan. A total of $3,500 in home improvements is an insurmountable cost for anyone already struggling to pay property taxes.
- **Does not Serve Intended Population:** Most small business owners do not own the land they operate on in the Westside. Tax incentives should not be directed to a small number of [wealthy] commercial landlords. There are better ways to serve the actual intended beneficiaries–small business owners.
- **Ambiguity:** The plan contains language that leaves room for misinterpretation and potential misuse by developers. Because of this, the plan can be exploited

by developers to pursue projects that do not align with the best interests of our Westside neighborhood. Given the long history of our neighborhood, development with tax incentives should be considered on a case-by-case basis, not a blanket policy.

- **Preservation of Historic Character:** The plan states that the Westside neighborhood has a rich historical and architectural heritage. We agree that we want to preserve the historic character. We are concerned that the plan would not adequately protect our neighborhood given the vague language and contradictory statements throughout the plan.

We respectfully request that the City Council vote against the passage of the Westside Heritage Urban Renewal Plan and consider our concerns and those of many community members.

Our Westside community's well-being is always at the heart of our advocacy.

In community/En comunidad,

Westside Neighborhood Association Board

Attachments: Email from HEDC, HEDC Plan Comparison document, HEDC Plan Comparison document with annotations from WNA member