

File No. 241213

Committee Item No. 2

Board Item No. 25

COMMITTEE/BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

AGENDA PACKET CONTENTS LIST

Committee: Land Use and Transportation

Date: January 27, 2025

Board of Supervisors Meeting:

Date: February 4, 2025

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OTHER

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Prepared by: John Carroll

Date: January 23, 2025

Prepared by: John Carroll

Date: January 31, 2025

Prepared by: _____

Date: _____

1 [Castro Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ) Cultural District’s Cultural,
2 History, Housing, and Economic Sustainability Strategy Report (CHHESS)]

3 **Resolution to adopt the Castro Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer**
4 **(LGBTQ) Cultural District’s Cultural, History, Housing, and Economic**
5 **Sustainability Strategy Report (CHHESS) under Administrative Code,**
6 **Section 107.5.**

7
8 WHEREAS, On May 18, 2008, the City and County of San Francisco (“City”)
9 enacted Ordinance No. 126-18, which added Administrative Code, Chapter 107 to
10 create a process for the establishment of cultural districts in the City to acknowledge
11 and preserve neighborhoods with unique cultural heritage; and

12 WHEREAS, Administrative Code, Section 107.3 set forth a list of established
13 Cultural Districts (as defined in Administrative Code, Section 107.1) of the City and
14 County of San Francisco: Japantown Cultural District; Calle 24 (Veinticuatro) Latino
15 Cultural District; SoMa Pilipinas – Filipino Cultural Heritage District; Transgender
16 Cultural District; Leather and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ)
17 Cultural District; African American Arts and Cultural District; Castro Lesbian, Gay,
18 Bisexual Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) Cultural District; American Indian Cultural
19 District; and Sunset Chinese Cultural District; and

20 WHEREAS, Administrative Code, Section 107.5 requires the Mayor’s Office of
21 Housing and Community Development (“MOHCD”) to prepare a Cultural, History,
22 Housing, and Economic Sustainability Strategy Report (“CHHESS”) report for each
23 Cultural District following the process set forth in Section 107.4(b)(5)-(7); and

24 WHEREAS, Administrative Code, Section 107.4(b)(7) requires MOHCD to submit
25 the CHHESS report to the Board of Supervisors for adoption by Resolution; and

1 WHEREAS, MOHCD, in partnership with the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District, the
2 Office of Economic and Workforce Development, the Planning Department, and the Arts
3 Commission, completed the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District's Cultural, History, Housing,
4 and Economic Sustainability Strategy Report, a copy of which is on file with the Clerk of
5 the Board of Supervisors in File No 241213, and is incorporated herein by reference;
6 now, therefore, be it

7 RESOLVED, The Board of Supervisors hereby adopts the Castro LGBTQ
8 Cultural District's Cultural, History, Housing, and Economic Sustainability Strategy
9 Report submitted by MOHCD.

10
11 RECOMMENDED:

12
13
14 /s/
Daniel Adams, Director
15 Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development
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25



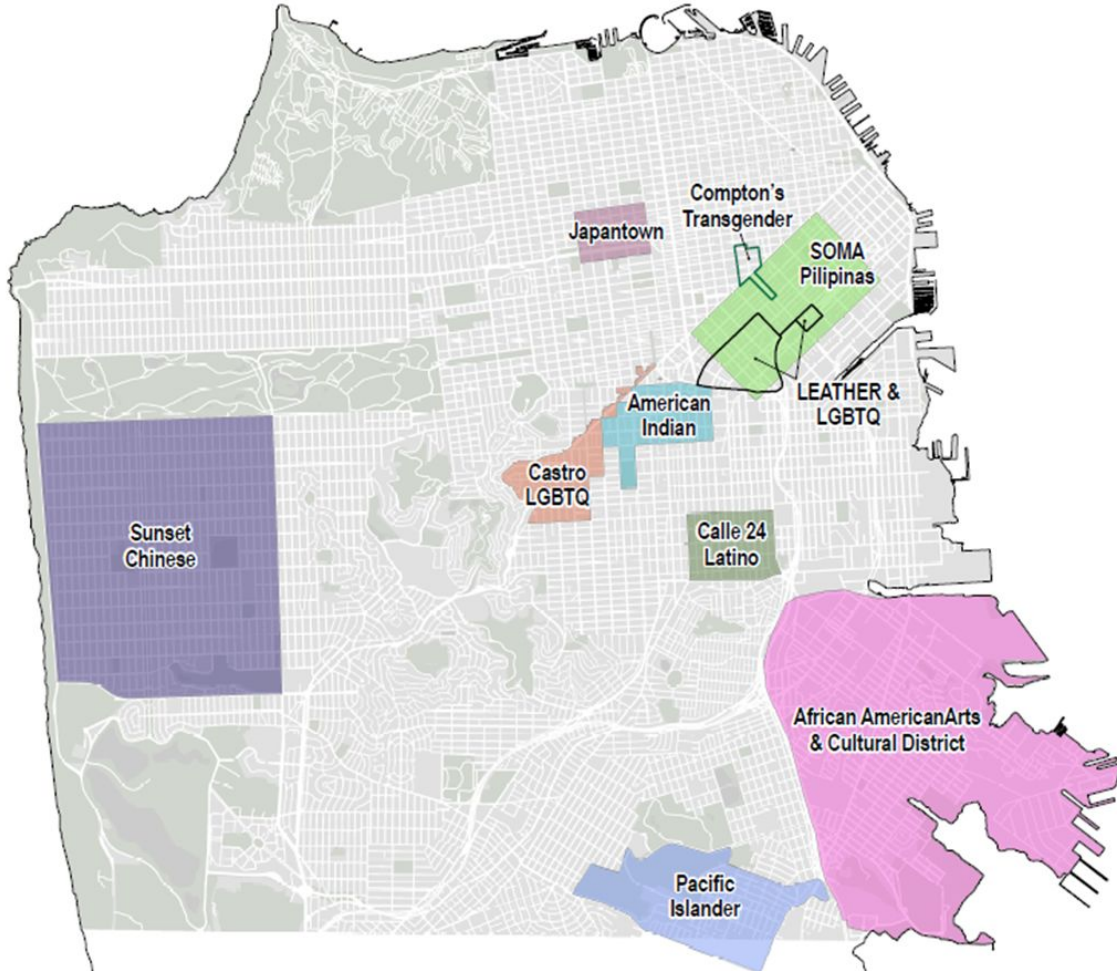
LGBTQ
Cultural
District

CHHESS
R E P O R T

Cultural History, Housing, and Economic
Sustainability Strategies







***“A geographic area...
designated by the
Board of Supervisors
by ordinance, as an
area or location **that**
embodies a unique
cultural heritage.”***

Cultural
History,
Housing and
Economic
Sustainability
Strategies

QR Code to download full CHHESS
Report
30 mb file







Economic & Workforce Development



castro

LGBTQ
Cultural
District

The Castro LGBTQ Cultural District has a new set of small business grants we have awarded to six local entrepreneurs. Grants of \$6,000 to each small business will be used to produce activation events that build foot traffic. The deadline for these grants was July 21, 2023. With these new grants, we have supported small businesses in the Castro with more than \$130,000 in funds over the last two years!



Tenant Protections/Housing





Placekeeping & Placemaking

Cultural Humility



&



Cultural Competence

Arts & Culture



CASTRO STREET STATION



Heritage Recognition & Preservation





**QR Code to download full CHHESS Report
30 mb file**



Castro LGBTQ Cultural District CHHESS Report

Acknowledgments

We acknowledge that we are on the unceded ancestral homeland of the Ramaytush Ohlone who are the original inhabitants of the San Francisco Peninsula. As the indigenous stewards of this land and in accordance with their traditions, the Ramaytush Ohlone have never ceded, lost nor forgotten their responsibilities as the caretakers of this place, as well as for all peoples who reside in their traditional territory. As guests, we recognize that we benefit from living and working on their traditional homeland. We wish to pay our respects by acknowledging the ancestors, elders and relatives of the Ramaytush Community and by affirming their sovereign rights as First Peoples.



San Francisco's Cultural Districts Program reimagines community and City partnership.

The Castro LGBTQ Cultural District acknowledges the administrative support and subject area expertise provided by the City, in particular the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development, the Office of Economic and Workforce Development, the Planning Department, and the Arts Commission.



MAYOR'S OFFICE OF
HOUSING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

San Francisco
Planning



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CHHESS Focus Groups Led by Be the Change Consulting

The Castro LGBTQ Cultural District would also like to thank the many community members and organizational partners who engaged in surveys, focus groups, and interviews to provide the data and ideas that are summarized in this report. Also, the District appreciates the work of Samuel Favela (they/them) who served as program associate during the focus group data collection phase of this project.

Letter from MOHCD

While the Castro occupies a small slice of San Francisco, its influence on the social, cultural, and political fabric of the City—and beyond—is outside. The neighborhood has long been

synonymous with LGBTQIA+ culture, civil rights, and gay pride. It is a place where many have come to find safety and their chosen families, a place that proudly wears its rainbow flag.

San Francisco's Cultural Districts program is a testament to the City's commitment to celebrating and preserving the unique cultural identities and traditions of communities like the Castro. This program, a collaborative effort between City and community, aims to develop a shared vision, build capacity, and provide resources to cultural havens who have faced discrimination and are at risk of displacement.

The establishment of the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District in 2019 signaled a commitment to sustaining the tangible and intangible assets of the storied neighborhood. This Cultural History, Housing, and Economic Sustainability Strategies (CHHESS) Report is the physical manifestation of that commitment: a multi-year effort to identify stabilization priorities that ensure that the Castro remains an inclusive and active business, nightlife, cultural, and artistic hub for LGBTQIA+ folks on a local, statewide, national, and international level.

As City staff and Bay Area natives, we are honored to learn and partner with the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District, which works to keep the neighborhood's heritage alive and center the experiences of BIPOC, trans, and non-binary individuals of color who have played and continue to play an integral role in the Castro. We hope that you, too, are inspired by the rich community history and proposed actions captured within the pages of this CHHESS that will ensure that residents, visitors, businesses, community organizations, and cultural institutions and practices will continue and thrive.

Our heartfelt congratulations to the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District on completing this milestone report, and we look forward to our continued collaboration to make this vision a reality.

Imani Pardue-Bishop

Grace Jiyun Lee

Cultural Districts Program

Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development

[formatting: place Cultural Districts and CHHESS summaries in boxes]

San Francisco Cultural Districts Program

The Cultural Districts program celebrates and strengthens the unique cultural identities of San Francisco's neighborhoods. Its goal is to preserve and strengthen diverse communities' cultural assets and to ensure that residents, businesses, institutions, and cultural assets thrive by formalizing collaborative partnerships between the City and communities. This partnership model facilitates ongoing communication and the potential for creating new tools and ideas related to cultural sustainability, access to affordable housing, environmental and artistic resilience, and economic and workforce development.



Cultural History, Housing, and Economic Sustainability Strategies Report

The Cultural History, Housing, and Economic Sustainability Strategies ("CHHESS") report is a legacy document and strategic plan that provides a shared understanding and comprehensive vision for the City and community. The CHHESS report outlines the cultural district's history and heritage and includes a roadmap of priorities and strategies for stabilizing the cultural community. These strategies are opportunities for the City and the community to explore and engage in crafting a more equitable future together.

Letter from the Cultural District

Queer and trans people, we are multitudes. We are dykes, femmes, gay men, trans men, genderqueers, soft butches, transmasculine individuals, lipstick lesbians, sissy boys, butch queens, and androgynes. We are fabulous artists, workers, small business owners, and we are in every industry. We are disabled, we are young, we are old, we are survivors, and we are able to thrive despite ongoing challenges to our well being.

We need housing, jobs, the arts, parks, libraries, and culturally humble frontline workers and employers. We need places and people that preserve our cultural heritage and herstories/theirstories/histories. We need love, food, friends and chosen family, and places to go to be safe and enjoy life. Most of all, we need hope and the ability to thrive.

This CHHESS Report is a plan for preserving and strengthening our community in the Castro District. It is also an entreaty for us to work together in ways that we have not always done. It is a means to acknowledge that we have achieved important things across nearly seven decades in our neighborhood—and at the same time, that we can and should do better.

This is because we deserve a great LGBTQIA+ district. We deserve racial, gender, and queer equity in this neighborhood and this city which have worldwide reputations as historic and safe spaces for LGBTQIA+ people. Accomplishing this requires intentional support for all LGBTQIA+ people, especially those of us who have been historically marginalized: lesbians and queer women, transgender individuals, bisexuals, LGBTQIA+ people of color, queer and trans people with low incomes, older adults, youth, and disabled people.

As you can read in our History and Cultural Legacy Statement in this document, written by queer historian Gerard Koskovich and lesbian sociologist Jen Reck, Ph.D., the Castro has had a long and fruitful evolution that led it to become known as a “gayborhood.” Starting in the 1950s, many LGBTQIA+ community members moved to the Castro from other places in the city, from elsewhere in the United States and from other countries. By the 1970s, the Castro had become a gay neighborhood: a site for visibility, community development, and political organizing unlike anywhere else.

While AIDS decimated the neighborhood in the 1980s, it also demonstrated the community’s strength and resistance as we banded together to fight society’s disregard for our survival. As the dot-com and tech booms increased gentrification in the 1990s and 2000s the neighborhood became increasingly appealing to heterosexual families and many queers have been displaced.

Currently, housing in the Castro has become affordable to few except the wealthiest queer and straight residents, and less than half the businesses in the neighborhood are owned by LGBTQIA+ community members. At the same time, the Castro remains home to many organizations and businesses created for and run by LGBTQIA+ people, and there are still many LGBTQIA+ residents in the neighborhood.

The importance of the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District and this report is that we as queer and trans people are in the midst of intergenerational disconnection, with our stories and our heritage dispersed and still largely invisible. Though the Castro has long been a haven for gay white men, the neighborhood has yet to fulfill its promise of providing a safe space for love, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for lesbians/queer women, bisexuals, LGBTQIA+ people of color, and transgender individuals.

To remedy this, we need to embrace voices and messages that have previously been excluded from policy-related conversations and processes. We need improved communication amongst City departments, community organizations, and community members, and allies so we can make the Castro a more inclusive place that centers LGBTQIA+ people and culture.

We deserve a great Castro District that lives up to the hopes of residents, visitors, and local nonprofits and merchants. This is why we do this work and why it is worth the difficulties we experience as a result of challenging inequities.

We look forward to improving our neighborhood as a community that centers queerness and transness in their many forms. We offer this CHHESS Report to begin laying out directions to get us there.

Thank you,

Mx. Tina V. Aguirre

Cultural District Director

Castro LGBTQ Cultural District



Mission and Vision

[formatting: place mission and vision in boxes]

Mission: The Castro LGBTQ Cultural District is committed to preserving, sustaining, and promoting the rich cultural legacy of the Castro and its significance to San Francisco's LGBTQ+ community and beyond. Our goals are to highlight the structures and sites important to our history; foster racial, ethnic, gender and cultural diversity among residents and businesses; and create a safe, beautiful, and inclusive space for LGBTQ and allied communities, to visit from around the world and call the Castro home.

Vision: We strive to recognize the importance of LGBTQIA+ people, places and culture in the Castro's history, and ensure that LGBTQIA+ people play a key role in its future. We work toward a day that LGBTQIA+ people – especially lesbians and queer women, transgender individuals, and LGBTQIA+ people of color – are centered in neighborhood community development efforts with the City for the Castro. We envision a day when equity (bigger and more important than equality) is embraced throughout the neighborhood; a day when LGBTQIA+ people in all of our diversity are the co-owners and partnering architects of the neighborhood's structures; and a day when we are all able to thrive.

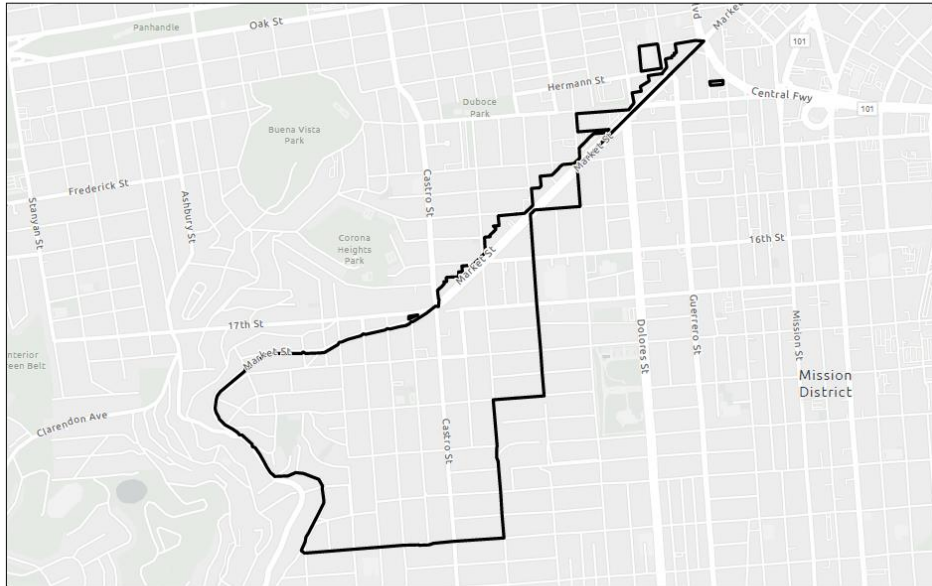


**Preserving and centering LGBTQ people, places, and culture,
especially in the Castro District.**

www.castrolgbtq.org

Figure 1: Castro LGBTQ Cultural District Boundaries

Castro LGBTQ Cultural District



Source: City and County of San Francisco Planning Department, DataSF

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Executive Summary

The Castro District has been the most well-known LGBTQIA+ neighborhood in the United States for over fifty years, a space with an unparalleled history of queer placemaking, political organizing, cultural development, and visibility. The Castro LGBTQ Cultural District was formed in 2019 to preserve, sustain, and promote queer history and culture in the Castro – a response to decades of gentrification and LGBTQIA+ displacement.

As part of the Cultural Districts program legislation, the San Francisco Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development (MOHCD) requires each cultural district to develop a Cultural History, Housing, and Economic Sustainability Strategies (CHHESS) report that outlines a roadmap for the district's work. This CHHESS report represents the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District's strategic priorities for neighborhood preservation. These priorities were developed through a robust community engagement process in which the district conducted focus groups and listening sessions with community members and stakeholders and analyzed existing city data and reports pertinent to the San Francisco LGBTQIA+ community and Castro neighborhood.

This report provides a historical context about what makes this neighborhood a special place for LGBTQIA+ worldmaking, as well as the various challenges and growth points the Castro has faced throughout its history. It also documents demographic changes, as well as ongoing threats to LGBTQIA+ preservation such as economic polarization, lack of affordable housing, high costs of operating businesses, and erasure of queer culture through assimilation and gentrification. The report also includes details of how the Cultural Districts program is situated in the City, outlining the context of City departments and their role in working to preserve and sustain the LGBTQIA+ community in the Castro.

Below is the executive summary of the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District's recommendations, which includes thirty policies across six categories: 1) Heritage Recognition and Preservation; 2) Arts & Culture; 3) Cultural Humility & Cultural Competence; 4) Economic & Workforce Development; 5) Placekeeping & Placemaking; and 6) Tenant Protections / Housing.

These policies will guide the district's work and ensuing work in collaboration with the City to support the Castro's preservation and growth as an LGBTQIA+ enclave.

1. **Heritage Recognition & Preservation:** Through new initiatives and collaborations with neighborhood partners, the District will seek to protect sites associated with the neighborhood's LGBTQIA+ past, as well as expressions of the neighborhood's trans and queer intangible cultural heritage.
 - a. Collaborate with the City to promote the creation of LGBTQIA+ heritage educational programming and support the GLBT Historical Society in updating and expanding the Castro listings in its LGBTQIA+ sites database.
 - b. Collaborate with the Friends of Harvey Milk Plaza to ensure the artwork and explanatory signage featured in the redesign of the Plaza includes respectful portrayals of historically marginalized members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

- c. Explore establishing a Citywide LGBTQIA+ Arts, Culture and Heritage Commission as an official municipal advisory body which could advise the City and others on preservation, interpretation and appropriate use of historic sites.
 - d. Ensure that the San Francisco Citywide Cultural Resources Survey includes a full historic resources survey of the Castro, prioritizing making visible and meaningful the history of diverse LGBTQIA+ populations, communities, social classes, and cultural expressions in the neighborhood.
 - e. Ensure the Historic Preservation Commission and/or the Board of Supervisors prioritize further municipal landmarking and state and national nomination of Castro LGBTQIA+ historic sites, notably those representing the experiences of women, BIPOC individuals, bisexuals, and transgender and gender-nonconforming people, as well as histories of neighborhood debates over diversity, belonging, displacement, and gentrification.
2. **Arts & Culture:** By initiating and enriching access to affordable practice and performance space, as well as supporting vibrant artists and art organizations producing their work in the neighborhood, the District aims to sustain the dynamic presence of LGBTQIA+ arts and culture in the Castro.
- a. Develop resources such as City and foundation funding to support events and programs in the Castro organized by and produced for LGBTQIA+ people, especially lesbians/queer women, LGBTQIA+ BIPOC individuals, transgender and gender-nonconforming people, and disabled people.
 - b. Collaborate with the City, nonprofits, for-profit enterprises, and landlords of commercial properties to develop programs and resources to display the work of LGBTQIA+ artists in public spaces and vacant storefronts in the Castro. Ensure a specific solicitation to support increased participation by culture makers who are lesbians/queer women, LGBTQIA+ BIPOC individuals, bisexuals, transgender and gender-nonconforming people, and disabled people.
 - c. Identify funding to develop a Cultural District program of accessible mini-grants for the production of cultural events, the creation of public art, and the promotion of other LGBTQIA+ cultural expressions in the Castro, specifically soliciting grant applications by lesbians/queer women, bisexuals, BIPOC individuals, gender-nonconforming people, and disabled people.
 - d. Develop a Cultural District program to encourage and support applications by LGBTQIA+ arts and culture makers to obtain City resources for the creation of public art and cultural events in the Castro.
 - e. Support the establishment of a Citywide LGBTQIA+ Arts, Culture and Heritage Commission, ensuring the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District is represented by designated seats with appointments selected both for expertise and to reflect the diversity of the LGBTQIA+ community and the Castro neighborhood.
3. **Cultural Humility & Cultural Competence:** The District aims to enhance cultural humility and competence in the Castro through programs, data strategies, and partnerships that center equity and education.
- a. Identify resources and partners to develop programs that encourage businesses and nonprofits in the Castro to adopt Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and

Accessibility (DEIA) training and to establish DEIA policies, practices, and codes of conduct for staff, customers, and clients.

- b. Address the lack of reliable data on distribution and diversity of LGBTQIA+ residents and households in the Castro neighborhood by assessing current City Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) data collection strategies and collaborating with experts on LGBTQIA+ data collection.
 - c. Work with the City and community organizations to reduce overdependence on police intervention in the Castro and to develop proposals and funding for establishing community-based public safety and officer-training programs, prioritizing principles of nonviolence and de-escalation as well as antiracism, diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.
4. **Economic & Workforce Development:** Broadening access to opportunities for those facing economic inequities, the District will work to create more opportunities for small businesses to succeed and for LGBTQIA+ people to gain access to meaningful and sustainable work.
- a. Increase access to employment opportunities through the expansion of regular job fairs connecting LGBTQIA+ job-seekers to LGBTQIA+ employers who observe cultural humility; include prioritized recruiting of BIPOC and transgender and gender-nonconforming workers, many of whom encounter exclusion from the job market.
 - b. Develop employment resources in collaboration with the San Francisco LGBT Center and other LGBTQIA+ organizations to build their repository of employment resources such as job-search information, resumes and cover-letter writing support, and interview skills-building.
 - c. Recognize historically significant businesses, possibly collaborating with the Castro Merchants to develop a program to assess and identify local establishments eligible for Legacy Business status.
 - d. Partner with community groups and the Office of Economic and Workforce Development to support underserved LGBTQIA+ entrepreneurs seeking to start small businesses in the Castro by increasing grant funding and developing resources such as coaching and mentorship.
 - e. Work with the Department of Building Inspection and/or the Mayor's Office of Disability to develop a strategy to support small businesses and nonprofits in the neighborhood to increase their accessibility to disabled persons . Collaborate with the Office of Economic and Workforce Development's Office of Small Business to support local business owners in gaining access to their grants to support ADA upgrades.
 - f. Explore developing a transportation assistance project to increase Castro District workers' economic stability, possibly in collaboration with the Castro Merchants Association and with San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA), to enhance workforce and economic development in the Castro by identifying resources to provide essential service, retail, and nightlife workers transportation support.

- g. Partner with local organizations and the Office of Economic and Workforce Development to develop a set of resources such as workshops, handbooks, and materials focused on labor laws and cultural competence education to aid Castro small businesses in learning how to better support their workers in terms of employment benefits.
5. **Land Use: Placekeeping & Placemaking:** Honoring the diverse but unsung history of the Castro, the District will prioritize land-use policies supporting an LGBTQIA+ centered culture, inclusive community spaces, and equitable neighborhood representation to ensure the Castro's ongoing role as a district reflecting the entirety of the LGBTQIA+ community.
- a. Collaborate with the San Francisco Historic Preservation Commission, SF Heritage, and the GLBT Historical Society to explore establishing the Castro as a City-recognized LGBTQIA+ historic district.
 - b. Work with liaisons from the San Francisco Interdepartmental Staff Committee on Traffic and Transportation (ISCOTT) to explore ways to make permitting more accessible, streamline permitting processes, and reduce high permitting fees, thereby supporting community programming and LGBTQIA+ cultural needs in neighborhood public spaces.
 - c. Collaborate with local housing organizations, nonprofit housing developers, and the Planning Department to develop strategies to increase affordability that may include cooperative housing such as land trusts and member housing (e.g., housing earmarked for people engaged in community organizations), making Castro housing more accessible to underrepresented LGBTQIA+ people, especially BIPOC LGBTQIA+ people, transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals, queer women, youth, and elders.
 - d. Work with neighborhood groups, arts organizations, and event producers to create more community programming in public outdoor spaces and to ensure that LGBTQIA+ youth and older adults are centered in these spaces.
6. **Tenant Protections/Housing:** Aiming to reduce LGBTQIA+ displacement, the District will work toward increasing access to affordable and culturally competent housing options in the Castro, reducing evictions, and developing outreach strategies and supportive resources to aid LGBTQIA+ people's housing access.
- a. Collaborate with local housing rights agencies and organizations to protect buildings that contain a high proportion of LGBTQIA+ tenants, to ensure landlords' compliance with housing and rental laws, and to educate tenants about their rights; ensure programs center issues particularly facing LGBTQIA+ tenants, such as discrimination and economic vulnerability.
 - b. Advocate for City investment to preserve housing affordability, such as City conversion and regulation of individual units in existing buildings to below market rate, and collaborate with local tenants' rights and housing organizations to develop programs to incentivize property owners to secure long-term tenants for vacant units.
 - c. In partnership with nonprofit developers and acquisitions under the City's Small Sites program, increase the number of subsidized units and develop new affordable housing and supportive services in the Castro so the percentage of affordable units in the Castro aligns with the percentage in the greater City.

- d. Increase LGBTQIA+ young people's housing security to reduce their risks of homelessness and increase their stability. To advance these ends, support and expand resources following models such as the former Host Homes program at the San Francisco LGBT Center, which paired marginally housed LGBTQIA+ youth with volunteer hosts for three months to one year while they pursue education and benefit from case-management support.
- e. Advocate for services and housing for LGBTQIA+ people experiencing homelessness, in collaboration with the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing, such as the creation of a shelter that is LGBTQIA+ centered (ideally in the Castro) and investment in bridge housing in the Castro for housing-insecure people or people needing temporary housing.
- f. Collaborate with housing development agencies, the San Francisco LGBT Center, and housing rights organizations to create special outreach materials providing information and resources for LGBTQIA+ people who seek affordable housing, below-market-rate home-buying options, and supportive housing.

San Francisco's Cultural Districts Program (Cover Page)

San Francisco's Cultural Districts Program

A Historical Snapshot

San Francisco is known around the world as a place for sanctuary and cultural pride, where personal and collective movements for justice and innovation are born. There are countless examples of how the City by the Bay serves as a lighthouse — a beacon of hope radiating light for those who envision a better life, not just for themselves but for families, communities, and generations to come.

Like many other cities, San Francisco experienced significant demographic changes throughout the 1990's and 2000's, particularly in the neighborhoods where communities of color live. The growth in income inequality and costs of living, led to major changes in the city's socio-economic composition leaving communities of color to grapple with displacement of low-income vulnerable households and the businesses and organizations that serve them. Communities advocated and looked to the city to implement policies and strategies to protect their neighborhoods.

Cultural Districts build upon the vision of those who came before, those who raised their minds, bodies, and spirits to protect those in need, holding accountable the systems that neglect the vulnerable and prevent equitable opportunities. This cultural legacy of pride and service to those in need sets a foundation for the Cultural Districts program and institutes a standard for our collective expectations. The Cultural Districts program is an attempt to make San Francisco's reputation become its current reality, to rectify past exclusions and create a more equitable future for historically marginalized cultural communities.

Evolution of Historic Preservation Field to Cultural Heritage Preservation

Previously, the historic preservation field was applied solely to tangible physical elements such as landmarks and architecture. More recently, preservation has expanded to include intangible heritage such as culture and the many elements that make up the social fabric of an area.

In 2003, The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) adopted the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage recognizing "...that the processes of globalization and social transformation, alongside the conditions they create for renewed dialogue among communities, also give rise, as does the phenomenon of intolerance, to grave threats of deterioration, disappearance and destruction of the intangible cultural heritage, in particular owing to a lack of resources for safeguarding such heritage"i . Indigenous communities were called out as having important roles in cultural diversity and human creativity as well as in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage for future generations.

The purposes of the Convention are to:

1. Safeguard the intangible cultural heritage;
2. ensure respect for the intangible cultural heritage of the communities, groups and individuals concerned;
3. to raise awareness at the local, national and international levels of the importance of the intangible cultural heritage, and of ensuring mutual appreciation thereof; and

4. provide for international cooperation and assistance.

While historic preservation methods, such as historic designation, can complement new strategies, fundamentally, it is critical that individual communities serve as the primary agents for developing programs that recognize and support their own cultural heritage assets

Evolution of Preservation & Place-Keeping Policy In San Francisco

San Francisco's Cultural Heritage Districts and Japantown's Role

In the same spirit of the UN's pivot in how preservation is defined and actualized, members of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors requested a hearing in May of 2012 to assess San Francisco's cultural preservation efforts and to also review the progress of the City's implementation of Senate Bill 307, passed in 2001, entitled The California Japantown Preservation Pilot Project that aimed to support the three remaining Japantown neighborhoods. Prior to World War II there were more than 40 Japantown neighborhoods and while the Bill did not cite Internment directly, the fact was that by 1992, the U.S. government had disbursed more than \$1.6 billion (equivalent to \$3.67 billion in 2021) in reparations to 82,219 Japanese Americans who had been interned. The Bill that built upon this reckoning effort and cited the following needs:

“The three remaining Japantowns in California face immediate challenges of integrating development and urban renewal proposals that are not consistent with the cultural character of Japantown neighborhoods. While economic development within Japantown neighborhoods and communities is both welcomed and encouraged, that development should be guided by a comprehensive vision of the future with a commitment to the history and cultural character of the neighborhoods and communities.”¹

The San Francisco Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) then endorsed Resolution No. 0698, recommending that the City develop an inter-departmental program, entitled 'Cultural Heritage Districts' which would further the efforts of documentation and designation, thereby incentivizing preservation of social and cultural heritage. At the same time, the HPC and Planning Department were actively developing historic context statements that reflect the diverse social and ethnic histories of the city which continue to be under-represented in cultural heritage work.

Cultural Districts as Geographically Designated Areas

In the 2014 San Francisco's State of the City Address, Mayor Ed Lee highlighted the urgent need for action to address the negative side effects of the city's booming economy: Our neighborhoods are revitalized, and new construction is all around us, but some still look to the future, anxiously, and wonder whether there's room for them in a changing San Francisco... This rising cost of living, the financial squeeze on our city's working families and middle class — these are the fundamental challenges of our time, not just for our city, but for great cities around the world.

¹http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/01-02/bill/sen/sb_0301-0350/sb_307_bill_20011014_chaptered.html

In 2014, the Calle 24 Latino Cultural District Resolution was passed by the Board of Supervisors as a collaborative effort between the Calle 24 Merchant and Neighbor's Association now Calle 24 Latino Cultural District Council, Mayor Ed Lee and District 9 Supervisor David Campos. The resolution recognized what had been for decades the Latino cultural center of San Francisco's Mission District- "El Corazón de la Misión".

While the step towards recognizing geography as a cultural district emerged in 2013, this effort began in the late 1990s under the leadership of then-Supervisor Jim Gonzalez in response to gentrification. His successor, Supervisor Susan Leal, and the 24th Street Revitalization Committee explored the creation of a "Cultural Historic District," but the idea went dormant without tools for implementation. Interest in establishing a cultural district for lower 24th Street reemerged in 2013 with the neighbors' and merchants' association – known as "Calle 24 SF" -- taking the lead in partnership with the Mayor's Office of Economic and Workforce Development through a new mayoral initiative, Invest In Neighborhoods. The initiative looked upon building on the unique strengths of each of San Francisco's commercial districts to promote economic vitality. For Calle 24, that meant recognizing the existing cultural assets and character of the neighborhood as part of the Latino history of the City.

The Calle 24 Latino Cultural District resolution led to the formal creation of the Cultural Districts Program in 2018, which would adapt the framework of Japantown's Cultural Heritage and Economic Sustainability Strategy and grandfather in five districts which had been leading cultural heritage preservation efforts: Calle 24 Latino Cultural District, Japantown Cultural District, SoMa Pilipinas Filipino Cultural District, Compton's Transgender Cultural District (now Transgender Cultural District), and Leather and LGBTQ Cultural District.

True to form, San Francisco's community and City leaders raised the bar, accelerating the implementation of their vision and deepening the coordination between City Departments and communities. There was a collective realization that to ensure progress in cultural stabilization, a toolkit of economic, zoning, educational, marketing, and planning approaches appropriate to safeguarding living heritage needed to be developed.²

SF Creates Cultural Districts Program

The current Cultural Districts program was formalized by Ordinance 126-18 in May 2018 when the Board of Supervisors' legislation defined a Cultural District as "a geographic area or location within the City and County of San Francisco that embodies a unique cultural heritage because it contains a concentration of cultural and historic assets and culturally significant enterprise, arts, services, or businesses and because a significant portion of its residents or people who spend time in the area or location are members of a specific cultural, community, or ethnic group that historically has been discriminated against, displaced, and oppressed."³

The legislation outlined the program's purpose:

San Francisco's Cultural Districts program will seek to formalize a collaborative partnership between the City and communities and bring resources and help in order to stabilize vulnerable communities facing or at risk of displacement or

² <https://commissions.sfplanning.org/cpcpackets/2016-008314CWP.pdf>

³ <https://sfbos.org/sites/default/files/o0126-18.pdf>

*gentrification and to preserve, strengthen and promote our cultural assets and diverse communities so that individuals, families, businesses that serve and employ them, nonprofit organizations, community arts, and educational institutions are able to live, work and prosper within the City.*⁴

The legislation's goals are the following:

- To preserve, strengthen, and promote diverse communities' cultural and neighborhood assets, events, and activities.
- To celebrate, amplify, and support the community's cultural strengths to ensure immediate and long-term resilience.
- To streamline City and community partnerships to coordinate resources that stabilize communities facing displacement.

Hotel Tax Measure for the Arts - Proposition E

The formalization of the Cultural Districts program through legislation positioned the new program to benefit from City efforts to restore arts funding through a new hotel tax ballot measure in November 2018. Proposition E was introduced to secure funding for the arts including funds for the Cultural Districts and Cultural Centers in San Francisco and passed by a 75% majority allocating approximately \$3 million annually from the City's Hotel Tax Fund to support the Cultural Districts Program. Proposition E not only provided the necessary resources for the Cultural Districts program, but also a formal recognition of the fact that San Francisco was experiencing a dramatically changing landscape; in response to this emerging transformation, the City's voters overwhelmingly had chosen to allocate ongoing funding to preservation of the City's diversity and cultural identities through a strategic stabilization.

As of 2024, there are ten formally recognized cultural districts across San Francisco, each working with the residents, business owners, service providers, and other stakeholders to strengthen community stability and to celebrate the neighborhood's distinct ethnic or cultural heritage.

⁴ <https://sfbos.org/sites/default/files/o0126-18.pdf>

Figure 2: San Francisco's Ten Cultural Districts



Source: San Francisco Planning Department

Cultural Districts Approach

The Cultural Districts program's approach to community development can be described as supporting active and local leadership to maintain communities' social fabrics by and for the people who live, visit, and work there. This approach focuses on participatory planning and community building, and supports communities in keeping the memories and legacy of their neighborhood alive by supporting their ability to maintain their traditions and way of life. The Cultural Districts program fundamentally works on the assumption that the most viable and impactful solutions are usually developed by the people most impacted by social inequities.

How the Cultural Districts Program Operates Today

The legislation that created the Cultural Districts program officially tasked its implementation to the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development (MOHCD). MOHCD created a new role in its department, the Cultural District Manager, specifically to oversee the program, including interfacing regularly with cultural district staff and administering City funding directly to the districts. The legislation also specifies that the program is to be supported by an inter-departmental working group coordinated by MOHCD, consisting of members of the Planning Department, the Office of Economic and Workforce Development (OEWD), and the San Francisco Arts Commission (SFAC). Each of these departments supports the cultural districts in meeting cultural equity goals, ensures district programming is tied into existing initiatives, and provides any relevant data housed by their department.

The program receives its annual funding from the city's Hotel Tax, which MOHCD directs to the individual districts and uses to cover any administrative costs it incurs in program management. The amount secured in the first year of the program was \$3 million, with the legislation specifying that each subsequent annual allocation cannot increase or decrease by more than ten percent from the previous year, thus keeping funding relatively stable.

Once a cultural district is created, an independent entity must be identified to manage the district. The entity – a nonprofit organization or fiscally sponsored project often carrying the same name as the district – applies for funding from MOHCD for operational support. Each district is led by a community-based advisory board that gives guidance and sets the mission and vision for the district, and then the MOHCD grant funds additional support (including staff and other operational necessities) needed to carry out the mission. Cultural districts may secure additional funding from other City or outside sources.

The CHHESS Report

Each cultural district is required, by legislation, to create a playbook for community stabilization. This resulting Cultural History, Housing, and Economic Sustainability Strategy (“CHHESS”) report is a community-co-authored planning document meant to inventory community assets and guide the city’s efforts to curb displacement within a district. In both name and goals, the CHHESS report was inspired by the JCHESS report created by the Japantown community in partnership with the Planning Department in 2013.

CHHESS reports provide a history of the community within that cultural district, a demographic and economic profile of the district (supported by data gathered from various departments, outside sources, and the districts themselves), and a set of strategies designed to guide community stabilization in six legislated policy areas.

Figure 3: CHHESS Strategy Policy Areas

Policy Area	Overarching Goal	City Department Scope Alignment
Historic/Cultural Preservation	Preserve and develop cultural and historic buildings, businesses, organizations, traditions, arts, events, and District aesthetics	Planning Department
Housing and Tenant Protections and Housing	Protect tenants from displacement and promote affordable housing and homeownership	Mayor’s Office of Housing & Community Development
Arts and Culture	Attract and support artists and cultural enterprises	San Francisco Arts Commission
Economic and Workforce Development	Promote jobs, tourism, and economic opportunities that stabilize the district’s economy.	Office of Economic and Workforce Development
Land Use and Housing	Create city regulations and programs that support businesses and industries that advance the Cultural District	All
Cultural Competency	Promote culturally competent and appropriate City services, policies, and narratives	All

The full set of Castro LGBTQ Cultural District strategies can be found starting on page 64. The cultural district, community partners, and City staff will work towards the implementation of these

strategies. To ensure that the CHHESS strategies continue to serve the community, the district will assess their efficacy every three years and make updates to the report based on these assessments every six years.

This CHHESS report builds upon the City and community's work over the last two decades and provides a roadmap for deeper partnerships and leveraging resources to attain the community's vision over the coming years. Moreover, it has served as a process to center LGBTQIA+ voices that have historically been underrepresented in citywide policy discussions, especially lesbians and queer women, transgender individuals, and LGBTQIA+ people of color. This is a tangible way to embrace racial, gender, and queer equity frameworks that include centering all queer and trans people. In this respect, our CHHESS Report is a way to create hope after a long period of challenges due to COVID-19, the racial reckoning brought on by police violence against people of color, and the economic hardships that have impacted LGBTQIA+ people, places and culture in the Castro and beyond.

City-Supported Place-Keeping Efforts in the Castro

This section touches on ongoing investments and tools implemented by the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development, San Francisco Arts Commission, Office of Economic and Workforce Development, and Planning Department that support stabilization and place-keeping efforts in the Castro. The CHHESS strategies complement and add to these existing efforts.

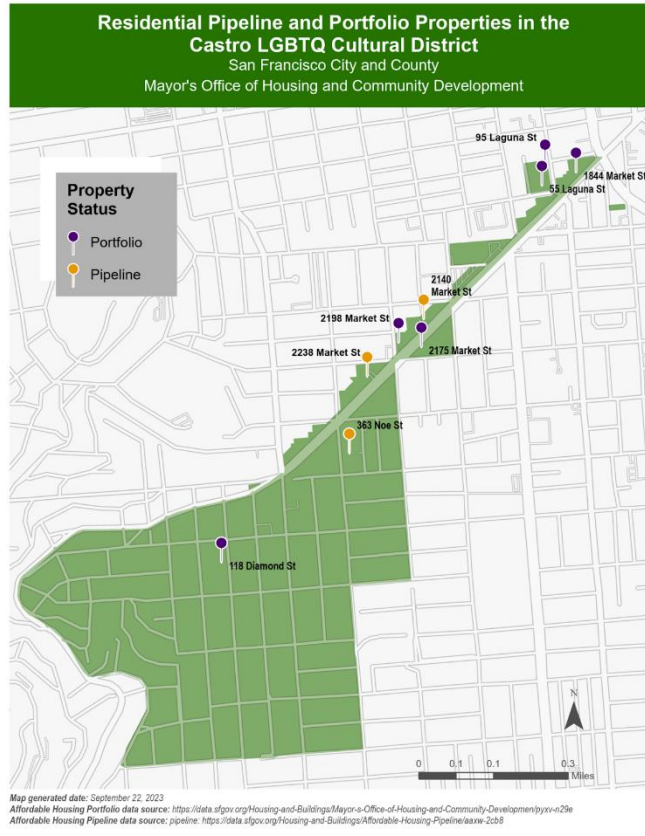
The Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development: Affordable Housing and Tenant Protections

MOHCD supports residents with affordable housing opportunities and essential services to build strong communities. It creates housing, preserves existing housing, protects vulnerable residents, and empowers neighborhoods.

MOHCD's Housing Division focuses on creating housing policies and programs that create safe, stable, and affordable housing. Over more than five decades, tenant advocacy, community activism and City leadership have shaped policies that protect tenants from displacement, such as rent control, just cause eviction protections, limitations on owner move-in evictions, and various other expansions of tenant protections under the Rent Ordinance.

Within the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District boundaries, there are nine properties in the department's below-market rate housing pipeline and portfolio. These projects are developed in partnership with non-profit or for-profit developers and financed through city funding agreements, ground leases, disposition and participation agreements and conduit bond financing.

Figure 4: Residential Pipeline and Portfolio Properties in the Castro



Further, various community-based anti-displacement services and programs are a result of the collaboration between the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development and San Francisco's vibrant community-based nonprofit sector.

MOHCD's residential anti-displacement strategies include community-based eviction prevention and housing stabilization programs, affordable housing programs, and housing preservation programs.

Eviction prevention and housing stabilization programs include:

- **Tenant Right to Counsel**, San Francisco's eviction legal defense system – legal representation for tenants in eviction court
- **Tenants' Rights Counseling, Education, and Outreach** – tenant assistance programs to help tenants know their rights and navigate eviction notices, rent increases, habitability issues, Rent Board petitions, etc.
- **Housing-Related Mediation** – partnership with the Bar Association of San Francisco providing on-demand and comprehensive alternative dispute resolution services to tenants, landlords, and City-subsidized housing providers

- Housing-Related Legal Services⁵ – legal services focused on housing stabilization, such as help with reasonable accommodations, rent increases, habitability issues, advocacy for tenants in subsidized housing, etc.
- Financial Assistance Programs (other City agencies, including but not limited to San Francisco Housing Authority, Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing, and Department of Disability and Aging Services, also fund these and similar programs)
- [San Francisco Emergency Rental Assistance Program](#) (SF ERAP) and [Season of Sharing](#)
- Longer-Term Tenant-Based Rental Subsidy Programs, such as Our Trans Home Initiative, Ending Trans Homelessness Initiative, Anti-Displacement Shallow Subsidy Program, Senior/Disability Shallow Subsidy Program, and various subsidy programs that serve people living with HIV/AIDS
- Guaranteed Income Programs, such as a trans-focused guaranteed income program

MOHCD administers Affordable Housing Lottery Preference Programs, including:

- The [Displaced Tenant Housing Preference Program](#) that helps tenants displaced from rent controlled housing by no-fault eviction, fire, or unaffordable rent due to expiring affordability restrictions;
- the [Neighborhood Resident Housing Preference Program](#) (Housing Lottery), which sets aside an allocation of housing units within new affordable housing developments for residents within the neighborhood; and
- the [Certificate of Preference Program](#) that helps households who were displaced due to former San Francisco Redevelopment Agency action.

The two hallmark programs of MOHCD's Housing Preservation efforts are:

- The [Small Sites Program](#) (SSP), which supports local nonprofit sponsors with acquisition and preservation loans, stabilizing at-risk communities by converting rent-controlled properties to permanently affordable housing.
- The [Community Living for Mental Health](#) (CLMH) Program, which expands opportunities for people with chronic mental illness and/or substance use disorders to live in communal, non-institutional, neighborhood-based, household settings with 24-7 on-call individual and household case management services.

These programs: 1) provide technical assistance and capacity building support to nonprofit organizations seeking to acquire and rehabilitate existing multifamily properties and 2) evaluate the eligibility of potential sites under criteria that prioritizes investing in buildings where there is displacement risk and where vulnerable populations are among current tenants.

San Francisco Arts Commission: Public Arts Investments

The San Francisco Arts Commission champions the arts as essential to daily life by investing in a vibrant arts community, enlivening the urban environment, and shaping innovative cultural

⁵ Organizations that provide this service include [AIDS Legal Referral Panel](#) and [Bay Area Legal Aid](#). Additionally, about 25% of Bay Area Legal Aid's clients served in their housing law grant identify as LBG.

policy. SFAC programs include Community Investments, Public Art, Galleries and Public Programs, and Civic Design Review.

Its grantmaking work is guided by its Cultural Equity legislation, which reads:

The Cultural Equity Endowment Fund ("Fund")⁶ is established to move San Francisco arts funding toward cultural equity. The goal of cultural equity will be achieved when all the people that make up the City have fair access to the information, financial resources and opportunities vital to full cultural expression, and the opportunity to be represented in the development of arts policy and the distribution of arts resources; when all the cultures and subcultures of the City are expressed in thriving, visible arts organizations of all sizes; when new large-budget arts institutions flourish whose programming reflects the experiences of historically underserved communities, such as: African American; Asian American; disabled; Latino; lesbian and gay; Native American; Pacific Islander; and, women.

SFAC has a long history of providing grant support to LGBTQIA+ community members deeply rooted in the LGBTQIA+ communities in the City. The Cultural Equity Endowment legislation was established in 1993 to specifically support historically underfunded communities, which includes LGBTQIA+ artists and arts organizations. SFAC issues annual competitive grant cycles to support arts organizations and individual artists.

The arts play a major role in supporting the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District as an international destination. Visitors can feel the significance of the Castro and the community when they land in the Harvey Milk Terminal at SFO. As more public art opportunities arise throughout the City, SFAC will continue to engage with communities to support the cultural landscapes that reflect the diverse narratives of neighborhoods. SFAC is committed to working with the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District to support efforts to ensure the cultural legacy and future of the arts in such a historically significant district. SFAC has an ongoing commitment to preserve the artwork that currently resides within the Cultural District, while also supporting local advocates that want to see new installations and developments.

Castro LGBTQ Cultural District works in our Civic Arts Collection

The San Francisco Arts Commission's Civic Arts Collection can be recognized as the city's archive of historic monuments, memorials, gifts to the city, annual art festival purchases made from 1946 to 1986 and more recently, the hundreds of contemporary artworks commissioned through the City's 2%-for-art program. As the conservators of these works it is the department's responsibility to preserve the collection which takes a deep understanding of the materials used to create each work as well as a financial investment of over 1 million dollars annually.

There are currently 4 artistic works from our Civic Arts Collection in the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District. The California Volunteers, Spanish American War by Douglas Tilden sculpture made of bronze and granite is on public display at the intersection of Market and Dolores St. The Torso by Beniamino Bufano sculpture made of granite is on public display at Eureka Valley Library. The Welcome Hands by Vicki Saulls cast made of concrete is on public display at the Eureka Valley Recreation Center. The "From the Heart Outwards" by Vicki Saulls made of cold cast bronze, zinc and aluminum is on public

⁶ https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/san_francisco/latest/sf_admin/0-0-0-19842

display at the Eureka Valley Recreation Center. Through a competitive process the department's 2% Art program provides arts organizations and artists within the Cultural District the ability to access funding for new installations that further celebrate the legacy and rich history of the neighborhood.

LGBTQIA+ Museum

The GLBT Historical Society, which has a museum located in the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District, has advocated for almost two decades for an expansive LGBTQIA+ museum to present exhibitions and preserve their archival collection. As a sign of continued commitment to support the preservation of queer culture, the San Francisco Arts Commission has made a commitment to supporting the establishment of a permanent LGBTQIA+ museum. In 2024, the Arts Commission approved a sole source pre-development grant in the amount of \$240,000 to be awarded to the GLBT Historical Society to coordinate neighborhood and site-specific due diligence efforts. Within the same 2024 calendar year, the Arts Commission approved the sole source of an additional \$400,000 for general operating support for a historical museum and archive focused on LGBTQIA+ history. The Art Commission's \$640,000 investment into efforts to support this critical work helped lead to the purchase of 2280 Market Street at Noe Street, which will give the LGBTQIA+ Museum a permanent home. The Art Commission's goal is to build on this relationship with the museum by partnering to host listening sessions on grant opportunities through the Community Investment Grants program.

Office of Economic and Workforce Development: Neighborhood Economic Investments

The Office of Economic and Workforce Development (OEWD) strives to create a thriving and resilient economy, where barriers to economic and workforce opportunities are removed and prosperity is shared equitably by all.

The Community Economic Development Division (CED) of OEWD, previously known as Invest In Neighborhoods Initiative (IIN), focuses on developing opportunities to maintain and build a vibrant local economy that supports small businesses and entrepreneurs. CED's focus is to ensure that access to entrepreneurship economic opportunities exists for all diverse households of San Francisco, prioritizing communities that may have challenges to accessing resources, which include, but are not limited to low to moderate income households and limited English speakers. CED manages neighborhood economic development programs, business technical assistance services by providers and disbursement of small business grants. The division works closely with community organizations whose goal is to create economic vitality in their neighborhoods.

The budget of CED varies on an annual basis based on Mayoral and Board allocations and priorities. Those funds then get disbursed to support economic development projects within commercial corridors and for support of small businesses.

OEWD programs that neighborhoods and business can benefit from include the following:

- Small Business Services and Financing Programs
 - Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
 - Loans and Grants /Access to Capital
 - Small Business Development Center
- SF Shines - Façade and Tenant Improvements

- Construction Mitigation
- Commercial Corridor and Small Business Grants
- Neighborhood Commercial Corridor Strategies
 - Community Benefit Districts
 - Cultural Districts MOHCD Partnership
 - Opportunity Communities
- Opportunity Communities Map (Listed on PIM as Invest In Neighborhoods Initiative)

A few of these programs are noteworthy. The Opportunity Communities Program focuses on creating opportunities that build wealth for communities that have experienced historic disinvestments, supporting them to develop an economic development strategy that promotes diversity, equity and inclusion. These commercial corridors have an assigned project manager that works closely with community stakeholders and other city departments to strategically disburse investments and support economic development strategies. Project managers support coordination, development and implementation of CED policy and programs with a focus on these commercial corridors and businesses that serve historically disinvested communities.

As part of their Neighborhood Commercial Corridor Strategies, OEWD investments in the Castro consist of direct small business support, community engagement, and activations that will benefit the Castro business community and neighborhood. OEWD has partnered with the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District, the Castro Community Benefit District, the Castro Merchants, and the Queer Trans Asian Pacific Islander Coalition to fund projects that support small businesses, activate the commercial corridor to increase foot traffic, market the area and improve the conditions of the corridor.

OEWD supports the Castro Community Benefit district (CBD), which was formed in 2005. The CBD is funded by a special property tax assessment, funds used to implement a wide variety of services including daily sidewalk cleaning and graffiti removal, a streetscape improvement plan, security and safety services, support of special events, and beautification of the district.

Between FY19 and 25 OEWD has disbursed \$4,500,453 in funds to support the following projects in the Castro:

- Small business mini grant program: Small businesses apply to the program and receive potential funds for an activation at their place of business.
- Castro commercial corridor activations and neighborhood activations to support foot traffic and placemaking in commercial corridors
- Temporary vacant storefront activations: This program provided funding to link small business owners and entrepreneurs with vacant storefronts. It helped to add vitality to the Castro and opportunities for entrepreneurs to test their ideas.
- Jane Warner Plaza maintenance: This program provides maintenance, cleaning, safety, and beautification services to Jane Warner Plaza so that it is a destination and noteworthy gateway into the Castro neighborhood.
- Castro Cares Community Ambassadors: This program has included uniformed private security patrols, community ambassadors patrolling and managing the public space, and outreach to unhoused people in the Castro.

Legacy Business Program

OEWD under the Office of Small Business also oversees the Legacy Business Program, which is a groundbreaking initiative of the City and County of San Francisco that recognizes longstanding, community-serving establishments. Businesses on the Legacy Business Registry – including retailers, restaurants, service providers, and more – foster civic engagement and serve as valuable cultural assets of the city.

To be eligible for the Registry, businesses must be 30 years or older with no break in San Francisco operations for more than two years. They must also have contributed to the neighborhood or the community's history and/or identity.

There are presently 23 Legacy Businesses in the Castro neighborhood. The City's Office of Small Business provides educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success. Legacy Businesses may receive recognition, marketing help, business assistance, and grants.

Figure 5: Legacy Businesses Located in the Castro

Business Name	Street Address	Status
Academy of Ballet	2121 Market St.	Legacy Business: Active
Anchor Oyster Bar	579 Castro St.	Legacy Business: Active
Beck's Motor Lodge	2222 Market St.	Legacy Business: Active
Cafe du Nord	2170 Market St.	Legacy Business: Active
Castro Country Club	4058 18th St.	Legacy Business: Active
Castro Village Wine Co.	4121 19th St.	Legacy Business: Active
Cliff's Variety	479 Castro St.	Legacy Business: Active
Courtney's Produce	101 Castro St., #A	Legacy Business: Active
Cove on Castro	434 Castro St.	Legacy Business: Active
Cruisin' the Castro Walking Tours	18th St. & Castro St.	Legacy Business: Active
For Your Eyes Only Optometry	552 Castro St.	Legacy Business: Active
GLBT Historical Society	4127 18th St.	Legacy Business: Active
La Méditerranée	288 Noe St.	Legacy Business: Active
Maitri Compassionate Care	401 Duboce Ave.	Legacy Business: Active
Marcello's Pizza	420 Castro St.	Legacy Business: Active
Moby Dick	4049 18th St.	Legacy Business: Active
PO Plus	584 Castro St.	Legacy Business: Active
Rolo San Francisco	2351 Market St. and 2267 Market St.	Legacy Business: Active
Ruby's Clay Studio & Gallery	552A Noe St.	Legacy Business: Active
San Francisco Bay Times	2261 Market St., #309	Legacy Business: Active
Scarpelli and Associates Physical Therapy	4200 18th St., Suite 102	Legacy Business: Active
Underglass Custom Framing	2239 Market St.	Legacy Business: Active
Yankee Clipper Travel	4115 19th St.	Legacy Business: Active
IXIA	2331 Market St.	Legacy Business: Active, In Transition

The Planning Department: Preserving Places and Planning for Growth

The Planning Department is a regulatory city agency which guides San Francisco's growth and development, under the direction of the Planning and Historic Preservation Commissions. The

Department oversees both current and long-range planning efforts to achieve a diverse jobs and housing base while sustaining the City's unique cultural heritage, minimizing environmental impacts, promoting exemplary urban design, and fostering safety and resiliency. Proposed projects are reviewed for compliance with Planning Code requirements including land uses, density, building scale, open space, and more. Urban and residential design guidelines further inform project review to ensure development is aligned with neighborhood built form.

The Planning Department is also responsible for maintaining the City's General Plan, which provides guidance to all city agencies and departments regarding urban design, land use, transportation, housing, public safety, and more. Policies and regulations are developed through community-based planning efforts and citywide initiatives to implement the General Plan.

In 2020, the Planning Commission passed Resolution No. 20738 and the Historic Preservation Commission passed Resolution No. 1127 to focus the Planning Department's work program on racial and social equity. This move aimed to prioritize these principles in all aspects of the Planning Department's work, emphasizing the goal of creating a more just and equitable community. This includes the implementation of the Racial and Social Equity Action Plan, along with policies and programs related to housing, economic development, and cultural preservation for marginalized communities.

A number of more recent planning efforts affecting the Castro neighborhood have been undertaken by the Planning Department and/or other City agencies in conjunction with community groups and elected officials. These efforts have sought to help stabilize the Castro's diverse cultural and economic fabric and retain its rich LGBTQIA+ heritage and legacy. These include the development of the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District, as well as other programs led by the Planning Department that impact the neighborhood and the cultural district's work.

Market and Octavia Area Plan

The area encompassed by the Market and Octavia Area Plan (Area Plan) overlaps with a portion of the Cultural District, specifically the eastern arm along Market Street between Noe and Octavia Streets. As the first plan to emerge from the Better Neighborhoods Program, the Area Plan grew out of the Market and Octavia Neighborhood Plan. Following the removal of the Central Freeway north of Market Street in the early 2000s and subsequent construction of Octavia Boulevard, the Area Plan was necessary to guide neighborhood growth and development during this transitional time. As an effort to repair past damage to the local urban fabric, the Area Plan built on the neighborhood's high potential, given its transit richness and walkability at the crossroads of many other San Francisco neighborhoods. The Plan's intentions were to develop a safe neighborhood serving the needs of residents with diverse housing and transit options, along with necessary services and amenities.

After Board of Supervisors and Mayoral approval, the Area Plan became effective in 2008, and is now formally incorporated into the San Francisco General Plan. Elements including land use and urban form, housing, sense of place, streets and open space, and transportation are supported by dozens of objectives and policies. For more information on the funding for this program and its governance structure, see Appendix D.

Place-keeping Efforts

To maintain, preserve, and enhance the Castro's rich cultural identity and living heritage as one of the world's most robust LGBTQIA+ enclaves, while assisting with marketing and economic development, a number of public realm projects have been conducted under the auspices of the Planning Department by various city departments in conjunction with community members.

- **Harvey Milk Plaza.** In 1985, seven years after his assassination, the above ground Castro Muni Station at Castro and Market Street, was officially dedicated to Harvey Milk. In 1997, Gilbert Baker (1951-2017), the creator of the seven stripe rainbow flag, erected a public art installation in the plaza, the large rainbow flag flying over the neighborhood. To help further commemorate Milk and his service to the LGBTQIA+ community, photographs of Milk's life were added to the plaza in 2006. In 2016, the San Francisco Metropolitan Transit Authority announced plans to redesign the plaza for accessibility improvements, which led to an international design competition. The project will be supported by a \$1M state grant which was secured in 2019. In 2021, the Friends of the Harvey Milk Plaza announced the selection of a local design firm, SWA, to redesign the space. The Castro LGBTQ Cultural District provided a letter of support after key changes to the design were made, including elements that provide visual representations of underrepresented LGBTQ community groups: lesbians and queer women, LGBTQ people of color, and transgender individuals.
- **Jane Warner Plaza.** A joint effort between the Planning Department, Public Works Department, and Castro/Upper Market CBD, The Jane Warner Plaza is located at the intersection of Castro, 17th, and Market Streets. It was developed in 2009 to offer a public neighborhood meeting space with small tables and chairs surrounded by planter boxes. Jane Warner (1956-2010) was a well-respected and appreciated lesbian Patrol Special Officer known for her steadfast dedication to keeping the neighborhood safe and orderly. In 2010 the Plaza was dedicated to Warner, and includes a commemorative plaque.
- **Castro Street Streetscape Improvement Project.** Between 2012-2014, the San Francisco Public Works, Planning Department and Municipal Transportation Agency collaborated on Castro Street streetscape improvements in response to neighborhood concerns to increase walkability and accessibility. Specific improvements included sidewalk widening, new lighting, street trees, curb cuts, bulb outs, and more. The project was funded by the road repaving and streets safety bond and public workshops were hosted to solicit input.
- **Rainbow Honor Walk.** Hosted by the streetscape project, the Rainbow Honor Walk includes the iconic rainbow crosswalks for each of the four street crossings at the intersection of Castro and 18th Streets. Additionally, the Walk includes 44 sidewalk plaques of celebrated LGBTQIA+ icons along portions of Market, 18th, 19th, and Castro Streets, with 24 more plaques planned. Selected by an advisory committee, the honorees represent a wide spectrum of deceased LGBTQIA+ trailblazers including community activists, politicians, writers, musicians, artists, performers, athletes, scientists, and others known as being exemplary in their respective fields.

Historic Preservation in the Castro

The Planning Department has led a number of initiatives to document, preserve, and commemorate significant architectural, cultural, and/or historic assets with ties to the

neighborhood's LGBTQIA+ heritage. This work has been undertaken in collaboration with local community groups, the Planning and Historic Preservation Commissions, and elected officials.

Historic Context Statements

- **LGBTQ+ Context Statement.** In 2016, the Historic Preservation Commission adopted the Citywide Historic Context Statement for LGBTQ+ History in San Francisco. Authored by Donna Graves and Shayne Watson, this 400+ page document overviews LGBTQIA+ history throughout San Francisco. The Castro neighborhood's history from the 1960s-1990s is detailed, under a number of different thematic sections, along with recommendations for protecting and interpreting LGBTQIA+ historic properties throughout the city.
- **Eureka Valley Historic Context Statement.** In 2017, the Historic Preservation Commission adopted the Eureka Valley Historic Context Statement. Authored by Elaine B. Stiles, this 250+ page document overviews development trends and themes from prehistory through the mid 1970s. Architectural prototypes and evaluative frameworks are outlined as a basis for further historic resource surveys and evaluations. Potential landmarks and historic districts are identified, along with other recommendations for future planning and preservation efforts to ensure the retention of significant cultural assets.

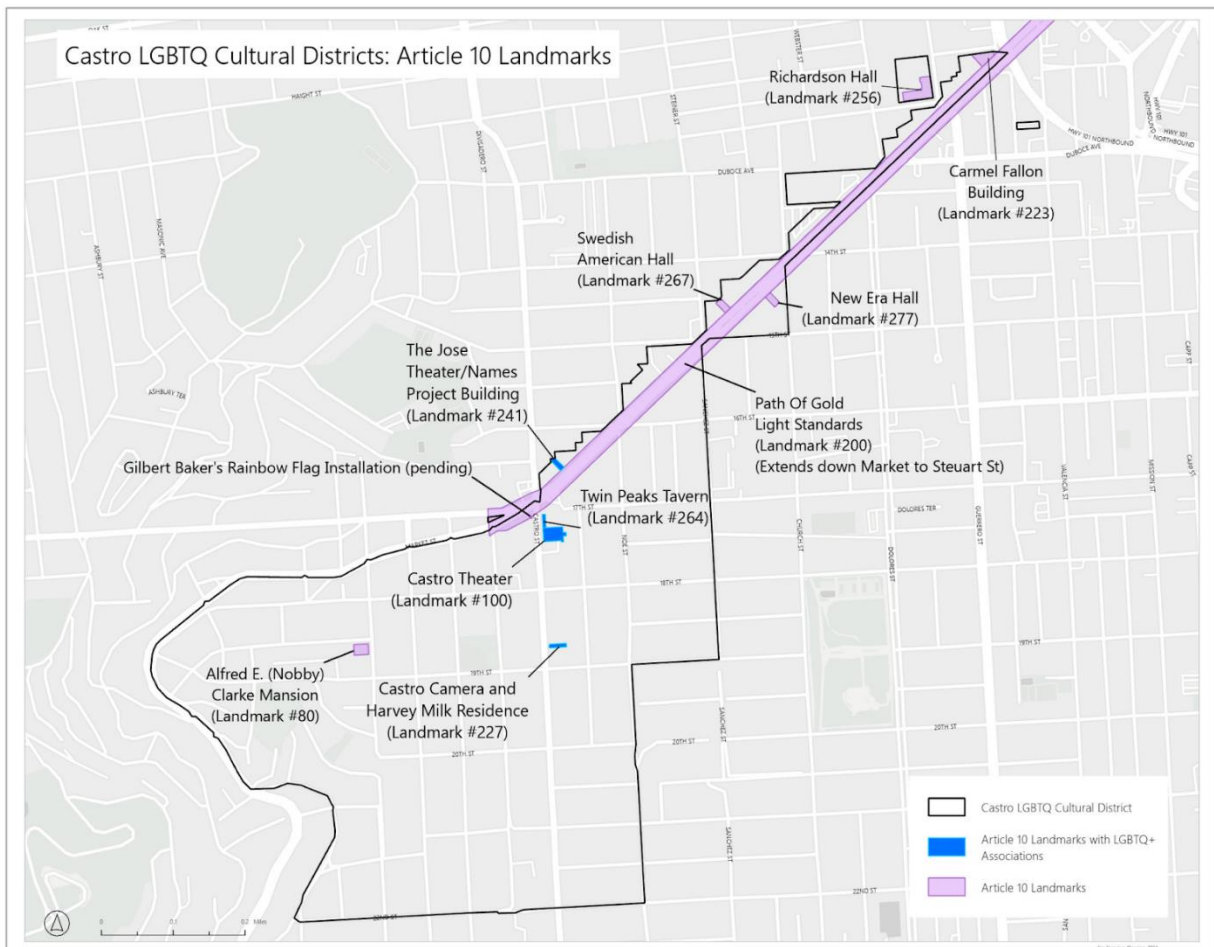
Historic Designations

As listed below, a handful of properties within the Cultural District are designated as Individual Landmarks under Article 10 of the Planning Code for their LGBTQIA+ historical associations. City Landmarks are recommended by the Historic Preservation Commission and ultimately approved by the Board of Supervisors. Individual Landmarks are designated as exemplary assets to the City, and determined to be significant for their historical, architectural, and/or cultural associations.

- **The Castro Theatre** (429-431 Castro Street, Landmark #100) - Built in 1922, the Castro Theatre is the oldest and longest continually operating single-screen movie house in San Francisco, and the most ornate of San Francisco's extant movie palaces. An early work of renowned Bay Area architect Timothy Pflueger, the Castro Theatre was the first theatre he designed and is considered one of his most iconic pieces of work. Since the mid-1970s, the Castro Theatre has maintained a deep tradition of LGBTQIA+ programming, including the world's largest and longest-running LGBTQIA+ film festival. In 2023, the Historic Preservation Commission, Planning Department, and San Francisco Board of Supervisors approved the landmarking of the Castro Theatre's interior, although the landmark designation excluded the historic raked orchestra floor and fixed theatre-style seating. A zoning change approved at the same time changed the use of the Castro from a theatre to a nighttime entertainment venue.
- **Castro Camera and Harvey Milk Residence** (573-575 Castro Street, Landmark #227) - Castro Camera has nationwide significance as one of the most important buildings in the country to be associated with the modern gay and lesbian rights movement. From 1973 - 1978 the storefront served a dual purpose as Harvey Milk's retail photography shop, Castro Camera, and as Milk's headquarters for his four campaigns for public office. From 1975 to 1978 the upper flat in this building was also Harvey Milk's residence.

- **The Jose Theater/Names Project Building** (2362 Market Street, Landmark #241) – The building was the place of origin for the NAMES Project and associated AIDS Quilt, an internationally significant project created as a political organizing tool and an expression of worldwide grief over the AIDS epidemic.
- **Twin Peaks Tavern** (401 Castro Street, Landmark #264) - Twin Peaks is known as the first gay bar in San Francisco (opened in 1972 by two lesbian friends) to feature large expanses of glass, which revealed rather than obscured the view of bar patrons. Housed in a remodeled turn-of-the-century building, the bar retains its expansive windows and continues to serve the LGBTQIA+ community.

Figure 6: Castro LGBTQ Cultural District Landmark Designations



Please see Appendix E for a list of other Article 10 Landmarks within the cultural district boundaries that are not designated for their LGBTQIA+ associations.

California Eligible Historic Districts

A number of California Eligible Historic Districts lie fully or partially within the boundaries of the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District. These historic districts were determined to be eligible under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the State's regulatory framework which public agencies must comply with before making a discretionary approval of a project. Refer to Appendix F for details about the guidelines for consideration and process of consideration for districts eligible in the Castro. Of the several California Eligible Historic Districts that fall within the Cultural District boundaries, two were specifically identified and designated for their LGBTQIA+ associations, as follows:

- Castro Street Historic District** – This CEQA eligible historic district was identified in 2013 and includes a few dozen properties along Castro Street between 17th and 19th Streets, and along 18th Street between Collingwood and Noe Streets. This district has two periods of significance, 1880-1929 and 1970-1979. The earlier period of significance relates to the neighborhood's early development as a late-19th century streetcar suburb,

with the later period significance identified for the strong LGBTQIA+ historical association.

- **Upper Market Street Commercial Historic District** - This CEQA eligible historic district was proposed in 2007 through the Market & Octavia Neighborhood Plan Historic Resources Survey. The linear district originally extended along Market Street roughly between Church and Noe Streets, with a later additional extension west towards Castro Street. Contributing resources are primarily one to four-story mixed-use wood-framed buildings which vary in architectural styles. The periods of significance are 1886-1958, and 1970-1979, the latter being specific to the corridor's robust LGBTQIA+ history.

Other identified CA Eligible Historic Districts fully or partially within the cultural district boundaries include Castro & Liberty Streets, 19th and Noe, Hartford Street, and Noe & Alvarado Streets Historic Districts. While evaluations of these districts did not determine significant LGBTQIA+ historic associations, that does not preclude the existence of such associations in these districts.

Citywide Cultural Resources Survey

The San Francisco Citywide Cultural Resources Survey (SF Survey) is a multi-year effort supported by the San Francisco Planning Department to identify and document places and resources of cultural, historical, and architectural importance to San Francisco's diverse communities. These places and resources include tangible aspects of our environment, such as buildings, structures, objects, sites, and districts, as well as intangible aspects, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, festivals, and traditional crafts. SF Survey is taking steps to center preservation in racial and social equity, better reflecting the dynamic cultural resources that make San Francisco unique. SF Survey findings will help guide the Planning Department's work on future landmark designations, heritage-based initiatives, environmental review, new development projects, area plans, and building permit applications. Survey field work began in 2023 and will include the Castro Neighborhood. Robust community outreach is being included in all phases of the survey to ensure the voices of long-term residents and other community stakeholders are captured.

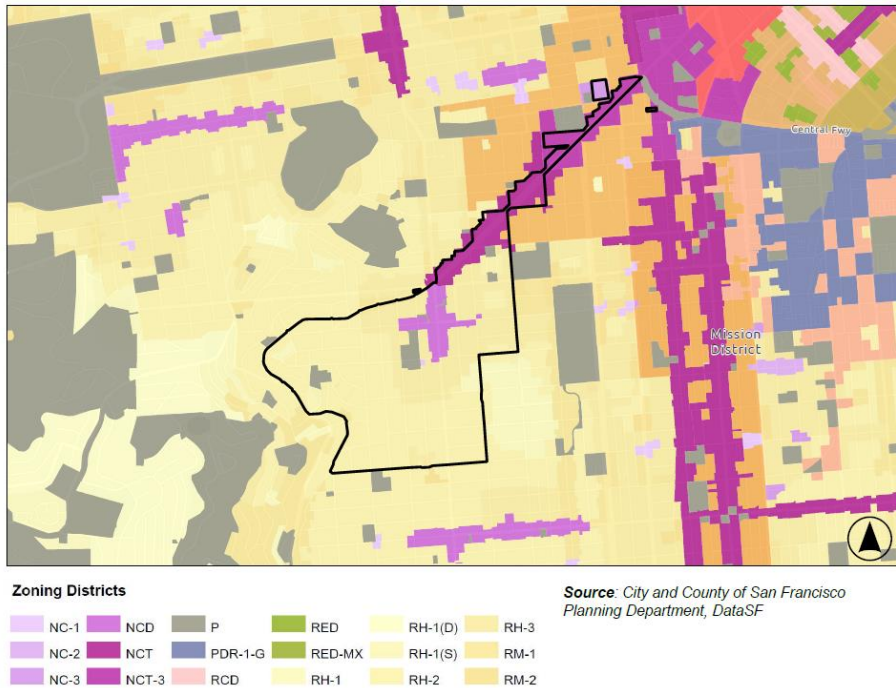
Current Day Land Use in the Castro

Eleven different zoning districts can be found within the Cultural District boundaries, as follows:

- Neighborhood Commercial, Cluster (NC-1)
- Neighborhood Commercial, Moderate Scale (NC-3)
- Castro Street Neighborhood Commercial (NCD)
- Upper Market Neighborhood Commercial Transit (NCT)
- Moderate Scale Neighborhood Commercial Transit District (NCT-3)
- Residential House, One Family (RH-1)
- Residential House, Two Family (RH-2)
- Residential House, Three Family (RH-3)
- Residential-Mixed, Low Density (RM-1)
- Residential Transit Oriented District (RTO)
- Public (P)

Figure 7: Zoning Districts in the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District

Castro LGBTQ Cultural District: **Zoning Districts**



Of these eleven different zoning districts, here are some examples of how the designations impact housing, commerce, and transportation.

Neighborhood Commercial and Neighborhood Commercial Transit Districts

Neighborhood Commercial Districts (NCDs) were established throughout the City for the purpose of General Plan implementation, particularly the Commerce and Industry element. These districts are low to medium density mixed-use neighborhoods of various scale clustered around historical neighborhood commercial corridors. These districts tend to be linear commercial corridors and provide for more customized zoning and land use controls to fit the localized neighborhood needs.

Two NCDs are found within the Cultural District boundaries, as follows:

- **Castro Street NCD.** This district spans Castro Street, roughly between 17th and 19th Streets; and 18th Street, roughly between Noe and Diamond Streets. Small scale commercial businesses make up the bulk of the NCD including LGBTQIA+ oriented bars, restaurants, clothing shops, gift stores, and more. Commerce is targeted to both residents of the surrounding neighborhood and larger Bay Area, as well tourists from throughout the world. Zoning controls are designed to maintain small scale development, and a mix of uses including a continuous retail frontage often with housing at the second story and above. New drinking establishments are conditionally permitted, with certain limitations on late-night entertainment uses.

- Neighborhood Commercial, Cluster (NC-1). A small NC-1 district exists at the southeast corner of Collingwood and 19th Streets, including just two parcels. NC-1 districts were established to serve as local neighborhood shopping districts, mainly open during daytime hours. These districts tend to have the lowest intensity of commercial development, and often grouped around a corner with just a few establishments, as is the case with this NC-1 cluster.

Neighborhood Commercial Transit Districts (NCTs) are moderate- to high-density neighborhood districts concentrated near transit services. These mixed-use districts support ground floor commercial space with housing above, maximizing convenient access and close proximity to transit lines. Accessory off-street parking, along with features such as driveways and garages, are discouraged; to preserve the pedestrian character and minimize automobile traffic.

Two NCTs are found within the Cultural District boundaries, both along the Market Street arm stemming east from Castro Street, as follows:

- Upper Market NCT. This NCT spans the linear stretch of Market Street from Church to Noe Streets, as well as side streets off Market Street. The NCT is well served by most of the City's light-rail lines including the F, J, K, L, M, and N, with underground stations at Church and Castro Streets, as well as the above ground historic F-Market Streetcar line. Zoning controls are intended to promote moderate-scale development, while preserving a mix of ground story commercial uses.
- Moderate Scale Neighborhood Commercial Transit District (NCT-3). Continuing eastward from the Upper Market NCT for the remainder of the Cultural District's Market Street arm, is a NCT-3 which specifically covers the northern portion of the Market Street frontage. NCT-3 districts are moderate- to high- density mixed-use neighborhoods of varying scales concentrated near transit, supporting ground floor commercial with residential above. These districts include some of San Francisco's longest linear streets, intended to serve not just the immediate neighborhood, but surrounding neighborhoods as well.

Special Use Districts

- Special Use Districts (SUDs) exist through the City to provide additional controls, or exemptions, to the underlying Zoning Districts and in some cases the Height and Bulk Districts. The following SUDs lie fully or partially within the Cultural District boundaries:
- Central Neighborhoods Large Residence SUD.⁷ This SUD was established in 2022 spanning all or portions of neighborhoods including the Castro, Noe Valley, Diamond Heights, Bernal Heights, and more. Controls of this SUD are intended to limit the expansion of large dwelling units to maintain neighborhood character and affordable housing.
- Dolores Heights SUD. This SUD overlaps with the Cultural District along portions of 20th, Hartford and Noe Streets. The SUD includes rear yard and height controls to maintain the unique local character including view corridors, landscape features, and existing buildings.
- 1800 Market Community Center. This SUD was established in 2012 specifically to support commercial and economic development within a portion of the SF LGBTQ

⁷ https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/san_francisco/latest/sf_planning/0-0-0-65648

Community Center. With certain limitations, this SUD permits more flexibility for restaurant, bar, and entertainment uses.

- Laguna Haight Buchanan Herman SUD. This SUD became effective in 2008 to facilitate the development of a mixed-use project which included affordable and market-rate rental and ownership dwelling units, including affordable units welcoming to LGBTQ+ seniors.

Recent Planning Code Changes

The Planning Code is a continually evolving document, with regular amendments made in response to shifting environmental, cultural, political, and socio-economic circumstances. A few recent changes have been made to the Planning Code to help facilitate the growth and development of the Castro Neighborhood, including the following:

- Castro Street NCD (2023) – This amendment allows nighttime entertainment uses on the second floor of buildings with a conditional use authorization, and was proposed in conjunction with a project approved for the historic Castro Theatre to add nighttime entertainment and bar uses, in addition to movie theater uses.
- Castro Street NCD Use Size Limits (2013) – This amendment allows neighborhood-serving nonprofit institutions to exceed the 4,000 square foot non-residential use size limits with a Conditional Use Authorization. This amendment was proposed in conjunction with the San Francisco AIDS Foundation project to consolidate their three existing social service facilities into a single building at 470-474 Castro Street.
- Castro Street and Upper Market NCDs Exemption of Certain Entertainment Permits from the Conditional Use Process (2005) – This amendment allows existing bars to apply for a receive a place of entertainment permit from the Entertainment Commission without obtaining a conditional use authorization from the Planning Commission, if they have been in operation prior to 2004.

The Castro LGBTQ Cultural District (Cover Page)

The Castro LGBTQ Cultural District History and Cultural Legacy

The following history and cultural legacy statement is a very condensed version of a document by Gerard Koskovich and Jen Reck, PhD. The complete version is available on the district website.

Standing on unceded homeland of the Ramaytush Ohlone, the part of San Francisco known today as the Castro District is recognized as one of the world's premier "gayborhoods." From the 1960s onward, the Castro emerged as a setting where queer people defied social stigma and state oppression to create a public place of belonging, even as external opposition and internal conflicts shaped the process in complex and at times contradictory ways. The Castro's contributions to the LGBTQIA+ community and to society in general give this heritage an ongoing impact of international significance.

From Working-Class Village to Gay Enclave

Referred to as Eureka Valley by the second half of the 19th century, the Castro developed into a residential district starting in the late 1880s, forming a working-class neighborhood with a dominant population of White ethnic immigrants. After World War II, the area experienced decline, with deindustrialization reducing economic opportunities and with the younger generation of families moving to new neighborhoods on the west side of the city or in the suburbs. White flight played a part, as well, with some neighborhood leaders by the mid-1960s expressing fears about the encroachment of "slums" and "blight."

Residents of Eureka Valley from the 1950s and early 1960s recall the area as retaining a close-knit heteronormative social structure centered on ties to family and church, yet LGBTQIA+ people were also finding a place in the neighborhood or nearby. One who spent part of his childhood in the 1920s living on Castro Street just north of Market Street was [José Sarria](#) (1922–2013), who would become the city's best-known drag performer in the 1950s and the first known openly gay candidate for public office anywhere in the world when he ran for the Board of Supervisors in 1961.

In 1957, the first documented gay merchant in Eureka Valley established his business on Castro Street: Drag performer Maurice "Mike" Gerry opened Maurice's Salon of Beauty (renamed Maurice's House of Fashions in 1966). The 1950s also offer the earliest evidence of individual gay people and same-sex couples keeping house in Eureka Valley. A gay elder in the mid-1990s recalled going to a party at the home of a gay African American man named Alan Price on the 400 block of Castro Street in 1954. [Del Martin \(1921–2008\)](#) and [Phyllis Lyon \(1924–2020\)](#) moved to Castro Street in 1953; in 1955, they helped found the [Daughters of Bilitis](#), the first lesbian organization in the United States. Lyon later recalled that "gay guys" were living in the apartment upstairs at the same time.

The 1960s brought the earliest signs of gay culture taking a visible form in Eureka Valley. The first gay bar and restaurant in the neighborhood, The Missouri Mule, opened in 1963. Five more bars followed by the end of 1968. Often emerging in spaces that had previously been White working-class taverns, the bars staked a claim to gay freedom of assembly that provided a foundation for LGBTQIA+ community-building. Alongside the nightlife establishments, two other developments in the 1960s presaged Eureka Valley's transformation into a gay

neighborhood: gay men began moving into housing left behind by families leaving the area, and a handful of shops and restaurants opened with a targeted outreach to gay customers.

Some of the new residents moved from within San Francisco 1) as formerly queer venues were replaced by straight establishments in North Beach; 2) as urban renewal created competition for space in the gay- and trans-friendly Tenderloin; and 3) as hard drugs in the late 1960s created challenges for the hippie scene in the Haight-Ashbury, which had been home to a gay enclave since the previous decade. Declared the “gay capital” of the United States by *LIFE* magazine in 1964, San Francisco also became a destination for those fleeing anti-LGBTQIA+ persecution elsewhere, a phenomenon known as the Great Gay Migration.

From Gay Village to Gay Boomtown

In the 1970s, the number of gay residents and visitors in the Castro grew exponentially—and gay spaces in the neighborhood expanded and diversified in response. Shops, restaurants, professionals, and service providers opened establishments tailored to the area’s booming new population. Such enterprises created meeting places, jobs, economic assets, and cultural resources. Several longtime Eureka Valley businesses also adapted to attract gay customers. In addition, the neighborhood supported associations and nonprofits formed by gay men and lesbian women, facilitating social interaction, cultural activities, education, self-defense, sports, fitness, sobriety, religion/spirituality, and medical/psychological health. These organizations by and for gay and lesbian people signaled new and radical opportunities for visibility, community building, and cultural production.

The Castro in the 1970s also became a territory for gay and lesbian activism and for the formation of a gay voting bloc that would have a significant impact on San Francisco politics. Notably, [Harvey Milk](#) (1930–1978) launched his efforts as both an activist and a candidate in the neighborhood in 1973. In addition to helping organize gay businesses into the Castro Village Association and leading protests in response to anti-gay crusades elsewhere in the U.S., Milk gained a seat on the Board of Supervisors in 1978 as the first openly gay elected official in California.

The transformation marked by the transition in name and culture from the heteronormative Eureka Valley to the resolutely gay Castro was a result not of gentrification or economic displacement but of generational shift and voluntary out-migration by one population alongside in-migration by another. At the same time, opposition to LGBTQIA+ people creating a public culture in the Castro came from longtime straight cisgender residents and merchants and from the power structure of the City itself. Gay residents and visitors even became the targets of violence, with regular reports of antigay assaults carried out largely by young straight men. Furthermore, police practices throughout the 1970s and beyond demonstrated that official tolerance for gay people in the Castro was at most provisional. In the first half of the 1970s, for instance, officers imposed putative public morality by ticketing, arresting, and sometimes beating gay men who were on their way to neighborhood bars, gathered outside nightlife establishments, or cruised in area parks.

The Castro also faced internal conflicts that shaped its queer culture. BIPOC individuals, cisgender women, trans people, LGBTQIA+ teens and elders, disabled people, and people of limited economic means often found the neighborhood both tantalizing and frustrating. One response was the creation of bars such as the Pendulum, a space for Black gay men and their friends open from 1971 to 2005, and Scott’s Pit, a lesbian-friendly bar just north of Market Street

open from 1970 to 1984. Organized efforts to confront exclusion also emerged in the 1970s. An early example: picket lines formed in 1975 to protest “racial and sexual discrimination” at the Mind Shaft, a gay disco on Market Street open from 1972 to 1977.

By the late 1970s, the transformation of Eureka Valley into the Castro produced a marked economic impact: Competition for space attracted real estate speculation, putting the Castro increasingly out of reach for gay people with modest incomes. Enterprises devoted to sustaining LGBTQIA+ culture rather than making profits also found operating in the neighborhood progressively more challenging. Struggles around housing equity and affordable space for small businesses and nonprofits would become an enduring aspect of the neighborhood’s LGBTQIA+ political culture.

The Castro in the 1980s: Decimation, Compassion, Defiance & Resilience

The 1980s tested the Castro in revealing ways. A neighborhood that had previously celebrated LGBTQ sexual connections now faced the decimation of AIDS, an epidemic in which men who had sex with men were at extraordinary risk. The community experienced collective trauma from both the incredible losses of life and the indifference or hostility of the federal government and much of society. The Castro reacted with defiance, compassion, and resilience, responding to the epidemic in ways that would sustain its LGBTQIA+ culture and would make the neighborhood a site of emulation and commemoration.

As AIDS developed into a major public health catastrophe in the 1980s, organizers in the Castro played a crucial role in practical, cultural, and militant responses. The neighborhood was home to groundbreaking HIV/AIDS social services, healthcare, prevention, education, advocacy and fundraising organizations. Such initiatives helped elaborate the San Francisco model of care. The Castro also was the birthplace of cultural responses to AIDS that not only created new practices for the public expression of grief but also constituted calls for society and the state to respond seriously to the epidemic. These included the annual AIDS Candlelight Memorial March, founded in 1983, and the [Names Project AIDS Memorial Quilt](#), founded in 1985.

In addition, the Castro emerged in the 1980s as a setting for direct action to oppose bigotry against people with AIDS and to demand funding for research and care. One of the world’s earliest militant AIDS organizations was Citizens for Medical Justice, founded in 1986. Renamed AIDS Action Pledge in 1987, then ACT UP/San Francisco in 1988, the group held meetings in the Castro. ACT UP also planned neighborhood protests, including a 1989 march which San Francisco police attacked in a crackdown known as the Castro Sweep Police Riot, a reaction that continued the repressive police practices of the 1970s. Another ACT UP demonstration closed the decade with festivity in the midst of grief and anger: a permit-free party on Castro Street near the end of the Sixth International Conference on AIDS in June 1990. The event launched Pink Saturday, a street party during Pride weekend, which would remain a Castro tradition for 25 years.

Gentrification & Displacement in the Gayborhood

The gentrification evident in the Castro since the late 1970s rapidly accelerated in the 1990s, propelled by an influx of straight families and wealthier gays. Among the contributing factors was the demographic and economic devastation of the AIDS crisis, which produced numerous housing vacancies as many Castro residents died and others were impoverished by medical costs. Analysis of Census data reveals that gay enclaves across the United States experienced

a decrease in their gay population and an increase in straight residents starting in the 1990s, a commonality suggesting the impact of both AIDS and gentrification.

The two major San Francisco tech booms further accelerated LGBTQIA+ displacement from the Castro. Housing prices soared and evictions increased during the dot-com era of 1995–2000. The tech boom beginning in 2010 created even more longstanding effects. Policies like the Twitter Tax Break of 2011 sparked luxury development up Market Street and into the Castro, creating housing accessible to wealthier heterosexual and LGBTQIA+ people but beyond the means of most in the queer and trans communities. Between 1994 and 2017, the Castro had 174 buildings where evictions were imposed under the Ellis Act, a state law authorizing expulsion of all tenants in buildings owners have withdrawn from the rental market. This was second only to the neighboring Mission District, and each of these Castro evictions removed five residential units from the rental market and displaced the tenants living in them. A large portion of affected LGBTQIA+ tenants had lived in their homes for 10 years or more, with Black and Latine people most at risk of eviction.

LGBTQIA+ housing justice activists have challenged displacement in the Castro by spearheading projects prioritizing affordable LGBTQIA+ supportive housing. One example is [Open House](#), an LGBTQIA+ elder services nonprofit founded in 1998, which began initial planning in 2022 for a housing site for LGBTQIA+ older adults with low income in the Castro. In addition, the Radical Faerie-led Queer Land Trust, founded in 2018, advocates affordable, cooperative housing options for LGBTQIA+ people. Their shared home and activist hub is one of the remaining queer collective households in the Castro.

Contested Claims for Public Space & Belonging

Since the late 1990s, questions have arisen about how to maintain the Castro as an LGBTQIA+ space, as well as what kind of LGBTQIA+ space it should be. Many of the increasingly wealthy residents of the Castro—both straight and gay—insist on centering their own comfort, stability, and cultural norms, while business owners worry about how to survive and keep both local customers and tourists happy. The conflicts became particularly noticeable in the early 1990s as sidewalks were increasingly claimed by straight couples pushing baby strollers and seeking what they characterized as a family-friendly environment; along with some members of the LGBTQIA+ community, they complained about public signs of gay male sexual culture and questioned the need to prioritize sexual freedom and sex positivity in the Castro. In addition, the struggles of community members with low income became increasingly clear with the growing visibility of unhoused LGBTQIA+ people in the Castro and with growing neighborhood debates over whether they should be welcomed and sheltered or policed and moved outside the neighborhood.

As was already the case in the 1970s, BIPOC, women, and trans, and bisexual community members have sometimes encountered exclusion in the neighborhood in the 2000s. One response was the activist organization [And Castro For All](#) (AC4A), which promoted support for inclusion in the Castro. The group was founded in 2004 in response to accusations of discriminatory hiring and racist treatment of Black and Latine patrons at Badlands, a bar on 18th Street opened in 1975. When the Pendulum, the only neighborhood bar catering to a Black clientele, closed in 2005, the nightlife opportunities for BIPOC community members were further reduced. The Pendulum had been purchased by the cisgender White gay man who owned

Badlands, suggesting the need for spaces owned and created by and for BIPOC queer and trans individuals.

LGBTQIA+ Culture and Resistance in Public Space

Since the [Castro Street Fair](#) was founded in 1974, street celebrations have been central to the neighborhood's LGBTQIA+ culture. The gay Halloween celebration moved from the Polk to the Castro in the mid-1970s, and AIDS activists launched Pink Saturday in 1990. The events became so popular by the 2000s that they attracted hundreds of thousands of people, many of them cisgender straight individuals who came to party rather than participate in queer culture. Crowd-control difficulties and anti-LGBTQIA+ attacks led the City to shut down Halloween in 2008 and Pink Saturday in 2015. Both the violence and the official decision to suppress the events instead of finding ways to protect them illustrate the still-radical nature of queer and trans people celebrating together in public space.

Other mass gatherings in the Castro reflect longtime community differences around visibility, belonging, and discrimination. [The Dyke March](#) (founded in 1993) and the [Trans March](#) (founded in 2004) were launched in response to cisgender White gay men's dominance at Pride. Both annual marches have brought large numbers of queer cisgender women and trans individuals, including elders, BIPOC individuals, and disabled people to the Castro by occasionally claiming the neighborhoods as part of their route or as their end point.







Neighborhood Institutions & Community Supports

The Castro today remains a beacon to LGBTQIA+ people who come to the neighborhood seeking safety and belonging. In response, the Castro's support systems strengthen community ties and prioritize LGBTQIA+ social justice. Examples include the [Castro Country Club](#), a clean-and-sober space founded in 1983 as an alternative to gay bars; the [Lavender Youth Recreation and Information Center \(LYRIC\)](#) founded in 1988; and the SF LGBT Center, which opened in 2002 on the eastern edge of the neighborhood to provide resources for employment and financial literacy, as well as social and cultural programming.

Arts spaces in the Castro have been greatly harmed by years of gentrification, yet the arts remain a vibrant and important expression of queer culture. The open-air Noe Art Mart (launched in spring 2021 and transformed into the monthly Castro Art Mart in 2022) offers LGBTQ artists a place to exhibit and sell their work, as did Spark Arts Gallery on 18th Street (2015–2022). The Strut sexual health center on Castro Street sponsored by the San Francisco AIDS Foundation hosts arts exhibitions and events often focused on work by BIPOC, trans/queer femmes, young, and disabled LGBTQ people. In addition, [Queer Arts Featured](#), a gallery founded in 2022 in the space at 575 Castro St. that once housed Harvey Milk's Castro Camera shop, supports community development through regular art-making events and prioritizes creating space for underrepresented queer artists.

The Castro also is a living repository of LGBTQIA+ heritage. Inaugurated in 1997, the enormous six-stripe rainbow flag installation created by [Gilbert Baker](#) (1951–2017) at the intersection of Castro, Market, and 17th streets is one of the most visible queer symbols in the neighborhood. Debates about whether other LGBTQIA+ flags should also fly on the towering flagpole serve as a dynamic example of how the community grapples with collectively creating an inclusive public culture in the neighborhood. In July of 2024, the [San Francisco Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to grant the installation city landmark status, specifying that no other flags be flown at the site](#) and Mayor London Breed signed the legislation September 13th, 2024. .

The [GLBT Historical Society](#) plays an important role in keeping queer and trans history alive. Opened as a pop-up in 2008 and in a permanent location in 2011, the society's museum now located on 18th Street annually welcomes some 20,000 visitors from around the world. LGBTQIA+ history and memory also mark the neighborhood in places such as the informal memorials to LGBTQIA+ community members posted since the early 1980s on the corner of Castro and 18th streets at the Bank of America; Pink Triangle Park, created in 2001 to commemorate the LGBTQIA+ victims of the Nazi Regime; and the Rainbow Honor Walk, founded in 2008 to install bronze plaques in Castro sidewalks to honor LGBTQIA+ people who have influenced culture and society.

In addition, commercial establishments have long played a central role in producing LGBTQIA+ culture and community in the Castro. Such legacy businesses are vulnerable to the challenges of gentrification. For instance, [Fabulosa Books](#) opened in 2022 in the space that formerly housed Dog Eared Books (2016–2022) and A Different Light Bookstore (1986–2011). A Different Light had encouraged queer community and cultural development by providing free gathering space; serving as a mail drop for activist networks; and supporting writers and artists through readings, exhibitions, and sale of publications on consignment. Fabulosa Books continues this tradition, offering a rare free gathering space and shared social territory in the neighborhood.

A Neighborhood for LGBTQIA+ People in All Our Diversity

The LGBTQIA+ institutions and public culture of the Castro make it a rare place created by and for LGBTQIA+ people—a population that continues to face enduring state-sponsored repression, invisibility, social stigma, and violence across the United States and beyond. Maintaining the Castro as a hub for LGBTQIA+ community and culture while confronting ongoing gentrification and displacement will ensure this neighborhood remains a vital space for queer and trans people and our allies. Honoring the history of struggles for social and economic justice in the Castro while acknowledging that the neighborhood has yet to fulfill its promise will enable the Castro to grow in ways that center accessibility and racial, gender, economic, and intergenerational equity as keys to celebrating LGBTQIA+ people in all our diversity.

Neighborhood Context: A Demographic Snapshot of the Castro Community

The Neighborhood Context section provides a snapshot and overview of Castro District resident demographics and key housing, economic, and commercial trends. This section includes available data from City and federal agencies. A detailed methodology can be found in Appendix B.

The Context of Demographic Data about the LGBTQIA+ Community

It is difficult to reliably describe the characteristics of the LGBTQIA+ population using existing demographic measures. The United States Census, for example, which collects the largest amount of data about the U.S. population, has no questions about gender identity or sexual orientation on its surveys.

During the Obama administration, the Justice Department, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Environmental Protection Agency, and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services all requested that the Census Bureau include questions about gender identity or sexual orientation on the American Community Survey (ACS, an annual survey distributed by the Census Bureau to a sample of around 3.5 million people with questions on demographics, economics, housing, and social characteristics⁸). In April 2016, over 75 members of Congress wrote with the same request. In 2017, the Census Bureau under the Trump administration determined there was “no federal data need” to ask such questions.⁹ As a result, the 2020 Census asked only about the relationships between people who share a home. Respondents could note if they cohabitated with a partner they identified as “same-sex,” whether the person was a married or unmarried partner. This was the first time the Census counted same-sex cohabitating partners, so indicated a positive change in the Census. However, this measurement excludes a significant portion of the LGBTQIA+ community – it fails to count members of the population who identify as LGBTQIA+, people who don’t live with a same-sex partner, or people who don’t describe their partnership as “same-sex.” This could then exclude transgender, two-spirit, or non-binary individuals, asexual people, those in polyamorous relationships, and many others in the community.

Thus, while the Census does measure the entire U.S. population, limits remain to the characteristics the Census measures and what we can learn about the U.S. population from Census data.

Sen. Tammy Baldwin and Rep. Raul Grijalva introduced the LGBTQI+ Data Inclusion Act¹⁰ to the House in 2021 and Senate in 2023, which would require federal agencies that use surveys to collect “voluntary, self-disclosed information” to ask questions about sexual orientation and gender identity. It also requires agencies to add sexual orientation and gender identity to data collection tools collecting demographic information.

The Census Bureau is evaluating how to collect data on LGBTQIA+ populations in the ACS and currently testing SOGI (sexual orientation and gender identity) questions to assess ways to

⁸ <https://www.npr.org/2017/07/18/536484467/census-bureau-found-no-need-for-lgbt-data-despite-4-agencies-requesting-it>

⁹ https://www.census.gov/newsroom/blogs/director/2017/03/planned_subjects_2020.html

¹⁰ https://www.baldwin.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/lgbtqi_data_inclusion_act_-_bill_text.pdf

produce accurate data on the population.¹¹ This is a result of the June 15, 2022 Executive Order on Advancing Equality for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex Individuals¹², which stipulated that:

Within 200 days of the date of this order, the head of each agency that conducts relevant programs or statistical surveys related to the Federal Evidence Agenda on LGBTQI+ Equity shall submit to the Co-Chairs of the Interagency Working Group on Equitable Data a SOGI Data Action Plan, which shall detail how the agency plans to use SOGI data to advance equity for LGBTQI+ individuals and shall identify how the agency plans to implement the recommendations in the Federal Evidence Agenda on LGBTQI+ Equity.

The progress of this order was outlined in a 2023¹³ report from the Equitable Data Working Group and a 2024 [SOGI Data Action Plan](#)¹⁴ for the U.S. Census Bureau, describing feasibility assessments and field-testing for adding SOGI questions on Census surveys.

Gary Gates, Ph.D. and Jason Ost (2004) have developed a measurement tool they call the Gay/Lesbian Index, which measures the concentration of gay and lesbian couples among households in certain geographic regions. Gates and Ost mined data from multiple sources focusing on variables that could indicate the presence of gay and lesbian individuals – needing to focus on indirect indicators since direct questions were not asked. The Gay/Lesbian Index is a ratio of the proportion of same-sex couples living in a region to the proportion of households that are located in a region. California is the second highest state on the Gay/Lesbian Index. They also looked at neighborhood level populations and found that more than 100 neighborhoods in the U.S. have gay/lesbian couple concentrations that exceed 1 in 50 households. Ten neighborhoods in San Francisco fit into this category. Of the neighborhoods in the U.S. with the highest proportion of gay/lesbian households in 2000, the Castro had a 20.7 proportion of gay and lesbian households, second only to Provincetown, MA. However, they have also noted indications of queer displacement, finding that zip codes of neighborhoods known as gay enclaves across the U.S. have seen a lower concentration of lesbian and gay couples over time. Fewer same--sex households lived in these zip codes in 2010 than they did in 2000 or in 1990 — and- the number of heterosexual residents is increasing. Providing a complex picture of displacement and potential “reshuffling”¹⁵ from the Castro to other parts of the city, populations of gay and lesbian households in the Haight-Ashbury and Twin Peaks were also among the highest in the country. See the chart below.

¹¹ <https://www.census.gov/topics/population/sexual-orientation-gender-identity.html>

¹² <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2022/06/15/executive-order-on-advancing-equality-for-lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender-queer-and-intersex-individuals/>

¹³ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2022/06/15/executive-order-on-advancing-equality-for-lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender-queer-and-intersex-individuals/>

¹⁴ <https://www2.census.gov/topics/population/sogi/sogi-data-action-plan.pdf>

¹⁵ Ghaziani, Amin. *There Goes the Gayborhood?* / Amin Ghaziani. Course Book, Princeton University Press, 2014.

Figure 8: Gay and Lesbian Index by Neighborhood¹⁶

Neighborhood	Gay / Lesbian Index
Provincetown	23.39
Castro, San Francisco	20.07
Guerneville, CA	12.93
Twin Peaks, San Francisco	12.12
West Hollywood, CA	10.06
Oakland Park, Ft. Lauderdale	8.93
Haight Ashbury, San Francisco	8.10
Chelsea, New York	8.06
South End, Boston	8.01
Montrose, Houston	7.93

Demographics of Castro LGBTQ Cultural District Residents

The data on same-sex and opposite-sex partner rates among San Francisco and Castro residents demonstrates that of the population residing in the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District (estimated to be 9,785 individuals), 6.4% live with any same-sex partner and 15.2% live with any opposite-sex partner. This does not provide a picture of singles or those otherwise not reported living with partners or spouses; thus 78.4% of the residents are not captured in this data. These data do show that a much larger proportion of San Franciscans who report living with any same-sex partner live in the Castro vs. San Francisco overall (6.4% vs 1.2%, respectively) and the percentages are much more similar between respondents reporting living with any opposite-sex partner in the Castro vs. San Francisco overall. This suggests that people with opposite-sex partners choose to live anywhere in the city, including the Castro, while people with same-sex partners choose the Castro over other neighborhoods.

The largest percentage of Castro LGBTQ Cultural District residents are between 45-59 years old (37.6%) and very disproportionately White (67.1%).

¹⁶ Gates, G. J., & Ost, J. (2004). Getting Us Where We Live. *Harvard Gay and Lesbian Review: A Quarterly Journal of Arts, Letters, and Sciences*, 11(5), 19-21.

Figure 9: Same Sex and Opposite Sex Partner Rates

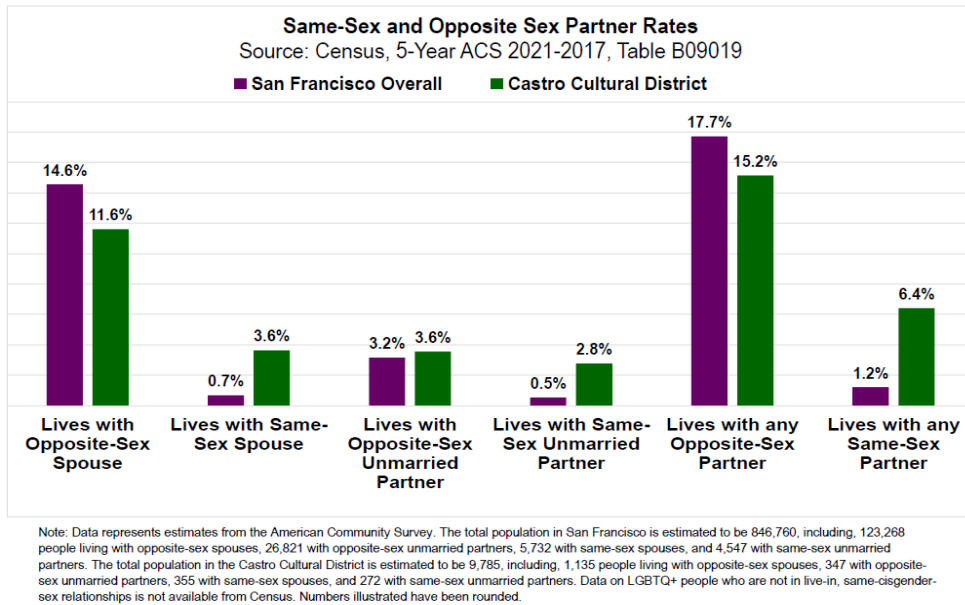
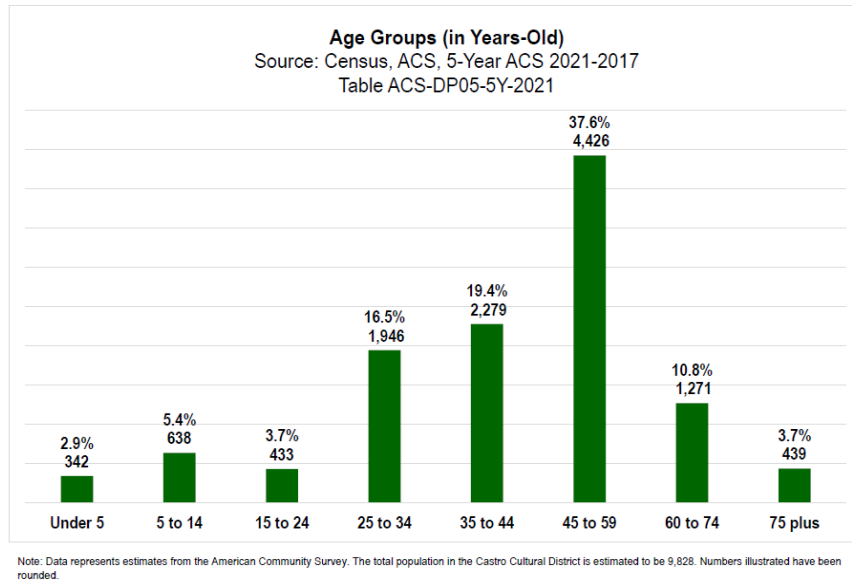


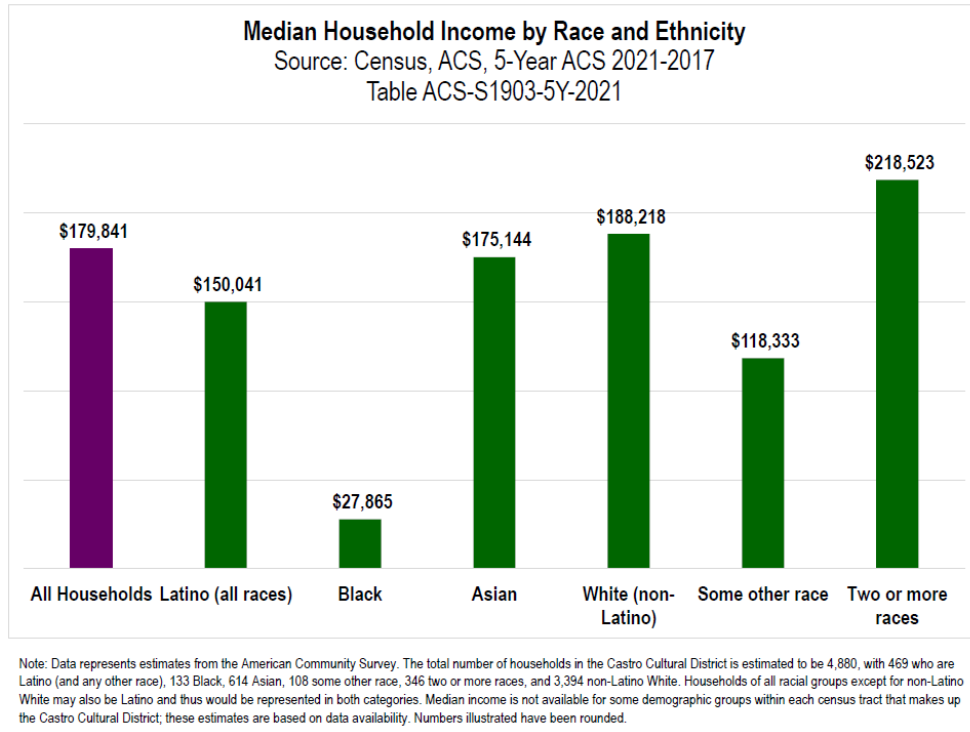
Figure 10: Age Demographics of Residents



Income, Employment, and Occupations of Castro LGBTQ Cultural District Residents

The median household income in the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District is \$179,841, and those reporting two or more races have incomes that are almost \$40,000 above the median while Black residents' incomes are over \$150,000 below the median. These are the largest differences, though also noteworthy is that Latinos (of all races) are almost \$30,000 below the median income.

Figure 11: Median Household income by Race and Ethnicity



The employment statistics demonstrate that a large majority of Castro LGBTQ Cultural District residents are either employed (74.9%) or not in the labor force (21.3%). While the employment occupations data captures many occupations, it is important to notice that there are very low percentages of residents who work in lower wage occupations such as sales, service, construction / maintenance, and transportation / moving. This helps demonstrate that more high-income individuals live in the Castro, reflected by the statistic that 75.8% work in management, business, science, and arts occupations.

[IN BOX:]

The median is the midpoint in a distribution of values, derived by arraying all the results in order (typically from the lowest to the highest) and then finding the middle one. The median provides a more accurate value compared to the average (mean) income, which can be affected by very high or very low values.

Figure 12: Employment Status

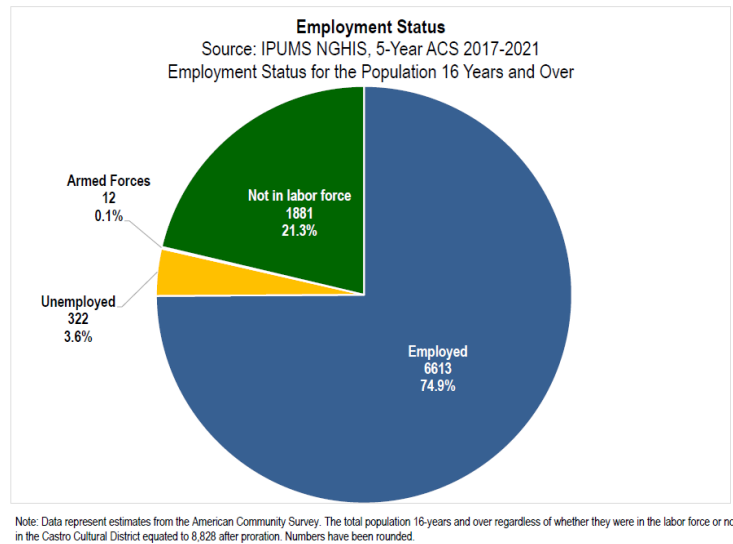
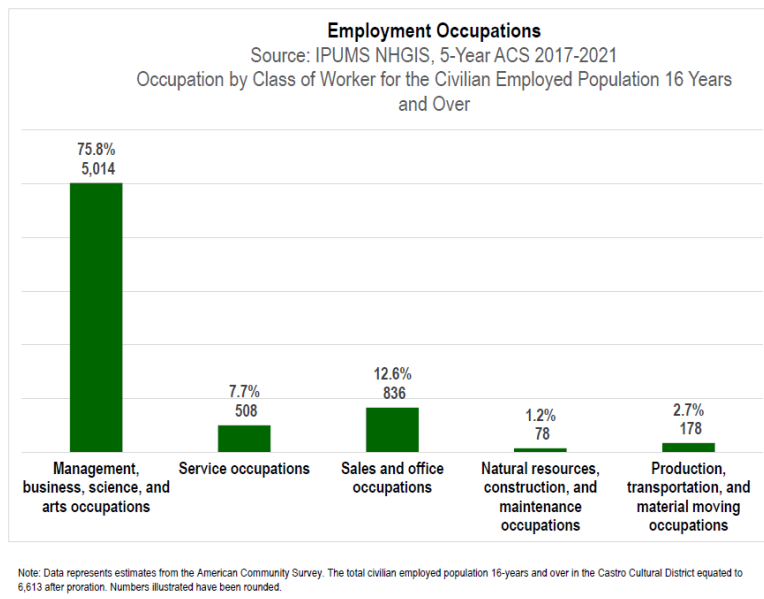


Figure 13: Employment by Occupation



Housing in the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District

Among Castro LGBTQ Cultural District residents, there are 20% more renters than owners. When looking at the housing cost burden among those residents, which is the percentage of a resident's overall income spent on their housing, the housing cost burdens are not markedly different between renters and owners. However, the districts see obvious racial differences around residents that bear the greatest housing cost burden.

Those who experience the highest housing cost burden in the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District, over 50%, include Latino owners (19%) and renters (14.1%) and Asian renters (13%). Many more Black owners and renters experience 30-50% housing cost burden compared to other races, and Latino renters also have high rates of cost burden at this level. Although the majority of residents in the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District experience less than 30% housing cost burden, many more Asians and Whites are in this category than Latinos and Black individuals.

Figure 14: Owner and Renter Occupied Housing Units

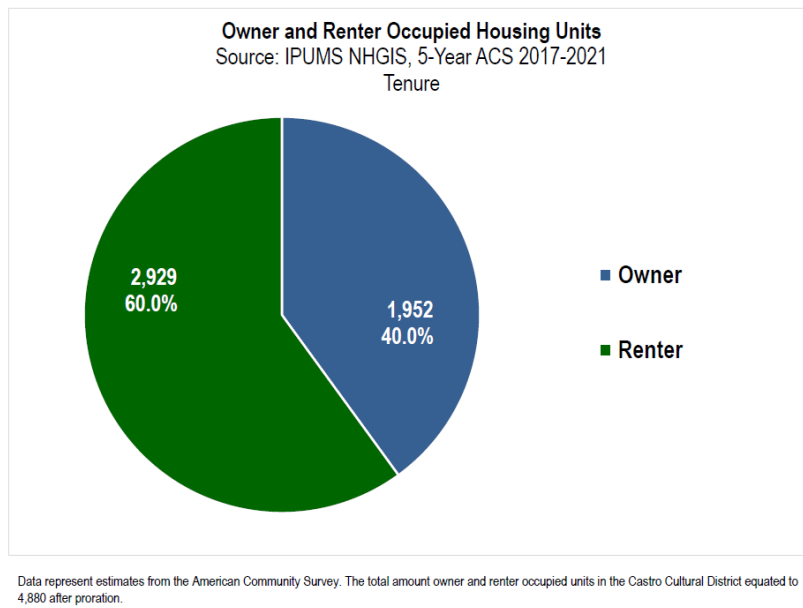


Figure 15: Housing Cost Burden by Owner and Renter

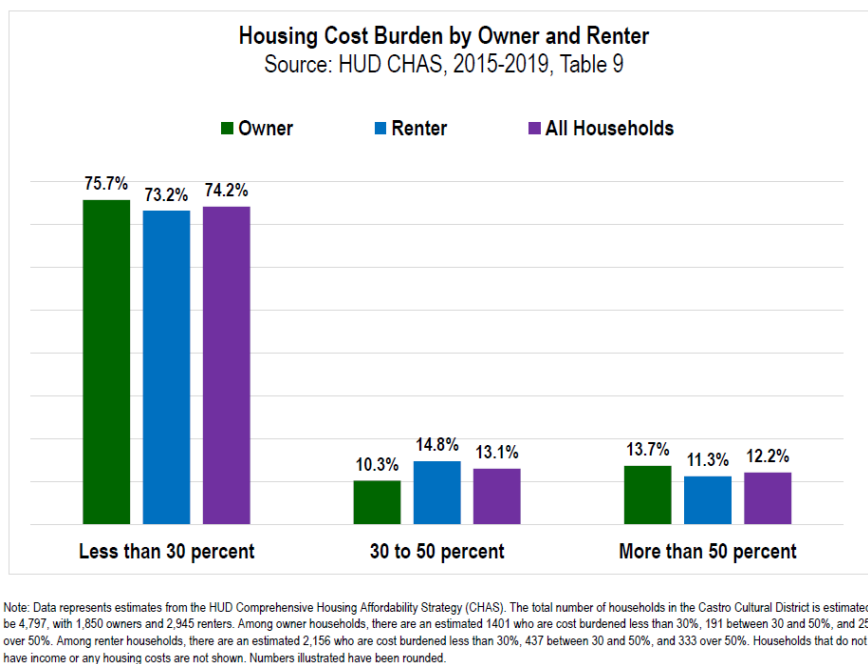
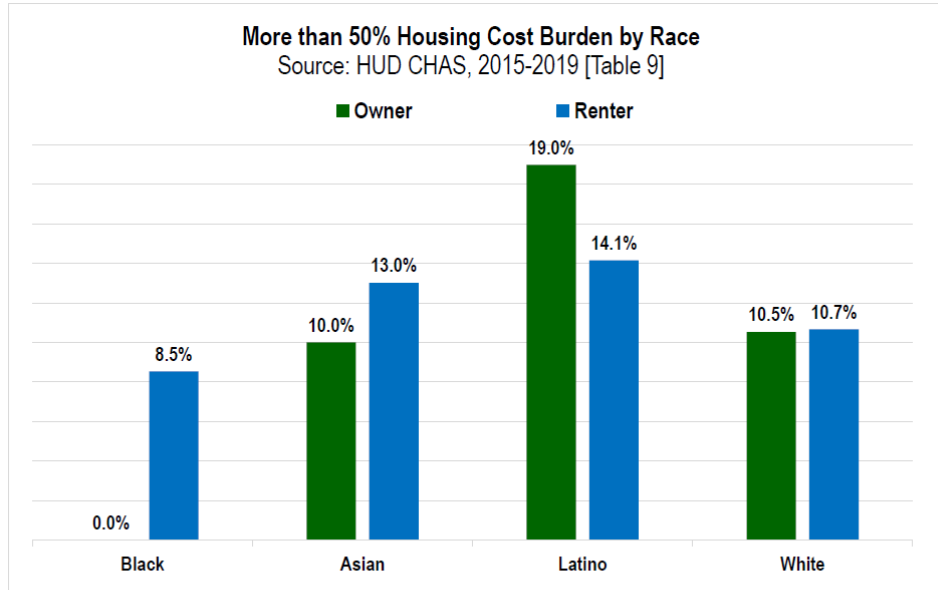
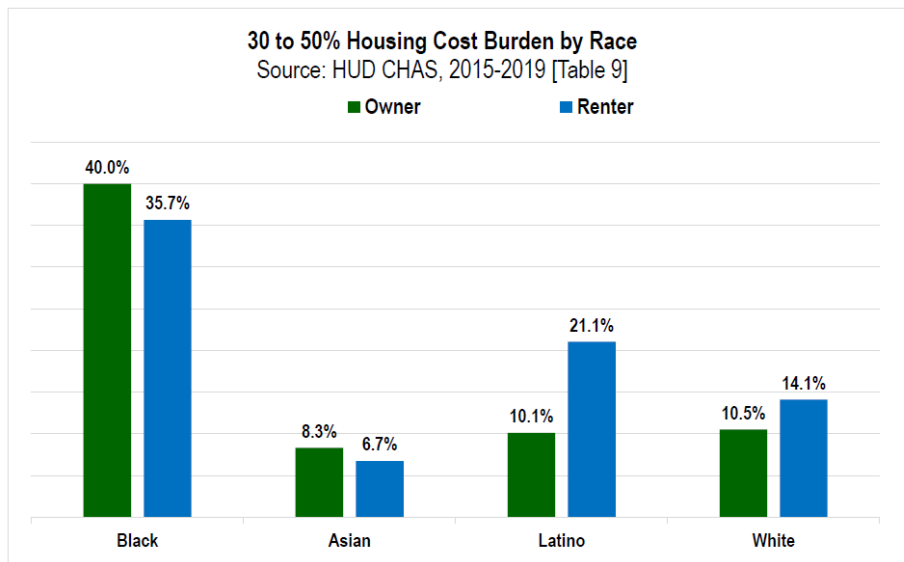


Figure 16: 50% Housing Cost Burden by Race



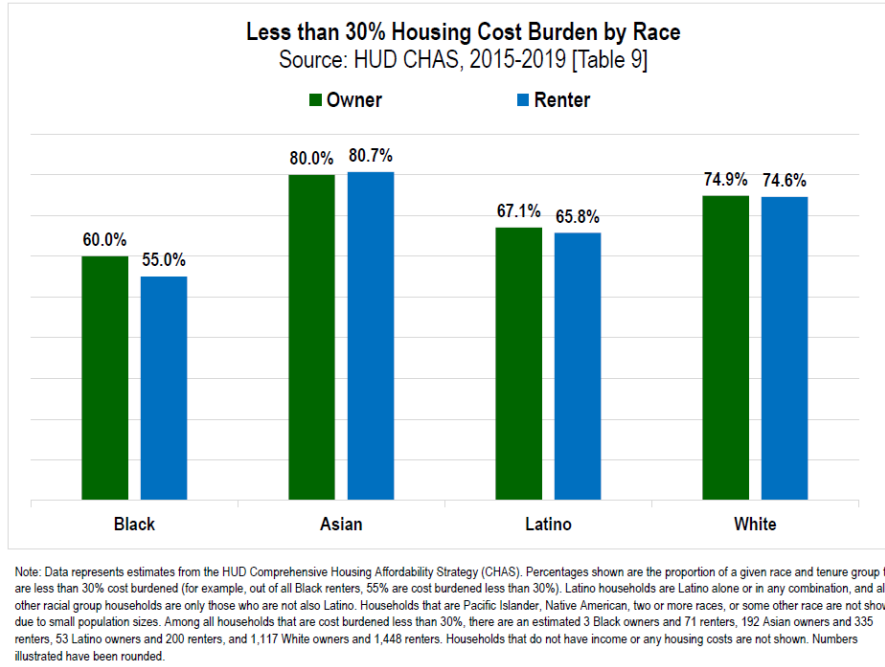
Note: Data represents estimates from the HUD Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS). Percentages shown are the proportion of a given race and tenure group that are more than 50% cost burdened (for example, out of all Black renters, 36.3% are cost burdened more than 50%). Latino households are Latino alone or in any combination, and all other racial group households are only those who are not also Latino. Households that are Pacific Islander, Native American, two or more races, or some other race are not shown due to small population sizes. Among all households that are cost burdened more than 50%, there are an estimated 0 Black owners and 11 renters, 24 Asian owners and 54 renters, 8 Latino owner and 43 renters, and 214 White owners and 207 renters. Households that do not have income or any housing costs are not shown. Numbers illustrated have been rounded.

Figure 17: 30-50% Housing Cost Burden by Race



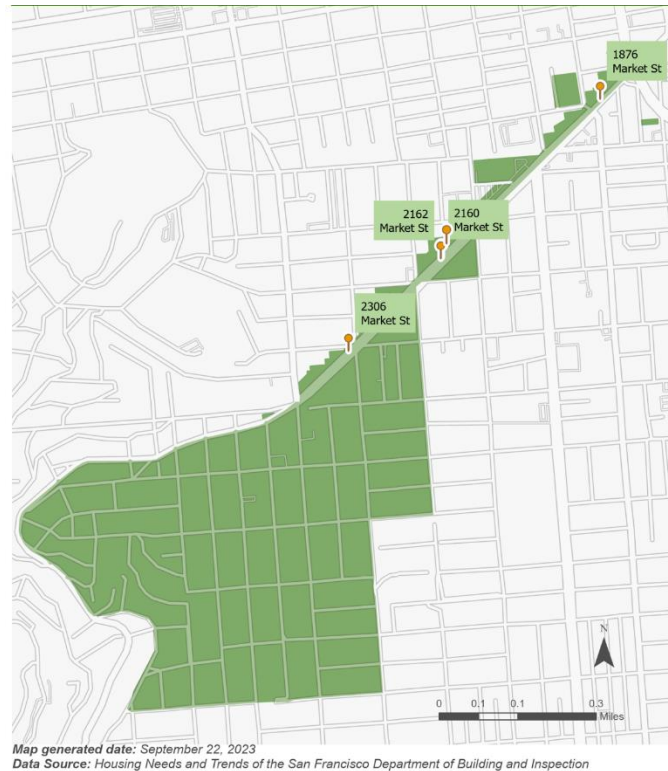
Note: Data represents estimates from the HUD Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS). Percentages shown are the proportion of a given race and tenure group that are 30 to 50% cost burdened (for example, out of all Black renters, 35.6% are cost burdened 30 to 50%). Latino households are Latino alone or in any combination, and all other racial group households are only those who are not also Latino. Households that are Pacific Islander, Native American, two or more races, or some other race are not shown due to small population sizes. Among all households that are cost burdened 30 to 50%, there are an estimated 2 Black owners and 46 renters, 20 Asian owners and 28 renters, 8 Latino owners and 64 renters, and 157 White owners and 274 renters. Households that do not have income or any housing costs are not shown. Numbers illustrated have been rounded.

Figure 18: 30% Housing Cost Burden by Race



Housing burden statistics provide suggestions about what residents may experience the most instability in their housing due to economic vulnerability related to being able to afford their housing. This suggests that housing is expensive in the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District – and perhaps that some residents choose to spend much of their income to live in the Castro for various personal reasons. There is little access to low-income housing in the neighborhood, save for examples like the four Single Room Occupancy (SRO) properties in the district.

Figure 19: SRO Properties in the Cultural District



MOHCD Funding Levels Supporting LGBTQIA+ Individuals in the Castro and City

In the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District, four organizations receive MOHCD funding. LGBTQIA+ clients in the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District receive more MOHCD resources than LGBTQIA+ people in the city on the whole. More men receive resources than women or trans and non-binary individuals in the Castro; overall, heterosexual and cisgender individuals receive the most MOHCD resources citywide as well as a high level of resources in the Castro.

Figure 20: MOHCD Community Development Grant Recipients in the Castro

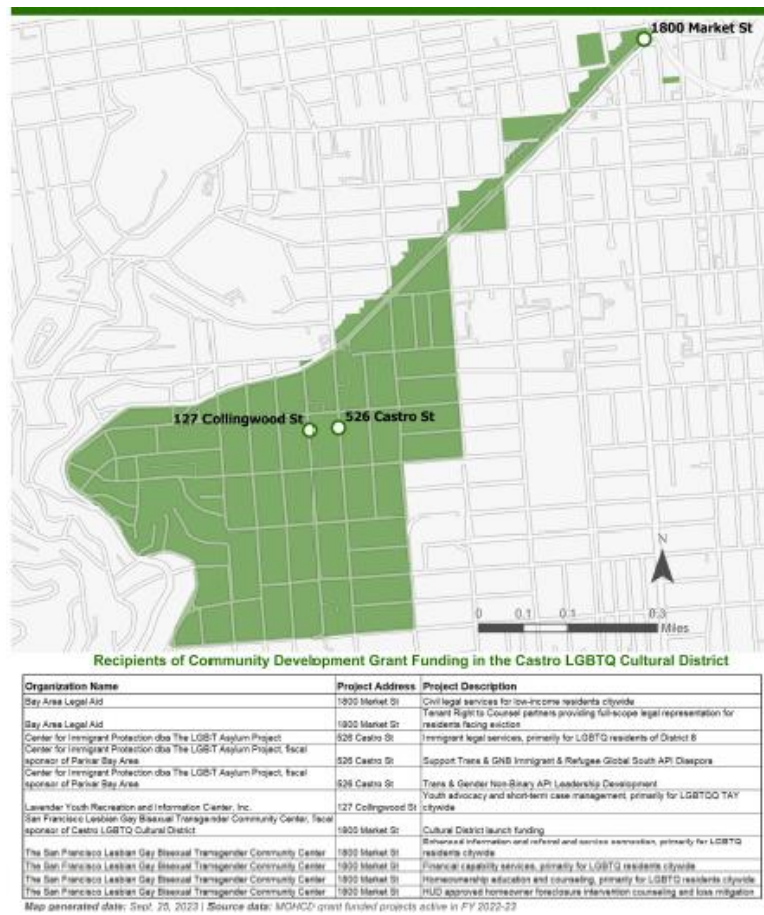
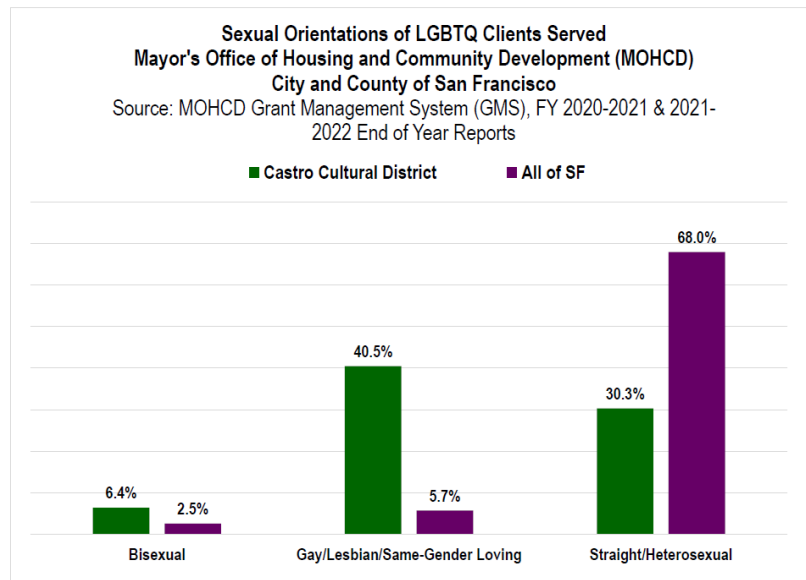


Figure 21: Sexual Orientations of LGBTQ Clients Served by MOHCD Grant Recipients



Note: Data represents percent (based on counts) of clients served by MOHCD funded community-based organizations during fiscal years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. Self-reported client home addresses are used to determine those living in the Castro Cultural District. Some sexual orientations with lower counts are not included.

Figure 22: Genders of LTBGQ Clients Served by MOHCD Grant Recipients

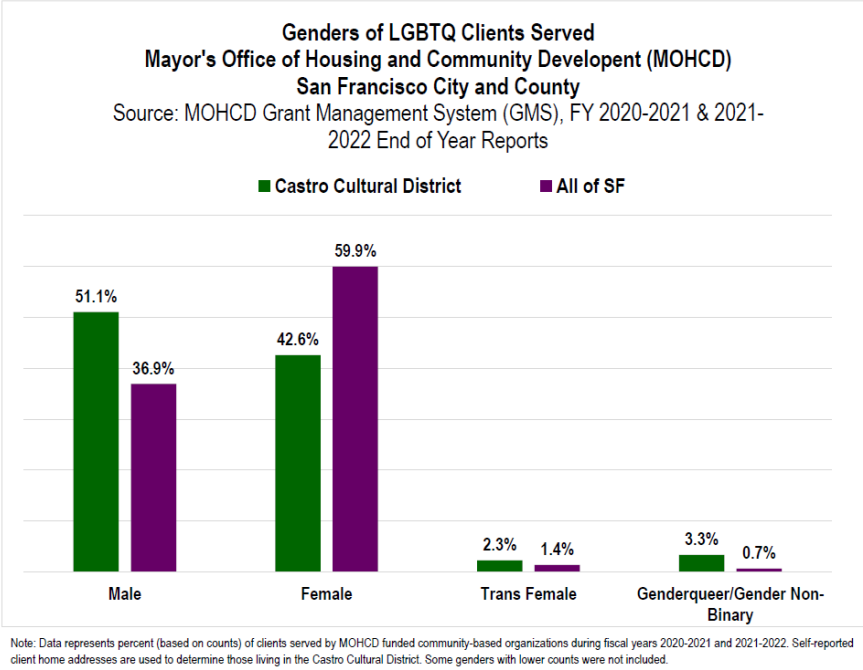
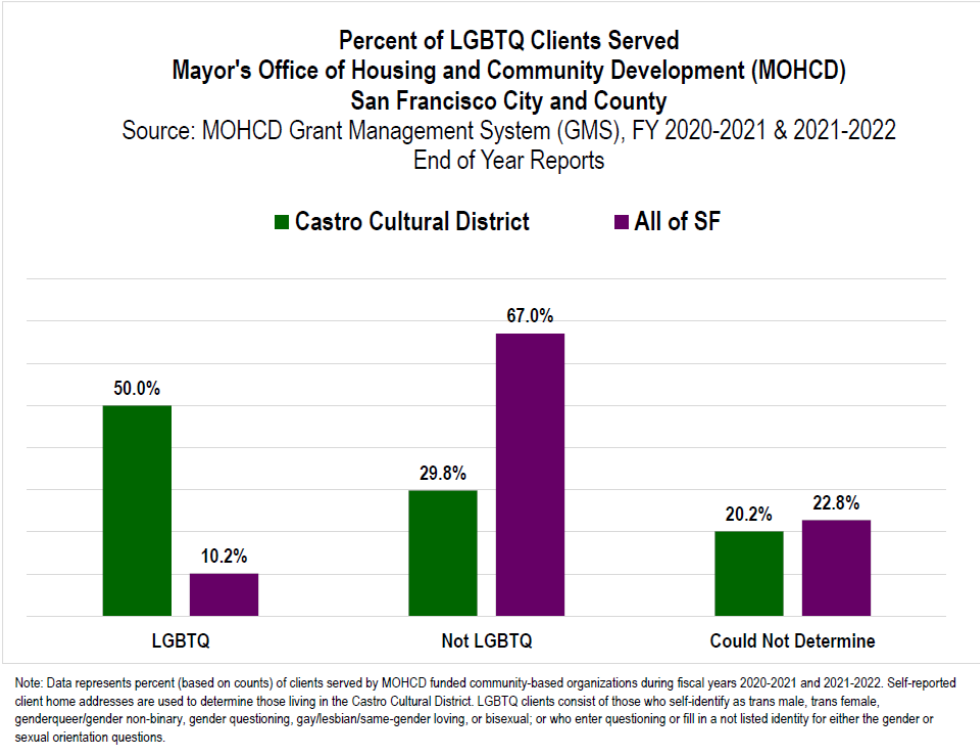


Figure 23: Percent of LGBTQ Clients Served by MOHCD Grant Recipients



Founding of the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District

The formation of the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District was initiated by a working group of neighborhood boosters and stakeholders in 2018. It was sponsored by Supervisor Rafael Mandelman (co-sponsored by Supervisors Vallie Brown, Hillary Ronen, and Asha Safai) to be legislated into the City and County of San Francisco's Cultural Districts program in 2019 via SF Administrative Code.

When the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District became fully legislated, the working group decided to create an advisory board for the district, which would be a community-appointed 15 member body (originally with the possibility of an additional 4 appointed seats). This advisory board would oversee the formation of the district structure and bylaws and serve as the interim directors until they were able to appoint a district manager. The advisory board collaborated with the district's fiscal sponsor, the San Francisco LGBT Center, in the hiring process. After the appointment of the district manager, the advisory board was slated to serve as the governing body of the district, with the executive chairs of the advisory board being delegated as the direct supervisors to the district manager. The district manager would become the sole administrative, technical and operational lead, responsible for all programming, implementations, disbursement of funding, and staff supervision. Furthermore, the advisory board would continue in its advisory capacity by developing policies to guide the district manager in district values, work, priorities, and programming, all in compliance with that set forth in the district's *mission statement*, *ordinance*, and *bylaws*. In October of 2020, Tina Valentín Aguirre was hired as the district manager. In 2022, the district manager was re-titled *district director* to better reflect their role and in alignment with other cultural districts and city departments, agencies, and commissions.

How the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District Operates Today

The Castro LGBTQ Cultural District operates as a fiscally sponsored project of the SF LGBT Center, a nonprofit with a 501(c)(3) determination from the IRS.

Castro LGBTQ Cultural District staff members are responsible for the operations, programming, and implementation of policies for the organization. The district director is the sole administrative, technical and operational lead, and is responsible for all operations.

The advisory board is responsible for developing and approving policies to guide the district director. The 15 advisory board members are elected in community elections and their positions may also be filled through nomination and board vote if seats are vacated.

The advisory board has three main policy committees, which are responsible for developing policy focused on the key areas of the district's mission: Arts & Culture, Economic & Workforce Development, and Land Use. There is also an Executive Committee, consisting of two executive co-chairs, a secretary, and a member-at-large. The Governance Committee, responsible for overseeing board processes and procedures, is an ad-hoc committee activated when necessary. In the early development of the advisory board, there was also a Diversity and Inclusion committee. This was dissolved as a separate committee in 2022 because diversity and inclusion are integral to the work in every committee and indeed the district's mission rather than a siloed concern; each committee is charged to uphold the district's mission, and commitment to diversity, inclusion, and equity must be core to the policies they create.

The executive committee, advisory board executive co-chairs, and committee chairs have extra duties that include scheduling meetings, ensuring the development of policies in their committee, ensuring that all meetings are publicly noticed with set agendas at least 72 hours in advance, and that meeting logistics (including development of minutes and timekeeping) are assigned prior to the start of business for meeting. Meetings are opened and recorded by a member of the executive committee. The executive committee, advisory board executive co-chairs, and committee chairs convey recommendations to the entire advisory board on an as-needed basis for time-sensitive issues.

The advisory board's policies and procedures are directed by the district's bylaws, which were developed by the Governance Committee and approved by the full board in 2023.

The district has a full-time Cultural District Director and an Administrative Assistant (.75 FTE) and they oversee the following activities for this year.

Cultural District Activities and Accomplishments

Fiscal Year 2020-2021

Start-up Phase:

Hiring staff and consultants – The district hired Cultural District Director Tina Aguirre in October 2020. Staff worked with the fiscal sponsor to create systems to observe best practices around nonprofit administration. The district hired a program associate in April 2021. It secured the services of Be the Change Consulting in May 2021 to facilitate focus groups and listening sessions for this report.

Arts and Culture:

Events – The district produced a panel discussion “Castro on Notice: Trans Equity is a Must!” in November 2020. The district collaborated with Still Here SF on a virtual event on the poetry, movies and cultural productions of Tina Aguirre in January 2021. The district held its first town hall in April 2021. The district co-produced the May 2021 Harvey Milk Day in the Castro. The district collaborated with NextSF and Alaska Airlines on a virtual panel on five San Francisco cultural districts in June 2021. The district produced the Pulse Memorial in Jane Warner Plaza in June 2021.

Following Browse ... Search

CASTRO ON NOTICE: TRANS EQUITY IS A MUST!

MISS BILLY COOPER (SHE/HER) COMEDY CLUB LUENELL TINA AQUIRRE (THEY/THEM)

JUST SHANNON (THEY/THEM) LEVI MAXWELL (THEY/THEM)

CASTRO LGBTQ CULTURAL DISTRICT

THANK YOU FOR JOINING US!

castrogbtq LIVE 37 0:37:57

STREAM CHAT

in San Francisco, since January 2020, they have worked at San Francisco Pride, working to help transition the city's annual largest outdoor event to an online format. Shannon is passionate about partnering with the LGBTQ+ community to create spaces and events for all queer folks — especially BIPOC, transgender, and gender-nonconforming folks, and women.

caesaradabes: The Patio, now Hamburger Mary's....

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lolaislewd: @trixiecarr I turned off the settings because it had no chill- sorry love it should be ok now

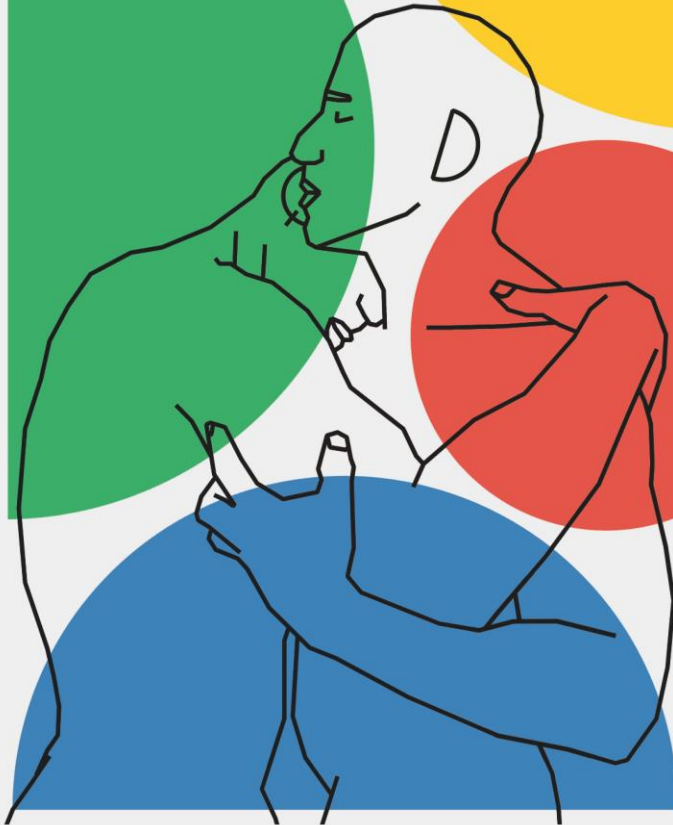
caesaradabes: The Castro LGBTQ Cultural District was created with the intent of preserving, sustaining, and promoting the LGBTQ history and culture of the broader Castro district. The creation of the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District was to highlight the structures and sites important to this history; foster racial, ethnic and cultural diversity among its residents and businesses; and create a safe, beautiful, and inclusive space for LGBTQ and allied communities! Go to castrogbtq.org for more info.

AllTheAmpersands: Thank you to the moderators!

Send a message Chat

PULSE ORLANDO

**REMEMBERING THE 49
RECORDANDO LOS 49**



5pm-7pm
Wednesday
June 12, 2024
Jane Warner Plaza
Castro and
Market
streets

Hosted by the
Castro LGBTQ
Cultural District

Artwork by [Simon Malvaez](#)



COVID-19

Food relief – In April 2021, the district worked with the Golden State Warriors and Brenda’s Restaurant to distribute food boxes for 500 Castro residents/visitors as part of COVID relief efforts. Outreach – Also in April, the district distributed posters and information to promote vaccines and testing in the neighborhood.

FREE Covid-19 PCR Testing

available every Saturday

10AM-4PM

No health insurance needed



18th Street Parking Lot
Between Castro & Collingwood
No appointment needed

**Castro LGBTQ
Cultural District**

Preserving, sustaining, and promoting the queer history and culture of the Castro.

www.castro-lgbtq.org

Historic and Cultural Preservation: Harvey Milk Plaza – The district began working with Friends of Harvey Milk Plaza in March 2021 on their redesign of the space, producing focus groups to ensure that racial, gender, and queer equity best practices were observed in the process and final draft of the project.

Fiscal Year 2021-2022

Arts and Culture:

Artists Mini-Grants and Pop-Up Art Show – In November 2021, the district partnered with Queer Cultural Center to distribute \$20,000 in artist mini-grants, working with Curator Marcel Pardo Ariza. An art show was exhibited at the Castro Art Mart.



COVID-19:

Weekly Castro COVID Testing and Vaccines – In May 2021, the district piloted collaborating with medical partners to provide COVID testing and vaccines. This became a weekly project from August 2021-December 2022. In total, the district vaccinated more than 1,200 people and the district provided 4,690 PCR COVID tests. This was especially important for underserved members of the LGBTQIA+ community: older adults, people with low-income or no-insurance, and front-line workers in the Castro.





COVID Housing subsidies – In FY 2021-2022, the district distributed \$60,000 in cash housing subsidies to underserved members of the LGBTQIA+ in the Castro who were housing insecure during the COVID pandemic. The district partnered with the Q Foundation as they had systems in place to identify clients and disburse the funds.

COVID organizational assistance (sponsorships) – In FY 2021-2022, the district distributed \$90,000 in sponsorships or grants to community organizations. These funds were pivotal to keep these groups financially solvent during the pandemic. Organizations included SF Pride, Frameline, Castro Street Fair, QWOCMAP, Queer Cultural Center, GLBT Historical Society, Fresh Meat, Lyon Martin Health Services, El/La Para TransLatinas, Bay Area American Indian Two Spirits (BAAITS), GAPA, Openhouse SF, and LYRIC.

Fiscal Year 2022-2023

Arts and Culture:

Creating Change Conference Panel – In February 2023, the district helped lead a panel of local cultural work with a special focus on Latinx LGBTQIA+ projects at the Creating Change Conference. Several hundred people from across the nation attended.

Drag Laureate Program – In spring 2023, the district participated in the Human Rights Commission-led effort to create a Drag Laureate program, culminating with the selection of D’arcy Drollinger as the first Drag Laureate in June 2023.

Mural – The district commissioned Serge Gay Jr. to paint *Circle of Change*, a mural of four Black lesbians and transgender women located on a building at 4122 18th St. in the Castro.





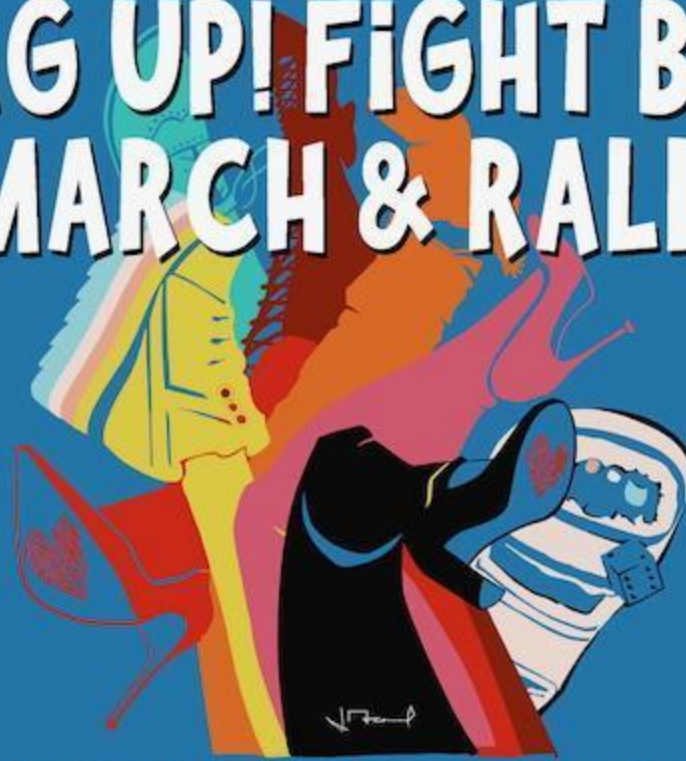


Transgender Day of Visibility – Director Aguirre shared remarks at the event attended by more than 150 people.

Drag Up! Fight Back! Rally – Director Aguirre marched and spoke at the event held in Union Square.

THE PEOPLE'S MARCH - OASIS - THE SISTERS OF PERPETUAL INDULGENCE

DRAG UP! FIGHT BACK! MARCH & RALLY



CITY HALL TO UNION SQUARE SATURDAY, APRIL 8, 2023 / 11 AM - 3 PM











Events – In May, the district co-produced Harvey Milk Day and in June, the district produced the Pulse Memorial Event in Jane Warner Plaza.



HARVEY MILK DAY 2024 CELEBRATION!

SUNDAY MAY 19 STARTS AT **1PM**

DJS ★ MUSIC ★ SPECIAL GUESTS

SPONSORED BY




Diversity & Inclusion:

Trainings – In March 2023, the district started provided internal trainings to build the skills of advisory board members and key constituent organizational leaders in relation to racial, gender, and queer equity frameworks used by the district. Be the Change Consulting provided facilitation.

Economic & Workforce Development:

Small business opening – Director Aguirre gave remarks at the Welcome Castro store opening that used OEWD funds to open in a vacant storefront. Paintings of images in the *Circle of Change* mural were provided by Serge Gay Jr. for an installation at the store during its first months of operation.

Jane Warner Plaza redesign – The district participated in a walkthrough of the Jane Warner Plaza and elevator redesign project with City representatives and key stakeholders of the neighborhood.

Small Business Grants – The district distributed \$36,000 in grants to small businesses in fiscal year 2022-2023 including \$10,000 to Queer Arts Featured.

Housing:

OpenHouse SF – Director Aguirre joined the OpenHouse SF Steering Committee for the 1939 Market development for LGBTQIA+ housing for seniors. The district helped choose public art for the development.

Historic and Cultural Preservation:

Castro Theatre – The cultural district was a member of the Friends of Castro Theatre Coalition, made up of over 20 community organizations and 100 individuals. The district helped lead the Coalition's work as they advocated for the preservation of the historic interior of the Castro Theatre and maintenance of it as a space of LGBTQ+ cultural production. As a result of this work, the Historic Preservation Commission and Planning Department voted to approve conditions for the future operation of the theatre, including a percentage of LGBTQ+ programming and a community engagement and oversight process.

Harvey Milk Plaza – The district worked closely with Friends of Harvey Milk Plaza, SWA Group, and Volume SF to design and implement a workshop and 3-hour walking tour experience entitled *LGBTQ+ Castro: Past, Present, and Future*, as part of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) 2022 Conference on Landscape Architecture. The event took place on November 11, 2022 with more than 40 attendees from throughout the Americas.







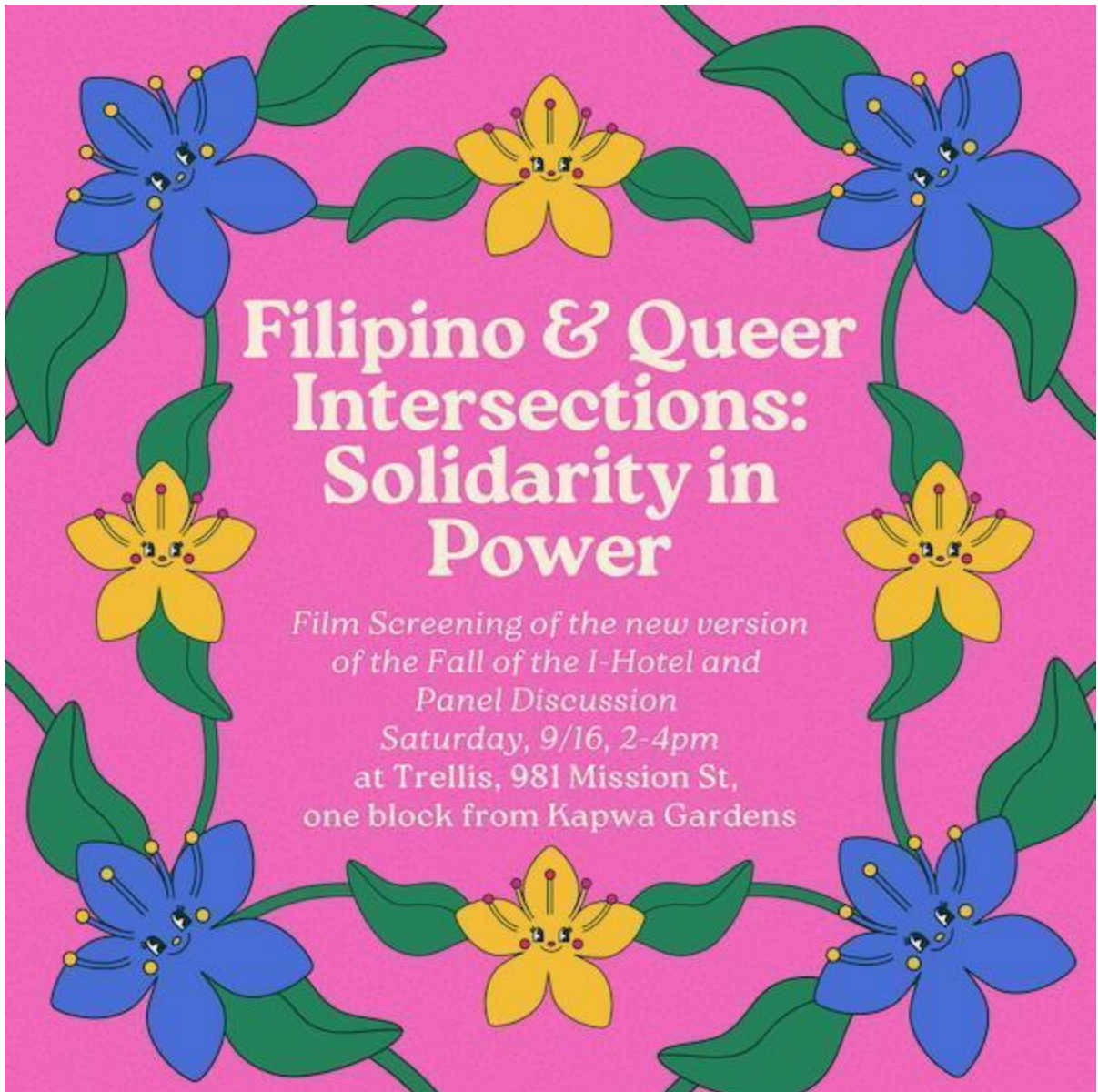
California Historic Preservation Conference – Director Aguirre and Executive Co-Chair Stephen Torres presented on the district at the 2023 California Historic Preservation Conference.

Fiscal Year 2023-2024

Arts and Culture:

Filipino and Queer Intersection – The district curated a panel and film program with the Facine Film Festival focused on the Fall of the I Hotel and LGBT activism in coalition building from the 70s. A panel included a Filipina lesbian housing community organizer who was part of the I Hotel activism in the 70s.





Latinx Queer and Trans History – Director Aguirre’s movie, *Viva 16!*, was part of an event at the SF Main Library produced by Julian Delgado Lopera on queer and trans Latinx history and culture.

Halloween Activations – The district held a party at the GLBT Historical Society for Halloween as part of community wide activations.

Diversity & Inclusion:

Trainings – The district convened internal trainings with advisory board members in October 2023 and March 2024. The district convened external trainings with key constituent organizational leaders in October 2023 and February 2024. Be the Change Consulting facilitated all trainings.

Economic & Workforce Development:

Small Business Grants – The district distributed \$36,000 in grants to small businesses in fiscal year 2023-2024 including \$6,000 to Fabulosa Bookstore and \$6,000 to Rouse Relational Wellness (focused on couples therapy, sex therapy, and polyamory related mental health and wellness services).





The Castro LGBTQ Cultural District has a new set of small business grants open as of Thursday, 06/15/23. We will award five \$6,000 grants to small businesses to produce activation events that build foot traffic. The deadline is Friday, 07/21/23. More info on our pages on Facebook and Instagram.



So far, we have distributed \$95,000 to small businesses in the Castro and these photos feature previous grantees. They are Art House SF, Arzo Hair Culture, AutoErotica, Fabulosa Books, Healing Cuts SF, Queer Arts Featured (Queer AF), Rosen Creative House, Rouse Relational Wellness, and Schlomer Haus Gallery. Congrats to all the previous grantees and Happy Pride!



Housing:

Openhouse SF – Director Aguirre represented the district in the OpenHouse SF Steering Committee for the 1939 Market development for LGBTQIA+ housing for seniors.

Historic and Cultural Preservation:

Transgender History Month – The district supported the vote to designate August 2024 as Transgender History Month at the State Capital in Sacramento as part of a contingent of queer and trans activists and community leaders.



Fiscal Year 2024 - 2025

Arts and Culture:

Art commissions – Tanya Wischerath created a series of paintings, “Living Lesbian Legends,” for the district highlighting eight leaders in the lesbian and queer women’s community. District commissioned paintings were shown at Queer Arts Featured in November 2024. The district is commissioning new art to focus on trans masc. and transgender men art in spring 2025.

Living Lesbian Legends



Art by Tanya Wischerath



castro

**LGBTQ
Cultural
District**

**"Giving Them Their Flowers" Art Exhibition
Including Living Lesbian Legends Paintings
Opening Reception: Friday, Nov. 1st, 6 p.m.-8 p.m.**

**Panel with featured artists & the Living Lesbian Legends:
Thursday, Nov. 14th, 6:00 p.m.-7:30 p.m.
Hosted at Queer Arts Featured, 575 Castro St.**

Giving Them Their Flowers: An Art Show



**Featuring works commissioned by the District:
“Living Lesbian Legends” by Tanya Wischerath &
“Circle of Change” by Serge Gay Jr.**

Mural – Tanya’s artwork will be used for a mural she will paint on the same wall as the mural painted by Serge Gay Jr. in the Castro.

Sponsorships – The district is a regular financial supporter of the Castro Merchants Holiday Tree, GLBTQ+ Asian Pacific Alliance (GAPA) Runway, Queer Women of Color Media Arts Project (QWOCMAP) Film Festival, and other LGBTQIA+ centering community events.

Events – The district produces the annual Pulse Memorial at Castro and Market to commemorate the loss of 49 souls at the LGBTQIA+ club in Orlando, FL in 2016. The district also co-produces the annual Harvey Milk Day in the Castro, along with townhalls & focus groups that help us learn from community members how to better preserve and promote LGBTQIA+ people, places and culture.





Diversity & Inclusion:

Trainings – The district will complete all scheduled internal trainings with advisory board members and external trainings with key constituent organizational leaders by June 2025. Be the Change Consulting facilitates these trainings.

Historic and Cultural Preservation:

History Booklet – The district is creating a booklet “Castro LGBTQ Cultural Heritage” by Gerard Koskovich and Jen Reck, Ph.D. The publication documents the emergence and development of the Castro as a queer mecca.

Castro Theatre – Director Aguirre participated in a documentary produced on the theater focused on its refurbishing and the advocacy conducted by the district.

Economic & Workforce Development:

Small Business Grants – The district will distribute more than \$20,000 in grants to small businesses this fiscal year. Including this fiscal year’s grants, the district has distributed more than \$156,000 in grants to small businesses.

Castro LGBTQ Cultural District Community Stabilization Strategies (Cover Page)

Methods for Developing Strategies: Community Data Collection

The Cultural History, Housing, and Economic Sustainability Strategies for the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District were developed using original data collected from Castro neighborhood stakeholders and community members and secondary sources such as San Francisco City reports.

The strategies were primarily guided by community input through original data collected from Castro stakeholders and community members. Between July 2021 and March 2022, Be the Change Consulting conducted 10 focus groups (referred to as “listening sessions”) and one community report back and feedback discussion, all using the Zoom platform due to health concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Data was collected from a total of 136 people: 95 people in the 10 focus groups and 41 in the feedback session. To recruit participants for the focus groups, cultural district staff employed non-probability sampling techniques. They utilized convenience sampling by posting on cultural district Facebook and Instagram pages to attract potential participants. They also used purposive sampling, reaching out to community organizations and stakeholders to recruit people affiliated with those organizations; this allowed them to recruit individuals for topic-area focus groups (such as land use or arts and culture) as well as individuals involved with particular community demographics (such as Castro stakeholder organizations, cultural district Advisory Board members, or youth and older adult services). Staff also employed snowball sampling by requesting organizations promote information about the focus groups in their networks and in their own networks. They also utilized quota sampling methods by doing targeted outreach to ensure underrepresented community members participated in the focus groups – doing in-person outreach and pursuing referrals from community stakeholders to ensure representation of LGBTQIA+ people of color, transgender individuals, and lesbians and queer women. Interested participants filled out a google form with their information so that Be the Change and district staff could provide them the details for the focus group meetings.

Be the Change Consulting developed the interview questions with cultural district staff to guide the focus groups, which focused on the six key areas pertinent to the CHHESS report and the mission of the cultural district. The topic areas included the following: tenant protections and housing, economic and workforce development, cultural competency, arts and culture, historic preservation, and placekeeping/placemaking.

Five stakeholder interview focus groups were carried out with specific neighborhood groups (see table Stakeholder Focus Groups: Topic, date, and participants with details). Thirty-six people total participated in these groups.

Figure 24: Stakeholder Focus Groups Overview

Stakeholder Focus Group Topics	Date Conducted	Number of Participants
Health Providers and Cultural Competency	9/27/21	5

LYRIC and Open House	8/17/21	4
Nonprofits and Service Providers	8/5/21	3
Castro LGBTQ Cultural District Advisory Board	7/30/21	16
Castro Merchants, Castro CBD, Duboce Triangle Neighborhood Association, Eureka Valley Neighborhood Association board members	7/26/21	8
	Total Participants:	36

Four of the focus groups addressed specific CHHESS topic areas (see table CHHESS Topic Area Focus Groups: Topic, date, and participants with details). Fifty-nine people total participated in these groups.

Figure 25: CHHESS Topic Area Focus Groups Overview

Focus Group Topic	Date Conducted	Number of Participants
Economic and Workforce Development	12/15/21	13
Land Use and Housing	10/21/21	7
Arts and Culture	11/17/21	24
Tenant Protections	9/14/21	10
“Last Call” Community Listening Session	3/24/2022	5
	Total Participants:	59

After nine of the focus groups were completed, Be the Change conducted preliminary data analysis and facilitated a community report back and feedback discussion on 3/3/22 with 41 participants. In this discussion, the attendees provided insight on the main findings from the focus group data analysis. After this discussion, Be the Change conducted the final “Last Call” Community Listening Session to provide community members space for additional thoughts and ensure that all community members desiring to participate had a chance to attend a focus group (described above in Table CHHESS Topic Area Focus Groups: Topic, date, and participants).

Additionally, the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District conducted a neighborhood survey between 2022 and 2024 to collect [Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity \(SOGI\) information from businesses in the Cultural District](#). A key takeaway from this survey is that less than 50% of all small businesses who responded to our survey were owned by members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

The final original data source used to develop policy strategies is a focus group conducted as part of the San Francisco Housing Element. This focus group was facilitated by the city of San Francisco and held on September 9, 2021 with eight participants. The Cultural District collaborated with the city to develop questions and recruit for this focus group after it was found that the city's data collection for the Housing Element failed to intentionally include LGBTQIA+ community concerns and did not systematically recruit LGBTQIA+ community members as participants.

Formal analysis of the focus group data involved compiling main themes and perspectives on key Castro District characteristics and core neighborhood concerns within the six thematic areas. Data analysis consisted of examining focus group participants' perspectives on the main neighborhood challenges in these areas and their insights about desired interventions and equity-based solutions; the shared and significant themes observed across the data became the foundation of the resulting policy strategies. Dr. Jen Reck, Assistant Professor of Sociology and Sexuality Studies at San Francisco State University, analyzed the data using qualitative analysis techniques. Employing line-by-line coding, Reck collected key themes shared across the focus groups and then conducted focused coding to flesh out the central categories represented by the themes. These categories became the main policy areas and elements from the core themes provided details guiding the policies' rationale, strategies, and goals. Participants' identities are confidential and all identifying information has been removed in reports of the results to protect their privacy.

The strategy development was also aided by drawing on pertinent secondary sources, such as San Francisco City reports. Examples of reports analyzed to develop strategies include the following: the *Citywide LGBTQ+ Cultural Heritage Strategy (2020)*; *Citywide Historic Context Statement for LGBTQ History in San Francisco (2020)*; *Eureka Valley Historic Context Statement (2017)*; and the *District 8 Housing Opportunities Report (June 2021)*.

Castro LGBTQ Cultural District Strategies

Below are the expanded recommendations and strategies the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District developed through community data collection. These are the detailed versions of the strategies presented in the Executive Summary at the beginning of this CHHESS report. Each category includes a goals statement, which captures an overall vision of the needs and the approach to the area of concern. Each of the strategies consists of a description of the key policy as well as detail about processes and potential community collaborations through which the district will operationalize the policy. These are aspirational and intended to serve as ideas that the community should focus on given capacity.

Heritage Recognition & Preservation

The Castro is a neighborhood of local, regional, national, and international significance for LGBTQIA+ people. Yet its queer and transgender heritage and culture are threatened with displacement due to gentrification and other factors. Sites associated with the neighborhood's LGBTQIA+ past provide irreplaceable anchors for evoking stories of struggles, sorrows, and successes, thereby reinforcing a sense of belonging in time and place for LGBTQIA+ people. Expressions of the neighborhood's trans and queer intangible cultural heritage likewise play an invaluable role in sustaining the community's memory and advancing the community's well-being. The strategies outlined here promote the recognition, interpretation, preservation, and appropriate use of irreplaceable sites embodying the Castro's LGBTQIA+ history and advance the vitality and positive evolution of its living LGBTQIA+ intangible cultural heritage.

1. **Collaborate with the City to promote the creation of LGBTQIA+ heritage educational programming and support the GLBT Historical Society in updating and expanding the Castro listings in its LGBTQIA+ sites database:** Assess and work to implement strategies from the Citywide LGBTQ+ Cultural Heritage Strategy (2020) that apply to the Castro. These include developing additional sources of support for the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District; collaborating with the City to promote the creation of LGBTQIA+ heritage educational programming, notably in conjunction with the GLBT Historical Society and the Rainbow Honor Walk; and supporting the GLBT Historical Society in updating and expanding the Castro listings in its LGBTQIA+ sites database and in integrating the data into property information records posted by the San Francisco Planning Department.
2. **Team with the Friends of Harvey Milk Plaza to ensure that the artwork and explanatory signage featured in the plaza's redesign respectfully portray historically marginalized members of the LGBTQIA+ community.** Partner with the Friends of Harvey Milk Plaza to ensure the artwork and explanatory signage featured in the space redesign represents the historical and current diversity of the LGBTQIA+ community, thus modeling respect and welcome for all LGBTQIA+ residents and visitors. The mission and resources of the GLBT Historical Society make it a significant potential partner for this initiative. The plaza should include respectful portrayals of groups that have historically struggled to gain complete belonging in the Castro as a gay neighborhood: lesbians/queer women, bisexuals, BIPOC individuals, transgender and gender-nonconforming people, disabled people, working-class people, and individuals with low incomes.

3. **Explore establishing a Citywide LGBTQIA+ Arts, Culture, and Heritage Commission as an official municipal advisory body to advise the City and others on preserving, interpreting, and appropriately using historic sites.** In accordance with Strategy Action C3 of the [Citywide LGBTQ+ Cultural Heritage Strategy](#) (2020), collaborate with City agencies to explore establishing a Citywide LGBTQIA+ Arts, Culture and Heritage Commission as an official municipal advisory body. Such a body would be constituted to advise all City commissions, departments and agencies whose work touches on LGBTQIA+ arts, culture, and heritage, including but not limited to the Arts Commission, the Historic Preservation Commission and the Planning Department. Ensure the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District is represented with designated appointments selected both for expertise and to reflect the diversity of the LGBTQIA+ community and the Castro. Priorities for the Commission could include advising the City and other parties on preservation, interpretation, and appropriate use of historic sites. The Commission also could develop proposals for sustaining the living LGBTQIA+ intangible cultural heritage of the neighborhood, such as promoting continued LGBTQIA+ programming at the Castro Theatre and working with the Legacy Business Program to support the recognition and visibility of trans and queer legacy businesses and organizations. The Commission would also advise the City on promoting LGBTQIA+ arts and culture: See strategy 5 below.
4. **Ensure the San Francisco Citywide Cultural Resources Survey includes a comprehensive historic survey of the Castro, highlighting the diverse history of its LGBTQIA+ communities.** Ensure that the San Francisco Citywide Cultural Resources Survey, which is in progress under the auspices of the San Francisco Planning Department, includes a full historic resources survey of the Castro. This engagement is in keeping with a recommendation in the *Citywide Historic Context Statement for LGBTQ+ History in San Francisco (2020)*, which calls for a formal LGBTQIA+ historic resources survey of the Castro neighborhood to “record and evaluate in detail historic properties identified in this context statement [and to] locate additional LGBTQIA+ historic properties...” The Cultural District and the Citywide LGBTQIA+ Arts, Culture and Heritage Commission proposed in Strategy 3 above will have a vital role to play in guiding Castro-related findings and recommendations of the Cultural Resources Survey. The survey should prioritize making visible and meaningful the history of diverse LGBTQIA+ populations, communities, social classes, and cultural expressions in the neighborhood.
5. **Ensure the Historic Preservation Commission and/or the Board of Supervisors prioritize further municipal landmarking and state and national nomination of Castro LGBTQIA+ historical sites, notably those representing the experiences of women, BIPOC individuals, bisexuals, and transgender and gender-nonconforming people, as well as histories of neighborhood debates over diversity, belonging displacement, and gentrification.** Pursue landmarking the five additional Castro sites referenced in the *Citywide LGBTQ+ Cultural Heritage Strategy* (2020) “that may be eligible for City Landmark, California Register, or National Register status,” as well as the home of Bay Area Reporter publisher Bob Ross (4200 20th St.) as suggested in the *Eureka Valley Historic Context Statement* (adopted by the Planning Commission on December 20, 2017). As of September 2024, the City has landmarked only five Castro sites based on LGBTQIA+ significance. No neighborhood sites are listed in the California State Register or the National Register of Historic Places. In

collaboration with the Planning Department, the Historic Preservation Commission, SF Heritage, the GLBT Historical Society, and the Citywide LGBTQIA+ Arts, Culture and Heritage Commission proposed in Strategy 1(c) above, and drawing on the Citywide Cultural Resources Survey, ensure the Planning Department also prioritizes further municipal landmarking and state and national nomination of Castro LGBTQIA+ historic sites, notably those representing the experiences of women, BIPOC individuals, bisexuals, and transgender and gender-nonconforming people, as well as histories of neighborhood debates over diversity, belonging, displacement, and gentrification.

Arts & Culture

Visual and performing arts, music, storytelling, and other forms of LGBTQIA+ culture enhance individual and community well-being by providing vital points of connection across identities. In addition, access to LGBTQIA+ culture advances understanding and respect for trans and queer people and communities among all Castro residents and visitors to the neighborhood. The impact is strengthened when diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility are centered. Sustaining the dynamic presence of LGBTQIA+ arts and culture in the Castro is challenging due to economic and demographic pressures, including the limited availability of affordable studio, exhibition, practice, and performance spaces. The strategies outlined here promote the creation, growth, visibility, and ongoing vitality of accessible LGBTQIA+ arts and culture in the Castro.

6. **Develop resources such as City and foundation funding to support events and programs in the Castro organized by and produced for LGBTQIA+ people, especially lesbians/queer women, LGBTQIA+ BIPOC individuals, transgender and gender-nonconforming people, and disabled people.** Identify and develop resources to support events and programs in the Castro organized by and produced for LGBTQIA+ people, especially lesbians/queer women, LGBTQIA+ BIPOC individuals, transgender and gender-nonconforming people, and disabled people. Approaches could include the following: collaborating with local for-profit and nonprofit enterprises to ensure the availability and visibility of affordable spaces; working with the City, foundations, and other grant-makers to establish easier access to funding; and promoting the availability of equipment and technical advice to encourage the creation of in-person and online hybrid events, thus making participation as an artist or audience member more widely accessible.
7. **Collaborate with the City, nonprofits, for-profit enterprises, and landlords of commercial properties to develop programs and resources to display the work of LGBTQIA+ artists in public spaces and vacant storefronts in the Castro.** Ensure a specific solicitation to support increased participation by culture makers who are lesbians/queer women, LGBTQIA+ BIPOC individuals, bisexuals, transgender and gender-nonconforming people, and disabled people. This initiative also will reinforce the goals of Strategy 4 (Economic and Workforce Development) noted below.
8. **Work with the City, foundations, and other grantmakers to identify funding to develop a Cultural District program of accessible mini-grants for the production of cultural events, the creation of public art, and the promotion of other LGBTQIA+ cultural expressions in the Castro.** To further the evolution of the neighborhood as a

space of welcome, respect, and belonging for all residents and visitors, specifically solicit and support grant applications by lesbians/queer women, bisexuals, BIPOC individuals, gender-nonconforming people, and disabled people.

9. **Develop a Cultural District program to encourage and support applications by LGBTQIA+ arts and culture makers to obtain City resources for the creation of public art and cultural events in the Castro.** Examples of such resources include the [Dream Keeper Initiative](#) mini-grants and artist opportunities stemming from recommendations of the Monuments and Memorials Advisory Committee.
10. **In accordance with Strategy Action C3 of the [Citywide LGBTQ Cultural Heritage Strategy](#), explore establishing a Citywide LGBTQIA+ Arts, Culture and Heritage Commission as discussed in Strategy 1(c) above.** Ensure the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District is represented by designated seats with appointments selected both for expertise and to reflect the diversity of the LGBTQIA+ community and the Castro neighborhood. Further priorities for the Commission could include proposing policies and identifying resources to advance arts and culture strategies set forth in the current report, including supporting the creation of queer and trans events for BIPOC individuals, bisexuals, and disabled people, as such cultural offerings are greatly underrepresented in the Castro. As noted under Strategy 1 above, the Commission also would play a crucial role in advising the City on the preservation, interpretation, and promotion of LGBTQIA+ intangible cultural heritage and historic sites.

Cultural Humility & Cultural Competence:

The Castro has a decades-long history not only of welcoming LGBTQIA+ people, but also of engaging in debate and struggle around issues of equity within the LGBTQIA+ community that reflect broader injustices in society as a whole. Encouraging cultural humility and enhancing cultural competence in the Castro will help further establish and sustain the neighborhood as a setting of respect for lesbians and queer women, BIPOC individuals, transgender and gender-nonconforming people, disabled people, immigrants, youth, older adults, and others who often face exclusion both outside and inside the LGBTQIA+ community.

The following is from Stanford University's Principles of Ethical and Effective Service:

Humility is how we relate to ourselves—to our own goodness and limitations—and involves placing ourselves among others and in the world at large. Humility is not about making oneself small; it requires holding and exercising empathy and power with care and intentionality. Humility compels us to listen generously, remain curious, keep an open mind, and maintain a learning attitude. It calls us to be mindful of the needs, assets, interests, and expectations of others. It requires mindfulness of our individual and institutional privileges, the complicated power dynamics that extend beyond interpersonal relationships, and the need to center the voices and experiences of individuals and communities that have been historically marginalized (Haas Center for Public Service, 2019 p. 1).

Cultural humility helps build greater cultural competence; in the Castro, this means ensuring that allies learn to work more effectively with LGBTQIA+ people in the neighborhood and that LGBTQIA+ community members engage with one another more respectfully and collaboratively. The strategies outlined here advance the neighborhood's ongoing evolution as a place of welcome and belonging for LGBTQIA+ people in all their diversity.

11. **Identify resources and partners to develop programs that encourage businesses and nonprofits in the Castro to adopt diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) training and to establish DEIA policies, practices, and codes of conduct for staff, customers, and clients.** In keeping with Goal W3 of the Citywide LGBTQ+ Cultural Heritage Strategy (“Improve Cultural Humility Training”) and as emphasized in the community listening session conducted for the Cultural District, identify resources and partners to develop programs that encourage businesses and nonprofits in the Castro to adopt diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) training and to establish DEIA policies, practices, and codes of conduct for staff, customers, and clients. Among the objectives are supporting the nightlife community in informing patrons about respectful ways of interacting with one another and staff and performers, especially BIPOC LGBTQIA+ nightlife workers.
12. **Improve data on LGBTQIA+ residents in the Castro by evaluating City SOGI data collection and collaborating with experts.** Address the lack of reliable data on the distribution and diversity of LGBTQIA+ residents and households in the Castro neighborhood and other San Francisco districts. Assess current City sexual orientation and gender-identity (SOGI) data collection strategies and collaborate with experts on LGBTQIA+ data collection to improve the approach. Prioritize data collection on transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals. Developing such data will provide more accurate information about LGBTQIA+ community demographics and enable the Cultural District to better advocate for prioritized and focused funding and services in the Castro neighborhood.
13. **In keeping with feedback from the community listening session conducted for the Cultural District, work with the City and community organizations to reduce overdependence on police intervention in the Castro and to develop proposals and funding for establishing community-based public safety and officer-training programs.** Such approaches should prioritize principles of nonviolence and de-escalation as well as antiracism, diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. This will enhance safety for LGBTQIA+ BIPOC individuals and others who face heightened risks from traditional policing practices. Initiatives of this sort will also offer greater flexibility and effectiveness in responding to neighborhood concerns regarding the unhoused population and addressing the public safety concerns presented by large gatherings such as street fairs.

[Format: In Box Sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) data had never been collected on small businesses in San Francisco's Castro neighborhood. The Castro LGBTQ Cultural District identified this as an urgent need in July 2021 and conducted a survey of district businesses. Key findings include that although 72% of the businesses report having LGBTQIA+ employees, less than half the respondents said their business is owned or managed by LGBTQIA+ people (45%). A little over half the businesses employ queer women (53%) and a majority had at least one BIPOC employee (86%). This data is instrumental to develop programs to prioritize small

businesses that center LGBTQIA+ community members and support LGBTQIA+ employees in neighborhood businesses.]

Economic & Workforce Development

Economic polarization in San Francisco has deepened over time; along with gentrification, this has placed greater financial strains on LGBTQIA+ businesses and workers in the Castro. LGBTQIA+ community members—especially BIPOC individuals, transgender and gender-nonconforming people, and youth—are at high risk of poverty and housing insecurity. It is particularly important in this context to increase support for those of us facing economic inequities—especially Black and brown trans women. Access to economic opportunities enables LGBTQIA+ people to survive, thrive, and build our community and culture; broadening these possibilities in the Castro will strengthen the stability of individuals and the community and help maintain Castro's significance as an LGBTQIA+ space. Creating more opportunities for small businesses to succeed and for LGBTQIA+ people to gain access to meaningful and sustainable work are crucial ways to bolster the economic vitality of the Castro. It is also vital that local businesses demonstrate LGBTQIA+ cultural competency about their employees and customers, ensuring that the neighborhood commercial culture operates from a foundation of equity and inclusion for the entire community.

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LGBTQ Cultural District

The Castro LGBTQ Cultural District has a new set of small business grants we have awarded to six local entrepreneurs. Grants of \$6,000 to each small business will be used to produce activation events that build foot traffic. The deadline for these grants was July 21, 2023. With these new grants, we have supported small businesses in the Castro with more than \$130,000 in funds over the last two years!



14. **Increase LGBTQIA+ workers' access to employment opportunities to strengthen their economic stability.** To advance such opportunities, support the expansion of regular job fairs to reach more LGBTQIA+ job-seekers and connect them with LGBTQIA+ friendly employers; include prioritized recruiting of BIPOC and transgender

and gender-nonconforming workers, many of whom encounter exclusion from the job market.

15. **Develop employment resources to increase LGBTQIA+ workers' employability and access to the workforce.** To promote improvements in this area, collaborate with the San Francisco LGBT Center and other LGBTQIA+ organizations to build their repository of employment resources such as job-search information, resume and cover letter writing support, and interview skills-building. Explore developing a job-search and employment-opportunities vocational counseling system focused on LGBTQIA+ workers.
16. **Recognize historically significant businesses to support their longevity and increase commercial vitality.** To broaden this recognition, develop a program to assess and identify local establishments eligible for Legacy Business status, ideally with the collaboration of the Castro Merchants; this program will help support LGBTQIA+ businesses and nonprofits with applications for the San Francisco Legacy Business Registry. The District Supervisor nominates businesses to the Legacy Business program.
17. **Develop streamlined pathways for business ownership to increase LGBTQIA+ people's economic development opportunities, particularly for people underrepresented in the Castro's commercial sector.** Partner with community groups to conduct regular sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) data collection to identify LGBTQIA+ run businesses. To increase LGBTQIA+ owned businesses in the Castro and enhance their viability, develop resources to support the creation and success of LGBTQIA+ owned businesses, especially those owned by lesbians/queer women, LGBTQIA+ BIPOC individuals, and transgender and gender-nonconforming people. Develop supportive systems, including study groups, coaching and mentorship, and training handbooks on key aspects of running a business. Collaborate with the Office of Economic and Workforce Development to increase grant funding supporting underserved LGBTQIA+ entrepreneurs seeking to start and build small businesses in the Castro.
18. **Enhance neighborhood accessibility to increase disabled community members' participation in the Castro as customers, clients, visitors, and employees.** To promote this participation, work with the Department of Building Inspection and/or the Mayor's Office of Disability to develop a strategy to support small businesses and nonprofits to increase their accessibility to disabled persons. Collaborate with the Office of Economic and Workforce Development's Office of Small Business to support local business owners gain access to their grants to support ADA upgrades. This endeavor may include exploring potential legislation about the Accessible Business Entrance program.
19. **Explore developing a transportation assistance project to increase Castro District workers' economic stability, possibly collaborating with the Castro Merchants Association.** The goal would be to enhance workforce and economic development in Castro by identifying resources to provide essential services, as well as transportation support for retail and nightlife workers. For example, support the broader promotion of current discount programs such as employer-based pre-tax MUNI pass programs and

regional programs for discounted transportation through BART. Explore how to take advantage of the discounted prices on bulk purchases of MUNI vouchers, which could then be provided to local workers.

- 20. Explore partnering with local organizations to develop a set of resources to aid Castro small businesses in learning how to better support their workers regarding employment benefits.** This will strengthen workers' economic stability and workplace safety. Identify funds that can be used to create a series of workshops, handbooks, and online tutorials, including information on how to offer comprehensive benefits plans at affordable rates; how to conduct diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility training; and how to carry out cultural competence education. Work with the Office of Workforce and Economic Development to make their materials focused on helping small businesses understand labor laws and benefits part of these resources and ensure the resources are inclusive of LGBTQIA+ employees' needs.

Land Use: Place-keeping & Placemaking

Since the massive community losses during the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s to mid-1990s and during the two technology booms in San Francisco in the late 1990s and 2010s, land-use changes in the Castro have typically benefitted a wealthier, White, and increasingly heterosexual population. Gentrification, growing economic polarization, and changing neighborhood demographics have made the neighborhood an enclave for the privileged to a greater extent. It has become a less accessible and safe place for community members who have low incomes, BIPOC individuals, disabled people, young people and elders, unhoused individuals, transgender and gender-nonconforming people, and women. Land-use policies favoring diverse communities are vital to sustaining the LGBTQIA+ population in the Castro while increasing accessibility and shifting the neighborhood culture toward equity. Policies favoring equitable community access rather than developers' extractive wealth accumulation are core to this approach. Supporting an LGBTQIA+ -centered culture, inclusive community spaces, and equitable neighborhood representation are vital land-use strategies that will ensure the Castro's ongoing role as a district that reflects the entirety of the LGBTQIA+ community.

- 21. Recognize the Castro as an LGBTQIA+ historic district to help sustain it as an LGBTQIA+ space.** To advance such recognition, explore collaborating with the San Francisco Historic Preservation Commission, SF Heritage, and the GLBT Historical Society to identify examples of municipal LGBTQIA+ historic districts and establish the Castro as a City-recognized LGBTQIA+ historic district. Explore the processes necessary to pursue similar designations by state, federal, and international bodies; support efforts to develop the resources to pursue these designations and submit the applications necessary to establish such recognition.
- 22. Make necessary municipal permits affordable and accessible to support and expand a diverse range of LGBTQIA+ community programming in the Castro.** To promote such activities, work with liaisons from the San Francisco Interdepartmental Staff Committee on Traffic and Transportation (ISCOTT) to explore ways to make permitting more accessible, streamline permitting processes, and reduce high permitting fees, thereby supporting community programming and LGBTQIA+ cultural needs in neighborhood public spaces.

23. **Collaborate with local housing organizations, nonprofit housing developers, and the Planning Department to develop strategies to increase affordability that may include cooperative housing, such as land trusts and member housing (e.g., housing earmarked for people engaged in community organizations).** Innovative and affordable neighborhood housing models will increase diversity in residential demographics, making Castro housing more accessible to underrepresented LGBTQIA+ people, especially BIPOC LGBTQIA+ people, transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals, queer women, youth, and elders. In collaboration with City agencies, implement these affordable housing models as outlined in the Housing Element 2022 and explore funding to create such programs in the Castro.
24. **Work with neighborhood groups, arts organizations, and event producers to create more community programming in public outdoor spaces** and to ensure that LGBTQIA+ youth and older adults are centered in these spaces. Outdoor, free public programs will expand inclusion for groups traditionally marginalized in neighborhood spaces.

[In Box: The district’s mission includes supporting housing access for LGBTQIA+ people, such as supporting more affordable housing. Often, housing defined as “affordable” by the City is still out of reach or challenging to afford for many residents. For example, rent at one housing complex designated as affordable in the neighborhood, 1844 Market, is \$4,735¹⁷ for a two-bedroom apartment or \$56,820 per year. To not be burdened by rent, the family living in this dwelling would need to make more than \$190,000. Median household income in SF is \$136,692¹⁸, which means for most SF residents this is not affordable.

Housing and Tenant Protections

Increasing access to neighborhood housing is critical to reducing LGBTQIA+ displacement—particularly for people with low incomes and for older adults, BIPOC individuals, disabled people, and transgender and gender-nonconforming community members. Gentrification, increasing economic polarization, and exorbitant housing costs have brought an increasingly privileged population to the Castro, with fewer LGBTQIA+ residents and less access to the broader LGBTQIA+ community. Ensuring the neighborhood’s resident population reflects the diversity of the LGBTQIA+ community requires increasing affordable and culturally competent housing options, reducing evictions, and developing outreach strategies and supportive resources to aid LGBTQIA+ people’s housing access.

25. **Protect buildings that contain a high proportion of LGBTQIA+ tenants and stabilize housing for existing LGBTQIA+ residents to help reduce displacement of LGBTQIA+ tenants and culture.** To enhance tenant protections, assess current housing stabilization programs’ inclusion of LGBTQIA+ tenants’ issues and explore the

¹⁷ https://www.zillow.com/apartments/san-francisco-ca/venn-apartments/5XnPbz/?utm_medium=cpc&utm_source=google&utm_campaign=zrw_nb_rent_rgrown_natdsa_x_visit_rentc_acq_country_USA_bldg_x_d_g_any_1_041524&utm_content=21189361339%7C163928433071%7Cdsa-2306571998795%7C696488385834%7C&gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAjw8rW2BhAgEiwAoRO5rNrHtWGm8OOvNdjEfaKyFtzclJMaLmlbtRZKXE_fGpgwipGrBLpZjhoCIU4QAvD_BwE

¹⁸ https://data.census.gov/profile/San_Francisco_city,_California?g=160XX00US0667000

expansion of strategies that best serve the needs of LGBTQIA+ tenants in the Castro. Increase outreach to LGBTQIA+ tenants about MOHCD's range of housing stabilization programs, such as the tenant right to counsel, emergency rental assistance, ongoing rental subsidies, tenant education, outreach, and mediation. Collaborate with local housing rights agencies and organizations to ensure landlords' compliance with housing and rental laws and to educate tenants about their rights; ensure programs center issues particularly facing LGBTQIA+ tenants, such as discrimination and economic vulnerability.

26. **Protect existing rental housing as affordable and expand affordable rental units to ensure more stability for local renters, including LGBTQIA+ residents of the Castro.** To meet this need, advocate for City investment to preserve housing affordability as outlined in the District 8 Housing Opportunities Report (June 2021), such as City conversion and regulation of individual units in existing buildings to below market rate. Collaborate with local tenants' rights and housing organizations to develop programs to incentivize property owners to secure long-term tenants for vacant units.
27. **Increase the number of subsidized units in the Castro and develop permanently affordable units to help enhance housing permanence for renters. Develop affordable units for people with lower incomes to purchase, promoting neighborhood diversity.** Developing permanently affordable housing options in the Castro will help reduce displacement and increase the accessibility of neighborhood housing for underrepresented LGBTQIA+ people, especially BIPOC LGBTQIA+ people, transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals, queer women, and elders. To pursue this goal, partner with nonprofit developers to increase the number of subsidized units and develop new affordable housing and supportive services in the Castro so the percentage of affordable units in the Castro aligns with the percentage in the greater City. Support the development of acquisitions under the City's Small Sites program and advocate for oversight and expansion of the Community Opportunity to Purchase Act (COPA) to better serve the Castro's renters. Explore resources to support policy change that would expand the number of affordable rental units, such as subsidizing the construction of accessory dwelling units as affordable rentals.
28. **Increase LGBTQIA+ young people's housing security to reduce their risks of homelessness and increase their stability.** To advance these ends, support and expand resources following models such as the former Host Homes program at the San Francisco LGBT Center, which paired marginally housed LGBTQIA+ youth with volunteer hosts for three months to one year while they pursued education and benefits from case-management support. Collaborate with local organizations working in youth development, with unhoused youth, and with youth aging out of the foster care system to expand housing options in the Castro that meet the needs of LGBTQIA+ young people, such as shelter and transitional housing services specifically catered towards LGBTQIA+ youth and transgender individuals, as well as social housing and other more permanent housing options for young people. In addition, develop systems to help connect marginally housed LGBTQIA+ youth with existing resources.
29. **Develop resources and services in the Castro for people experiencing homelessness to increase support and stability for unhoused individuals in the neighborhood.** To address this need, advocate for services and housing for LGBTQIA+

people experiencing homelessness. Collaborate with the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing to create a shelter that is LGBTQIA+ centered (ideally in the Castro) and invest in bridge housing in the Castro for housing-insecure people or people needing temporary housing. Work with local homelessness organizations and with the San Francisco LGBT Center, given their capacity, to establish a resource space in the Castro to help LGBTQIA+ people who are on the streets identify and gain access to safe spaces.

30. **Enhance housing resources and educational programming about housing options to increase LGBTQIA+ people's housing stability in the Castro.** To this end, collaborate with housing development agencies, the San Francisco LGBT Center, and housing rights organizations to create special outreach materials providing information and resources for LGBTQIA+ people who seek affordable housing, below-market-rate home-buying options, and supportive housing.

Conclusion

The Castro LGBTQ Cultural District, with its unparalleled history of LGBTQIA+ activism, culture, and community, remains a cornerstone of queer identity. The Cultural History, Housing, and Economic Sustainability Strategies (CHHESS) were developed through extensive community input and research, representing a truly grassroots process. Also, it is worth noting that the CHHESS was developed during the global coronavirus pandemic, showcasing the community's ability to create opportunities amidst crises. It is a testament to the community's dedication to preserving this legacy amidst ongoing challenges like gentrification, economic disparity, and cultural erasure.

The report's key themes—heritage preservation, combating displacement, fostering arts and culture, enhancing economic opportunities, and protecting tenants' rights—reflect a commitment to sustaining the Castro as an inclusive, vibrant, and culturally rich neighborhood. By implementing these strategies, the District, in collaboration with the City and community partners, aims to uphold Castro's unique role as a safe haven and cultural hub for LGBTQIA+ people. The report and the District's mission also highlight that the neighborhood has much work to do before it can be accurately described as a haven for all LGBTQIA+ people. For this to be true, community organizations, small businesses, community leaders, and residents need to learn about and practice racial, gender, and queer equity. This will center those of us who have historically been marginalized and ostracized from policy and community initiatives, specifically lesbians and queer women, transgender individuals, and LGBTQIA+ people of color. The work ahead is a collective endeavor to ensure Castro's resilience and evolution as a beacon of LGBTQIA+ history and culture.

The Castro LGBTQ Cultural District will work closely with City departments, community organizations, and residents to ensure these recommendations come to life as much as possible given resources and capacities. This collaborative effort will safeguard the Castro's heritage and promote a thriving, equitable future for all who call this historic neighborhood home.

This CHHESS report serves as a living document and roadmap, guiding efforts to sustain Castro's cultural, economic, and social vitality over the coming years. The actions taken today will determine the future of this iconic neighborhood, an essential part of San Francisco's identity as a beacon of diversity and inclusion.

Next Steps- Stakeholder Coordination and Collaboration

1. Cultural District leaders will engage with City departments to establish benchmarks and regularly assess progress toward achieving the CHHESS strategies. Quarterly check-ins will keep the community aligned and focused on shared goals.
2. MOHCD will report on CHHESS progress per Cultural District legislation.
3. The District will maintain open communication with stakeholders, partners, and community members to ensure transparency and accountability.

The CHHESS strategies present a vital opportunity for the Castro community and City agencies to unite to align goals, leverage resources, and amplify impact. Close collaboration with City departments can bridge gaps and streamline efforts to better support LGBTQIA+ residents,

businesses, and cultural initiatives. Together, we can build a future where the Castro remains a safe, vibrant, and inclusive community where all can thrive.

Contact Information:

For inquiries regarding any of the information or strategies in this report, please reach out to:

Castro LGBTQ Cultural District

<http://www.castrogbtq.org>

contact@castrogbtq.org

Facebook and Instagram: CastroLGBTQ

Appendices

Appendix A: Historical Legacy Statement Methodology and References

The History and Cultural Legacy Section provides a historical outline of the emergence of the Castro as an LGBTQIA+ neighborhood and the shifts and changes to the district over time that contributed to gentrification and displacement and led to its development as a cultural district. This section was written with the aid of secondary sources, such as San Francisco city reports and existing academic work on the Castro neighborhood and San Francisco LGBTQIA+ history. Primary sources such as news and magazine articles about the Castro District and organizations' and community groups' websites and documents also offered details about specific events and influential institutions. Databases such as the Ancestry.com Library Edition and Bay Area Reporter Searchable Obituaries Database at the GLBT Historical Society were consulted to establish identities and years of birth and death of several individuals mentioned in the text. Qualitative interviews and oral histories conducted by history and heritage section authors Dr. Jen Reck and Gerard Koskovich provided insights about individuals' personal experiences in the Castro neighborhood over time, and a number of additional individuals and organizational representatives responded to queries regarding factual details. Dr. Reck conducted six in-depth qualitative interviews. Koskovich conducted three oral history interviews, three brief qualitative interviews, and factual queries with five individuals. Koskovich also consulted eight oral histories from the Oral History Collection of the GLBT Historical Society.

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Newspapers & Magazines

The Advocate (Los Angeles): Gerard Koskovich reviewed all references to the Castro District for 1968–1990.

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Citizens News (San Francisco: Strait and Associates): Gerard Koskovich reviewed all references for the Castro District for 1964–1965.

L.C.E. News/The News (San Francisco: League for Civil Education): Gerard Koskovich reviewed all references to the Castro District for 1961–1964.

San Francisco Chronicle: Gerard Koskovich reviewed all references for the keyword phrases "Eureka Valley," "Castro District" and "The Castro" in the full digitized run from 1865 to 1980.

Vector (San Francisco: Society for Individual Rights): Gerard Koskovich reviewed all references to the Castro District for 1964–1970.

Qualitative Interviews

Conducted by Gerard Koskovich in person, via telephone, or via email or text message: "N. R." (anonymous Eureka Valley native and current resident), Maurice "Mike" Gerry, Sharon Johnson, Cleve Jones, Lani Ka'ahumanu, Nick Krieger, Ingrid Nelson, David Polizzi, Martin Rawlings-Fein, Rita Rockett, Karla Rossi, Mike Shriver, Gwendolyn Ann Smith, Jessica Tanzer, Laura Thomas, Ron Williams, Isaako Si'uelo, Jim Stapleton.

Conducted by Jen Reck via telephone, via Zoom, or in person: Christa Hillhouse, Lee Yi, Jon Lopez, Brett Thomas, Mahsa Hakimi, Lila Thirkield.

Oral History Collection of the GLBT Historical Society (San Francisco):

Interview Subject: Martha Asten; interviewer: Jason Allen (March 12, 1995)

Interview Subject: Fernando Feliciano; interviewer: Kurt Schroeder (May 31, 1995)

Appendix B: CHHESS Report Quantitative Analysis Methodology

Unless otherwise indicated, the MOHCD Data Team conducted all CHHESS Report quantitative analyses described herein. We drew from a variety of data sources, and each analysis cites the source used, but in general, we used data from the United States Census Bureau's (Census) American Community Survey (ACS), San Francisco City and County's DataSF Open Data Portal, and MOHCD internal databases. We performed all geospatial analyses with ArcGIS, utilizing the cultural district shapefiles publicly available on datasf.org/opendata. For all charts and maps, we used shapefiles of the Cultural District's boundaries to aggregate the data. We geocoded addresses with the City and County's Enterprise Address System or another geocoding service and then used the ArcGIS pairwise intersect function to identify the coordinates that overlap with the Cultural District (i.e., which addresses were inside the cultural district). For data reported at the census tract level, we used the ArcGIS tabulate intersection tool to calculate the percentage of overlap between each census tract and the cultural district, yielding a proportion for each tract that represents how much of it lies within the district. Then we used the R Project for Statistical Computing (R) to prorate totals for census tract data by the percentage overlap and finally aggregate prorated totals from all census tracts that touched the district. For example, if a tract had a population of 1,000 renters and overlapped the cultural district by 50%, we would add 500 renters to the total cultural district renter population.

American Community Survey

Our analyses utilized ACS data to estimate the Cultural District population, including race/ethnicity, age, tenure (renter or owner), employment status, occupation, income, and housing cost burden. The ACS uses a sample to estimate whole populations, so findings include a meaningful margin of error. Census weights survey responses to account for demographic differences in response rates because some groups are more likely to participate (e.g., older adults, higher income households), but they may not receive enough data from low-population demographic groups (e.g., Native Americans, Pacific Islanders) to provide reliable estimates. To minimize the effects of sampling error, we used ACS five-year averages to base our findings off a larger dataset. Despite using five-year averages, we had limited data for some analyses, particularly median income level for low-population racial groups. To ensure confidentiality of participant responses, the Census does not report data for sample sizes less than three. This means that if, for example, fewer than three African American households in a census tract reported their income during the five survey years, Census would not publish an estimate for African American income in that tract.

We calculated our ACS population total estimates by prorating a census tract value by its overlap with the cultural district and then summing each of those prorated totals for all tracts that touched the district. The exception to this method was for median household income. For median household income, we calculated the percentage of households in the District that lived in the prorated tract, then multiplied the median income of that tract by the percentage, and finally added up the adjusted median income of all tracts. For example, if we estimated that there were 5,000 households in the district and 1,000 in a specific prorated tract, then we would multiply the median household income of that tract by 0.2 and add it to the other tracts, which would be weighted in the same fashion. We conducted this analysis for all households together and then again for each racial group reported in our findings.

Housing Cost Burden findings were drawn from the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) dataset. The CHAS dataset utilizes publicly unavailable raw ACS data to create tables of housing affordability information that can be made publicly available. Similar to ACS, CHAS data are reported as five-year averages, although they are generally at least a year older than the most recent ACS.

Residential Pipeline and Portfolio Properties

Our analyses of residential pipeline and portfolio developments used primary data owned by MOHCD. This dataset includes all residential properties with MOHCD units and/or MOHCD financing: 100% affordable new construction, MOHCD preservation acquisitions, developments with Section 415 inclusionary units, San Francisco Redevelopment Agency units that were transferred to MOHCD upon their dissolution, Office of Community Investment and Infrastructure developments, and units from various legacy housing programs, such as the 1979-1988 Condo Conversion program. Portfolio properties have completed construction and pipeline properties are still being developed. A project that was completed but is now undergoing rehabilitation work can be classified as both pipeline and portfolio. We geocoded and geospatially plotted all development addresses against the Cultural District boundary and mapped the ones that intersected. For pipeline, we geocoded the preliminary address assigned upon Planning approval and for portfolio, we used the one that was marketed to potential residents.

Eviction Notices

Eviction maps show eviction notices filed with the San Francisco Rent Board in the five years prior to the CHHESS report. These are available at datasf.org/opendata. The notices are filed as stipulated in San Francisco Administrative Code 37.9(c). Types of eviction notices varied from nuisance to non-payment to Ellis Act withdrawal, among others. A notice of eviction does not indicate that a tenant was eventually evicted, and there is no way of knowing the resolution of any of these cases. We ran the eviction notice locations through the kernel density tool in ArcGIS to visualize concentration in a particular area.

Community Development Organization Grant Recipients

MOHCD funds hundreds of grants annually under our Community Development program areas. Community development grants can be for service, capacity building and training, operations, and small capital projects. Most services are housing related, but we also fund legal services, community-based services, and other areas. We geocoded and geospatially plotted project addresses, the site of service delivery, against the Cultural District boundary.

Single Room Occupancy Properties

Data utilized for single room occupancy (SRO) properties is derived from the latest Housing Needs and Trends Report of the San Francisco Department of Building Inspection (DBI). An SRO site is a residential property, sometimes referred to as a hotel, that includes single room dwelling units, in which tenants do not have their own kitchen or bathroom, instead using a shared one. Using the data from DBI, we geocoded and geospatially plotted the SRO property locations against the cultural district boundary.

Appendix C: [Economic Recovery Task Force](#) and [Dream Keeper Initiative](#) Alignment

The following pages demonstrate how two important City initiatives complement and align with the Cultural Districts program.

Economic Recovery Task Force Alignment

The Economic Recovery Task Force has developed recommendations aligned with the Cultural Districts program Areas and the Castro LGBTQ+ Cultural District community-generated strategies. The Task Force, created by Mayor London N. Breed and Board of Supervisors President Norman Yee, and co-chaired by city officials and community leaders, has guided San Francisco's economic recovery from COVID-19. The focus has been on sustaining local businesses, employment, and vulnerable populations. The Task Force met regularly from April to October 2020 and developed 41 policy recommendations informed by diverse member input, city staff research, and community feedback. The Task Force proposed initiatives like the Reopening Plan and Shared Spaces Program to support the City's pandemic response and economic recovery. The recommendations are organized into eight themes: local economic stimulus, job connections, safe reopening, regulatory flexibility, economic justice, housing investment, basic needs, and strengthening neighborhoods. The Task Force emphasized an equitable recovery, addressing the needs of heavily impacted sectors like hospitality, entertainment, and food services, and prioritizing support for low-income residents and communities of color.

Cultural District Program Areas	Economic Recovery Task Force Recommendations	Castro LGBTQ+ Cultural District Recommendations and Strategies
<p>1. Historic/Cultural Preservation - Preserve and develop cultural and historic buildings, businesses, organizations, traditions, arts, events, and District aesthetics</p> <p>3. Arts & Culture-Attract and support artists and cultural enterprises</p>	<p>8. Imagine and Build Stronger Neighborhoods: activate and draw upon San Francisco's unique neighborhood and cultural assets</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collaborate with the City to promote the creation of LGBTQIA+ heritage educational programming and support the GLBT Historical Society in updating and expanding the Castro listings in its LGBTQIA+ sites database. 2. Team with the Friends of Harvey Milk Plaza to ensure that the artwork and explanatory signage featured in the plaza's redesign respectfully portray historically marginalized members of the LGBTQIA+ community 3. Explore establishing a Citywide LGBTQIA+ Arts, Culture, and Heritage Commission as an official municipal advisory body to advise the City and others on preserving, interpreting, and appropriately using historic sites. 4. Ensure the San Francisco Citywide Cultural Resources Survey includes a comprehensive historic survey of the Castro, highlighting the diverse history of its LGBTQIA+ communities. 5. Confirm the Planning Department prioritizes further municipal landmarking and state and national nomination of Castro LGBTQIA+ historical sites and histories of neighborhood debates over diversity, belonging displacement, and gentrification 6. Develop resources such as City and foundation funding to support events and programs organized by and produced for LGBTQIA+ people in the Castro.

		<p>7. Partner with local entities to showcase LGBTQIA+ artists in the Castro, prioritizing marginalized communities.</p> <p>8. Identify funding to develop a Cultural District program of accessible mini-grants to produce cultural events, the creation of public art, and the promotion of other LGBTQIA+ cultural expressions in the Castro.</p> <p>9. Create a Cultural District program to support LGBTQIA+ arts and culture makers in securing City resources for public art and events in the Castro.</p> <p>10. Advocate for a Citywide LGBTQIA+ Arts, Culture, and Heritage Commission with designated seats for diverse Castro LGBTQ representation.</p>
<p>2. Housing & Tenant Protections- Protect tenants from displacement and promote affordable housing and homeownership</p>	<p>6. Invest in Housing: incentivize the construction of affordable housing, an immediate and long-term need</p>	<p>25. Collaborate with housing rights agencies to safeguard buildings with LGBTQIA+ tenants, ensure landlord compliance, and educate tenants on their rights.</p> <p>26. Advocate for City investment in affordable housing and partner with local organizations to incentivize long-term leases for vacant units.</p> <p>27. Work with nonprofit developers to expand subsidized and affordable housing in the Castro, aligning with Citywide goals.</p> <p>28. Expand programs to improve housing security for LGBTQIA+ youth, reducing homelessness through initiatives like volunteer host programs.</p> <p>29. Advocate for LGBTQIA+-focused housing services, including shelters and bridge housing in the Castro.</p> <p>30. Partner with housing organizations to create outreach materials for LGBTQIA+ individuals seeking affordable housing, home-buying options, and supportive services.</p>
<p>4. Economic and Workforce Development- Promote jobs, tourism, and economic opportunities that stabilize the district's economy.</p>	<p>1. Local Economic Stimulus: explore policies & investments that encourage economic development and activity</p> <p>2. Job Connections: facilitate and improve connections to jobs and explore programs that hire local workers</p> <p>5. Pursue Economic Justice: narrow the wealth gap and bridge the digital divide for residents with low incomes and communities of color</p>	<p>14. Expand job fairs connecting LGBTQIA+ job-seekers with culturally humble employers, prioritizing BIPOC and transgender workers.</p> <p>15. Collaborate with LGBTQIA+ organizations to enhance job search tools, resume support, and interview skills resources.</p> <p>16. Work with Castro Merchants to identify and recognize historically significant businesses for Legacy Business status.</p> <p>17. Partner with community groups and city offices to increase grant funding and resources for underserved LGBTQIA+ entrepreneurs in the Castro.</p> <p>18. Collaborate with the Planning Department and city offices to help small businesses and nonprofits in the Castro improve ADA accessibility.</p> <p>19. Explore transportation support programs for Castro workers, enhancing economic stability in collaboration with local associations and SFMTA</p> <p>20. Develop workshops and materials on labor laws and cultural competence to help Castro small businesses better support their employees.</p>
<p>5. Land Use and Housing- Create city regulations and programs that support businesses and industries that advance the Cultural District</p>	<p>4. Preserve Operations and Lesson Regulatory Burdens: improve, repurpose, and increase access to public outdoor space; create more flexible</p>	<p>21. Collaborate with preservation groups to explore establishing the Castro as a City-recognized LGBTQIA+ historic district.</p> <p>22. Work with transit agencies and the Planning Department to make permitting more accessible and</p>

	use for ground floor retail spaces; develop strategies with commercial landlord and tenants to avoid foreclosure and evictions	affordable, supporting LGBTQIA+ cultural programming. 23. Partner with housing organizations and the Planning Department to develop cooperative housing programs for underrepresented LGBTQIA+ communities in the Castro. 24. Collaborate with neighborhood and arts groups to expand public outdoor programming, focusing on LGBTQIA+ youth and elders
6. Cultural Competency- Promote culturally competent and appropriate City services, policies, and narratives	7. Meet the Basic Needs of the Vulnerable: ensure San Franciscans have access to food, shelter, mental health, and other services	11. Identify resources and partners to develop programs that encourage businesses and nonprofits in the Castro to adopt diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) training and to establish DEIA policies, practices, and codes of conduct for staff, customers, and clients. 12. Improve data on LGBTQIA+ residents in the Castro by evaluating City SOGI data collection and collaborating with experts. 13. Collaborate with the City and community groups to reduce police reliance in the Castro by developing and funding community-based public safety and officer-training programs focused on nonviolence, de-escalation, and inclusivity

Dream Keeper Initiative Alignment

In 2020, Mayor London Breed launched the Dream Keeper Initiative (DKI), a citywide effort that reinvested \$120 million over Fiscal Years 2020-21 and 2021-22 from law enforcement into San Francisco’s Black and African American community. This Initiative is part of Mayor London N. Breed’s roadmap for reforming public safety and addressing structural inequities in San Francisco. The Dream Keeper Initiative recognizes the diversity of San Francisco’s Black and African American community and includes investments in a wide range of programs that will support youth, families, seniors, and members of the Black LGBTQIA+ community. These investments are designed to improve outcomes for San Francisco’s Black and African American youth and their families and ensure the needs of all family members are addressed cohesively and comprehensively. The Dream Keeper Initiative aims to break the cycle of poverty and involvement in the criminal justice system for the families in City programs and ensure that new investments are accessible to San Francisco’s families who are most in need. MOHCD is leading efforts to: increase African American homeownership, build the capacity of African American housing developers, and support Cultural District Planning through the lens of intersectionality with and within the African American community targeting engagement to African American residents.

MOHCD is committed to racial equity. Further, as MOHCD facilitates the alignment of the Dream Keeper Initiative and the Cultural Districts program, SF cultural communities will have the tools to look inward and consider how their strategies impact and should include Black residents. Moreover, leaders in the Cultural Districts program, among both the City and Community, recognize that the upliftment of Black residents, one of SF’s most disenfranchised communities, is integral to the full success of the program. As intersectionality and equity are key frameworks of DKI and the Cultural Districts program, it is imperative to consider the alignment of these initiatives in the CHHESS process. DKI investments and Cultural Districts

program priorities—anti-displacement, preservation of unique cultural identities or experiences, and collaborative partnership with the City—are in direct alignment (see figure below).

Cultural Districts Priority Areas	Dream Keeper Initiative Framework
<p>1. Historic & Cultural Preservation 3. Arts & Culture 5. Land Use & Housing</p>	<p>Culturally affirming spaces that celebrate Black people: Physical spaces that highlight the culture and beauty of San Francisco's diverse Black communities. These gathering spaces celebrate joy and being in community together and allow visitors to engage in the expansive experiences of the Black diaspora.</p>
<p>2. Tenant Protections 4. Economic & Workforce Development</p>	<p>Growing financial health and economic well-being; City Employment Pipelines; Workforce Training & Development; Guaranteed Income; Business & Entrepreneurship Support; Youth development of San Francisco's diverse Black communities' foundational needs are met, and they have an opportunity for equitable economic growth through homeownership, entrepreneurship, employment pathways in high growth industries, guaranteed income and other income generating opportunities.</p>
<p>5. Cultural Competency</p>	<p>Transformative and intergenerational social-emotional wellness - i.e., physical, mental, and behavioral health): San Francisco's diverse Black communities have access to mental and physical healing and wellness that is created and provided by people with shared lived experiences and who practice cultural humility. Families receive support where they are loved and cared for.</p> <p>Black-led and Black-centered narrative shift- Using performance, arts, storytelling, and media, Black-led and Black-centered narratives showcase the expansive experiences, stories, and talents of San Francisco's diverse Black communities. These narratives are created to highlight the rich beauty and brilliance within the Black community.</p> <p>Building organizational knowledge and infrastructure- (i.e., capacity building): Black-led and - serving organizations are adept in centering San Francisco's diverse Black communities. These organizations are financially solvent and growing. Their policies and practices are reflective of wanting to create change so that San Francisco's diverse Black communities may prosper</p>

Appendix D: The Market – Octavia Plan

To support the Market – Octavia Area Plan implementation, two impact fees were developed. Specifically, the Market & Octavia Community Infrastructure Fee which is triggered by new dwelling units or additions/changes of use of 800 square feet or more; and the Market & Octavia and Upper Market Street Affordable Housing Fee which is triggered by the creation of ten or more dwelling units.

To support the implementation of the Area Plan and the plan's community improvements, the Market & Octavia Community Advisory Committee (MO-CAC) was formed. As codified under the Planning Code, the MO-CAC was established to serve as an advisory body to the Planning Director, Interagency Plan Implementation Committee, Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors. Specific functions include recommending priorities for community improvement projects, reporting back to the Planning Department on enforcement of specific projects' compliance with the Area Plan, and collaborating with the Planning Department on updating the community improvements program at least every five years. Two-thirds of the MO-CAC members are appointed by the Board of Supervisors, and one-third by the Mayor, with the requirement of diverse geographic and demographic representation within the area covered by the Area Plan.

Appendix E: Article 10 Landmarks within Cultural District boundaries

This is a list of other Article 10 Landmarks that fall fully or partially within the boundaries of the cultural district that are *not* designated for their LGBTQIA+ associations:

- The Alfred E.(Nobby) Clarke Mansion (250 Douglass Street, Landmark #80)
- Path Of Gold Light Standards (1-2490 Market Street, Landmark #200)
- Carmel Fallon Building (1800-1806 Market Street, Landmark #223)
- Richardson Hall (55 Laguna Street, Landmark #256)
- Swedish American Hall (2174-2178 Market Street, Landmark #267)
- New Era Hall (2117-2123 Market Street, Landmark #277)

Appendix F: Criteria and Process of Consideration for California Eligible Historic Districts

Several California Eligible Historic Districts lie fully or partially within the boundaries of the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District. California Eligible Historic Districts are identified as cohesive groups of buildings which are significant under at least one of four criteria: 1) events; 2) people; 3) architecture; and 4) information potential. In addition to significance, potential districts must be found to retain sufficient integrity from their periods of significance to be eligible as historic districts. Contributing buildings within CEQA eligible historic districts are offered protection from demolition or alterations to avoid a substantial adverse impact on the district. Additionally, within these districts, new development which requires a discretionary approval action must be determined to be compatible with the surrounding architectural and aesthetic character.

For the Eligible Historic Districts that fall within the cultural district boundaries and have been identified and designated for their LGBTQIA+ associations, this is the process they have undergone thus far in the designation process:

Castro Street Historic District – For this CEQA eligible district, the Historic Resource Evaluation (HRE) which initially identified this district was completed for the required environmental review of a project at 470 Castro Street. The HRE identified a few dozen properties within the eligible district's boundaries. However, the HRE did not specifically identify contributing and non-contributing buildings, though that could be determined through future survey efforts.

From: [Emily Murase](#)
To: [Melgar, Myrna \(BOS\)](#); [Fielder, Jackie \(BOS\)](#); [Mahmood, Bilal \(BOS\)](#)
Cc: [MelgarStaff \(BOS\)](#); [FielderStaff](#); [Carroll, John \(BOS\)](#); [boardofsupervisors@sfgov.org](#); [Lee, Grace \(MYR\)](#); [Pardue-Bishop, Imani \(MYR\)](#); [daniel.adams@sfgov.org](#); [Cheu, Brian \(MYR\)](#); [Tina Aquirre](#); [Mandelman, Rafael \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: [Japantown Cultural District] Letter of Support for the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District CHHESS
Date: Wednesday, January 22, 2025 8:56:26 PM
Attachments: [25.1.22 JTF JCD Letter of Support for Castro LGBTQ Cultural District CHHESS.pdf](#)

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Colleagues & Friends,

Please see my attached letter in support of the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District CHHESS which the Land Use and Transportation Committee is scheduled to review on Monday, January 27. Thank you for your valuable consideration.

Emily

Emily M. Murase, PhD
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Executive Director
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JAPANTOWN TASK FORCE



JAPANTOWN CULTURAL DISTRICT

San Francisco Board of Supervisors Land Use and Transportation Committee
San Francisco City Hall
VIA E-MAIL

January 22, 2025

RE: Support for the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District

To the Board of Supervisors Land Use and Transportation Committee:

On behalf of the Japantown Cultural District, a project of the Japantown Task Force, I would like to express strong support for the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District CHHESS (Cultural History, Economic Sustainability Strategy) Report presented by the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development for your review on Monday, January 27.

The CHHESS represents many hours of dedicated collaborative work between the Castro LGBTQ community, Supervisor Rafael Mandelman, and MOHCD Cultural District staff. In 2023, under the very capable leadership of Castro LGBTQ Cultural District Director Tina Aguirre, the Cultural District sponsored a new "Circle of Change" mural honoring lesbian and transgender Black women activists. Through frequent Facebook posts, Cultural District staff publicizes important events such as the Bay Area American Indian Two-Spirits 25-year anniversary celebration, the Castro Menorah Lighting Ceremony, and Board of Supervisors hearings on youth housing. The Cultural District has become the connector of all things LGBTQ locally and beyond.

The timing could not be more crucial as the LGBTQ community is facing attacks from the new Administration and its supporters. There is no doubt in my mind that the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District, by celebrating diversity, inclusion, and pride, will save lives. Finally, the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District CHHESS is an important blueprint for a resilient future and I urge your support.

Sincerely,

Emily M. Murase, PhD
Executive Director