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*****PRESS RELEASE*****

*****ESTABLISHING THE PACIFIC ISLANDER CULTURAL DISTRICT *****

SAN FRANCISCO, CA - Today, Board President and District 10 Supervisor Shamann Walton and District 1 Supervisor Connie Chan, along with community leaders from the Pacific Islander (PI) community announced the creation of the Pacific Islander Cultural District—the first in the United States and the tenth Cultural District in San Francisco.

According to the [Pacific Islander Demographics Report](#) published by the Regional Pacific Islander Taskforce in the Bay Area, between 2000 and 2017, the Pacific Islander population grew by 27% in California. Pacific Islanders are tremendously diverse and the Census Bureau has identified 19 distinct ethnic communities within the Pacific Islander populations. Almost 1 in 5 Pacific Islanders in California reside in the San Francisco Bay Area with 53% of the Bay Area's Pacific Islander population living in the counties of San Francisco, Alameda, and San Mateo. Native Hawaiians are the largest PI ethnic subgroup in the Bay Area with 22.8%, followed by Samoans at 19.4%, and Tongans at 18%. Many Pacific Islanders are also of multiracial descent. According to the U.S. Census, there are approximately 6,773 Pacific Islanders living in San Francisco.

The Pacific Islander community has been in San Francisco for over 100 years and have largely settled in the Visitacion Valley and Sunnydale neighborhoods as well as the Bayview Hunters Point, Forest Hill, and Ingleside neighborhoods. The Visitacion Valley neighborhood also reflects the decline and disparities of the PI community in San Francisco as well as highlights the contributions of the PI community to the city. The Visitacion Valley and Sunnydale neighborhoods are where most PI families found temporary and permanent homes after arriving in San Francisco and the neighborhood holds important legacy sites that are vital to the fabric of the PI community history.



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After World War II to the mid-1950s, families of the PI community from American Samoa started to migrate to San Francisco for education and job opportunities, and some continued to join the military including working on the now decommissioned Hunters Point Naval Shipyard. From 1951-1970, numerous large groups of migrations of the PI community from American Samoa moved to San Francisco and other cities of California and Hawai'i seeking job opportunities and new homes when American Samoa's economic condition took an unexpected turn for the worst due to the relocation of the U.S. Naval Base, the end of the G.I. Bill for vocational training and education, change of federal administration oversight control of the U.S. territory, decreased food supply due to drought, high cost of import and decreased export, increased local population, and bad living conditions left behind by the U.S. Navy.

The PI community's early and later migrations to San Francisco in the 1900s to the 1980s can also be traced back to many factors, including: The Mormon Church's recruitment of members through missionaries and recruitment of labor pools from the PI communities in American Samoa, Tonga, and Samoa (also known as Western Samoa) to build their Temple in Hawai'i. After the completion of the Mormon Temple in Hawai'i, many of these workers stayed on the island, some returned to their native homes, and many moved to San Francisco. The continuous migration influx of PI communities from Tonga and Samoa to San Francisco from 1951-1980 were encouraged and sponsored by the Mormon Church for missionary labor, while some of the PI communities from American Samoa, Samoa, and Tonga were brought to the San Francisco Bay Area for farm labor.

Visitacion Valley and Sunnysdale is home to many cultural resources for the Pacific Islander community. The first PI businesses and restaurants in San Francisco started their roots in Visitacion Valley including the South Pacific Restaurant, and a Samoa/Tonga Seamstress Shop on Geneva Avenue bordering Daly City; unfortunately these stores were forced to close or relocate due to high rents. Currently, the Polynesian Luau remains on Geneva Avenue as a key dining hub for the PI community.

"I am honored and proud to introduce the first-ever Pacific Islander Cultural District and the tenth Cultural District here in San Francisco," said Board President and District 10 Supervisor Shamann Walton. "We have done everything we can to make sure that no community is ignored under our watch, including the Pacific Islander community. The cultural district will highlight



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the histories and contributions of the Pacific Islander community here in the City and we will also continue to make sure that the Pacific Islander community receives the resources and support that they need to thrive.”

“Today, by introducing the Pacific Islander Cultural District legislation, we recognize the history, culture, and contributions of the Pacific Islander people in San Francisco,” said District 1 Supervisor Connie Chan. “By marking this space, we stand together to recognize their part in San Francisco and District 10’s rich cultural fabric.”

“On behalf of the Pacific Islander community, the establishment of the Pacific Islander Cultural District is a celebration of existence in San Francisco,” said Gaynora Siataga, a native of San Francisco of Pacific Islander and mixed descent who has worked in the community for over 25 years.

“It feels good to be seen and it feels good to be seen,” said Fa’ugaa Moliga, former member of the San Francisco Board of Education. “The kids want to come to school because they feel seen and when you see people whether they are Black, Latinx, Native American, or Pacific Islander, they will show up. Today is about the future of these kids and our families.”

“A cultural heritage district plays a big role in preserving and honoring our culture, our history, and our great contributions made by our community to the development and prosperity of San Francisco,” said MJ Mariano, a youth leader from the community. “We deserve to have a space to feel safe and secure, and a space to feel welcome to grow and call home. This is more than just a district that our community asked for, this is a sanctuary for our cultural identities that includes our native language, traditions, and beliefs.”

“This initiative is a pivotal moment for our people, as Pacific Islanders,” said Dr. Ponipate Rokolekutu, professor of Pacific Islander Studies at San Francisco State University. “This initiative is a fight against the erasure of our culture to ensure that there is visibility to uplift the community.”

The boundaries of the Pacific Islander Culture District will be defined as Visitacion Avenue along the south side of Campbell Avenue to San Bruno Avenue, to Bayshore Boulevard at Hester



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Avenue, along Hester Avenue looping back to Bayshore Boulevard to Geneva Avenue, along the north side of Geneva Avenue to Moscow Street, to the east side of Moscow Street to France Avenue, to the south side of France Avenue to La Grande Avenue bordering the west border of McLaren Park to Sunnydale Avenue at Persia Avenue, along Persia Avenue, which turns into Mansell Avenue to Visitacion Avenue through McLaren Park to Campbell Avenue.

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