

BOARD of SUPERVISORS



City Hall  
Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 244  
San Francisco 94102-4689  
Tel. No. 554-5184  
Fax No. 554-5163  
TDD/TTY No. 554-5227

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Regina Dick-Endrizzi, Director  
**Small Business Commission, City Hall, Room 448**

FROM: Erica Major, Assistant Clerk  
Land Use and Transportation Committee

DATE: April 11, 2018

SUBJECT: REFERRAL FROM BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
Land Use and Transportation Committee

The Board of Supervisors' Land Use and Transportation Committee has received the following legislation, which is being referred to the Small Business Commission for comment and recommendation. The Commission may provide any response it deems appropriate within 12 days from the date of this referral.

**File No. 171019-2**

**Resolution establishing the Leather and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ) Cultural District with the intent of commemorating historical sites, preserving existing spaces, and planning for thriving and vibrant communities that are Leather and LGBTQ affirming.**

Please return this cover sheet with the Commission's response to me at the Board of Supervisors, City Hall, Room 244, 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, San Francisco, CA 94102.

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**RESPONSE FROM SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION - Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ **No Comment**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Recommendation Attached**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Chairperson, Small Business Commission**

1 [Establishment of the LGBTQ and Leather Cultural District]

2  
3 **Resolution establishing the Leather and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer**  
4 **(LGBTQ) Cultural District with the intent of commemorating historical sites, preserving**  
5 **existing spaces, and planning for thriving and vibrant communities that are Leather**  
6 **and LGBTQ affirming.**  
7

8 WHEREAS, San Francisco's South of Market has been a local and world capital for  
9 Leather culture since the 1960s, as well as one of the city's most significant and distinctive  
10 Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ) neighborhoods since the 1950s, with a  
11 unique concentration of businesses, institutions, organizations, events, individuals and artists  
12 that has been an integral part of the City's cultural richness, economic prosperity, and  
13 historical significance; and

14 WHEREAS, The offices of major mid-20th century homophile political organizations  
15 such as the Mattachine Society, The Society for Individual Rights, and the Daughters of Bilitis,  
16 and later organizations such as the National Leather Association were in the South of Market;  
17 and

18 WHEREAS, South of Market had long been the west coast center for printing and  
19 publishing, and most of San Francisco's gay and leather printers, typesetters, lithographers,  
20 and publications were concentrated South of Market, including *Drummer* magazine, the most  
21 important national and international leather publication from 1975 to 1998; and

22 WHEREAS, After a savage police repression in the early 1960s drove gay businesses  
23 from the Embarcadero, many began to flow into South of Market, where suburbanization,  
24 deindustrialization, and urban renewal had resulted in many vacant buildings, which quickly  
25 became occupied by gay bars, restaurants, and bathhouses; and

1           WHEREAS, South of Market quickly became one of San Francisco’s major LGBT  
2 areas, in which most of the city’s gay bathhouses were located, as were innumerable bars  
3 catering to diverse populations, such as lesbian bars the Hula Shack and the Baybrick Inn,  
4 famous dance bars such as the Stud and the End-Up, featured in *Tales of the City*, and most  
5 recently, the drag-focused Oasis; and

6           WHEREAS, The first gay leather bar in the South of Market, the Tool Box, became  
7 world famous when a photo of its interior, with a massive mural painted by local artist Chuck  
8 Arnett, was featured in a 1964 *Life* magazine article on “Homosexuality in America;” and

9           WHEREAS, South of Market became most identified with the emerging Leather  
10 community in San Francisco, when leather bars such as Fe-Be’s, the Ramrod, and the In  
11 Between (now the site of the Powerhouse) opened along Folsom Street, starting the formation  
12 of a distinctive leather neighborhood; and

13           WHEREAS, By the late 1960s Folsom Street had already acquired the nickname of  
14 “The Miracle Mile” in maps and travel guides of San Francisco, codifying a leather character  
15 that expanded dramatically throughout the 1970s, such that by 1980 there were at least thirty  
16 South of Market bars, baths, shops, and restaurants serving the leather population, and the  
17 area had the largest and most dense concentration of leather institutions anywhere in the  
18 world; and

19           WHEREAS, Much of leather social life was produced by the leather motorcycle clubs  
20 and leather social organizations, which used the physical spaces, buildings, and streets South  
21 of Market for their meetings, gatherings, and events, and which have engaged in long  
22 traditions of raising funds for charitable causes; and

23           WHEREAS, Leather places and groups sparked an explosion of art and iconography,  
24 much of it generated by dozens of artists and photographers and sculptors whose work  
25 adorned the bars and baths and club insignia, and who were featured in galleries such as

1 Fey-Way, 544 Natoma, 80 Langton, and later, Mark I Chester's studio, as well as in the many  
2 art shows that were regularly displayed on the walls of bars such as the Ambush and the  
3 Eagle; and

4 WHEREAS, South of Market institutions and personnel were centrally involved in the  
5 construction of political organizations such as the Tavern Guild, which helped mitigate the  
6 routine police harassment of LGBTQ individuals and businesses, and give San Francisco its  
7 current queer friendly politics and reputation; and

8 WHEREAS, During the AIDS epidemic, using the models of mutual aid practiced by the  
9 motor cycle clubs, leathermen became leaders in combating the epidemic, established  
10 institutions such as the AIDS Emergency Fund, and raised hundreds of thousands of dollars  
11 to provide direct assistance for people with AIDS and HIV; and

12 WHEREAS, Sex educators and AIDS activists from the leather community developed  
13 and effectively disseminated some of the earliest and most comprehensive safer sex  
14 guidelines and practices; and

15 WHEREAS, Despite the general consensus among public health professionals that the  
16 gay bathhouses were opportunities to promote safer sex practices, the city was swayed by a  
17 campaign that erroneously blamed the bathhouses for the AIDS epidemic, and adopted  
18 regulations that effectively closed the existing bathhouses and sex clubs in San Francisco,  
19 badly damaging the gay and leather economies located in South of Market and drastically  
20 reducing the gay and leather presence in the neighborhood; and

21 WHEREAS, Since the 1960s, South of Market has experienced relentless pressure  
22 from the urban renewal and redevelopment projects in and around the Moscone Center and  
23 Yerba Buena Complex, which have displaced thousands of residents and small businesses in  
24 favor of capital intensive civic construction and private developments; and

1           WHEREAS, The Leather and LGBTQ presence South of Market continues to be  
2 imperiled by the displacement caused by rising rents and land costs resulting from the  
3 ongoing economic and physical reconstruction of much of South of Market, particularly the  
4 current building boom of high end housing and retail and the escalating competition for  
5 commercial space; and

6           WHEREAS, Although the first Folsom Street Fair was founded in 1984 as a protest  
7 against the impact of such redevelopment on the South of Market, the Folsom Street Fair  
8 evolved into an annual event that is the largest celebration of leather sexuality in the world,  
9 drawing hundreds of thousands of visitors to what has become a major international festival,  
10 while the smaller and more local Up Your Alley Fair, begun as an AIDS fundraiser in 1985, is  
11 also a major tourist destination, and both of these street fairs are vivid and cherished  
12 expressions of the leather cultural character of the neighborhood; and

13           WHEREAS, The Western SOMA Citizens Planning Taskforce, established by the  
14 Board of Supervisors in 2004, worked for almost a decade, consulting with multiple  
15 stakeholders in the area in a collaborative planning process, to formulate a plan for  
16 sustainable development that would enhance the existing neighborhood rather than destroy it,  
17 and whose Western SOMA Community Plan was adopted by the Board of Supervisors in  
18 2013, also included proposals for a Filipino social heritage district (*Recognizing, Protecting  
19 and Memorializing South of Market Filipino Social Heritage Neighborhood Resources*) and an  
20 LGBTQ social heritage district (*Recognizing, Protecting and Memorializing South of Market  
21 LGBTQ Social Heritage Neighborhood Resources*); and

22           WHEREAS, The importance of Leather and LGBTQ South of Market has been  
23 recognized in the National Park Service LGBTQ Theme Study (*LGBTQ America: A Theme  
24 Study of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer History*), as well as in the *Citywide*  
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1 *Historic Context Statement for LGBTQ History, and the South of Market Historic Context*  
2 *Statement of the San Francisco Planning Department; and*

3 WHEREAS, The San Francisco Leather History Walk on Ringold Alley, and the future  
4 Eagle Plaza, are physical manifestations of the rich leather heritage of South of Market; and

5 WHEREAS, The boundaries of the District are defined as the south side of Howard  
6 between 7th Street and Highway 101, to the west side of 7th between Howard Street and  
7 Harrison St, to Interstate 80 between 7th Street and Division Street, to Highway 101 between  
8 Interstate 80 and Howard Street; as well as the south side of Harrison Street from 7th Street  
9 to 5th Street, the west side of 5th Street from Harrison Street to Bryant Street and the north  
10 side of Bryant Street from 5th Street to 6th Street and the west side of 6th Street from Bryant  
11 Street to Harrison Street, and these boundaries contain the greatest concentration of Leather  
12 landmarks, businesses, institutions, organizations, and festivals; and

13 WHEREAS, Despite decades of relentless economic pressure, many challenges, and  
14 substantial displacement, there are still vibrant Leather and LGBTQ communities and  
15 institutions South of Market, and South of Market remains the cultural heart of the region's  
16 Leather culture as well as a world-renowned Leather capital; now, therefore, be it

17 RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco  
18 ("the Board") to secure the future of Leather and LGBTQ in South of Market, to stabilize its  
19 institutional structures, and to enhance its economic vitality and physical environment,  
20 therefore establishes the Leather and LGBTQ Cultural District (District); and, be it

21 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board endorses the goals:

- 22 1) To preserve, advance, and promote San Francisco's Leather & LGBTQ Cultural  
23 District as a local, national, and international resource, and as a culturally and commercially  
24 enriched neighborhood and district;

1           2) To preserve and strengthen the Leather and LGBTQ communities of San Francisco  
2 by bringing together our diverse histories and cultures at and within the District for all persons  
3 to enjoy and share;

4           3) To create an atmosphere of safety, creativity, vitality, and prosperity for present and  
5 future Leather & LGBTQ neighborhood participants, organizations, institutions, commercial  
6 activity, entertainment, nightlife, events, and street fairs within the District;

7           4) To augment and make sustainable Leather & LGBTQ: housing, commerce,  
8 community development, cultural resources, physical spaces, and healthcare (in particular,  
9 the healthcare of LGBTQ seniors and those living with HIV); and, be it

10           FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board establishes the District to preserve and further  
11 develop the South of Market’s past, present, and future Leather and LGBTQ communities and  
12 resources, and to recognize the historical and present contributions of the Leather and  
13 LGBTQ communities; and, be it

14           FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board establishes the District to preserve and further  
15 develop Leather and LGBTQ nightlife and commercial corridors within the boundaries of the  
16 district; and, be it

17           FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board establishes the District to preserve and  
18 develop housing, services, and health care for Leather and LGBTQ Seniors and people living  
19 with HIV; and, be it

20           FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board establishes the District to maintain and further  
21 develop public installations commemorating the history of the District, such as the San  
22 Francisco Leather History Walk on Ringold Alley and the Eagle Plaza, and to support the  
23 creation and maintenance of multi-use community center spaces; and, be it

24           FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors urges the Mayor’s Office of  
25 Housing Community Development (“MOHCD”), with advisement from the Historic

1 Preservation Commission, the Office of Economic Workforce Development, and other relevant  
2 city departments, to implement a community process that leads to the development of a  
3 Leather and LGBTQ District Cultural History and Housing and Economic Sustainability  
4 Strategy (“LCHHESS”) to set policies that promote community development and stabilization,  
5 and increase the presence and visibility of the District; and, be it

6 FURTHER RESOLVED, That other city departments and other bodies may be  
7 requested to be part of the community process to create the LCHHESS, including but not  
8 limited to the Department of Public Health, the Department of Homelessness, the Historic  
9 Preservation Commission, the Aging and Adult Services Commission, the Small Business  
10 Commission, the San Francisco Arts Commission, the Department of Human Services, the  
11 Department of Aging and Adult Services, the Department of Children, Youth and their  
12 Families, the Office of Community Investment and Infrastructure, the Department of Building  
13 Inspection, the Department of Public Works, the Entertainment Commission, and the Park and  
14 Recreation Department; and, be it

15 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the LCHHESS as developed by MOHCD through a  
16 community process should be submitted to the Board of Supervisors within 12 months of the  
17 adoption of this resolution.  
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