Resolution establishing the Leather and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ) Cultural District with the intent of commemorating historical sites, preserving existing spaces, and planning for thriving and vibrant communities that are Leather and LGBTQ affirming.

WHEREAS, San Francisco's South of Market has been a local and world capital for Leather culture since the 1960s, as well as one of the city's most significant and distinctive Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ) neighborhoods since the 1950s, with a unique concentration of businesses, institutions, organizations, events, individuals and artists that has been an integral part of the City's cultural richness, economic prosperity, and historical significance; and

WHEREAS, The offices of major mid-20th century homophile political organizations such as the Mattachine Society, The Society for Individual Rights, and the Daughters of Bilitis, and later organizations such as the National Leather Association were in the South of Market; and

WHEREAS, South of Market had long been the west coast center for printing and publishing, and most of San Francisco's gay and leather printers, typesetters, lithographers, and publications were concentrated South of Market, including Drummer magazine, the most important national and international leather publication from 1975 to 1998; and

WHEREAS, After a savage police repression in the early 1960s drove gay businesses from the Embarcadero, many began to flow into South of Market, where suburbanization, deindustrialization, and urban renewal had resulted in many vacant buildings, which quickly became occupied by gay bars, restaurants, and bathhouses; and
WHEREAS, South of Market quickly became one of San Francisco's major LGBT areas, in which most of the city's gay bathhouses were located, as were innumerable bars catering to diverse populations, such as lesbian bars the Hula Shack and the Baybrick Inn, famous dance bars such as the Stud and the End-Up, featured in Tales of the City, and most recently, the drag-focused Oasis; and

WHEREAS, The first gay leather bar in the South of Market, the Tool Box, became world famous when a photo of its interior, with a massive mural painted by local artist Chuck Arnett, was featured in a 1964 Life magazine article on “Homosexuality in America;” and

WHEREAS, South of Market became most identified with the emerging Leather community in San Francisco, when leather bars such as Fe-Be’s, the Ramrod, and the In Between (now the site of the Powerhouse) opened along Folsom Street, starting the formation of a distinctive leather neighborhood; and

WHEREAS, By the late 1960s Folsom Street had already acquired the nickname of “The Miracle Mile” in maps and travel guides of San Francisco, codifying a leather character that expanded dramatically throughout the 1970s, such that by 1980 there were at least thirty South of Market bars, baths, shops, and restaurants serving the leather population, and the area had the largest and most dense concentration of leather institutions anywhere in the world; and

WHEREAS, Much of leather social life was produced by the leather motorcycle clubs and leather social organizations, which used the physical spaces, buildings, and streets South of Market for their meetings, gatherings, and events, and which have engaged in long traditions of raising funds for charitable causes; and

WHEREAS, Leather places and groups sparked an explosion of art and iconography, much of it generated by dozens of artists and photographers and sculptors whose work adorned the bars and baths and club insignia, and who were featured in galleries such as

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Fey-Way, 544 Natoma, 80 Langton, and later, Mark I Chester's studio, as well as in the many art shows that were regularly displayed on the walls of bars such as the Ambush and the Eagle; and

WHEREAS, South of Market institutions and personnel were centrally involved in the construction of political organizations such as the Tavern Guild, which helped mitigate the routine police harassment of LGBTQ individuals and businesses, and give San Francisco its current queer friendly politics and reputation; and

WHEREAS, During the AIDS epidemic, using the models of mutual aid practiced by the motor cycle clubs, leathermen became leaders in combating the epidemic, established institutions such as the AIDS Emergency Fund, and raised hundreds of thousands of dollars to provide direct assistance for people with AIDS and HIV; and

WHEREAS, Sex educators and AIDS activists from the leather community developed and effectively disseminated some of the earliest and most comprehensive safer sex guidelines and practices; and

WHEREAS, Despite the general consensus among public health professionals that the gay bathhouses were opportunities to promote safer sex practices, the city was swayed by a campaign that erroneously blamed the bathhouses for the AIDS epidemic, and adopted regulations that effectively closed the existing bathhouses and sex clubs in San Francisco, badly damaging the gay and leather economies located in South of Market and drastically reducing the gay and leather presence in the neighborhood; and

WHEREAS, Since the 1960s, South of Market has experienced relentless pressure from the urban renewal and redevelopment projects in and around the Moscone Center and Yerba Buena Complex, which have displaced thousands of residents and small businesses in favor of capital intensive civic construction and private developments; and

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WHEREAS, The Leather and LGBTQ presence South of Market continues to be imperiled by the displacement caused by rising rents and land costs resulting from the ongoing economic and physical reconstruction of much of South of Market, particularly the current building boom of high end housing and retail and the escalating competition for commercial space; and

WHEREAS, Although the first Folsom Street Fair was founded in 1984 as a protest against the impact of such redevelopment on the South of Market, the Folsom Street Fair evolved into an annual event that is the largest celebration of leather sexuality in the world, drawing hundreds of thousands of visitors to what has become a major international festival, while the smaller and more local Up Your Alley, begun as an AIDS fundraiser in 1985, is also a major tourist destination, and both of these street fairs are vivid and cherished expressions of the leather cultural character of the neighborhood; and

WHEREAS, The Western SOMA Citizens Planning Taskforce, established by the Board of Supervisors in 2004, worked for almost a decade, consulting with multiple stakeholders in the area in a collaborative planning process, to formulate a plan for sustainable development that would enhance the existing neighborhood rather than destroy it, and whose Western SOMA Community Plan was adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 2013, also included proposals for a Filipino social heritage district (Recognizing, Protecting and Memorializing South of Market Filipino Social Heritage Neighborhood Resources) and an LGBTQ social heritage district (Recognizing, Protecting and Memorializing South of Market LGBTQ Social Heritage Neighborhood Resources); and

WHEREAS, The importance of Leather and LGBTQ South of Market has been recognized in the National Park Service LGBTQ Theme Study (LGBTQ America: A Theme Study of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer History), as well as in the Citywide
Historic Context Statement for LGBTQ History, and the South of Market Historic Context

Statement of the San Francisco Planning Department; and

WHEREAS, The San Francisco Leather History Walk on Ringold Alley, and the future Eagle Plaza, are physical manifestations of the rich leather heritage of South of Market; and

WHEREAS, The boundaries of the District are defined as the south side of Howard between 7th Street and Highway 101, to the west side of 7th between Howard Street and Harrison St, to Interstate 80 between 7th Street and Division Street, to Highway 101 between Interstate 80 and Howard Street; as well as the south side of Harrison Street from 7th Street to 5th Street, the west side of 5th Street from Harrison Street to Bryant Street and the north side of Bryant Street from 5th Street to 6th Street and the west side of 6th Street from Bryant Street to Harrison Street, and these boundaries contain the greatest concentration of Leather landmarks, businesses, institutions, organizations, and festivals; and

WHEREAS, Despite decades of relentless economic pressure, many challenges, and substantial displacement, there are still vibrant Leather and LGBTQ communities and institutions South of Market, and South of Market remains the cultural heart of the region’s Leather culture as well as a world-renowned Leather capital; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco ("the Board") to secure the future of Leather and LGBTQ in South of Market, to stabilize its institutional structures, and to enhance its economic vitality and physical environment, therefore establishes the Leather and LGBTQ Cultural District (District); and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board endorses the goals:

1) To preserve, advance, and promote San Francisco’s Leather & LGBTQ Cultural District as a local, national, and international resource, and as a culturally and commercially enriched neighborhood and district;
2) To preserve and strengthen the Leather and LGBTQ communities of San Francisco by bringing together our diverse histories and cultures at and within the District for all persons to enjoy and share;

3) To create an atmosphere of safety, creativity, vitality, and prosperity for present and future Leather & LGBTQ neighborhood participants, organizations, institutions, commercial activity, entertainment, nightlife, events, and street fairs within the District;

4) To augment and make sustainable Leather & LGBTQ: housing, commerce, community development, cultural resources, physical spaces, and healthcare (in particular, the healthcare of LGBTQ seniors and those living with HIV); and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board establishes the District to preserve and further develop the South of Market’s past, present, and future Leather and LGBTQ communities and resources, and to recognize the historical and present contributions of the Leather and LGBTQ communities; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board establishes the District to preserve and further develop Leather and LGBTQ nightlife and commercial corridors within the boundaries of the district; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board establishes the District to preserve and develop housing, services, and health care for Leather and LGBTQ Seniors and people living with HIV; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board establishes the District to maintain and further develop public installations commemorating the history of the District, such as the San Francisco Leather History Walk on Ringold Alley and the Eagle Plaza, and to support the creation and maintenance of multi-use community center spaces; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors urges the Mayor’s Office of Housing Community Development (“MOHCD”), with advisement from the Historic Supervisors Kim; Sheehy, Ronen
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Preservation Commission, the Office of Economic Workforce Development, and other relevant city departments, to implement a community process that leads to the development of a Leather and LGBTQ District Cultural History and Housing and Economic Sustainability Strategy ("LCHHESS") to set policies that promote community development and stabilization, and increase the presence and visibility of the District; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That other city departments and other bodies may be requested to be part of the community process to create the LCHHESS, including but not limited to the Department of Public Health, the Department of Homelessness, the Historic Preservation Commission, the Aging and Adult Services Commission, the Small Business Commission, the San Francisco Arts Commission, the Department of Human Services, the Department of Aging and Adult Services, the Department of Children, Youth and their Families, the Office of Community Investment and Infrastructure, the Department of Building Inspection, the Department of Public Works, the Entertainment Commission, and the Park and Recreation Department; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the LCHHESS as developed by MOHCD through a community process should be submitted to the Board of Supervisors within 12 months of the adoption of this resolution.
Resolution

File Number: 171019  Date Passed: May 01, 2018

Resolution establishing the Leather and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ) Cultural District with the intent of commemorating historical sites, preserving existing spaces, and planning for thriving and vibrant communities that are Leather and LGBTQ affirming.

April 23, 2018 Land Use and Transportation Committee - RECOMMENDED

May 01, 2018 Board of Supervisors - ADOPTED

Ayes: 11 - Breed, Cohen, Fewer, Kim, Peskin, Ronen, Safai, Sheehy, Stefani, Tang and Yee

Mark E. Farrell
Mayor

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED on 5/1/2018 by the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco.

Angela Calvillo
Clerk of the Board