

Hon. Mayor Todd Gloria
202 C St, 11th Floor
San Diego, CA 92101

August 9, 2023

Dear Honorable Mayor Gloria:

We are a coalition of community members, business owners, non-profit organizations, and property owners who have many years of engagement in the Hillcrest community. We have formed an LGBTQ+ Cultural District Advisory Group to support the creation of an LGBTQ+ Cultural District and provide input from the community to the City of San Diego.

Since May we have held a series of meetings to develop recommendations for the LGBTQ+ Cultural District and the related Plan Hillcrest initiative. City staff from several departments have attended and we greatly appreciate their participation. We appreciate the City's focus on equity and willingness to listen to our voices.

The following are key recommendations developed from the LGBTQ+ Cultural District Advisory Group meetings.

- As Hillcrest continues to evolve and grow, it is essential that we enact policies and protections now so future generations can experience Hillcrest as a safe and welcoming space to the LGBTQ+ community. Foremost, the Cultural District should put people first by supporting the existing community uses that serve as anchor institutions for LGBTQ+ people. The Cultural District should recognize and protect Hillcrest's unique role as a place for LGBTQ+ social interaction, activism, and community organization.
- The Cultural District should promote the diversity, equity, and compatibility of new development with existing LGBTQ+ spaces, businesses, and special events. Hillcrest is a welcoming community, and we welcome new neighbors. Many will be living close to our valued LGBTQ+ institutions and establishments, and we need compatibility measures to protect these important places and events, many of which are long-serving community gathering spaces.
- We support the Planning Department's initial concepts for LGBTQ+ interpretive elements, linear parks, and walking corridors. Additional components should be added to provide meaningful protections and prevent loss of cultural integrity, including an LGBTQ+ Cultural District Certification Program.
- It is essential for the LGBTQ+ Cultural District to be prepared alongside Plan Hillcrest and its historic preservation strategy. These issues are interrelated and should be considered comprehensively by the City. The commercial core of Hillcrest is an open, dynamic, and evolving place. Maintaining that vitality and preserving significant LGBTQ+ places are both important. New historic regulations should not impact new

investment in the community or valued LGBTQ+ establishments. A holistic approach would ensure that one City initiative does not inadvertently undermine the goals of another.

Based on the LGBTQ+ Cultural District Advisory Group meetings, we have developed the following concept for a Cultural District Certification Program. Additional recommendations on historic regulations will be provided separately.

LGBTQ+ Cultural District Certification Program

We propose a certification and recognition program for places and events that serve as anchor institutions and gathering spaces for the LGBTQ+ community. Once a place or event has received certification, it would become eligible for incentives and protections that would strengthen the establishment and minimize the potential loss of the valued institution.

While some aspects of this proposal have been successfully implemented in other cities, this would be a first of its kind program in the nation. We hope San Diego can act as a leader and serve as a model for others seeking to preserve the cultural integrity of their communities.

Eligibility Criteria

1. Institution, business, organization, or event of high significance to LGBTQ+ community due to role as gathering space and place for social organization/activism (i.e. number of people served, key role supporting important cultural events, serving discrete populations).
2. Physical presence in Hillcrest vicinity is essential to the business, institution, or event. It would lose relevance if had to move to another neighborhood.
3. Loss of establishment or event would impact LGBTQ+ cultural integrity.
4. High level of community support demonstrated.
5. Must be located within LGBTQ+ Cultural District boundary (Plan Hillcrest boundary) or noncontiguous locations that meet eligibility criteria.
6. Must agree to maintain core LGBTQ+ features/traditions that were part of the initial certification.

Certification Process

1. Nomination required (options: Mayor, Councilmember, LGBTQ+/community advisory group, petition)

2. LGBTQ+ community group advisory recommendation on criteria compliance.
3. City staff provide final review for compliance with criteria.

Certification Benefits

1. Official City recognition (and unified marketing, technical assistance, etc)
2. Priority or enhanced process when taking lead on community-driven gathering spaces, public spaces.
3. Special event fees reimbursements or Spaces as Places fee reductions, and expedited permit review.
4. Certification a factor to be considered by SDPD when reviewing entertainment licenses/CUPs.
5. Flexibility with 100' residential buffer from entertainment uses (to the extent possible at local level).
6. Longer operating hours for outdoor patios, special events, and uses that activate our public spaces such as parklets and sidewalk cafes.
7. Resident notification of importance of establishment to cultural integrity.
8. More flexible noise regulations to preserve existing operations and events.
9. Complaint procedures that reflect importance of business, establishment, or event.
10. Access to toolkit to make it easy to connect with neighbors and build community.

We understand that Plan Hillcrest is a land use plan and may not be the primary mechanism for implementing the full certification program. Instead, Plan Hillcrest could be developed in coordination with this concept and include a description of it. It could also incorporate companion Supplemental Development Regulations such as resident notification of location within the Cultural District and design criteria that are thoughtful to culturally significant surroundings (i.e. noise mitigation measures, building orientation).

Although our recommendations are informed by input from City staff, we know that significant work remains to refine the concept and turn it into a successful program. We request that the City designate an appropriate department lead and working group to work with us on this effort.

We are immensely thankful that we have such a strong champion for the LGBTQ+ community as our Mayor. We look forward to continued collaboration with you and City staff on the LGBTQ+ Cultural District, and we hope it will become yet another major contribution you have made to our community.

Yours sincerely,



Susan Jester
(she/her/hers),
Chair of LGBTQ+
Cultural District
Advisory Group and
San Diego City
Commissioner



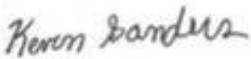
Fernando Z. López
Jr., (he/him/his),
Executive Director,
San Diego Pride



Nicole Verdés (she,
they),
Board President,
Lambda Archives



Benjamin Nicholls
(he/his/him),
Executive Director,
Hillcrest Business
Association



Kevin Sanders
(he/his/him),
Owner, Number 1 on
Fifth Avenue



Ryan Bedrosian
(he/his/him),
Owner, Rich's
Nightclub



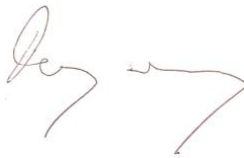
Adam Gilman
(he/his/him),
Property Owner



Moe Girton
Owner, Gossip Grill



Matt Ramon,
Owner, Urban MO's



Gary Wong
(he/his/him),
Property Owner



Mike Burnett
(he/his/him),
Owner, Foundation
for Form



Jason Frye
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Chair, Hillcrest Town
Council