

June 28, 2016

Los Angeles City Council
Los Angeles City Clerk
City Hall
200 N. Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Date: 6/28/16
Submitted in EDC Committee
Council File No: 16-0749
Item No.: 2
Adam R. Lid
Deputy: _____

RE: Opposition to the Establishment of Business Improvement District(s) in Venice

Dear City Officials,

We are writing to oppose the establishment of the proposed Venice Beach Business Improvement District. As longtime residents, property owners, business owners and stakeholders, we are concerned about both the Business Improvement District (BID) process and potential implementation. We oppose for many reasons, including:

1. The process for establishing the BID has not been public or transparent. None of the details or documents about the potential Venice BID have been made public, including the proposed area of coverage, the bylaws or other governing documents, the process for membership, the results or timing of any petitions or ballot processes, and other relevant information.
2. Business Improvement Districts in the City of Los Angeles, and particularly the security forces they hire, have a history of hostility toward homeless and low-income residents resulting in several lawsuits since their inception in the late 1990s regarding unconstitutional practices.
3. Business Improvement Districts are a way to put the control of public spaces and services in the hands of private, commercial property owners that disenfranchises or harms those that don't own commercial property and limits democratic control over resources.
4. Business Improvement District assessments are not feasible for all businesses or property owners to pay, particularly non-profits and small business owners. Additionally, non-profits and small businesses that rent their properties are likely to have to pay their portion of a BID assessment without any voice or vote in the approval process.
5. The founding premise for the Business Improvement District is at fault. It is claimed that a BID is needed because the City of Los Angeles is not providing the proper public services. While the city is not currently providing all needed services, the solution is not giving grossly disproportionate control of public spaces to the select few who own businesses in a neighborhood. We vehemently oppose any privatization of our public spaces and services. The city is responsible for providing these necessary services.
6. Currently, and for at least the past five years, some of the wealthiest global technology corporations such as Google and Snapchat have enjoyed an 80% tax break from the City. Simply requiring these companies pay their fair share would help properly fund our needed public services.
7. Residents, small businesses, tourists and other stakeholders in and near the proposed Venice Beach BID are not in favor of the BID, yet have no voice or vote in the process. Initial petitions documenting this opposition are attached.

For these and other reasons, we urge that any proposal for a BID in Venice be denied.

Sincerely,

Los Angeles Community Action Network
Los Angeles Human Right to Housing Collective
Occupy Venice
People Organized for Westside Renewal (POWER)
VAGABOND
Venice Coalition to Preserve Our Unique Community Character (VCPUCC)
Venice Community Housing
Venice Justice Committee
Venice United/Unidos
Western Regional Advocacy Project
Westside Tenants Union