

BOARD of SUPERVISORS



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MEMORANDUM

TO: Jonas Ionin, Director of Commission Affairs, Historic Preservation Commission

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

DATE: October 3, 2022

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 Historic Preservation Commission, pursuant to Charter, Section 4.135, for comment and recommendation.

File No. 221031

Resolution reflecting the intent of the Board of Supervisors to establish a Pacific Islander Cultural District to commemorate historical sites, preserve existing spaces, and plan for thriving and vibrant communities to celebrate Pacific Islander culture in the Visitacion Valley and Sunnydale neighborhoods.

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.

cc: Rich Hillis, Director, Planning Department
Tina Tam, Planning Department
Lisa Gibson, Planning Department
Devyani Jain, Planning Department
Adam Varat, Planning Department
AnMarie Rodgers, Planning Department
Aaron Starr, Planning Department
Andrea Ruiz-Esquide, Planning Department
Joy Navarrete, Planning Department
Elizabeth Watty, Planning Department

1 [Intent to Establish Pacific Islander Cultural District]

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3 **Resolution reflecting the intent of the Board of Supervisors to establish a Pacific**
4 **Islander Cultural District to commemorate historical sites, preserve existing spaces,**
5 **and plan for thriving and vibrant communities to celebrate Pacific Islander culture in**
6 **the Visitacion Valley and Sunnysdale neighborhoods.**

7

8 WHEREAS, According to the 2015 United States Census Bureau estimate, there are
9 353,666 Pacific Islanders (PI) living in California, more than any other state other than
10 Hawai'i; and

11 WHEREAS, Pacific Islanders are defined as the 20 or more communities with origins in
12 Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia and each group carries their own distinct beliefs,
13 practices, and languages; and

14 WHEREAS, According to the Pacific Islander Demographics Report published by the
15 Regional Pacific Islander Taskforce in the Bay Area, the Pacific Islander populations accounts
16 for 0.8% of California's population as of 2015 and almost one in five Native Hawaiian Pacific
17 Islanders in California reside in the Bay Area, with 53% of the population living in Alameda,
18 San Francisco, and San Mateo; and

19 WHEREAS, Between 2000 and 2017, the Pacific Islander population grew by 27% in
20 California and the Census Bureau has identified 19 distinct ethnic communities within the
21 Pacific Islander populations; and

22 WHEREAS, Among the three Bay Area counties, San Francisco has approximately
23 6,773 Pacific Islanders, with a majority of the population living in Visitacion Valley and
24 surrounding neighborhoods in the southern part of the city; and

25

1 WHEREAS, Native Hawaiians are the largest PI ethnic subgroup in the Bay Area with
2 22.8%, followed by Samoans at 19.4%, and Tongans at 18%; many Pacific Islanders are also
3 of multiracial descent; and

4 WHEREAS, As the result of the colonialization of the Samoa Islands, Tonga, Fiji,
5 Micronesian Islands, and many additional South Pacific Islands from the Tripartite Convention
6 of 1899, as well as the militarization of American Samoa and recruitment of PIs to join and work
7 for the military during World War II, these factors influenced the early migration and later
8 migration to San Francisco when PI military personnel were sent to California and Hawai'i on
9 military business; and

10 WHEREAS, After World War II to the mid-1950s, families of the PI community from
11 American Samoa started to migrate to San Francisco for education and job opportunities, and
12 some continued to join the military including working on the now decommissioned Hunters
13 Point Naval Shipyard; and

14 WHEREAS, From 1951-1970, numerous large groups of migrations of the PI
15 community from American Samoa moved to San Francisco and other cities of California and
16 Hawai'i seeking job opportunities and new homes when American Samoa's economic
17 condition took an unexpected turn for the worst due to the relocation of the U.S. Naval Base to
18 California and Hawai'i, the end of the G.I. Bill for vocational training and education, change of
19 administration (Department of Interior) oversight control of the U.S. territory, decreased food
20 supply due to drought, high cost of import and decreased export, 47% increase of the local
21 populations, and bad living conditions left behind by the U.S. Navy; and

22 WHEREAS, The PI community's early and later migrations to San Francisco in the
23 1900s to the 1980s can also be traced back to many factors, including: The Mormon Church's
24 recruitment of members through missionaries and recruitment of labor pools from the PI
25

1 communities in America Samoa, Tonga, and Samoa (also known as Western Samoa) to build
2 their Temple in Hawai'i; and

3 WHEREAS, After the completion of the Mormon Temple in Hawai'i, many of these
4 workers stayed on the island, some returned to their native homes, and many moved to San
5 Francisco; and

6 WHEREAS, The continuous migration influx of PI communities from Tonga and Samoa
7 to San Francisco from 1951-1980 were encouraged and sponsored by the Mormon Church for
8 missionary labor, while some of the PI communities from American Samoa, Samoa, and
9 Tonga were brought to the San Francisco Bay Area for farm labor; and

10 WHEREAS, The PI community faced many challenges including language barriers,
11 lack of help and resources from the government, cultural shock, and discrimination when they
12 first settled in San Francisco; to remedy the lack of help from the government, the PI
13 community formed their own *aiga* (family) network system to provide social support and
14 mutual aid: housing, jobs, cultural retention activities, education, translators, counseling,
15 community gathering spaces, and other needs; and

16 WHEREAS, In 1972, the first PI non-profit organization, Samoa-Mo-Samoa was formed
17 in Visitacion Valley in partnership with Leali'ie'eiao Nofoaluma Fulu Asi Tuiasosopo, the first
18 woman activist of the PI community, and other community members; the organization was
19 fully funded by the city government; and

20 WHEREAS, Samoa-Mo-Samoa, in partnership with Samoan Affairs, now housed under
21 the Samoan Community Development Center in the Sunnysdale and Visitacion Valley
22 neighborhood, extended their education program for youths who were suspended, expelled,
23 drop-outs, and juvenile delinquent, and created an adult school for the PI community adults to
24 learn English, get their GED or high school diploma and receive job training on skills for jobs;
25 and

1 WHEREAS, The Pacific Islander community has been in San Francisco for over 100
2 years and have largely settled in the Visitacion Valley neighborhood while others settled in the
3 Bayview Hunter Point, Forest Hill, and Ingleside neighborhoods; and

4 WHEREAS, The Visitacion Valley neighborhood has been the primary home to the
5 Pacific Islander community since the early 1900s; and

6 WHEREAS, The Visitacion Valley neighborhood also reflects the decline and
7 disparities of the PI community in San Francisco as well as highlights the contributions of the
8 PI community to the city; and

9 WHEREAS, The Visitacion Valley and Sunnyside neighborhoods are where most PI
10 families found temporary and permanent homes after arriving in San Francisco and the
11 neighborhood holds important legacy sites that are vital to the fabric of the PI community
12 history; and

13 WHEREAS, Many PI residents from the Sunnyside area started community churches
14 and restaurants from their kitchens, created space for meeting of high chiefs, and conducted
15 fundraising in the neighborhood; more importantly, the Visitacion Valley and Sunnyside
16 neighborhoods are where the PI community lost many loved ones; this area serves as a
17 special memorial to honor all the PI community kids, youth, and adults that were victims of
18 gun violence, hate crimes, and other domestic violence; and

19 WHEREAS, The first PI businesses and restaurants in San Francisco started their
20 roots in Visitacion Valley including the South Pacific Restaurant, and a Samoa/Tonga
21 Seamstress Shop on Geneva Avenue bordering Daly City; unfortunately these stores were
22 forced to close or relocate due to high rents; currently the Polynesian Luau remains on
23 Geneva Avenue as a dining hub for the PI community; and

24 WHEREAS, Beginning in 1975, the Leland Avenue commercial corridor was home to
25 many of the first PI community-owned businesses including: a t-shirt shop, video shop, The

1 Hugo Store, a furniture store and other PI businesses; there were also two Samoan
2 restaurants on Leland and a Tongan restaurant on 28 Leland Avenue, where most of the PI
3 community families and other cultural communities in the area dined at; and

4 WHEREAS, The Sunnydale public housing is an important cultural legacy site to the PI
5 community history and is still home to over 70% of the low-income families of the PI
6 community; and

7 WHEREAS, Bravo Cocktail Lounge-Restaurant, now called Bayside Cafe, located on
8 Bayshore Boulevard and Hester Avenue was another important historical gathering venue for
9 the PI community history; this was also a gathering place for some of the PI community
10 leaders, *matai* (chiefs), church leaders, and deacons and their wives to socialize, have dinner
11 and have their *talanoa* (talk) every Friday evening; and

12 WHEREAS, Leaders from the South Pacific Islanders frequently stayed on the Motor
13 Inn Lodge on Geneva Avenue when visiting and attending important events of the PI
14 community in San Francisco; and

15 WHEREAS, The Samoan Community Development Center, located at 2055 Sunnydale
16 Avenue is a community anchor for the PI community providing programming for families,
17 parents, children, youth, seniors, and much more; and

18 WHEREAS, In 2020, the S.A.L.L.T. association, co-founded by San Francisco South
19 Pacific Islands, All Islanders Gathering As One, Living in Peace, and the San Francisco
20 Tongans Rise Up, and with many additional PI organizations, was established during the
21 COVID-19 pandemic to address service gaps to the PI community and primarily serving the
22 Visitacion Valley, Sunnydale, and Bayview neighborhoods; and

23 WHEREAS, As a response to the COVID-19 health emergency throughout 2020 and
24 2021, the City invested in community-led hubs that provided essential services to the
25 communities most impacted by COVID19, including funding the first ever Pacific Islander

1 Community Hut led by S.A.L.L.T., modeled after the Latino Task Force located in the Mission
2 and the Bayview Hub located on 1800 Oakdale, to provide job assistance, help with applying
3 to various city and state programs, translation, quality of life support, housing assistance,
4 immigration support, COVID-19 response including providing food assistance to address food
5 insecurity and many more services; and

6 WHEREAS, Visitacion Valley neighborhood is home to many different churches that
7 support the spiritual needs of its diverse communities, the Samoan Congregation Church of
8 Jesus Christ is on Schwerin Avenue along the Daly City border and most of its Samoan
9 community congregation members are residents of the Visitacion Valley neighborhood; and

10 WHEREAS, The PI community are also members of different denominations, including
11 Mormons, Catholics, Pentecost, Seven Days Advent, Methodist, and Assembly of God and
12 have created churches in the neighborhood from the church leaders' living rooms or garages
13 due to the small size of the congregation; and

14 WHEREAS, The Pacific Islander community has often been lumped with the Asian
15 American community for statistical purposes, however, the Pacific Islander community faces
16 the largest amount of disparities that need to be disaggregated from general Asian American
17 Pacific Islander (AAPI) data including the lack of access to resources, higher education, job
18 skills training, and general assistance; and

19 WHEREAS, In researching for the Pacific Islander Cultural District, there is limited data
20 and documentation of the PI community's history in San Francisco other than spoken stories
21 shared among families and communities; and

22 WHEREAS, The boundaries of the Pacific Islander Culture District are defined as
23 Visitacion Valley Avenue along the south side of Campbell Avenue to San Bruno Avenue, to
24 Bayshore Boulevard at Hester Avenue, along Hester Avenue looping back to Bayshore
25 Boulevard to Geneva Avenue, along the north side of Geneva Avenue to Moscow Street, to

1 the east side of Moscow Street to France Avenue, to the south side of France Avenue to La
2 Grande Avenue bordering the west border of McLaren Park to Sunnydale Avenue at Persia
3 Avenue, along Persia Avenue, which turns into Mansell Avenue to Visitacion Valley Avenue
4 through McLaren Park to Campbell Avenue; and

5 WHEREAS, Despite decades of relentless economic pressure, many challenges, and
6 substantial displacement, there are still vibrant Pacific Islander communities, cultural assets,
7 and institutions in the Visitacion Valley and Sunnydale neighborhoods; now, therefore, be it

8 RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Board of Supervisors intends to establish a
9 Pacific Islander Cultural District in the Visitacion Valley and Sunnydale neighborhoods to
10 acknowledge and preserve the Pacific Islander history and cultural influences in San
11 Francisco; and, be it

12 FUTHER RESOLVED, That in establishing the Pacific Islander Cultural District, the
13 Board of Supervisors intends to endorse the following goals:

14 1) To preserve, advance, and promote San Francisco's Pacific Islander Cultural District
15 as a local, national, and international resource, and as a culturally and commercially enriched
16 neighborhood and District;

17 2) To preserve, document, and strengthen the Pacific Islander Communities of San
18 Francisco by bringing together our diverse histories and cultures at and within the District for
19 all persons to enjoy and share;

20 3) To create an atmosphere of safety, creativity, vitality, and prosperity for present and
21 future Pacific Islander community and broader diverse neighborhood participants,
22 organizations, institutions, commercial activity, entertainment, cultural events, and street fairs
23 within the District;

24
25

1 4) To augment and make sustainable Pacific Islander: housing, commerce, community
2 development, cultural resources, physical spaces, and healthcare, in particular, culturally
3 appropriate health services;

4 5) To honor all the Pacific Islander ancestors that have impacted the Pacific Islander
5 community and honor all the Pacific Islander residents that were victims of violence;

6 6) To inspire hope that communities can reclaim, revitalize and uplift their
7 neighborhood and restore a sense of unity in communities; and, be it

8 FURTHER RESOLVED, That Board of Supervisors intends that the Pacific Islander
9 Cultural District will preserve and further develop the Visitacion Valley and Sunnydale’s past,
10 present, and future Pacific Islander communities and resources, and to recognize the
11 historical and present contributions of the Pacific Islander Community; and, be it

12 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors intends that the Pacific Islander
13 Cultural District will preserve and further develop opportunities for Pacific Islander businesses
14 along the commercial corridors within the boundaries of the district.