

# San Francisco Business Times

## UPDATE: BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS

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### Business improvement districts flourish in nine areas

BY CHLOE DOMINGUEZ  
San Francisco Business Times

Over the past few years, Oakland's nine community benefit districts have helped make neighborhoods safer, cleaner and livelier. In the process, they have become an essential asset for businesses and city leaders.

As the city's resources dwindle, businesses seem willing to tax themselves to create these areas, and three neighborhoods — airport/business park, Jack London Square/south of Broadway and Mosswood Park/Piedmont Avenue — are in the process of creating new BIDs.

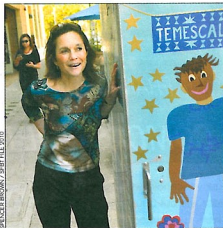
Grand Avenue and the Dimond District are exploring the idea as well.

"These are small but strong areas, with good reputations, and if they are interested, we will support them," said Aliza Gallo, the city's business development services manager. "All the districts are going very well, with a number of initiatives under way that are very exciting to the city."

Census figures show that more people are moving to cities, making BIDs an important tool for policy makers.

"The districts are helping establish Oakland as a model city of the East Bay," said Marco LiMandri, president of New City America, which helped Oakland establish the nine districts.

With about 2,000 businesses in the districts, the BIDs are generating more than \$3.6 million annually, Gallo said. The initial priority for many districts is to improve safety. In the Temescal district, for example, new pedestrian lighting will hopefully beef up security, a major issue for merchants there.



"The advantages of BIDs are the dedicated people picking up where the city leaves off," says Drapkin.

"We're choosing to use LED lights, since they will save money in the long run," said Darlene Drapkin, executive director of the Temescal and Koreatown Districts.

Many BIDs are now turning toward beautification and creating a sense of community.

"We are focusing more on improving public spaces, like our plaza, which establishes a community of nurturing and support," said Deborah Boyer, senior vice president

of the Swig Co., which owns the Kaiser Center complex, and is a member of the Downtown Oakland Association, the area's BID.

BART is working to help clean up the exits at the 12th and 19th Street locations, with flower planters and attractive seating.

J.C. Wallace, vice president at SKS Investments and a member of the Downtown Oakland Association, said the BID is hanging plants and banners and "trying to improve the medians downtown."

Beautification also includes art pieces in areas like Temescal where the "Temescal Flows" mural on the 52nd street overpass cheers up the area.

"The overpass mural helps remove the psychological barrier coming from the Children's Hospital and Research Center. It is amazing," Drapkin said. The mural, by artist Alan Leon, received two grants from the city totaling \$19,000, and the BID contributed as well.

Steve Snider, district manager of the Downtown Oakland Association, said pop-up art galleries and events like First Fridays — both partially funded by the BIDs — help attract people to the area's businesses.

"The first Friday of every month galleries, restaurants, and clubs are open for people to explore and experience the culture of Oakland. We're trying to connect the dots and to help grow a positive image of the city," Snider said.

Improving the city's image is one of the reasons the BIDs were created, boosters say.

"The advantages of BIDs are the dedicated people picking up where the city leaves off," Drapkin said. "This shows how much people care about our city."

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### Waterfront projects would create jobs, housing, stores

Oakland's waterfront is the site of some of the largest proposed projects in the city and promises to see revitalization in the decades ahead.

Projects range from industrial building at the Army Base to 3,100 housing units at Oak to Ninth and new offices and retail and a hotel at Jack London Square. These ambitious projects have all been held up due to the troubled economy, but officials hope they will get moving again soon.

—Chloe Dominguez

#### ARMY BASE

**Developer/Agencies Involved:** Prologis, California Capital and Investment Group, Port of Oakland, and the City of Oakland.

**Size:** Logistics facilities, including deployment centers, container freight stations, warehouse facilities and storage on 232.6 acres.

**Status/next steps:** Going through final stages of negotiations.

**Construction to start:** 2013 for first phase.

**Construction to end:** 2015 for first phase.

**Projected cost:** \$438 million.

**Top challenges:** Getting approval and finalizing agreements with different agencies.

**Why it's important:** This project will help create jobs, clean up the environment for the surrounding communities, and rebuild the decaying infrastructure into a new logistics and trade center. It will help the Port to export in a faster and more cost-efficient way.

**Permanent jobs created:** 8,000 new jobs.

#### JACK LONDON SQUARE, PHASE II

**Developer/Agencies Involved:** Jack London Square Ventures LLC, a partnership between Ellis Partners LLC and DwycoWest; the Port of Oakland.

**Size:** Phase II is approved for 255,000 square feet of retail and office and a 248-room hotel.

**Status/Next steps:** Jack London Square has completed Phase I of construction and is waiting for the market to rebound for Phase II planning to begin.

**Construction to start:** No timeline has yet been established.

**Projected cost:** The value of Jack London Square Phase II construction would be approximately \$200 million.

**Why it's important:** The Jack London Square project is significant economically and socially to Oakland and the greater Bay Area. The project represents the revitalization of a historic waterfront neighborhood — the gateway to the East Bay. The mixed-use property includes offices, retail, dining and entertainment venues and public space for recreation and events.

#### OAK TO NINTH

**Developer/Agencies Involved:** Signature Development Group, Reynolds & Brown and the Port of Oakland.

**Size:** 3,100 housing units, 200,000 square feet of retail/commercial, 3,950 parking spaces, 30 acres open space, two renovated marinas on 65 acres.

**Status:** Project is approved, and now working on engineering and drawings for next year.

**Construction to start:** 2013.

**Construction to end:** Depends on market conditions.

**Projected cost:** Many billions of dollars.

**Top challenges:** Large project and a long process.

**Why it's important:** The project revitalizes the waterfront and transforms the under-used maritime area into a vital neighborhood.

**Permanent jobs created:** 10,000 new jobs in retail, construction, commercial and janitorial.

