



October 24, 2018

Rich Hillis, President
San Francisco Planning Commission
1650 Mission Street, Suite 400
San Francisco, California 94102

Re: Prohibiting Employee Cafeterias within Office Space/2018-010552PCA

Dear Commissioner Hillis & Members of the Planning Commission,

The Golden Gate Restaurant Association supports the intent of the cafeteria ban to:

- Apply only to non-retail corporate cafeterias.
- Be applicable only to new buildings zoned as office.
- Not prevent the provision of free food or snacks, rather the building out of a full service non-retail cafeteria operation.
- Still encourage catering in of food from local restaurants or caterers.
- Not impact existing cafeterias retroactively.

We support some of the recommendations of the Planning Staff, most notably creating Health Code amendments to differentiate between cafeterias that operate as a full-service daily non-retail cafeteria versus a kitchen that may be used for some cooking and preparation. In acknowledging Planning Staff's recommendation for alternative approaches, a definition distinction would allow the Commission to consider the tool of a Conditional Use authorization for the installation of a full service, non-retail cafeteria. This would allow the Commission to weigh the provision of a non-retail cafeteria in the context of the General Plan Priority Principles.

In addition to supporting changes in the Health Code, we'd like to address other items highlighted under Staff's **Issues and Considerations**:

Catering - As noted above, it is not our intent to see catering prohibited, in fact, we support incentives that encourage it.

Impact on Jobs -- While it's true that restaurant jobs have less ideal hours since their busiest times are evening and weekends, industry wages are at an all time high as there's a massive shortage of workers in the industry. If you were to search restaurant jobs, you'd find everything from neighborhood coffee shops to Michelin starred restaurants starving for talent. Additionally, according to the Planning Department's own Commerce and Industry Inventory 2016 (which is

the most recent report released), eating and drinking establishments represent more than 35 percent of all retail sales tax collected in San Francisco, with more than \$4.7 billion in taxable sales that support the local economy. The survival and vitality of the local restaurant industry is critical to San Francisco's overall economy. Traditional restaurant jobs provide a path to move into the front of house jobs (which have good compensation) or small business ownership (opening a restaurant).

Alternatives to a Complete Ban

- Incentives for foregoing an Employee Cafeteria - We support the concept of creating incentives and/or implementing a CU process for cafeterias. We're agnostic on item one (CU for ground floor office), but we generally don't believe every office building must have retail space given the existing amount of vacant storefronts. We're supportive of items two (exempting Gross Floor Area up to 15,000 square feet devoted to personal services, restaurants) and three (first floor employee cafeterias open to the public), especially since our issue is with non-retail cafeterias, not cafeterias generally. One point of irony in office cafeterias is that restaurant uses are typically not allowed above the first floor in Neighborhood Commercial Districts.
- Requirements for Establishing an Employee Cafeteria - While we like the idea of meal vouchers for use at nearby restaurants, similar to what some companies already do, we oppose any attempt to legislate this requirement. We support items two (reporting to OEWD) and three (considerations under Planning Code Section 321 for office development), and think this is where the Commission could add the Conditional Use requirement for employee non-retail cafeterias.

In closing, as the Commission considers what happened in the Mid-Market area and the promise of the Central SOMA rezoning, we think it's a critical time to really think about the ground floor experience in our city. Vibrant communities have a healthy balance of uses, and the promise of new jobs has always been considered in the context of the greater economic impact they have on the overall local ecosystem. The notion of the ban is a consideration of whether the requirement of mixed use zoning can actually achieve the active streetscape our General Plan contemplates; and we hope that after careful consideration that you support our recommendations.

Sincerely yours,



Gwyneth Borden
Executive Director

CC: Supervisor Ahsha Safai
Supervisor Aaron Peskin