



San Francisco BID Fact Sheet

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What is a BID?

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are poorly understood but crucial actors in the ongoing criminalization of homelessness. A BID is a bounded geographic area in which additional assessments are levied on businesses or property in order to fund programs administered by private corporations. These funds are spent with very little public oversight.

San Francisco currently has **18 BIDs** which collectively control **480 blocks** of the city. In 2020 alone, they will collect **\$25,000,000** in assessments.

What do BIDs do and how are they formed?

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.

City government is responsible for the spread of BIDs in San Francisco. The Board of Supervisors augmented state legislation to require exclusively residential properties to pay BID assessments and lowered the threshold for successful petitions to form a BID from 50% to just 30% of total proposed assessment fees. The city government has also submitted ballots in favor of forming new BIDs on behalf of city-owned properties before any public hearings for every single one of San Francisco's BIDs.

In spite of the undemocratic process, elections on the formation of BIDs are tabulated by the San Francisco Department of Elections.

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 most important program for BIDs is clearly security. Over **\$13,500,000** is budgeted towards cleaning and security programs for BIDs in 2020, more than half of their total assessment revenue.

BIDs' security budgets pay for armed and unarmed private security that patrols seven days a week, security camera surveillance programs, and coordination with the SFPD. BIDs in San Francisco also use the 10B program, which allows them to pay off-duty cops to patrol their districts. The cops are paid through SFPD, but are supervised by the BID.

Cleaning programs are also an important part of criminalization, because cleaning crews move people on the streets out of public spaces. If people resist being moved, then cleaning crews will call private security or police. Other activities that BIDs spend their money on include:

- Drafting and promoting legislation that privatizes public space for business interests and criminalizes poor and homeless people. BIDs lobby local and state legislators to push legislation that supports the targeting, harassment and exclusion of homeless people, poor people, street vendors, buskers, and anyone who is not a consumer 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.



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