



SAN FRANCISCO  
COMMISSION ON THE ENVIRONMENT

# Annual Report 2020



**SF Environment**

**Our home. Our city. Our planet.**

A Department of the City and County of San Francisco

Prepared by SF Environment  
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## OUR MISSION

The mission of the San Francisco Commission on the Environment is to improve, enhance, and preserve the environment while promoting San Francisco's long-term environmental sustainability as set forth in Section 4.118 of the City Charter. The Commission sets policy for the Department of the Environment and advises the Mayor, Board of Supervisors, and other City departments on environmental matters. Appointed by the Mayor, the seven-member Commission helps develop policies and programs on a wide range of environmental topics including: zero waste, toxics reduction, environmental justice, clean air, transportation, energy efficiency, green building, habitat restoration, biodiversity, urban forestry, and greenhouse gas reductions.



*(From L to R) Sarah Ching-Ting Wan, Eddie Ahn (Vice President), Mike Sullivan, Elmy Bermejo, Heather Stephenson (President), Johanna Wald, Tiffany Chu*



## LETTER FROM THE COMMISSION PRESIDENT

**Mayor Breed, Members of the Board of Supervisors, Friends, and Colleagues:**

The Commission on the Environment had a truly unique year that challenged us to rethink how we conduct business and create change. I am proud of our Commission for successfully navigating new territory and shifting to virtual meetings while still holding true to our environmental mission and commitment to San Francisco.

Commission and Committee convenings fully resumed in June as Commissioners and staff worked together to lead meaningful meetings, hear virtual public comments, and invite speakers from our community. The level of engagement from both Commissioners and the public has been inspiring, and allowed us to pass resolutions addressing some of our key priorities, including fossil fuel reduction and better integrated pest management through the use of safer alternatives.

The Commission and the Department were also able to contribute to new priorities, such as the City's recovery from the pandemic with the Economic Recovery Task Force. The Essential Worker Ride Home Program and the Green Business Program's support to small businesses were just two ways the Department's programs pivoted, while keeping their focus on the people of San Francisco and our environment. The Commission also heard about outreach efforts and partnerships with the COVID Command Center. During this unique time, it's clear the Commission on the Environment, along with the Department, continue to be leaders in outreach, environmental awareness, and climate justice.

Racial equity has long been a focus of the Department, and it will be a critical factor to address for the entire City as we recover from the pandemic, take action on key climate issues, and become a more just City for all. We look forward to seeing the first phase of the Department's Racial Equity Plan put into action and to supporting our continuing work with the Office of Racial Equity.

As a Commission, we are entering 2021 with a renewed commitment to environmental and social justice. The last year has shown us that we can harness science and compassion to tackle some of the biggest issues the world has ever faced. Looking ahead, I have no doubt that we can come together again to solve the climate crisis with the same innovation and perseverance.

Sincerely,

Heather Stephenson  
President, San Francisco Commission on the Environment



## REAPPOINTMENT OF COMMISSIONER ELMY BERMEJO

Commissioner Elmy Bermejo was reappointed to the Commission on the Environment by Mayor London Breed on October 14th, 2020. She has been a key part of the Commission since 2015 when she was originally appointed and served as Commission President in 2018 and 2019. Commissioner Bermejo is currently the Northern California Director of External Affairs for the Office of California Governor Gavin Newsom. She was previously the Director of Intergovernmental Affairs at the U.S. Department of Labor where she was responsible for strengthening relationships with the National Governors Association, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the National Association of Counties, the U.S. League of Cities, and other organizations. For more than 20 years, Commissioner Bermejo has been dedicated to public service in California and in Washington D.C. She has served as Interim Executive Director of the Latino Issues Forum, Chair of the California State Commission on the Status of Women, and Deputy Secretary for the State and Consumer Services Agency in California.





## 2020 COMMISSION HIGHLIGHTS

### GREEN BUSINESS PROGRAM

At the 14th Annual Green Business Awards, Commissioners Ahn, Bermejo, Chu, Stephenson, and Wald congratulated over 100 local businesses for their commitment to sustainable business practices. The Green Business Program showcases how businesses can be prosperous and operational without further burdening the environment. The Department has always led by example, and SF Environment is now an Innovator Green Business, the highest tier of certification in the Green Business Program.

At the Commission meeting in July, Commissioners heard about how the Green Business Program has pivoted to support members during the pandemic. From April through June of 2020, the program provided rebates and pre-bates to existing Green Businesses to help offset the cost of environmentally friendly products they needed such as Safer Choice cleaning products and recycled content paper products. This program will continue into 2021, and rebates and pre-bates will be awarded to Green Businesses that are in Districts 10 and 11 or majority owned by a person who identifies as Black, Indigenous, or a Person of Color.

Additionally, from June through August of 2020, the Green Business Program carried out a paid Facebook marketing campaign to market Green Businesses and let customers know about take-out from restaurants, contactless pickup from retailers, and virtual appointments for financial services. The theme was “San Francisco: Open for Business” and featured a photo of each of the participating businesses.



# 2020 COMMISSION HIGHLIGHTS *continued*

## GOING VIRTUAL

After the Mayor’s shelter in place order went into effect in March, San Franciscans had to reimagine the way they work and conduct business. Everything shifted to a virtual format, and the Commission was no different. The Commission cancelled its meeting set for the end of March and did not meet again until June. Despite the inability to meet in person, Commissioners, speakers, and members of the public remained engaged and committed to making progress on the City’s climate goals. When meetings started up again virtually in June, the Commission continued its environmental work, approving resolutions in support of new ordinances that addressed critical topics like all-electric new construction. Commissioners also maintained their annual responsibilities to the City, which included approving the Reduced Risk Pesticide List for City Properties and reviewing the Department’s budget. The need to adapt and shift the way the Commission conducts business highlights what is possible as well as future opportunities for innovation and creative solutions. Climate action is more important than ever and, with technology and innovation on our side, we can continue to imagine a better, more sustainable future.

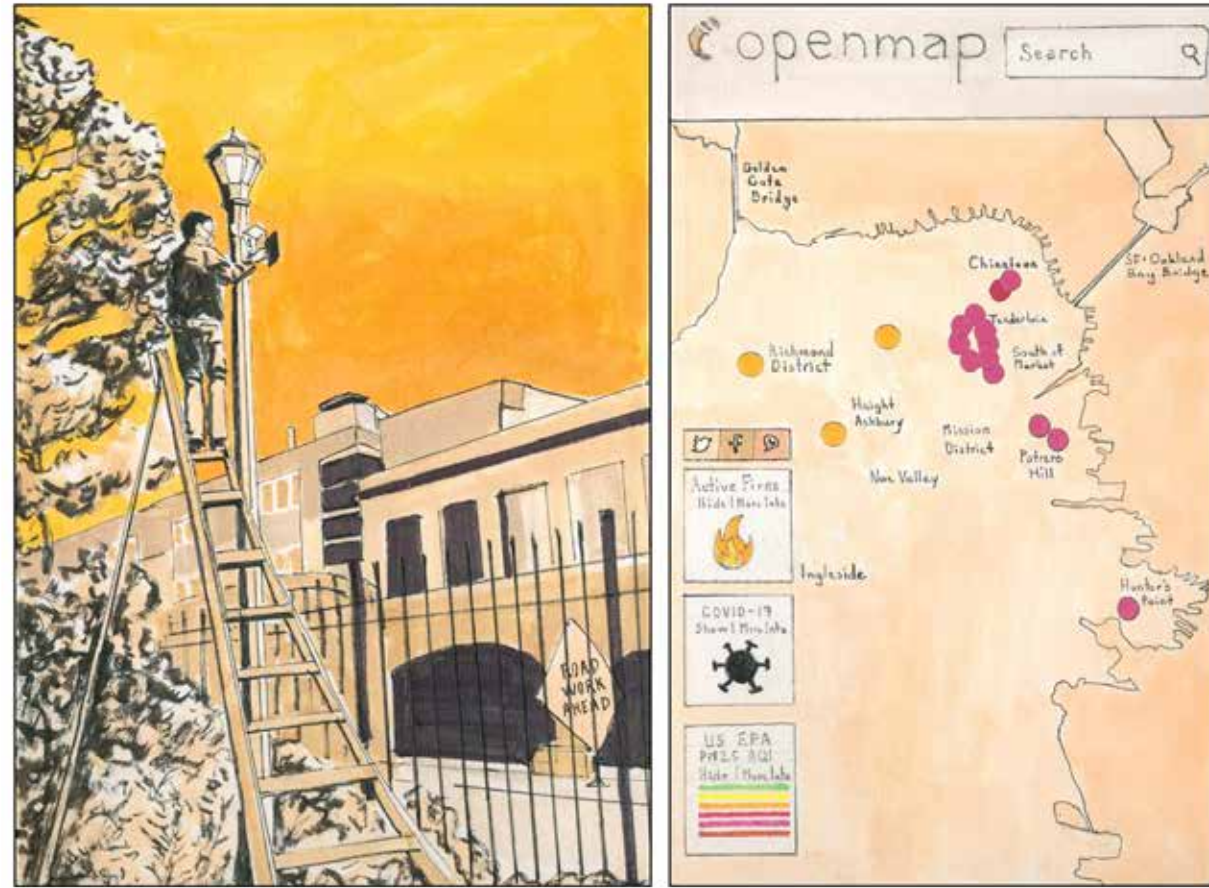


## COMMISSION AND DEPARTMENT RESPONSE TO COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic presented opportunities for the Department to double-down on programs that address the link between climate and human health. The Commission heard about the Essential Worker Ride Home program which reimburses taxi rides home from work for essential employees commuting to and within San Francisco who have been impacted by public transit reductions. This program was advertised through a collaborative project between the Department and the San Francisco County Transportation Authority. Additional efforts between the Department and the Joint Information Center at the City’s COVID Command Center focused on distributing reusable bags and other COVID-19 resources like reusable masks, hand sanitizer, and information on safety protocols and the essential worker ride home program.

The Commission also heard regular updates on the Department staff who were deployed as Disaster Service Workers after the Mayor declared a citywide state of emergency on February 25, 2020. Staff have been deployed throughout the year to the COVID Command Center as well as in the community to aid in response and recovery efforts.





## 2020 COMMISSION HIGHLIGHTS *continued*

### ONGOING RACIAL EQUITY WORK

The Department has long been committed to racial equity work and in 2020 the Department took a significant step forward by readying a comprehensive Racial Equity Action Plan. The Commission heard several updates on the Department’s racial equity plan and engaged in the development of specific actions that were incorporated into the plan. Commissioners had a meaningful discussion around opportunities for training and leadership as well as the need to commit to an increased emphasis on specific departmental metrics and a focus on equity at Commission meetings. Commission presentations on Department programs and policies will continue to highlight racial equity components of each initiative as well as the importance of our outreach and work with local communities. The Commission will continue to play an important role in this process as the Office of Racial Equity provides guidance for all City Departments.

### COMMISSION LETTER TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS ON ALL-ELECTRIC LEGISLATION

At the Commission meeting in July, Commissioners voted to approve a resolution in support of Board of Supervisors File No. 200701 that would amend the Building Code to require new construction be all-electric. This topic received over 20 public comments of support with suggestions for how the ordinance might be strengthened. The Commission incorporated these comments into a letter that was sent to the Board of Supervisors along with the resolution. This letter from the Commission, which was signed by President Stephenson, reinforced the safety and health hazards of natural gas and the benefits of switching to all-electric energy for the environment and human health. The ordinance was passed unanimously by the Board of Supervisors in November 2020 and has already become a model for cities around the country. It will take effect in June 2021.



## COMMISSIONER SPOTLIGHT

Throughout August and September 2020, Brightline Defense, an environmental nonprofit, installed a unique solar-powered air quality sensor network, focusing on low-income residents in the Tenderloin, South of Market, and Chinatown. As these high-quality sensors track localized air impacts across the city, air quality data is made continuously available to the public at [tinyurl.com/brightlineAQ](https://tinyurl.com/brightlineAQ). Commissioner Eddie Ahn, Executive Director of Brightline Defense, worked closely with Commissioner Sarah Wan, Executive Director of the Community Youth Center, to raise awareness of this program with media outlets as well as involving the Center's youth leaders. The installation of these air sensors took place during a year of intense fires and hazardous air quality for San Francisco residents and highlights the critical connection between climate and human health.

## POLICY COMMITTEE

The Commission on the Environment's Policy Subcommittee meets monthly to oversee long-term planning and policy development for the Department, including the assessment of environmental conditions and review of the City's long-term environmental sustainability plans.

In 2020, the Committee heard presentations on proposed revisions to the City's ordinance on flame retardant chemicals in upholstered furniture and juvenile products, fuel substitution in the 2020 BayREN Multifamily Program, proposed revisions to the City's ordinance on greenhouse gas emissions targets, the First Annual Report on the Antibiotic Use in Food Animals Ordinance, the 2020 Reduced Risk Pesticide List for City Properties, a new ordinance addressing construction and demolition debris permits, and the San Francisco County Transportation Authority Congestion Management Initiative.

## OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

The Commission on the Environment's Operations Subcommittee meets quarterly. The Committee oversees public education and community outreach on environmental issues.

In 2020, the Operations Committee discussed the Department's budget, new initiatives for the Green Business Program, outreach for the used oil program, the Department's move to a new office, and the Department's racial equity plan.

More information about commissions hearings and presentations can be found online at [SFEnvironment.org](https://SFEnvironment.org).







## COMMISSION ON THE ENVIRONMENT – ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICE AWARDS

Each year, San Francisco’s Commission on the Environment strives to recognize several worthy individuals and organizations that embody the City’s mission of long-term sustainability and environmental public education.

In January of 2020, the Commission awarded its Environmental Service Award to SF Market for their efforts to ensure that recovered food goes to communities in need in San Francisco. Since receiving funding from the Department of the Environment in 2018-2019, SF Market has successfully diverted and donated 1027 tons of food that otherwise would have gone into the waste stream which is more than double their original goal of 606 tons.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Environmental Service Awards program was paused in the middle of 2020. The Commission plans to resume it in 2021.





## COMMISSION ON THE ENVIRONMENT LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY

Approved the 2019 Annual Green Buy Report.

Approved increasing the Safe Drug Disposal Stewardship Ordinance Fees.

Approved Department of the Environment Funding Recommendations for San Francisco Carbon Fund Grants to Friends of the Urban Forest and Climate Action Now.  
(Resolution File No. 2020-01-COE)

Urging the Board of Supervisors to support a proposed Ordinance (Board of Supervisors File No. 200701) that amends the Building Code to require new construction be all-electric.  
(Resolution File No. 2020-02-COE)

Approved the 2020 Reduced Risk Pesticide List for City Properties.  
(Resolution File No. 2020-03-COE)

Approved amendments to Commission Bylaws.  
(Resolution File No. 2020-05-COE)





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Illustrative artwork by Eddie Ahn, Department of the  
Environment Commissioner and local San Francisco artist