



Los Angeles BID Factsheet

10.1.19

What is a BID?

Over the past three decades Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) have been expanding rapidly across California, and they have systematically acted to criminalize the presence and activities of poor people in public spaces. A property-based BID is a private corporation funded by city collected assessments on property, including properties owned by the city and nonprofits. A merchant-based BID uses special assessments on businesses instead. Both types of BIDS use these funds with very little public oversight.

Los Angeles currently has **40 BIDs** which collectively control **1,341 blocks** of the city. In fiscal year 2018 alone, they collected **\$39,322,228.35** in assessments.

How are BIDs created?

There are two votes in the process for forming a new property-based BID. First, petitions in favor of the BID from property owners representing more than 50% of total assessments must be submitted. Then ballots are sent to all property owners in the BID, and a majority of those returned must be in favor. Both the petitions and the ballots are weighted by each property owner's assessment as proportionate to the total proposed District assessment. This means that:

- Only property owners and local and state governments are allowed to submit petitions and ballots in elections on the formation of BIDs.
 - Renters and homeless people are denied by law the right to vote.
- The larger the amount of property that a person owns, the more influential their vote.

The city decides its position on forming new BIDs without public input. City Council has repeatedly submitted petitions in favor of forming new BIDs on behalf of city-owned properties before any public hearings. These petitions are submitted with the explicit intent of pushing BIDs over the 50% threshold.

What kinds of programs do BIDs fund?

Each BID refers to their programs by different names, but all programs fall into the four categories of security, public space maintenance, communication and development, and administration and advocacy. The priority for BIDs, however, is clear. A total of **\$26,406,166.24** was spent on security programs in fiscal year 2018, or **67%** of the total assessments.

BIDs' security budgets pay for armed and unarmed security officers, security camera surveillance programs, and coordination with the LAPD. The Hollywood Entertainment BID, for example, employs six to eight armed officers every day of the week. BID officers regularly harass homeless people, violate their civil rights, and exclude and evict them from public spaces. The Fashion District BID has also been successfully sued for working with police to seize and destroy the property of street vendors. Other activities that BIDs spend their money on include:

- Drafting and promoting legislation that privatizes community space for business interests and criminalizes poor and homeless people, and anyone who is not a consumer. They lobby local and state legislators to push legislation that supports the targeting, harassment and exclusion of homeless people, poor people, street vendors, and buskers from their districts.
- Opposing legislation that seeks to protect street-based people from criminalization including those that attempt to overturn sit-lie ordinances.
- Controlling the architecture and aesthetics of the district including creating parklets, holding festivals, and cleaning public spaces.

TAKE ACTION – What You Can Do:

With BIDs playing an increasingly greater role in controlling our public spaces in our cities and states, and in creating laws that criminalize poor and homeless people, it's important to take action and say NO to BIDs!

- Tell your local government:
 - Stop all public funding of BIDs
 - Ask for the immediate disbanding of BIDs
 - Cancel all special agreements with BIDs
 - Demand more public oversight
- Document (video, photos, take notes) incidents of BID harassment of vendors, poor people, buskers, homeless people, and send your documentation to wrap@wraphome.org and your local groups fighting BIDs.
- Ask your local business if they support BIDs. If they do not, ask them if they would be willing to put signage in their windows. If they support BIDs, don't patronize their business!



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