



AGENDA REPORT



TO: Honorable Mayor & City Council

FROM: Councilmember Kaplan
At Large

Mayor Thao

Council President Fortunato
Bas

SUBJECT: Lakeshore LGBTQ Cultural District

DATE: October 10 2023

RECOMMENDATION

Councilmember Kaplan, Mayor Thao, And Council President Fortunato Bas Recommend That The Council Approve A Resolution Establishing The Oakland “Lakeshore LGBTQ Cultural District” To Uplift The Rich History Of And Cultivate A Supportive Environment For LGBTQ Individuals, Families, Allies, And Businesses In Lakeshore, And Nurture A Safe, Vibrant, And Welcoming Community

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report recommends establishing the first-ever LGBTQ Cultural District in Oakland, centered on the Lakeshore neighborhood, where there are a wide range of existing LGBTQ-serving and LGBTQ-allied business, cultural facilities, creative enterprises, and arts venues. The mission of the Lakeshore LGBTQ Cultural District (“the District”) is to uplift the rich history of the LGBTQ Oakland community, cultivate a supportive environment for diverse LGBTQ individuals, families, allies, and businesses, and nurture a safe, vibrant, and welcoming community.

BACKGROUND / LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

Assembly Bill 189, authored by Assemblymember Richard Bloom and adopted in 2015, charged the California Arts Council with establishing criteria and guidelines for state-designated cultural districts, with the following required components of a public program:

- (1) Establish a competitive application system by which a community may apply for certification as a state-designated cultural district.

(2) Provide technical assistance for state-designated cultural districts from, among others, artists who have experience with cultural districts and provide promotional support for state-designated cultural districts.

(3) Collaborate with other public agencies and private entities to maximize the benefits of state-designated cultural districts. applying for state designation and funding through the competitive grant process established by California AB 189

In 2017, The California Arts Council launched 14 California Cultural Districts as the inaugural cohort for the program, with an opportunity for more districts to be added in the future. The inaugural cohort included no districts in Oakland, nor any LGBTQ-designated districts.

ANALYSIS AND POLICY ALTERNATIVES

The [Oakland metropolitan area has the highest percentage of LGBTQ residents of any metropolitan area in the entire United States¹](#), and Oakland has been at the forefront of fighting for justice and equity for the LGBTQ community, including the celebrations of Oakland Pride and Pridefest and the establishment of the oldest operating gay bar in the nation, but Oakland lacks any designated LGBTQ cultural districts.

In 2023, [a record number of bills restricting the rights of LGBTQ people have been introduced across the country²](#), with a particular focus on eroding protections for trans youth, making efforts to sustain, protect, uplift, and celebrate LGBTQ people all the more critical. Cultural districts are an important and established strategy for preserving, protecting, and expanding the cultural vitality of vulnerable communities, and LGBTQ cultural districts have proven successful in other cities. San Francisco alone has three designated cultural districts for the LGBTQ community, including the [Transgender District](#), [Castro LGBTQ Cultural District](#), and [Leather & LGBTQ Cultural District](#) in San Francisco.

A coalition of LGBTQ community stakeholders have united to establish Oakland's first LGBTQ cultural district in the Lakeshore area, with the mission of the District is to uplift the rich history of the LGBTQ Oakland community, cultivate a supportive environment for diverse LGBTQ individuals, families, allies, and businesses, and nurture a safe, vibrant, and welcoming community.

The District will include the area bounded by Grand Avenue to the west, El Embarcadero to the south, Lakeshore Avenue to the east, and Kenmore Avenue continuing to Fairbanks Avenue and Boulevard Way to the north, including both sides of each boundary street, as depicted in attachment A

The history of LGBTQ community and culture in Lakeshore includes Sistahs Steppin' in Pride, an annual march and festival that brought the East Bay's diverse queer women's community together for a decade, and whose historic gathering and march began at Lake Merritt at the pillars between Lakeshore and Grand Avenues. The District is home to a primary cultural hub for the LGBTQ community in the form of the Oakland LGBTQ Community Center, founded in 2017 as Oakland's first nonprofit multi-service center dedicated to serving the multi-ethnic, intergenerational, LGBTQ community members and one of very

¹ The Williams Institute on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Law and Public Policy (2021), LGBT Adults in Large US Metropolitan Areas. UCLA School of Law. Available at: <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/MSA-LGBT-Ranking-Mar-2021.pdf>

² American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). (2023, July 21). Mapping Attacks on LGBTQ Rights in U.S. State Legislatures. ACLU. Available at: <https://www.aclu.org/legislative-attacks-on-lgbtq-rights>

few, all-inclusive LGBTQ community centers in the nation, led and founded by African Americans, and the first in the state of California.

The District is home to a concentration of cultural facilities, creative enterprises, and arts venues owned and operated by LGBTQ people. In addition to the Oakland LGBTQ Community Center, these institutions include the Queer Arts Center, Shakewell, Slick & Dapper, Modigliani Café, Kinetic Chiropractic, United Grooming, Baymade, Galleria Scola Picture Framing, VT Nail Spa, Alkali Rye Beverage Shop, Arizmendi Bakery, and Michael's Chocolates

The District is a walkable, compact area that is easy for visitors to recognize, and can act as a center for LGBTQ cultural activities—curative, artistic, and economic.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact to the City's current budget. This resolution seeks to bring greater resources to the proposed District and directs the City Administrator to pursue funding opportunities to support its development and future programming.

PUBLIC OUTREACH / INTEREST

The Lakeshore LGBTQ Cultural District is the result of LGBTQ community leaders and stakeholders organizing to unite and preserve LGBTQ cultural resources in Lakeshore. Leaders of this effort include community activists, nonprofit leaders, entrepreneurs, and public servants.

COORDINATION

The author's office has coordinated with the City Attorney's office in preparing this legislation, in addition to City Administrator's office, Finance, and the office of State Senator Supervisor Lena Tam.

SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES

Economic: The District can make meaningful improvements for the people and City of Oakland, including by beautifying and activating streets and community spaces, promoting LGBTQ tourism and visitation, supporting and encouraging artists, creative businesses, and entrepreneurial opportunities for the LGBTQ community, contributing to an artistic and innovative environment, driving economic growth and tax revenue, and highlighting LGBTQ culture and history.

Race & Equity: The vision for the Lakeshore LGBTQ Cultural District is to become one of Oakland's premier safe spaces free from violence and discrimination for all LGBTQ individuals, allies, and families to be in an environment where Oaklanders can be ourselves no matter what race, sexuality, religion, or ethnicity.

ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL

Councilmember Kaplan, Mayor Thao, And Council President Fortunato Bas Recommend That The Council Approve A Resolution Establishing The Oakland “Lakeshore LGBTQ Cultural District” To Uplift The Rich History Of And Cultivate A Supportive Environment For LGBTQ Individuals, Families, Allies, And Businesses In Lakeshore, And Nurture A Safe, Vibrant, And Welcoming Community

For questions regarding this report, please contact Kimberly Jones, Chief of Staff, at kjones3@oaklandca.gov

Respectfully submitted,

Councilmember Kaplan
At Large

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Attachment (A): Lakeshore LGBTQ Cultural District Boundaries



