

COMMUNITY UPDATE: CHHES REPORT



Strategies for Stabilizing and Supporting Our
Bay Area Leather & LGBTQ Community

November 29, 2023

San Francisco Cultural District Program



San Francisco Cultural District Program

GOALS

- Stabilize vulnerable communities
- Place-making + Place-keeping
- Preserve and strengthen SF's cultural assets



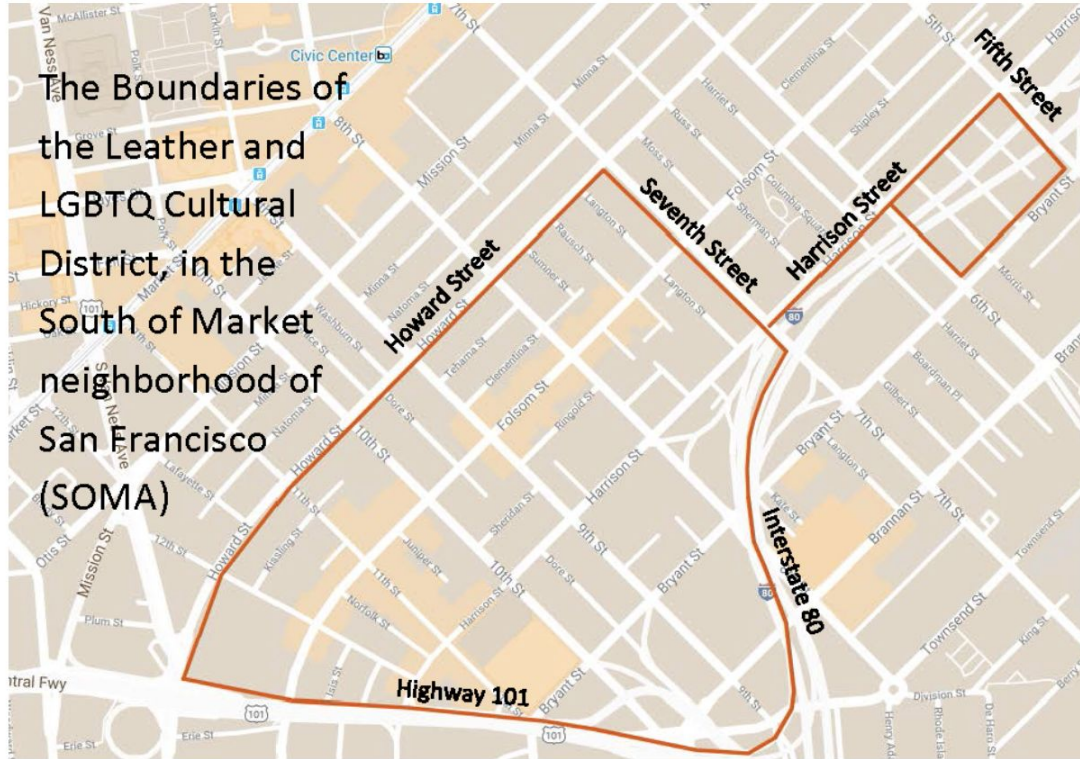
SF Cultural Districts

- Japantown Cultural District - *Japantown*
- Calle 24 Latinx Cultural District - *Mission*
- SoMa Pilipinas - *SoMa*
- Compton's Transgender Cultural District - *Tenderloin*
- African American Arts & Cultural District - *Bayview*
- Castro LGBTQ Cultural District - *Castro*
- American Indian Cultural District - *SoMa*
- Sunset Chinese District - *Sunset*
- Pacific Islander District - *Visitacion Valley*
- LEATHER & LGBTQ Cultural District - *SoMa*



SF Cultural Districts

The Boundaries of
the Leather and
LGBTQ Cultural
District, in the
South of Market
neighborhood of
San Francisco
(SOMA)



The CHHES Report



The CHHESS Report

Cultural History, Housing and Economic Sustainability Strategies
Report.



What is the CHHES Report?

- Community + Data informed
- A guide to help the City of San Francisco support our District



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- *First Time!*



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- Community + Data informed
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- *First Time!*
- Living Document



Who are we working with?

- Staff at the Cultural District Program Department
- City Departments
 - Planning Department
 - Office of Economic Workforce Development
 - Arts Commission
 - Mayor's Office of Housing + Community Development
- Board of Supervisors
- Mayor's desk



What is the CHHESS Report?

- Letter from the District
- Letter from the City
- District Vision + Mission
- Methodologies
- Cultural District History
- History of Leather + LGBTQ Communities in SoMa
- District Operations + Governance
- SF City's Current Support Methods
- Current Context + Data
- District Policy Strategy Recommendations
- Conclusion



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Recap: The CHHESS Report is....

- Roadmap to stabilize and support the District
- An excellent archival document



How we created the CHHESS REPORT:



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FOCUS GROUPS + TOWN HALLS:

1. BIPOC
2. Transgender
3. Women
4. Sex Workers
5. Arts & Culture
6. Economic Vitality
7. Kink & Leather
8. Tenants' Rights



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INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS



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INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

ONLINE SURVEYS



What we found:

COMMUNITY VALUES



What we found:

COMMUNITY VALUES

1. SoMa holds a special place in our hearts, revered for its queer and kinky legacy, dynamic community, liberated events, and joyous celebrations.
2. We cherish the rich legacy of SoMa, which has paved the way for today's vibrant LGBTQ and Leather culture, and want this history to be widely acknowledged and preserved.
3. Our community members perceive our District as an a diverse amalgamation of individuals, physical spaces, businesses, nightlife, entertainment, and art. Together, they create unique experiences that set our neighborhood apart from others in San Francisco.
4. The Leather community is highly esteemed in our values, recognized as a safe(r) space for exploring identity and orientation, embracing transgender and gender expansive experiences, and fostering a sense of community within this exploration.
5. Diversity and inclusion are core principles. In addition to LGBTQ, our communities comprise of BIPOC individuals, trans + GNC people, sex workers, women and femmes, disabled individuals, and working-class members. Supporting and uplifting these identities within our District is crucial to our community's ethos.



What we found:

COMMUNITY ASSETS: *Cultural Practices*

- Clothing-focused fetish practices, including those focused on latex, various uniforms, athletic gear, high heels, and of course leather (vests, boots, harnesses, etc.);
- Public nudity, as well as the freedom to express leather identity and kink in public and semi-public events and spaces;
- A general sex positivity, and an embrace of all body types;
- The use of semiotics like the “hanky code” to significant kinks and sexual desire;
- The visibility of STI-related health services and substance harm reduction services at Leather events;
- The centrality of fundraising for community causes at Leather events;
- The art of drag, and San Francisco’s uniquely activist-oriented drag scene;
- An exploration of power dynamics through kink;
- Various types of kink, including pup play, fisting, BDSM, watersports, cruising, role play, shibari, and more;
- Historic preservation efforts, such as those led by the GLBT Historical Society;
- The designing of pins, vests, patches, and other memorabilia for other Leather and LGBTQ events and organizations.



What we found:

COMMUNITY ASSETS: *Cultural Events*

- **The Folsom Street Fair** and **Up Your Alley Street Fair** (aka Dore Alley), both of which are large leather street festivals hosted in SoMa;
- **The Barrison Street Fair**, a fair hosted by the Bears of San Francisco and Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence;
- **Leather Week**, including the **Leather Pride Fest** and **LeatherWalk**;
- **SoMa Second Saturdays**, a Leather market organized by the LEATHER & LGBTQ Cultural District on the second Saturday of each month;
- **Leather Alley**, a Leather-focused segment of San Francisco Pride;
- **Dark Odyssey**'s play events throughout the year;
- Halloween in the Castro neighborhood;
- Educational events to explore and learn about Leather culture and kink, including classes and munches (several respondents particularly called Wicked Ground's munches out);
- Many kinds of bar nights, ranging from kink nights and sex parties to beer busts, underwear nights, and drag shows;
- Private kink parties and orgies;
- Pup moshes, where pups and handlers come together to socialize.



What we found:

COMMUNITY ASSETS: *Organizations*

- **International Ms. Leather (IMsL), International Mr. Leather (IML), and International Mx. Leather (IMxL)**, as well as the San Francisco local Leather and kink competition;
- **Society of Janus**, a BDSM education and support group based in San Francisco;
- **Queer Leather Meditation**, an online Leather community meditation group;
- **The Exiles**, a BDSM education group focused on people who do not identify as cisgender men;
- **The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence**, a San Francisco-based order of queer and drag nuns;
- **Folsom Events**
- **Femmes on Top**, a BIPOC-led Leather group;
- **St. James Infirmary**, sex worker health clinic;
- Various types of social clubs, including LGBTQ sports teams and motorcycle clubs;
- Various Leather- and LGBTQ-focused newspapers and magazines;
- **The Center for Sex and Culture**, a space for sex education, study, and exploration that operated out of SoMa until 2019;
- The **Folsom Street Community Center**, a community center managed by Folsom Street Events;
- **Twisted Windows**, a bondage performance and interactive event.



What we found:

COMMUNITY ASSETS: *Businesses*

- Leather and LGBTQ bars and nightclubs, including **Oasis, Powerhouse, Lone Star Saloon, SF Eagle, The EndUp, Cat Club, The Stud, and more;**
- Leather and kink shops, with several respondents specifically mentioning **Mr. S. Leather, Madame S. Leather** (which closed in 2010), and **Leather Etc.;**
- Porn studios like **Kink.com, Crashpad Studios, and Pink and White Studios;**
- **Wicked Grounds**, cafe and event and much hosting;
- Multidisciplinary event and exhibition spaces like **SOMArts** and **Liminal Space**, kink and queer run or friendly;
- **Eagle Plaza**, a public plaza located outside of the San Francisco Eagle;
- **Ringold Alley**, a historic cruising alley;
- Bathhouses;
- Curated play spaces, including sex dungeons.



What we found:

CHALLENGES



What we found:

CHALLENGES

1. Many important Leather and LGBTQ spaces within SoMa have closed within the past several decades, primarily from rising rents and development pressure.
2. Leather and LGBTQ culture—and especially kink practices—remain in many ways misunderstood by wider society.
3. The cost of living in SoMa, as in many other San Francisco neighborhoods, has become prohibitively expensive for many community members to live there.
4. Business owners and organizations face difficulty opening spaces within the District.
5. The programming and events that do still exist in SoMa do not encapsulate the range of experiences and identities within the Leather and LGBTQ communities.
6. Leather and LGBTQ community members expressed feeling unsafe at times in SoMa.



What we created:

POLICY STRATEGIES



What we created:

POLICY STRATEGIES

> Focuses the work of your organization by aligning it with an objectives that you are pursuing.



POLICY STRATEGIES

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL PRESERVATION:

RESEARCHING, TEACHING, AND PRESERVING LEATHER AND LGBTQ CULTURE

1. Investigate ways to streamline City processes for protecting and commemorating historic Leather and LGBTQ sites within San Francisco.
2. Continue research on identified historic sites within the LEATHER & LGBTQ Cultural District.
3. Secure resources and space for Leather & LGBTQ archival work.
4. Conduct outreach to residential and commercial tenants and owners about local Leather and LGBTQ sites and culture.
5. Support educational opportunities around Leather, LGBTQ, and Kink cultures.
6. Identify funding opportunities to create and install the Leather History Cruise commemorative plaques.



POLICY STRATEGIES

LAND USE: SHAPING COMMUNITY THROUGH THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

7. Explore strategies to open a LEATHER & LGBTQ Community Center within the District.
8. Explore opportunities to build real estate capacity amongst Leather and LGBTQ community members to support stabilization.
9. Identify and utilize vacant space within the LEATHER & LGBTQ Cultural District for community events and new businesses.
10. Explore ways to update zoning rules within the LEATHER & LGBTQ Cultural District to permit and allow for a critical concentration of adult and leather businesses.
11. Explore the development of LEATHER & LGBTQ Special Area Design Guidelines development to preserve District history.
12. Include LEATHER & LGBTQ Cultural District representation in local planning processes that impact our district.



POLICY STRATEGIES

TENANT EMPOWERMENT AND EVICTION PREVENTION: FOSTERING HOUSING ACCESS AND INNOVATION

13. Develop partnerships with City departments, non-profit organizations, and housing rights advocates within San Francisco to ensure Leather and LGBTQ community needs are reflected and supported.
14. Support models of LGBTQ and/or communal housing within the LEATHER & LGBTQ Cultural District.
15. Expand dignified and humane housing and sanitation options for the LEATHER & LGBTQ Cultural District's unhoused community members.



POLICY STRATEGIES

ARTS AND CULTURE:

FACILITATING PUBLIC ART, SUSTAINING NIGHTLIFE, AND DIVERSIFYING EVENT OFFERINGS

16. Create a cohesive public art strategy or plan for the LEATHER & LGBTQ Cultural District.
17. Explore a streamlined method to allow Cultural Districts to install public art and district placemaking elements on City infrastructure within their district boundaries.
18. Create a Nightlife and Entertainment Revitalization and Sustainability Plan for the LEATHER & LGBTQ Cultural District.
19. Research and develop resources to support BIPOC, trans, women, sex worker, and disabled Leather and LGBTQ community members in organizing new cultural events within the LEATHER & LGBTQ Cultural District.
20. Create a registry of potential locations in which to gather and host community events and programming.
21. Strengthen connections with Leather and LGBTQ communities outside of San Francisco.



POLICY STRATEGIES

ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT:

RESOURCING LEATHER AND LGBTQ BUSINESSES, EVENTS, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

22. Explore ways to simplify permitting processes for new and existing businesses, events, and organizations within the Leather and LGBTQ Cultural District.
23. Develop and market Leather and LGBTQ businesses and organizations within the District.
24. Support an entrepreneur training program for Leather and LGBTQ community members.
25. Organize employment resources and connections for BIPOC, trans, women, sex worker, and disabled members of the Leather and LGBTQ communities.



POLICY STRATEGIES

CULTURAL COMPETENCY:

CULTIVATING UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATION

26. Develop educational materials to familiarize City government staff with specific cultural norms and issues faced by the Leather and LGBTQ communities.
27. Collect more robust and accurate data about San Francisco's LGBTQ communities.
28. Create a task force to explore community safety and conflict intervention strategies.
29. Pilot a "harm reduction" approach to substance use within the LEATHER & LGBTQ Cultural District.
30. Include input and leadership from local sex worker advocates when creating programs and regulations about the sex trade.
31. Create clear paths to LEATHER & LGBTQ Cultural District leadership for and increase engagement amongst BIPOC, women, trans, sex worker, and disabled community members.
32. Work with community and City partners to improve access to culturally competent health resources for Leather LGBTQ community members within the District.



Programs + Events stemmed from the CHHESS Report process



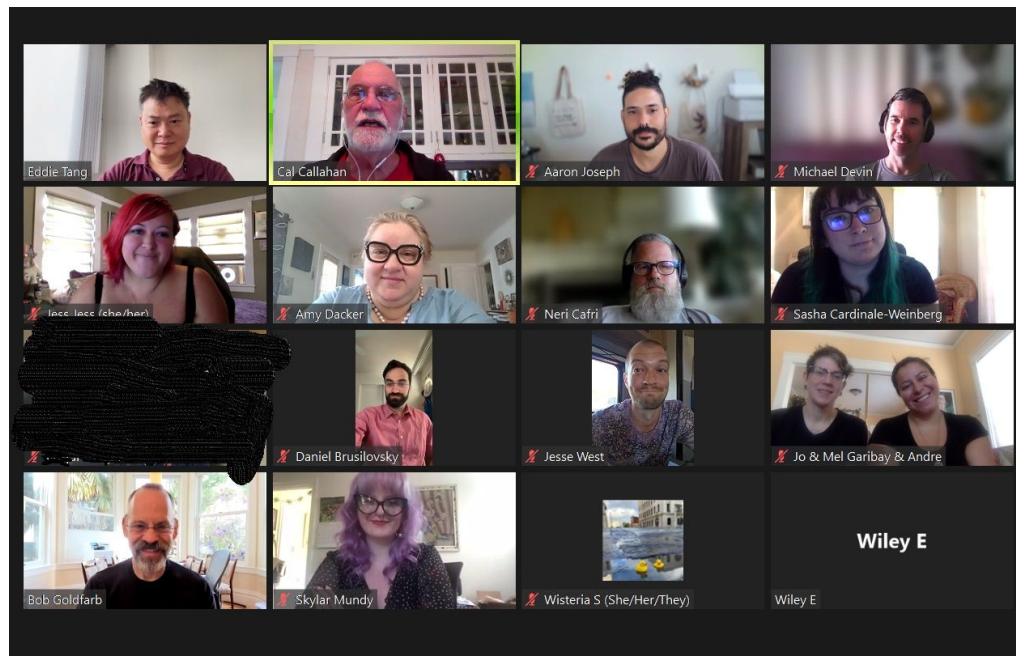
Programs + Events stemmed from the CHHESS Report process

- **SOMA 2nd Saturdays**
 - Holiday Market (*Saturday December 9th*)



Programs + Events stemmed from the CHHESS Report process

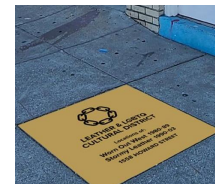
- Entrepreneur Training Program
 - 4th Cohort



Programs + Events stemmed from the CHHESS Report process

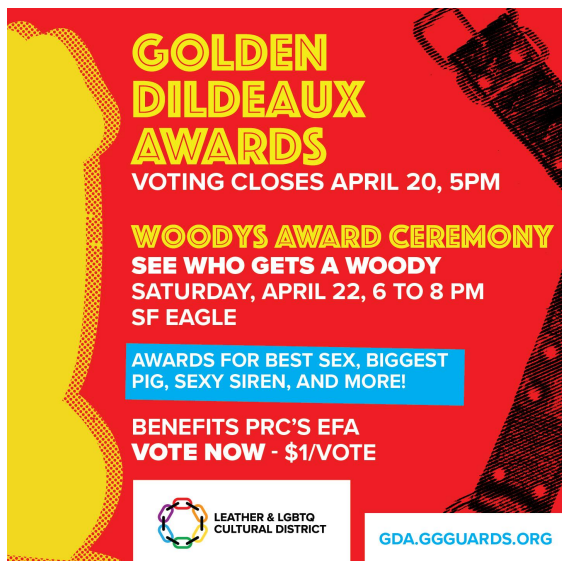
- **Place Making**

- 4 murals in SOMA,
- Street Banners + Pole wraps, painted Cross Walks
- Upcoming - custom street signs and sidewalk plaques



Programs + Events stemmed from the CHHESS Report process

- **Community Building + Preserving Community Traditions**
 - Took on the Golden Dildeaux Awards and Color Guard
 - Reinvigorated the Leather Walk




GOLDEN DILDEAUX AWARDS
VOTING CLOSSES APRIL 20, 5PM

WOODY'S AWARD CEREMONY
SEE WHO GETS A WOODY
SATURDAY, APRIL 22, 6 TO 8 PM
SF EAGLE

AWARDS FOR BEST SEX, BIGGEST FIG, SEXY SIREN, AND MORE!

BENEFITS PRC'S EFA
VOTE NOW - \$1/VOTE

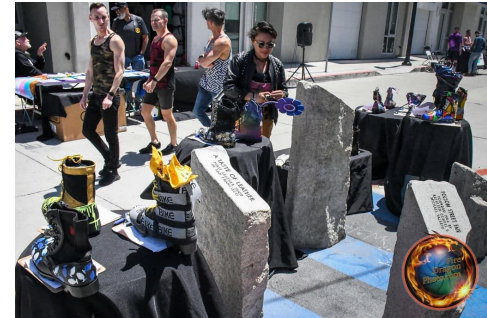
 LEATHER & LGBTQ CULTURAL DISTRICT

GDA.GGGUARDS.ORG



Programs + Events stemmed from the CHHESS Report process

- **Arts + Culture**
 - PRIDE arts pop-ups
 - Walking tours
 - Ringold Alley makeover and Block Party

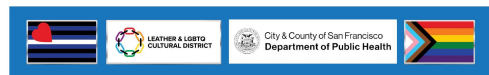


Programs + Events stemmed from the CHHESS Report process

- **Supporting Public Health Initiatives**
 - MPX Vaccine Pop-ups
 - Narcan Trainings + Access



for
SATURDAY
10/8, 1 - 5pm
Eagle Plaza
Appointments
Use This Code:



Next Steps...



Next Steps...

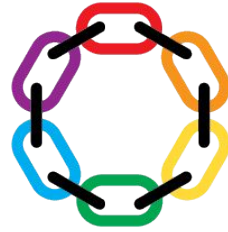
1. **SF Board of Supervisors Hearing + Mayor's Desk for approval** - *Early 2024*
2. **Implementation Phase** - *2024 + Beyond...*
 - a. CHHESS Report as a guiding tool



Questions?



Get Involved

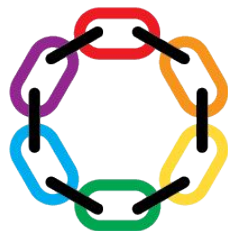


**LEATHER & LGBTQ
CULTURAL DISTRICT**

sfleatherdistrict.org / manager@sflcd.org



Get Involved



**LEATHER & LGBTQ
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- Email list + Membership
- Monthly board meeting - third Wednesday of the month
- Attend events
- Join a committee
 - Arts + culture revitalized
 - Diversity and Membership
 - Communications

