

Buena Vista GBD Community Meeting

Monday, May 7, 2018 at the Randall Museum

Hosted by GBD Steering Committee: Jill Allen, Jan Chernoff, Boris Dramov, Pat Dusenbury, Bonnie Fisher, Craig Latker, Janice Nicole, Sue Rugtiv, Dan Slaughter & Isabel Wade

Number of Sign-Ins: 65

Notes from Q&A Session

- What funding sources cover the costs for forming a GBD?
 - Public Works provides formation assistance grants; these come with vigorous community outreach & engagement requirements.
 - In other district formation efforts, community fundraising also plays a key role.

- What are the costs of managing a GBD?
 - Management costs depend on the District priorities. For the proposed Buena Vista GBD, we have not yet reached this stage.
 - If we assume that the GBD would fund 1 staff person to implement, and the remainder is for projects – the administrative costs are fairly minimal. Moreover, the staff person will be expected to fundraise for the District – typically more than making up for their salary.

- A member of the audience, John Hooper, announced opposition to the GBD & read from a letter. The Steering Committee would like to correct some of the inaccurate information:
 1. *“Neighborhood Organizations are all opposed”*
 - a. **BVNA** is not against the GBD. It maintains a ‘neutral’ position according to David Burke
 - b. **CVIA**: position is that the GBD “Is an Idea worth Considering,” and is also maintaining a ‘neutral’ position (see Winter newsletter 2017)
 - c. **HAIA**: no position taken yet
 - d. **Mt. Olympus Association**: neutral
 2. *“Rec & Park does not need the extra help”*
 - a. RPD estimates it needs an ~\$30 million in capital funds at BVP alone
 - b. RPD estimates that it needs 2 more full-time equivalent positions to deliver ideal standard of park maintenance (i.e. install and maintain refurbished perimeter zone plantings, remove foxtails, higher garbage detail)
 - c. RPD does not expect to receive funds to expand educational / health-related programming in our proposed district

- What is the process of determining the boundaries?

- We will be gathering community feedback through a variety of methods – including this meeting and the upcoming workshop in June. The survey is a key tool in determining where support for a GBD is strongest.
- Can different areas with different interests be included in the same District? Some parts of Haight-Ashbury area, for instance, are more interested in clean sidewalks.
 - We are at an early stage in the formation process, and this type of input is critical. Participation in meetings and survey helps to determine the District priorities, which ultimately informs the District budget categories.
 - The Dogpatch & NW Potrero Hill GBD have two different zones. Both zones receive the same *types* of services, but at varying frequencies. Getting the budget categories right during the formation process is really important.
- Concern that a GBD relieves the City of its responsibilities.
 - Eric Andersen from Recreation & Parks Department responded that deferred maintenance is major issue. A GBD would *augment* RPD’s resources.
 - Moreover, City agencies are required to formally document their baseline services to the District during the development & approval of the GBD Management Plan. This enables the GBD, if formed, to hold City agencies accountable for meeting existing commitments.
- Alamo Square looks great, so does Golden Gate Park. Why doesn’t Buena Vista Park?
 - Alamo Square is a unique case: initial improvements were funded by a PUC water conservation grant. RPD brought in additional resources for path improvements from its annual capital funds. There was also a fair amount of philanthropy involved.
 - Currently in Buena Vista Park, RPD currently has an urban forestry project paid for by the most recent bond. Larger renovations like these happen through the community-based bond planning process.
 - RPD’s General Manager and the former Capital Program Manager have both indicated that a GBD would not supplant Buena Vista’s potential project budget on the bond docket for 2019. On the contrary, it would probably improve the park’s chances in RPD allocations for the bond by helping organize the community around shared interests.
- How is the district term determined?
 - A District can last anywhere from 5-15 years. The term is determined during the development of a GBD Management Plan.
 - If a GBD is formed, property owners have the opportunity to request disestablishment of a GBD during a 30-day period each year. A written petition must be submitted by property owners who pay 50% or more of the assessments levied in the district.

- I'm concerned that the threshold for GBD disestablishment is higher than the voting thresholds for GBD formation.
 - The process for GBD disestablishment is different than the formation process, so this is not an apples-to-apples comparison. Disestablishment can be initiated by the Board of Supervisors OR dissatisfied property owners after 1 year of operation. A GBD can be disestablished:
 - If the Board of Supervisors has found any misappropriation of funds, malfeasance, or violation of law in connection with the management of the District.
 - A supermajority of the Board of Supervisors votes for dissolution, without any justification or reason
 - A written petition is submitted signed by owners or authorized representatives of real property in the district or the owners or authorized representatives of businesses in the district who pay 50 percent or more of the assessments levied.
 - If not supported by property owners, there are countless avenues for a GBD to condemn itself to disestablishment, including, but not limited to:
 - Failure to procure insurance
 - Failure to register and file appropriate documentation with City, state, and federal entities
 - Failure to elect, appoint, or nominate a representative Board of Directors
 - Failure to administer the activities, improvements, and services detailed in the Management Plan
 - Failure to administer assessment funds
 - Failure to adhere to any of the conditions, terms, and requirements detailed in the City-GBD Agreement
 - Failure to adhere to the Brown Act

- Who votes?
 - Only property owners can vote during the Petition and Ballot phases.

- What is a weighted vote?
 - For the Petition and Ballot, property owners' votes are weighted by their proportional share of the total proposed assessment for the entire district. For example: assume the total annual budget for a GBD is \$1,000 per year. If an individual property owner's proposed assessment is \$100 per year, then the property owner's share would be equal to 10% of the vote during the Petition and Ballot.

- When will the survey results be shared?
 - We will share survey results at the next community meeting on June 11, 2018, 6-8pm at the Randall Museum.

- Are there are adjustments for elderly or low-income households?

- While the City cannot legally provide assistance, the non-profit could. If established, the GBD could create a grant-based assistance fund to support households in need.
- How do tenants get an equal & fair voice – both in formation & management of GBD?
 - Property owners and renters alike enjoy our parks and open spaces. As such, tenants are welcome to participate in all community meetings for GBD formation, as well as on the Steering Committee.
 - Once a GBD is formed, tenants can also serve on the Board of Directors. In the Dogpatch & Northwest Potrero Hill GBD, there are several Board seats allocated for tenant representation.
- How was the survey distributed?
 - Every property in the study area received a mailed postcard, including absentee landlords, that provided the link to the survey and urging them to take it. The property owner records come from the City Assessor's Office.
- I like that Buena Vista Park is wild & woodsy. Will the GBD change that?
 - We like this too! But we believe that we should be able to enjoy nature without worrying about hazardous trees, eroded hillsides, or invasive species.
- Are properties grandfathered into the District? What happens if there is a change of ownership?
 - A GBD assessment would be property-based. Changes in property ownership would not affect the assessment for the duration of the District term.
- Would the GBD be run by a CCSF employee?
 - No. The District would be an independent non-profit entity, with its own staff person.
- What is the size of the proposed District?
 - We are at the very beginning, and do not yet know. The current map with initial proposed boundaries includes 3200 properties. The Dogpatch & NW Potrero Hill GBD is comprised of ~1200 properties, and has an annual budget of about \$600,000. For a 1400-sq ft home in this District, the assessment is about \$145 per year.
- Does City vote in the Petition & Ballot? This seems to be a clear conflict of the community interest.
 - City & State properties do not vote during *the Petition*, which is the most critical voting phase to demonstrate community support for a GBD.
 - If the GBD reaches the Ballot phase, City and State properties participate in the vote mainly to affirm the community process. We will investigate this requirement.

Study Area Map: What improvement ideas do you have? What are your concerns?

Path repairs

- Add a few more accessible paths
- Repair paths in BV park
- Repair asphalt path to tennis courts
- Ensure that Vulcan Stairway is included in enriching this stairway

Erosion & water management

- Manage erosion along States St / Corona Heights
- Water management at end of Museum Way

Tree maintenance

- More tree maintenance & reforestation at Buena Vista Park
- Tree removal & maintenance in Mt. Olympus Park

Traffic / Crosswalks

- Safer crossings at 17th St (Roosevelt, Temple)
- Crosswalk at base of Adah's staircase
- Make Saturn St one-way going east from Roosevelt

Other

- Stabilize concrete around the pedestal at Mt. Olympus
- Find a solution for uncivil behavior at BV park Southern corner
- Lights & security on Monument Way Stairs

Meeting Handout: Green Benefit District FAQs

A group of local neighbors who love San Francisco's parks are inspired to seek solutions to ongoing safety concerns and tap into the underused potential in the public spaces we frequent most. They are currently exploring the possibility of forming a Green Benefit District (GBD) in the Greater Buena Vista neighborhood.

What is a GBD?

A GBD is an innovative tool that allows residents to directly invest in enhancements to open spaces in their community, providing services and improvements that are above and beyond baseline City services. These additional services and improvements are funded by a local property assessment, which appears on the City's annual property tax bill. This is the main difference between a tax and an assessment: collected assessment funds are locally controlled by the neighborhood GBD, *not* the City. GBDs are authorized by state and local law (Property & Business Improvement District Law of 1994, San Francisco Business Code Article 15A).

Are there any GBDs in existence?

Yes, there is one GBD in the Dogpatch and Northwest Potrero Hill neighborhoods. Currently, three other neighborhoods exploring formation of a GBD, including the Inner Sunset, Dolores Park, and Buena Vista. The GBD program is modeled on San Francisco's successful Community Benefit District program, with 15 districts currently operating throughout the City. Whereas CBDs focus on economic development in primarily commercial areas, GBDs focus on public realm improvements in primarily residential neighborhoods.

Is this a permanent fee?

No, the assessment is not permanent. A District can exist for 5 to 15 years, as determined by local property owners. If property owners are interested to renew the District after this term is up, the formation process must start over.

How much is it likely to be?

We are in an exploratory phase for a Buena Vista GBD and do not yet know how much the assessment would be. Before we can answer this question, we need to introduce and explore this concept with other neighbors to determine if there's any interest in a GBD in our community.

How much would the GBV GBD raise annually?

We do not yet know this. The Buena Vista GBD must first go through an extensive community engagement process to identify the specific types of services and projects desired in the neighborhood, and evaluate the willingness to pay among property owners. Ultimately, the District budget will depend on the number of properties within the District boundaries and assessment methodology.

What’s an “Assessment Methodology”?

Each property owner’s annual assessment is legally required to be determined and calculated by a licensed Assessment Engineer. This Assessment Engineer creates an “assessment methodology” that is applied to all properties in the proposed District, which is used to calculate annual assessments. The methodology is typically based on parcel characteristics, such as land use, building size, lot size, and/or street frontage. The Assessment Engineer consults with local property owners to determine an assessment methodology that is fair, representative, and proportional across all assessed property owners.

Assessment rates can be decreased by any amount. Any increase is limited to a maximum of the percentage increase in the Bay Area Consumer Price Index (CPI) or 3% - whichever figure is less. Changes to annual assessment rates must be voted on and approved by the GBD Board of Directors.

Does a GBD duplicate City services already provided?

No. San Francisco’s Article 15A expressly prohibits a GBD from replacing City services and improvements. A GBD is legally required to fund services and improvements that are above and beyond the City’s existing baseline.

This designation “above and beyond” does not depend on the nature of the activity (i.e. weeding, sweeping) but on the current level of service being provided. Other activities that might be prioritized (i.e. programming and educational classes) and that do not exist are more obvious as extra services. A GBD also requires City agencies to clearly identify what they are supposed to be providing, and holds the City accountable to that baseline (non-performance is reported to the Board of Supervisors).

Why isn’t the City already providing these services?

The City had countless priorities that are perennially underfunded from one collective pot of funds. Parks and open spaces get a small slice – less than 2% – of the City’s annual budget. Furthermore, our local priorities for neighborhood parks and open spaces barely get attention or any funding at all. Our efforts seek to leverage RPD’s existing funding and services with additional resources that are determined and controlled by neighbors.

What are the types of projects/services that might be provided by a GBD?

A community process determines the specific services and projects to be provided by a GBD. Types of additional services and projects include:

- Grant writing and fundraising
- Advocacy for local neighborhood priorities and to address urgent community concerns
- Design and planning
- Specialty landscape projects that leverage existing RPD efforts
- Environmental management and restoration projects, such as erosion control, water conservation, and carbon sequestration

- Security projects (perimeter lighting, hazardous tree pruning, path repair)
- Community-initiated art projects
- Enhanced community programming in partnership with education and recreation providers (i.e. Randall Museum, Nature in the City, health activity specialists) to conduct classes in the park for all (i.e. yoga, Tai Chi, Birds & Mammals of Buena Vista/Corona Heights, Art In the Park)

How do the priorities get established for which services?

The formation process requires continuous community engagement and outreach. Members of the community can provide input on priority services and projects at multiple stages – including the neighborhood-wide survey, an interactive workshop, and ultimately, the development of a GBD Management Plan.

Who is in charge of the GBD?

State and local law requires that a non-profit organization is established to implement the GBD's community-derived goals. The organization would be managed by a Board of Directors (10-25 people) that would represent the diverse open spaces and residents of the district. The limits of the Board's governance and spending authority are pre-defined in the GBD's Management Plan. Moreover, the GBD is subject to standard non-profit rules of governance, including ethical rules governing disclosure of conflicts of interest and prohibitions against self-dealing.

What are some of the other benefits of a GBD?

- **Enhanced services & improvements:** Provides dedicated, reliable resources to implement neighborhood priorities for its public realm that are above and beyond the City's baseline services in a timely and cost-effective manner, making the district's public spaces cleaner, safer, more accessible, attractive and lively for the community.
- **Accountability & transparency:** A GBD provides district property owners with direct oversight in how their funds are used in the neighborhood open spaces, and ensures a high degree of transparency through the public engagement process of the non-profit organization established to manage the district. It can also provide a platform to advocate for the delivery of the City's existing commitments to public spaces.
- **Advocate on neighborhood open space issues and ballot measures:** the GBD staff person will stay on top of open space issues, provide a presence as needed at hearings or participate in planning processes, to help ensure that the neighborhood interests in open space topics are well represented, augmenting existing volunteer efforts in this arena.
- **Leveraging additional funds:** A GBD can leverage additional capital for the neighborhood in two ways: (1) using a GBD matching grant line item in the budget, the district can apply for government grants that often require a match and (2) making a focused effort to solicit additional private funding for special projects.

- **Maximize volunteer stewardship:** the GBD staff person will work to broadcast existing volunteer work days to generate more participation and solicit volunteer groups and individual volunteers who are available during the week.

Would a GBD compete with other citywide measures, such as the proposed teacher salary parcel tax?

GBD assessments are different from parcel taxes. GBD funds can only be spent in the neighborhood where they are collected, and are managed by our own neighbor-residing Board of Directors that has established a non-profit organization for this purpose. Parcel taxes get spread across the City and we have no control how or where the funds are spent.

More Information

For detailed information on how a GBD is formed, please visit: www.gbvgbd.org

If you have additional questions, please contact Jonathan Goldberg, Green Benefit District Program Manager at Public Works: jonathan.goldberg@sfdpw.org. He serves as the City's liaison to help neighborhood groups considering the establishment of a GBD.