

Wong, Jocelyn (BOS)

From: Board of Supervisors, (BOS)
Sent: Tuesday, February 5, 2019 10:29 AM
To: BOS Legislation, (BOS)
Subject: FW: Support SoMa West Community Benefit District

Categories: 190028

From: Adam Mayer <adam.n.mayer@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 05, 2019 10:27 AM
To: Yee, Norman (BOS) <norman.yee@sfgov.org>; Haney, Matt (BOS) <matt.haney@sfgov.org>; Peskin, Aaron (BOS) <aaron.peskin@sfgov.org>; Stefani, Catherine (BOS) <catherine.stefani@sfgov.org>; Brown, Vallie (BOS) <vallie.brown@sfgov.org>; Fewer, Sandra (BOS) <sandra.fewer@sfgov.org>; MandelmanStaff, [BOS] <mandelmanstaff@sfgov.org>; Mar, Gordon (BOS) <gordon.mar@sfgov.org>; Walton, Shamann (BOS) <shamann.walton@sfgov.org>; Ronen, Hillary <hillary.ronen@sfgov.org>; Safai, Ahsha (BOS) <ahsha.safai@sfgov.org>
Cc: Board of Supervisors, (BOS) <board.of.supervisors@sfgov.org>; Breed, London (MYR) <london.breed@sfgov.org>
Subject: Support SoMa West Community Benefit District

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

Re: File # 190029, Establishment of SoMa West Community Benefit District

Dear Supervisors,

I am writing today to urge you to support the establishment of the SoMa West Community Benefit District (CBD).

Spearheaded by the Western SoMa Voice neighborhood group, the West SoMa neighborhood has been working for years to establish this CBD to improve the conditions on the streets for both residents and small business owners. It is no secret that it has been a challenge to maintain clean and safe streets in this neighborhood. A CBD would go a long way in helping the City address the concerns of residents and small business owners in Western SoMa.

Recently there has been some questioning of the efficacy of Community Benefit Districts (often mistakenly referred to as "BIDs" by opponents) by certain members of the San Francisco community. Some opponents claim that CBD's further "criminalize the homeless" and "push out the poor". I strongly disagree with this and my own experience/observations living in a CBD district disputes these preposterous claims.

I live right in the middle of the Lower Polk Community District area. Only a few years old, the Lower Polk CBD is a well-regarded organization by local residents and small business owners alike. Besides day-to-day street cleaning (which is difficult enough to manage), the Lower Polk CBD does the following for our community:

- Manages a pit stop in front of Sgt. Macaulay Park at the corner of Larkin Street and Myrtle Alley
- Manages an information station in front of the pit stop that serves free coffee to homeless members of the community and helps connect them to services

- Runs a free legal clinic for tenants in the neighborhood facing rent hikes or eviction with legal experts from UC Hastings
- Employs street ambassadors who are themselves either formerly homeless or formerly incarcerated and have trouble finding employment elsewhere

I also spend a lot of time in the Tenderloin and have gotten to know some of the folks who work for the Tenderloin CBD who also do a great job in their neighborhood. An example of a program they run is the invaluable "Safe Passage" program which helps over 3,000 children who live in the Tenderloin navigate their way to school everyday.

I could go on about the benefits to the community that CBDs serve. Critics of CBDs may frame them as an extension of law enforcement but from what I've observed this couldn't be further from the truth.

I urge you today to approve the Western SoMa Community Benefit District.

Best Regards,
Adam Mayer
Board Member, Lower Polk Neighbors

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Adam N. Mayer AIA, LEED AP BD+C
adam.n.mayer@gmail.com

Wong, Jocelyn (BOS)

From: Board of Supervisors, (BOS)
Sent: Tuesday, February 5, 2019 9:16 AM
To: BOS-Supervisors; BOS Legislation, (BOS)
Subject: FW: Letter to Board re: Soma West CBD hearing
Attachments: BoS CBD ltr 2.4.19.docx

Categories: 190028

From: informationmistress <informationmistress@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, February 04, 2019 5:58 PM
To: Board of Supervisors, (BOS) <board.of.supervisors@sfgov.org>; Haneystaff (BOS) <haneystaff@sfgov.org>; Haney, Matt (BOS) <matt.haney@sfgov.org>; Calvillo, Angela (BOS) <angela.calvillo@sfgov.org>
Subject: Letter to Board re: Soma West CBD hearing

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

I am unable to attend the above-named hearing on Feb. 5, 2019 and submit the following comments. I hope to be able to drop-off a hard copy by hand this evening but am emailing an MS Word file of the letter below as an attachment.

--L. Higa

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L. Higa
563 Minna St., suite 3
San Francisco, CA 94103
415-912-0882

Feb. 4, 2019

Angela Calvillo, Clerk

SF Board of Supervisors Rm. 244

1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Pl.

SF CA 94102

Attn: Board of Supervisors

I write to express my opposition to the SoMa West Community Benefit District (CBD). Here are my reasons:

-Duplication of services: We SoMa West residents already pay for services proposed by the SoMa West CBD through our property taxes (cleanup, beautification, activation & marketing). The City currently offers no

accountability mechanism to residents for such services. Without a baseline, additional CBD taxes may end up being used to pay for services we already have.

-The CBD formation is an inherently unfair process that is anti-democratic; lacks transparency and is taxation without representation.

-Its voting and ballot-counting process are under the complete control of CBD promoters. As this is not a municipal election—it has none of the normal protections like secret ballots and security to prevent voting fraud. Who will guarantee that there will be no voter fraud?

-The CBD formation doesn't require a majority of votes of property owners but merely a majority of property owners who bother voting. A simple majority of those who vote is all that's needed to create a CBD!

-The CBD seems clearly set up to favor big business/large landowners who are guaranteed a 50% share of seats on the governing board. Expenses promoting those businesses can be passed through to the CBD ("neighborhood/destination marketing-branding—events") while small property homeowners are the ones who will pay for it. Maybe property owners should be guaranteed 51% of the seats?

-Each vote is weighted according to a property's square footage, with large property owners' votes counting more than that of individual homeowners. It is *not* one owner, one vote.

-For example, a large retailer or landowner's vote apparently counts as much as votes from 55 single-family homes combined. Since public agency holdings tend to be large, their votes carry more weight. They therefore exert a disproportionate influence on the decision to increase property taxes.

-As a result CBD promoters are incentivized to focus on the largest property owners, not homeowners. Renters don't pay anything.

The Dept of Public Works (DPW) works with CBD promoters to facilitate approval like awarding grants to CBD consultants.

The nonprofit that runs the CBD adds an extra burden of bureaucracy, with a large chunk of CBD money raised going to pay for executive directors' salaries, lobbying and marketing, not for extra services.

-The CBD like The City also lacks accountability. The people selling the CBD will be running the CBD. They are not elected officials. How will they be held accountable with a guaranteed 15-year mandate? We already have trouble holding our elected officials accountable on much shorter terms. Whose will take the blame if things don't improve?

-CBDs encourage development, as developers can more easily pay the extra taxes vs. homeowners who really can't afford it.

-For my property (a 1-bedroom condo), the CBD's promoters estimate my first year assessment will be about \$200 with a provision for 3% annual increases. Using a conservative estimate of the annual 3% increase, the net total assessment for my parcel alone over 15 years could total more than \$3,000 (over 5% of my annual wages) with the final assessment in year 15 potentially reaching \$300. Cost of living will increase for everyone. Renters will also have to pay more because landlords will pass on the increased CBD costs to tenants. And what about Proposition C which San Francisco voters passed overwhelmingly in November? If implemented it promises to generate hundreds of millions of dollars from large corporations to address homeless problems. This seems to be another instance of potential duplication of services with the proposed CBD.

-No additional police presence or enforcement: The CBD's promoters claim that Western SoMa will be safer. From a health perspective, additional street cleaning to remove feces, urine, vomit, garbage and used

needles will make the area cleaner, maybe healthier. But without increased police presence and enforcement, how will we actually be safer? Police and HOT involvement are required to remove a homeless encampment. Hiring and paying salaries for Special Patrols represent a hefty additional cost that neighbors not the CBD will probably have to pick up.

-Based on this, it seems the best we can expect is that CBD employees working the streets might log requests on our behalf--something anyone can already do with the 311 app or by calling 311.

-While I realize additional cleaning and related services may offer cosmetic improvements to my neighborhood (Tutubi Park) and possibly raise property values that haven't kept pace with the rest of San Francisco due to SoMa's homelessness, drugs and crime, I'm loathe to be forced to pay extra taxes for an idea whose chances of success are dubious. Sure I'm sick and tired of walking everyday over used needles, animal/human waste, trash and related byproducts of homelessness. However, I do not believe that a CBD is the right solution.

-The SoMa West CBD is a poorly thought-out, inequitable cookie-cutter band-aid to serious problems faced by our entire City. And it does nothing to address root causes. I don't believe our district, our community—which includes small homeowners, renters and mom-and-pop businesses alike--should be strong-armed into paying for something many of us do not want! The City already has a responsibility to provide service for which it should be held accountable--from clean, safe streets to healthy, sustainable and resilient communities with housing for all.

Sincerely,

L. Higa

A 17-year long SoMa homeowner & association officer

While I realize additional cleaning and related services may offer cosmetic improvements to my neighborhood (Tutubi Park) and possibly raise property values that haven't kept pace with the rest of San Francisco due to SoMa's homelessness, drugs and crime, I'm loathe to be forced to pay extra taxes for an idea whose chances of success are dubious. Sure I'm sick and tired of walking everyday over used needles, animal/human waste, trash and related byproducts of homelessness. However, I do not believe that a CBD is the right solution.

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• Sincerely,

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▪ L. Higa

