



GASLAMP QUARTER ASSOCIATION  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING  
MINUTES

Wednesday, August 28th, 2024, | 3:30 PM  
Marriott Gaslamp: 660 K Street 8<sup>th</sup> floor

Present Board Members	Absent Board Members	GQA Staff
Cindy Blair Laurie Peters Aron Langellier Jeffrey Burg Joe Santos Howard Greenberg Vania Raitano Rick Borba Sean Renard Chris Lott	Stephen Sherman Josefine Jandinger Carlos Becerra Kim Shattuck Lucy Burni Francesca Ramirez	Alma Ascencio Michael Trimble

- 1. Call to Order – Directors Present**  
Aron Langellier  
Howard Greenberg  
Jeff Burg

**2. Minutes approved by: Executive Board- All in favor Lori, Aron, Jeff(seconds)**

Michael Trimble: officially called the meeting to order at 3:42pm. He began by thanking the board members for their continued dedication and support. Michael emphasized that the association's key focus remains on promoting the Gaslamp Quarter as San Diego's premier entertainment district and ensuring it remains a safe, vibrant destination for both locals and tourists. He acknowledged the collective efforts that have gone into sustaining businesses and improving the overall experience within the Gaslamp, with a focus on both short-term recovery and long-term revitalization.

Michael then reviewed the meeting agenda, which included the introduction of new board members, updates on the Property Business Improvement District (PBID) renewal, community safety initiatives, and discussions on upcoming events and partnerships.

Introduction of New Board Members:

Michael Trimble introduced four new board members who have joined the GQA to offer their leadership and expertise in supporting the district's growth and sustainability:

1. Vania Raitano - CFO and owner of Whiskey Girl, a well-known establishment in the Gaslamp Quarter. Vania has been deeply involved in the neighborhood since the mid-1990s, witnessing its evolution. She has a rich background in both



business operations and financial management, which will be invaluable to the GQA. Vania spoke briefly about her personal connection to the Gaslamp, referencing her stepfather, Leon Herrick. He was one of The Pioneers of the Gaslamp Quarter Historic District, who was a pivotal figure in the district's early redevelopment efforts. She shared her excitement about contributing to the board and the community's ongoing success.

2. Chris Lott - General Manager of the Pali Hotel San Diego. Chris has spent several years working in San Diego's hospitality industry, focusing on luxury accommodations and high-level customer service. His expertise in managing large teams and guest experiences will be crucial as the Gaslamp continues to attract visitors. Chris expressed his enthusiasm for supporting the district's initiatives, especially in terms of collaboration between hotels and local businesses.

3. Sean Bernard - Director of Operations for King Seafood Group, which includes overseeing operations at Lou and Mickey's and Water Grill. Sean brings significant experience in restaurant management, particularly in optimizing operations, improving cost control, and driving event sales. His knowledge of the food and beverage industry and his focus on quality service will contribute to enhancing the dining experiences offered in the Gaslamp Quarter. Sean shared his excitement about returning to the area, having previously worked in the Gaslamp, and his eagerness to bring new energy to the board.

4. Rick Borba - Owner of the Gaslamp Tavern and Revel Revel Event Space. Rick is a long-time restaurateur and entrepreneur who has successfully run several establishments in San Diego. His deep understanding of the local business landscape and his entrepreneurial mindset will be a significant asset to the board. Rick highlighted his commitment to preserving the Gaslamp's unique identity while finding innovative ways to attract new audiences and enhance the community's offerings.

Michael encouraged the board to offer their full support to the new members, noting that their combined experience and passion for the district will play a pivotal role in advancing the GQA's mission.

Special Presentation: Betsy Brennan, CEO of the Downtown Partnership

Betsy Brennan, CEO of the Downtown Partnership, gave a comprehensive presentation on the Property Business Improvement District (PBID) renewal process. She began by outlining the PBID's vital role in funding essential services such as enhanced maintenance, security, and beautification efforts across the Gaslamp Quarter. She noted that the PBID's current term is coming to an end, and the renewal process is crucial for continuing these services. Betsy emphasized the need for collective property owner support to ensure the district remains clean, safe, and welcoming for both businesses and visitors.

Key points from her presentation included:

- The importance of collaboration between the GQA and the Downtown Partnership in driving economic growth and improving public safety.
- Post-pandemic recovery challenges, including increasing homelessness, public safety concerns, and the need for greater investment in cleanliness and security initiatives.
- The PBID renewal timeline: If 50% of property owners support the renewal, the next step will be to present it to City Council for a vote.
- Feedback from property owners has been largely positive, with a strong desire to maintain and potentially expand current services.

Betsy concluded by thanking the board for their continued partnership and underscored the importance of aligning goals to ensure a successful renewal.

Clean and Safe Program Update: Alonso Vivas



Alonso Vivas, Director of the Clean and Safe Program, provided an update on the program's recent initiatives aimed at maintaining the cleanliness and safety of the Gaslamp Quarter:

- Enhanced maintenance services: Alonso highlighted the introduction of a new cleaning machine designed to improve the efficiency of sidewalk cleaning. This new equipment will allow the team to cover more ground with less disruption to businesses.

- Safety and security efforts: The Clean and Safe team has been working closely with the San Diego Police Department (SDPD) to address crime and public safety concerns in the district. Alonso emphasized the importance of these partnerships and the role they play in creating a secure environment for both residents and visitors.

- Community outreach: In addition to cleaning and safety, Alonso discussed the program's efforts to connect with unsheltered individuals in the area, providing them with services and support through partnerships with local outreach organizations.

- Future initiatives: Alonso announced plans to expand the program's services, including additional graffiti removal efforts, beautification projects, and increased collaboration with local businesses to maintain the Gaslamp's appeal.

Alonso reiterated the significance of continued investment in the Clean and Safe Program and encouraged the board to support its ongoing efforts.

Next Steps:

- PBID Renewal: The board agreed to continue discussions on the PBID renewal.

- Safety and Cleanliness Initiatives: Board members expressed their support for expanding maintenance and security services, with several suggesting further engagement with local businesses to address specific concerns.

Betsy Brennan, CEO of the Downtown San Diego Partnership, discussed upcoming enhancements in the Gaslamp Quarter and other downtown areas. She highlighted services planned for MLK Promenade, historic parks, and several green spaces. A 20% increase in assessment is scheduled for the first year of the new program, starting July 1, 2025, with an additional 7% annual increase thereafter.

Brennan emphasized the program's recent accolade—the 2023 San Diego County Taxpayers Association's Golden Watchdog Award—recognizing their effective financial stewardship. She noted that the Downtown Partnership Board of Directors is actively involved in overseeing the program's budget, which is approved annually by the San Diego City Council. She also explained that if the renewal of the Property and Business Improvement District (PBID) is not approved, services will revert to baseline city levels, drastically reducing the frequency of trash collection and other essential services.

Michael Trimble, followed up with a question about what happens to PBID funds if the renewal doesn't pass. Brennan assured that all PBID funds would be fully expended by June 30, and beginning July 1, city services would resume at a reduced level.

Howard Greenberg expressed concerns that the Gaslamp is still not clean or safe, despite years of efforts. He requested more transparency, specifically asking for a clear comparison between the current and proposed future budgets and service schedules to justify the additional costs. Greenberg also noted the difficulty of passing these costs on to tenants, especially given the economic challenges businesses face, including decreased sales, rising rents, and vacant storefronts. He called for immediate action, rather than waiting for long-term solutions like the reopening of Horton Plaza.

Brennan acknowledged these concerns, reiterating that the program provides enhanced services over and above city provisions. She committed to providing the requested budget details and emphasized that the partnership is doing everything possible, including advocating for downtown improvements at the city and state levels. Brennan also highlighted the role of the Clean and Safe program's grant-funded employees, including 25 unhoused care workers.



Greenberg reiterated the importance of showing property owners the tangible benefits of paying into the program and suggested a detailed presentation outlining how the proposed enhancements would improve current conditions. He supported spending more money if it would lead to effective results but stressed the need for clear communication to property owners and tenants.

Brennan appreciated the feedback and committed to being fully transparent about the budget and services. She welcomed further discussions and pledged to keep working with all stakeholders to ensure the success of the Clean and Safe program.

During the board meeting, several key figures shared updates and concerns:

- Michael Trimble: mentioned the importance of ensuring continuous improvement within the Gaslamp Quarter, emphasizing a need for concerted efforts to manage ongoing challenges.
- Alonso Vivas: provided insights into the current cleanliness efforts and upcoming improvements. He shared updates on the new cleaning machine arriving in September, which aims to enhance sidewalk cleanliness. Alonso noted that the Gaslamp area has already been power-washed from Broadway and southward. The investment includes nearly \$100,000 in new equipment, and the community can expect visible improvements by September.
- Betsy Brennan: added that recent stormwater regulations had previously limited the ability to use certain technologies. However, with regulations easing, new machines like the one implemented in SeaWorld and the airport can now be used in Gaslamp. Betsy highlighted the ongoing push to bring in cutting-edge technology, including potential safety measures such as drones and enhanced lighting on private properties. The Downtown Partnership continues to collaborate with local authorities to improve safety in the district.
- Michael Trimble: inquired about the investment in "Big Belly" trash cans, which have proven successful in keeping the Gaslamp clean. Alonso confirmed that once the new program is renewed, there will be plans to replace all trash cans downtown with Big Belly units. Fifth Avenue has seen significant progress in this regard, with further work planned for other areas of the district.
- Maria, a Gaslamp tenant: expressed concerns about declining sales and questioned the timeline for cleaning improvements, specifically regarding sidewalk cleanliness. Alonso reassured her that significant improvements are underway, with the new machine expected to enhance results.
- Captain Hallahan and SDPD Lt. Shawn Takeuchi: discussed the increasing unruly behavior, particularly on Friday and Saturday nights. They addressed the growing violence and the dangers it poses to both the public and police officers. Lt. Takeuchi emphasized the need for a more robust police presence and how the department is working towards increasing staffing for neighborhood policing, specifically in the Gaslamp area. He also mentioned the importance of compliance and leveraging enforcement to address safety concerns.
- Lt. Takeuchi: explained the significant challenge of dealing with ongoing violent incidents, stressing the need for additional resources and collaboration with local businesses to manage safety issues more effectively.
- Aron Langellier: highlighted his concerns about the lack of consequences for unruly behavior. He emphasized that without stricter consequences, issues will persist, and business owners, as well as the police, need stronger support in maintaining order in the Gaslamp area.

Maria (Gaslamp Tenant): Expressed support for the police, acknowledging the limitations they face, and questioned where the breakdown occurs that allows arrested individuals back onto the street.



Captain Hallahan: Explained that after the police arrest individuals, the responsibility lies with the City Attorney and District Attorney (DA). Often, charges are dropped due to procedural issues. Hallahan highlighted that Proposition 47 has made it harder to hold people accountable, reducing police authority to enforce penalties such as rehabilitation or jail time.

Joyce Summer (Downtown Resident): Expressed frustration with the county's lack of action, particularly their delay in opening mental health facilities, despite having had funding over the years. She encouraged residents to write letters and lobby for change.

Jake Fresh: Introduced himself as the incoming Lieutenant taking over Captain Hallahan's position in the service area. He mentioned that he will continue collaborating with the community and implementing changes, including increasing motorcycle officer patrols to address vending issues and improve conditions

Captain Hallahan: introduced Mike Ellington, the new Lieutenant in charge of the Vice Unit, replacing Jason Scott. He also mentioned collaborating with Melanie on a new project. Mike Ellington, in his introduction, expressed his excitement to return to downtown, noting his experience as a Sergeant from 2017 to 2021. He emphasized his goal to address alcohol-related issues in the area, moving beyond arrest-focused strategies to more preventative measures, such as nuisance abatement projects. Mike discussed working closely with business owners and security personnel to reduce incidents by keeping the streets clear and educating staff on proper ID checks.

Sean from Economic Development: provided two updates: the fiscal year 2025 BID agreements had been signed, and order requests had been submitted, signaling the beginning of the payment process for assessments.

Rhiannon from Gaslamp Museum: shared upcoming events, including a Friday the 13th tour in October and the Fall-Back Festival on November 3rd, which transforms the streets to resemble the 1880s. She encouraged GQA's sponsorship and participation.

Michael Trimble: then moved the discussion to the approval of the minutes from the June 26th Board of Directors meeting, which passed after a motion from Lori and a second from Jeff. He also provided an update on recent meetings with city officials, including a meeting with the Chief and his team on August 13th. Howard Greenberg added that property owners and interested business leaders are coordinating efforts to address issues affecting the Gaslamp Quarter. They emphasized the need to see budgets and deployment schedules to ensure effective changes.

Michael Trimble: concluded by discussing the importance of Proposition 36, which seeks to amend Proposition 47 and provide law enforcement with the necessary tools to address issues like drugs and homelessness. He called for volunteers to attend a roundtable discussion on September 3rd to discuss Prop 36 further.

Laurel McFarlane's Updates:

1. Mobility Campaign: The campaign is progressing well. The video is complete and approved by the city, which covered the entire cost. It's set to be released soon. Additional efforts include parking initiatives, such as holiday parking promotions.
2. Tree Farm for Holidays: Laurel has contacted Aaron's tree supplier regarding a potential tree farm on Island Avenue, from Thanksgiving onwards, and offered help with permits and street closures. If this doesn't work, she plans to collaborate with a pumpkin patch/tree farm for October events.
3. Upcoming Events
  - October Halloween Event: Exploring options for partnerships with pumpkin patch providers.
  - Cinco de Mayo: A 2-day event due to the success of last year's event. The budget is set at \$80,000. Laurel emphasized starting sponsor searches earlier to allow for effective promotion.



- Craft Cocktail Crawl: The crawl will soon be promoted, with over 10 participating bars/restaurants. It's an interactive event, incorporating a scavenger hunt with prizes and maps. Launching on September 14th.

4. Pet Parade: Scheduled for December 14th, this year's parade will feature a marching band to attract more families.

5. Day of the Dead Event: Partnering with Estrella and Bob from Old Town to organize a Day of the Dead event, including altars at local restaurants and a big Latin band concert. Estrella has committed to a \$10,000 sponsorship.

6. Postseason Events: Preliminary plans for MLB postseason activations include fun photo stations near businesses, flash tattoos, and silk-screened shirts. These activities will aim to draw fans after Padres games. Alcohol sponsorships are being explored to help fund these initiatives.

7. Future Promotions: Upcoming events include Small Business Saturday, Christmas, Mardi Gras, Super Bowl, and Easter 2025

Alma Ascencio Updates:

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) Overview:

Alma provided an analysis of key performance indicators from July to August:

- Overall Impressions: There was a 95% increase in impressions across Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook platforms.
- Engagement Rates: Engagement surged by 158%, largely driven by Comic-Con-related content.
- Link Clicks: Post link clicks increased by 130%, thanks to effective blog posts and press releases.
- Audience Growth: The total audience grew by 2.1%, with notable increases: Twitter (91%), Facebook (22%), and video views skyrocketing by 196.5%.

Alma emphasized the growing importance of video content in social media strategy, stating that static posts are becoming less effective. She aims to produce more regionally focused content featuring local businesses to enhance engagement.

Comic-Con Recap:

The week leading up to Comic-Con saw extensive promotion, with Alma collaborating closely with Gaslamp Quarter businesses to highlight specials and offers. The engagement metrics included over 6,000 interactions and 7,000 shares across social media platforms. Alma noted that user-generated content, particularly shares, significantly boosts visibility, reaching audiences beyond San Diego.

Alma facilitated a successful partnership with HBO for the Penguin activation, mediating connections between the production and local businesses to enhance promotional efforts. She expressed commitment to reaching out to board members for future collaboration opportunities.

Influencer Engagement:

Alma is actively coordinating with content creators and micro-influencers, paying for their services to promote Gaslamp Quarter businesses. She carefully selects influencers with authentic followings, ensuring they align with the brand's image.

In her strategy, she invites these influencers to experience local businesses without charging them for promotional posts. This approach has yielded promising results, with specific influencers, such as SoCal Nation, boasting over 200,000 followers and demonstrating effective engagement.

Upcoming Promotions:

- Taste of Gaslamp: Alma is ramping up promotions for this event using social media ads, Google Ads, and YouTube Ads. She plans to feature each participating Gaslamp Quarter business to maximize visibility.



- Transportation Campaign: The campaign is live, integrating various media platforms, including YouTube, Google, Spotify, Disney+, Hulu, and Roku. This multi-channel approach aims to reach broader audiences while targeting demographics in San Diego and Los Angeles.
- Gaslamp Chills Campaign: Preparations are underway for Halloween promotions, focusing on attracting visitors during this high-traffic season.

#### Strategic Partnerships:

Alma is developing a press kit containing marketing materials and digital assets to facilitate sharing among partners, such as California Downtown, San Diego MTS, and DLI. The kit aims to enhance collaboration and awareness of the Gaslamp Quarter.

#### Additional Discussion:

- Sean Renard inquired about the possibility of connecting with influencers for promotions.
- Alma confirmed her commitment to ongoing promotions and collaborations, emphasizing the importance of expanding visibility for participating businesses.

#### Update from Michael Trimble:

Michael provided insights on the status of parklet removals, distributing handouts detailing which parklets had been removed or were in the process of removal. He expressed frustration over the lack of clarity in communication from city officials regarding timelines and permits.

Joe Santos: noted progress on ongoing projects but highlighted internal challenges within city departments that have been causing delays.

#### Key Issues Discussed:

##### 1. Blarney Stone Pub Status:

- Howard Greenberg: highlighted that Blarney Stone Pub Status has received the necessary permits.. He emphasized the need to remove outdated structures to allow for new developments.
- Michael Trimble: mentioned ongoing challenges with city communication, specifically regarding parklet removals and how delays can negatively impact local businesses. He shared a personal anecdote about a business incident that underscored these frustrations.

##### 2. Joe Santos' Experience:

- Joe Santos: expressed frustration and delays affecting his business. He highlighted his proactive approach in working with city.
- Joe also pointed out issues related to emergency issues, indicating that parklets can obstruct safe evacuation routes during emergencies.

##### 3. Michael Trimble's Perspective:

- Michael acknowledged the challenges with city processes, mentioning that the fines imposed on businesses seem disproportionate to the circumstances, and there's a lack of accountability.

##### 4. Public Safety Concerns:

- Maria from Gaslamp Tenant brought up discussions with a city representative about safety and accessibility issues related to parklets, which can impede emergency services.

##### 5. Budget and Cleaning Initiatives:

- Kevin Flatt: reported on the budget committee's exploration of enhanced power washing and cleaning services. He detailed the logistical aspects of the operations, highlighting the need for dedicated resources.
- The discussion touched upon the inadequacy of current cleaning efforts, with Kevin noting that while cleaning appears visually acceptable, deeper cleaning is necessary to maintain the area's standards.



#### 6. Improvement Suggestions:

-Rick Borba and Kevin discussed potential strategies for improving cleaning efficiency, including better equipment and more comprehensive cleaning. The goal is to address the long-term cleanliness of the Gaslamp Quarter effectively.

#### Discussion on Power Washing and Cleanliness in the District

Presented by: Kevin Flatt

##### 1. Current Challenges:

- Kevin Flatt outlined ongoing issues with sidewalk cleanliness, noting the surge in littering and graffiti, particularly in areas surrounding popular venues. He emphasized that pressure washing schedules have been insufficient, with many locations requiring more frequent cleanings, especially following events. Joe Santos highlighted the impact of accumulated debris on foot traffic, explaining that it not only detracts from the district's aesthetic appeal but also negatively affects local businesses' patronage.

##### 2. Regulatory Changes:

- Kevin elaborated on new regulations concerning pressure washing, particularly the introduction of reclamation systems designed to limit water use. Flatt detailed how these regulations often result in incomplete cleanings, with teams forced to prioritize specific high-visibility areas, leaving other sections neglected.

##### 3. Role of Clean and Safe Programs:

- Flatt provided insights into the transition to an in-house model for the Clean and Safe program, aimed at enhancing service quality and responsiveness. While this change has shown promise, he acknowledged mixed feedback from local businesses, with some expressing concerns over slow response times for urgent cleanliness issues.

##### 4. Budget Considerations:

- Michael Trimble presented a preliminary budget analysis indicating a potential increase in funding allocated for enhanced power washing services. He stressed the need for transparency in financial planning and cautioned that exceeding the budget by \$100,000 could jeopardize future financial health.

##### Future Action Items:

- The board agreed to revisit cleaning protocols and consider proposals for increased funding and resources to enhance public safety and aesthetic standards in the area.

#### Homelessness and Community Safety

Presented by: Michael Trimble

##### 1. Ongoing Concerns:

- Joe Santos and Michael Trimble articulated growing concerns regarding safety tied to homelessness in the district. They recounted specific incidents involving aggressive behavior that deterred customers and raised alarm among residents. Trimble emphasized the complexity of homelessness and the necessity to approach it with empathy but underscored that the safety of patrons and residents remains paramount.

##### 2. Need for Better Coordination:

- Santos advocated for a renewed approach to community safety, stressing the need for improved coordination between local businesses, security personnel, and law enforcement.

##### 3. Community Safety Initiatives:

- Trimble noted that several businesses have opted to hire private security personnel to enhance safety measures, leading to an increased sense of security. However, he emphasized that while this is a positive development, a coordinated approach across the district could maximize the effectiveness of these efforts.





## Discussion on the Property and Business Improvement District (PBID)

Presented by: Michael Trimble

### 1. Understanding the PBID:

- Michael Trimble provided an in-depth overview of the PBID.

### 2.. Potential Alternatives:

- The group discussed the viability of establishing a Maintenance Assessment District (MAD) as an alternative should the PBID renewal fail. Trimble explained that a MAD could offer a more flexible framework, allowing businesses to manage their own cleanliness and maintenance services without relying solely on a centralized system, thus fostering local autonomy.

### 3. Collaboration and Next Steps:

- Trimble proposed organizing a series of meetings with local merchants and restaurant owners to facilitate open discussions regarding the PBID and potential MAD options.

## Conclusion and Action Items

Presented by: Michael Trimble

- Michael Trimble concluded the meeting by underscoring the importance of improved communication among businesses and board members to tackle collective action as it is crucial for addressing challenges related to cleanliness and safety.

### - Action Items:

- Trimble will coordinate a follow-up meeting with local business owners to discuss community safety, and cleanliness.
- A detailed analysis of the budget for additional cleaning services will be conducted, aiming to balance enhancements with financial responsibility, with updates provided at the next board meeting.

Michael Trimble: Meeting adjourned at 6:09 pm

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**MEETING ADJOURNMENT –meeting ended: 2 hour 39 minutes**