

Lew, Lisa (BOS)

From: Somera, Alisa (BOS)
Sent: Wednesday, March 6, 2019 10:31 AM
To: BOS Legislation, (BOS); Carroll, John (BOS)
Subject: FW: Comment on SoMa CBD from SoMa resident
Attachments: image001.jpg; SoMa CBD-SFWeekly.pdf

Categories: 190029

Please add to SoMa CBD file approved yesterday.

Alisa Somera

Legislative Deputy Director
San Francisco Board of Supervisors
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San Francisco, CA 94102
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**From:** Calvillo, Angela (BOS)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 06, 2019 6:55 AM  
**To:** Somera, Alisa (BOS) <[alisa.somera@sfgov.org](mailto:alisa.somera@sfgov.org)>; Mchugh, Eileen (BOS) <[eileen.e.mchugh@sfgov.org](mailto:eileen.e.mchugh@sfgov.org)>  
**Subject:** FW: Comment on SoMa CBD from SoMa resident

Hello Alisa,  
Please add this email and article to the CBD file that was at Board yesterday..  
Thank you.  
Angela

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**From:** informationmistress <[informationmistress@yahoo.com](mailto:informationmistress@yahoo.com)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 5, 2019 1:25 PM  
**To:** Hanestaff (BOS) <[hanestaff@sfgov.org](mailto:hanestaff@sfgov.org)>; Haney, Matt (BOS) <[matt.haney@sfgov.org](mailto:matt.haney@sfgov.org)>; Board of Supervisors, (BOS) <[board.of.supervisors@sfgov.org](mailto:board.of.supervisors@sfgov.org)>

Cc: Calvillo, Angela (BOS) <[angela.calvillo@sfgov.org](mailto:angela.calvillo@sfgov.org)>; [nsawyer@sfweekly.com](mailto:nsawyer@sfweekly.com)

Subject: Comment on SoMa CBD from SoMa resident

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To: Supervisor Matt Haney

Dear Matt:

I'm sure you saw SF Weekly's Nuala Sawyer well-researched piece on the perils and promise of the new SoMa West CBD. As one of your supporters, I wish to again echo the voices opposing the CBD for its redundancy, lack of transparency and inequitable treatment of small property owners (homeowners) vis a vis large government agency and private developer landholders.

I was glad to learn from Ms. Sawyer's article that the CBD intends to give a 50% discount to large nonprofit developers like TNDC. My question is why doesn't the CBD also offer a discount or waiver to low-income seniors, the disabled and those on public benefits who are homeowners as well? That is the way the San Francisco Unified School District endeavors to show equity with its property tax assessments. This would be one way the CBD could garner more support from, and show the community it has an open heart and big tent, especially to those of us who are fighting so hard every day to stay in The City against rising costs of housing, food, property taxes, parking and utilities.

I'm attaching a PDF of Nuala's article and embedding it below. Thank you for your time and effort in considering this long-time SoMa resident's opinion. Please don't hesitate to contact me anytime about this or any other neighborhood issue--I'd be honored to provide more input and ideas, and work with your office to make the lives of all D6 residents better!

Cordially,

L. Higa, vice president  
563 Minna Homeowners Assn.

<http://www.sfweekly.com/topstories/prepare-for-the-newly-rebranded-soma-west/>

## Prepare for the Newly Rebranded SoMa West

Yet another business improvement district is on its way, pending a March 5 vote from the Board of Supervisors.

[Nuala Sawyer](#)

Wed Feb 27th, 2019 4:16pm



Once it's approved by the Board of Supervisors, SoMa West will immediately become one of the largest CBDs in the city. Image: SoMa West

A controversial new Community Benefit District is one vote away from approval — to the chagrin of some SoMa community members, and the joy of others.

On March 5, the Board of Supervisors is expected to approve the brand-new **SoMa West CBD**, which will formalize and fund efforts to clean up the streets, improve safety, and recruit businesses to the neighborhood — defined roughly by the borders of Mission Street to

Townsend, and South Van Ness Avenue to Fifth Street.

It's not a new tactic. Much of District 6 in San Francisco is split into Business Improvement Districts (which are used interchangeably with the term "Community Benefit District"). There's the **Union Square BID**, which is responsible for **hundreds of security cameras installed downtown**. There's the **Yerba Buena CBD**, which covers everything from the Moscone Center to the Yerba Buena Gardens to some of the city's most popular museums.

The **East Cut CBD** is wildly busy, with 12 meetings on everything from parks to safety scheduled for March alone.

The **Central Market CBD** focuses on the economic development of the corridor and cleanliness like graffiti abatement, and the **Civic Center CBD** works to beautify and "activate" the plaza, with things like the new Bi-Rite Cafe and the winter skating rink.

Last but not least is the **Tenderloin CBD**, which is arguably the most invested in its diverse community: It hosts Safe Passage, which gets kids to and from school safely, and it partners with the **Downtown Streets Team** to employ people from the program, helping them qualify for housing.

But none of the above services are free. Far from it — the districts pay for their private security teams and street cleaners through an additional tax on local businesses and residents. The taxes are based on square footage; big buildings pay more, smaller ones pay less. But if a formal vote is held and it passes, everyone is required to chip in, even if you voted against it.

At the first hearing about SoMa West's CBD in early February, many people spoke against the plan. Some property owners are reluctant to pay more in taxes for work the city should already be doing, and they worry that even more red tape could hinder efforts to improve the neighborhood.

"It's almost illegal that in this city we have to take a certain neighborhood and say 'Your taxes are going to be higher,'" said property owner Maryann Fair. "And for what — clean, beautiful streets? That is part of what we're already paying as a property owner. It makes no sense to increase our taxes for this program. I am totally against it."

Others raised concerns about the contributions required by nonprofits, and the effect private security would have on low-income residents.

“We do have concerns about adding bicycle patrol, vehicle patrol, and foot patrol. Police and security forces have a pretty documented history of racial inequity,” pointed out Alexandra Goldman of the [Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Center](#), which houses low-income tenants and which would have to pay \$30,000 in extra taxes every year under the original plan.

“We definitely have a question on how that will impact some of our lower-income neighbors, or people of color — whether that’s increased criminalization or a sense of psychological displacement that the neighborhood isn’t really designed for low-income people, but for people who can come in and spend a bit more money.”

But others said they felt left behind by the city, and out of options.

“People that live in western SoMa are suffering every day,” resident Ben Woosley said. “They’re suffering from burglaries, they’re suffering from auto break-ins, they’re suffering violence, theft, every violation of a human’s rights are on offer on the streets of western SoMa. Our neighborhood is the center of degradation in the city, basically.”

In the end, the new CBD was approved by the neighborhood, 56 to 44. It should be noted that, as with the tax breakdown, property owners who own more land have a bigger vote than small businesses or landlords. In an interesting twist, the biggest property owner in all of western SoMa — the state of California — voted against it, but lost.

Supervisor Matt Haney, who was elected last November to preside over the soon-to-be-seven BIDs in District 6, postponed the Board of Supervisors vote until the nonprofit tax fee could be worked out. They will now receive a discount of more than 50 percent.

In addition, Haney is demanding that the SoMa West CBD board have people on it who represent a diverse array of the neighborhood’s needs.

“We’re working to make sure that we’re clear that community organizations, residents, and small businesses have seats on the board of directors,” he tells *SF Weekly*. “Generally, that happens in bylaws, but we want to make it more explicit.”

In addition, one board seat must be preserved for a member of each of western SoMa’s cultural districts — [SoMa Pilipinas](#) and the [Leather & LGBTQ Cultural District](#).

It’s a smart, though curious move. The required diversity of the board is no doubt going to keep any meeting where its members have to reach a consensus very interesting. Because while everyone can generally agree that we want our neighborhoods to be clean and safe, and to include a sense of community, what that means will vary from person to person. For some, cleaning up western SoMa may include sweeping homeless encampments elsewhere, like to the Bayview or Dogpatch. For others, it may be calling the cops on someone who looks suspicious — perhaps stereotyped to be that way because they’re poor and Black — as they’re walking down the street.

Private security guards hired to enforce the BID’s priorities may operate outside the purview of other advocacy groups or frontline workers. In an effort to “clean up” western SoMa, which notably includes

Sixth Street, it's quite likely that the neighborhood's homeless and low-income residents will only be further harassed, displaced, and made to feel unwelcome.

“Although [BIDs] are present in almost every city in California, researchers, policymakers, and the public have paid little attention to their rise and growing influence in local and state affairs,” says Jeff Selbin, the director of the Policy Advocacy Clinic at UC Berkeley School of Law, which conducted a **three-year study on BIDs**. “Our key finding is that they exclude homeless people from public space through aggressive policy advocacy and policing practices. This finding raises important legal — and I would say moral — concerns.”

The UC Berkeley School of Law study came out last year, but despite 52 pages of fascinating data, it hasn't seemed to deter San Francisco business and property owners' march toward the privatization of their neighborhoods. It could be because BIDs often function as intended. Neighborhoods get cleaner, and the negative effects of that cleaning — like displacement and whitewashing — can easily be ignored.

But Haney is optimistic about the SoMa West CBD, which will, once it's established, immediately become the largest of his district.

“The CBD can play a needed role in bringing people together, and building community, and creating a sense of identity,” he says. “A lot of people who live in west SoMa don't self-identify with that neighborhood, but maybe with the support of the CBD they will have a greater connection to the place that they live, and their shared needs and history.”

Fingers crossed that those “shared needs” include everyone — whether they're a tax-paying corporation, or the residents of an SRO down the street.

(415)-359-2644 or [nsawyer@sfbay.com](mailto:nsawyer@sfbay.com). Follow her on Twitter at [@TheBestNuala](https://twitter.com/TheBestNuala).

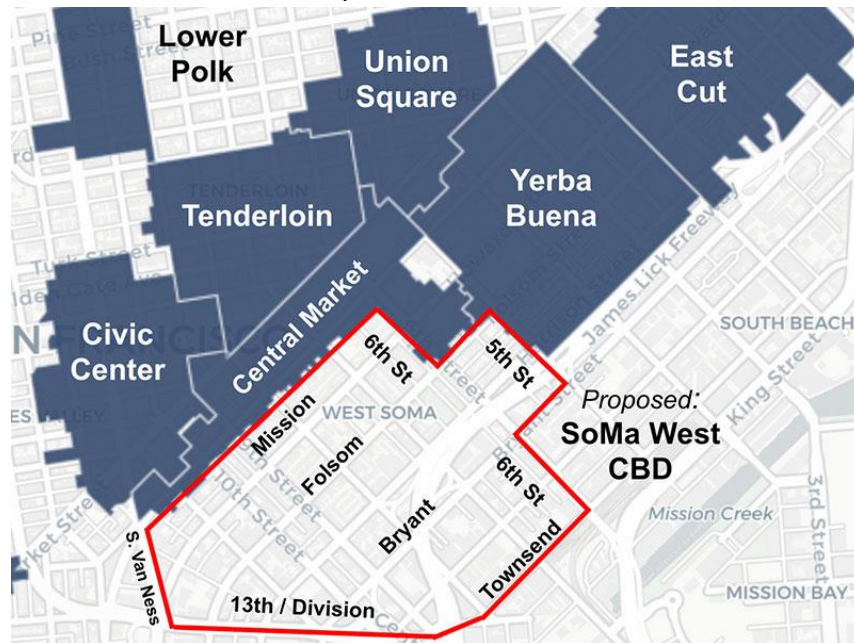
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