



# LYDIA SO

Architect | Land Use & Infrastructure Strategist | Public Enterprise Trustee

## Areas of Expertise

- Infrastructure & Asset Master Planning: Long-range planning, land use, multi-modal transportation hubs, and aviation real estate.
- Fiscal Governance & Financial Analysis: Enterprise-scale budgeting, capital asset deployment, and MIT-trained commercial real estate financial analysis.
- Legislative & Permitting Streamlining: Planning Code amendments, inter-agency negotiation (OEWD, Small Business), and development agreements.
- Multilingual Community Diplomacy: Deep grassroots community trust; fluent in English, native Cantonese, and professional Mandarin.

## Summary

A seasoned civic leader, California licensed architect, and real estate investment professional combining 20+ years of global private sector design management with elite-level governance of San Francisco's most critical fiscal and land-use public enterprises. Possesses an extensive track record of managing multi-billion-dollar infrastructure budgets, navigating complex union negotiations, and spearheading long-range development plans for major municipal assets—including the San Francisco International Airport (SFO). Proven political acumen in bridging cross-agency goals, driving landmark legislative reforms alongside the Board of Supervisors, and executing deep multilingual community diplomacy to champion equitable economic and transit growth.

## CIVIC & COMMISSION GOVERNANCE

### San Francisco Planning Commission

#### President Emeritus / Commissioner | San Francisco, CA

- Landmark Redevelopments: Successfully secured the approval of the historic Stonestown Redevelopment, bringing 13,000 units of housing tailored for all, including dedicated spaces for seniors and veterans.
- SFO Recommended Airport Development Plan (RADP): Actively championed, reviewed, and advanced the critical framework for it during key commission hearings, ensuring complete architectural, environmental, and long-term land-use alignment between city infrastructure and aviation modernization goals.
- Legislative & Business Streamlining: Partnered closely with members of the Board of Supervisors, the Office of Economic and Workforce Development (OEWD), and the Office of Small Business to pass a series of transformative Planning Code Amendments. Streamlined permitting processes, lowered barrier entry points, and optimized development agreements/inclusionary unit rates to encourage local investment.
- Community Advocacy & Diversity: Conducted extensive direct grassroots outreach in monolingual Cantonese and Mandarin-speaking communities to cultivate trust and ensure equitable input on the Family Zoning Plan, ultimately voting "Yes" to codify it into law.



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## Education, Certifications & Affiliations

### Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)

Executive Certificate in Commercial Real Estate Analysis and Investment — Completed via the Sloan School of Management & the School of Architecture + Planning  
2020

### Apple University

Advanced Certificates in Business Management, Leadership Palette, and Managing Motivation  
2014 - 2015

### University of Oregon

Bachelor of Architecture (B.Arch), Minor in Business Administration (Dean's List)  
2014 - 2015

## Licensure & Credentials

- **California Licensed Architect** (California Architects Board)
- Passed the **LEED Accredited Professional** (LEED AP) Examination (USGBC)

- **Economic Retention & Industrial Infrastructure:** Restored a highly collaborative, professional, and efficiency-driven culture within the Planning Department and on the Commission. Provided major local enterprises—such as THE EMPIRE and the Prologis (Bayview Gateway Project)—with the regulatory confidence and clarity needed to continue investing and staying in the city.
- **Arts & Land Use Synthesis:** Served as the Ex-Officio on the San Francisco Arts Commission, intentionally strengthening the relationship between major city land use initiatives and public arts/culture development.

## San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA)

### Board Director | San Francisco, CA

- **Fiscal Oversight & Union Negotiations:** Provided fiduciary governance over a multi-billion-dollar municipal transit enterprise budget. Successfully protected and ensured the full funding of the SFMTA security team throughout a contentious, 3-month-long fiscal budgeting and union contract negotiation period.
- **Safety Infrastructure & Technology:** Spearheaded the resolution to a systemic vulnerability in transit crime reporting by diagnosing and fixing the SFPD digital reporting system, vastly improving multi-agency data integrity and commuter safety.
- **Frontline Grounding:** Acquired first-hand operational insight into transit infrastructure by completing MUNI bus operator training; placed 3rd in the city's annual Bus Rodeo.

## San Francisco Arts Commission

### Commissioner | San Francisco, CA

- **Aviation Real Estate Oversight:** Served as a key member of the Civic Design Review Committee, directly overseeing the architectural development and design integrity of airport real estate expansions, aviation facilities, and connected art museum assets.
- **Affordable Housing & Capital Deployment:** Acted as the commission's formal liaison to the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development (MOHCD) to align capital investments with affordable housing metrics.



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- Fiscal Grant Stewardship: Appointed to the Community Investment Committee to audit, evaluate, and distribute millions of dollars in civic grants to local organizations.

## Civic Affiliations

- Member, Lambda Alpha International Land Economics Society; Urban Land Institute (ULI); SPUR
- Advisor to the Board, San Francisco Symphony (Facilities Committee)

## Languages

- English (Bilingual proficiency)
- Cantonese (Native fluency in speaking & writing)
- Mandarin (Professional proficiency)

## San Francisco Historic Preservation Commission

### Commissioner | San Francisco, CA

- Provided high-level governance to the Planning Department by reviewing complex private and public historical assets, legacy business applications, and historic district designations.

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

### SOLYD Architecture Management Design

#### Founder & Principal Advisor | San Francisco, CA

- Establish and lead an agile architectural design, art curation, and real estate investment advisory firm delivering strategic design-and-economics solutions across the Bay Area.
- Core Specialty: Drive complex urban housing development initiatives, design bespoke residential homes, and advise on high-value commercial real estate sales, optimizing physical assets through a dual lens of architectural excellence and financial return.

### Apple Inc.

#### Senior Retail Design Manager | Cupertino, CA

- Portfolio & Fiscal Stewardship: Managed the expansive retail store real estate portfolio across North America, partnering closely with the corporate CFO team to achieve strict financial targets and ensure high-yield capital deployment.
- High-Stakes Negotiations: Spearheaded complex lease negotiations with high-profile institutional landlords (such as Hines), consistently delivering successful outcomes within high-stress, zero-mistake-tolerant corporate environments.



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- **Design Excellence & Vendor Management:** Vetted, hired, and managed elite international architecture firms, including Foster & Partners, to execute premier retail assets. Completely authored and rewrote the corporate Master Services Agreement (MSA) to formalize procurement frameworks for global architects and consultants.
- **Cross-Functional Synergy & Brand Alignment:** Maintained a dedicated "startup spirit" to establish and scale store design prototypes meticulously aligned with Apple's iconic hardware products. Collaborated seamlessly with Steve Jobs' immediate leadership team and worked extensively with in-house legal counsel to safeguard brand equity and minimize institutional liability.

## **Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) & Bohlin Cywinski Jackson (BCJ)**

Senior Architect / Designer | San Francisco, CA

- Honed advanced urban design and real estate mastery across 20 years of premier corporate practice. Project portfolio includes high-density commercial developments, urban master plans, and landmark international skyscrapers (e.g., the tallest skyscraper in Beijing). Recipient of over 35 global design awards.