



**El Cajon Boulevard Business Improvement Association  
Annual Budget Narrative  
FY 2025**

*The El Cajon Boulevard Business Improvement Association is an association of local businesses committed to improving the physical and economic conditions along the El Cajon Boulevard corridor and its surrounding neighborhoods in Mid-City San Diego. This year we were excited to open a new incarnation of the Fair@44 serving seniors, partnering with other nonprofits serving the Mid-City, creating opportunities for entrepreneurs who are women, from our BIPOC, refugee and immigrant communities. This work fulfills our goals and mission statement and we are honored to address Inclusivity, Diversity and Equity.*

**Personnel/Staffing Overview:**

Personnel and operating expenses are integral to sustaining the Association responsible for managing The Business Improvement District. Key components include staff salary, benefits, payroll taxes, and insurance covering health and workers' compensation. The Association plays a crucial role in fostering collaboration and engagement through various meetings and HUB gatherings.

**Key Responsibilities and Initiatives:**

**1. Board and Committee Meetings:**

- Coordinate, notify, and lead monthly board and committee meetings in accordance with the Brown Act, fostering transparent governance.
- Monthly Board of Directors meeting, Monthly Executive Officers meeting, Joint Committee Meetings A and B, Promotions, Financial/Budget/Policy Adhoc, and Mid-City Community Parking District meetings.

**2. HUB Meetings:**

- Facilitate HUB meetings connecting businesses with neighboring counterparts, rekindling friendships, and promoting reciprocity along The Boulevard.
- Active HUBs include West End, 30ECB, East End, College Gateway, Little Saigon Cultural District, and the emerging Central Corridor.

**3. The Blvd. 20/20 Vision:**

- The Blvd. 20/20, now in its 5th year, but not quite its half way point due to 1 ½ years lost to Covid restrictions and recovery serves as a dynamic and adaptable document, engaging the community through partnerships with organizations like

Housing You Matters, ULI, City Heights CDC, and local community groups.

- Through our active Volunteer board and management the ECBBIA continuously reshapes the 10-year vision to address changes in business, the growth of home-based ventures, and the demand for smaller spaces.

**4. Community Engagement and Partnerships:**

- Coordinate and nurture relationships with Neighborhood Planning Groups, non-profits, trade groups, stakeholders, and government representatives to develop ideas and plans for the improvement of El Cajon Boulevard.
- Engage with the community through special events like The Holiday Market, San Diego Design Week, BLVD Mardi Gras Crawl, Camino De Almas, International Food and Product Market, BLVD Stroll, Parking Day, Take Back the Alley, and Vision Zero.

**5. Business Mixers and Communications:**

- Coordinate business mixers at various locations throughout the district to foster networking and collaboration.
- Prepare monthly e-newsletters and annual reports, ensuring regular communication with neighbors and business members.

**6. Hybrid Meetings:**

- Conduct hybrid meetings to accommodate the busy schedules of owner-operated businesses, engaged neighbors, and partners with varying accessibility needs.

**7. GIS Management:**

- Expand and maintain the GIS of community assets and development opportunities in the district, providing valuable insights for planning and growth.

**8. Internship Program:**

- Manage interns to contribute to various promotional projects, including events, business directories, online content and social media development, and promotional videos. Collaborate with the Department of Rehabilitation to provide real-world experience and enhance digital capabilities.

Through these efforts, the management, staff and interns alike at The El Cajon Boulevard BIA play a pivotal role in driving the success, inclusivity, and vibrancy of the Business Improvement District.

**Office/Operational Overview:**

Our office serves as the heartbeat of our association, embodying a dynamic space where our rich history is preserved, strategic plans are devised and executed, and both education and inspiration thrive. Positioned on the ground floor of a vibrant 5-story building hosting a mix of innovative startups in services and manufacturing, our office is a bustling hub of business activity.

Situated within the burgeoning Central/Corridor hub, our Boulevard BIA office strategically

connects the Normal Heights neighborhood to the north and the City Heights Corridor neighborhood to the south.

Key Achievements and Activities:

1. **Maintaining Office Infrastructure:**
  - Successfully sustained office and meeting spaces, ensuring efficient operations through timely payment of monthly rent and utilities.
2. **Financial Management:**
  - Executed meticulous monthly bookkeeping, bill payments, and cash flow management.
  - Provided regular reports to the Board of Directors and collaborated with accounting and audit consultants.
3. **Insurance Compliance:**
  - Secured and maintained current and competitive insurance policies, meticulously managing required documentation.
4. **City of San Diego Reimbursements:**
  - Diligently prepared and submitted monthly reimbursement requests for various City of San Diego programs, including the Office of Small Business – BID Reimbursements, Small Business Enhancement Program reimbursements, and Community Parking District reimbursements.
5. **Grants Management:**
  - Successfully prepared reports and reimbursement requests for Community Projects, Programs, and Services grants, along with the County Community Enhancement Grant.
  - Managed reporting on grants from public and private agencies.
6. **Business Training and Education:**
  - Coordinated and facilitated impactful business training sessions, educating businesses on available programs from government and private organizations such as Workforce Partnership, SCORE, The Internal Revenue Service, Accion, and other evolving programs.
7. **Board Management:**
  - The ECBBIA, managed by an all-volunteer Board of Directors, efficiently operated from our office space, serving as the nerve center for staff management and BIA functions.
  - Maintained a seat on the board of directors of the BID Alliance, fostering collaboration and synergy.
8. **Consultant Engagements:**
  - Successfully hired consultants to drive initiatives aligned with our mission, focusing on creating safer streets, business improvement, and advancements in technology.
  - Collaborated with consultants on transportation, safe streets, and capital programs.

In summary, the past year has seen our office serve as a pivotal force in the successful execution of our association's mission, encompassing financial stewardship, grant management, community engagement, and strategic partnerships. We look forward to building on these achievements in the

coming year.

### **Communications/Website Overview:**

Our online presence has evolved into a comprehensive repository for BLVD BIA business, offering transparent insights into our operations for the communities and businesses we serve. Through engaging online activities and a robust social media footprint, our website has transformed into a virtual meeting place, providing valuable benefits to our members, patrons, and encouraging Blvd. businesses to embrace online commerce and communication.

#### Key Achievements and Activities:

**1. Website Functionality and Design:**

- Our website serves a dual purpose, highlighting the association's structure, legalities, history, and focus as a non-profit 501C3, while also celebrating the district's businesses, cultural diversity, events, opportunities, and resources.
- Ongoing efforts will focus on maintaining and enhancing the website's design to ensure it remains a dynamic platform for both functions.

**2. Website Maintenance and Content Updates:**

- Sustain the district's website, <http://www.TheBoulevard.org>, by consistently posting required organizational governance documents.
- Regularly update the website with current events, business resources, project updates, historical resources, and organization activities, along with information on grant and funding opportunities.

**3. Communication Options and Membership Support:**

- Our website serves as a hub for communication options and contacts, providing essential support to our membership.

**4. Real Estate and Business Resources:**

- Highlight valuable real estate development and business space leasing resources, offering a one-stop destination for businesses exploring opportunities.

**5. Diverse Social Media Presence:**

- The organization maintains an active presence on various social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, Tik Tok, and Next Door, ensuring widespread outreach and engagement.

**6. Monthly E-Newsletter:**

- Distribute a monthly e-newsletter through email and website posts, keeping our audience informed about the latest developments, activities, and opportunities.

#### Moving Forward:

As we continue to foster growth in the online arena, our website will play a pivotal role in expanding commerce, facilitating online ordering, and broadening our customer base. The commitment to transparency, user-friendly design, and up-to-date content will remain central to our online strategy. We look forward to leveraging these digital platforms to enhance communication, support our membership, and contribute to the thriving business ecosystem along

El Cajon Boulevard.

The Boulevard BIA cont'd

## **Design and Improvements Overview:**

Our focus on design and improvements extends across various facets, contributing to the vibrancy and sustainability of El Cajon Boulevard. Here's a comprehensive overview of our initiatives and achievements:

1. **Landscape Maintenance District Oversight:**
  - Oversee and advise two Mid-City Landscape Maintenance Districts within the Boulevard BIA's boundaries, collaborating with the City Parks and Recreation department on maintenance, budget, and enhancement issues.
2. **Community Engagement and Expansion of Services:**
  - Initiated a survey for the expansion of services and an update of the engineers' report on the North Park Maintenance Assessment District (NP MAD), receiving a favorable response.
  - Advocated for projects and services in the El Cajon Boulevard portion of the North Park district at relevant meetings.
3. **Urban Beautification Projects:**
  - Identified locations and facilitated the implantation of 11 street trees between the SR-15 and 43rd, lighting, tree benches, wayfinding kiosks, and other improvements on El Cajon Boulevard and its side streets.
  - Laid the groundwork for planting 37 trees in Little Saigon, contributing to the greenery and aesthetic appeal of the area. This also encourages walkability to the area frequented by seniors and students.
4. **Infrastructure Enhancement and Economic Base Strengthening:**
  - Addressed infrastructure deficiencies and oversaw infill development activity and transit issues to strengthen the district's economic base.
  - Celebrated the 35th year of the 805 Holiday bridge lighting project, fostering collaboration with neighboring organizations and officials.
5. **Expansion of Holiday Bridgelighting:**
  - Expanded the Holiday Bridgelighting to the 15 freeway bridgedeck, coordinating with the Normal Heights planning group for increased coverage.
  - Maintained median and other special lighting projects along El Cajon Boulevard.
6. **Innovation and Development Collaboration:**
  - Initiated a think tank on Prefab, modular, and panel construction, exploring innovative possibilities with visionaries, developers, architects, and students.
  - Advanced efforts to make the dedicated bus/bike lane permanent in partnership with MTS and the City of San Diego.
7. **Transit-Oriented Development and Community Art Projects:**
  - Worked closely with ULI, MTS, and SANDAG to oversee development around Bus Rapid Transit stations.

- Implemented recommendations from ULI TAP to support transit-oriented development around the I-15 bridge deck.
  - Contributed to an art project reflecting the diverse MidCity communities for the I-15 Bridgedeck.
- 8. Economic Development and Mobility Initiatives:**
- Coordinated economic development tours, produced property profiles, and attracted investment into the district.
  - Implemented incubation strategies, aiming to activate hubs within the district, including the development of a Tech Library at Fair@44.
  - Worked to enhance mobility options, including traffic calming, pedestrian mobility, and bicycle infrastructure.
- 9. Infrastructure Advocacy and Improvement Programs:**
- Advocated for infrastructure improvements and redevelopment projects along El Cajon Boulevard, actively participating in the TEAH task force.
  - Focused on gaining resources for projects outlined in a City-funded sidewalk replacement study.
- 10. Enhancing Storefronts and Art Initiatives:**
- Administered the street banner district along El Cajon Boulevard, maintaining infrastructure and coordinating with other organizations.
  - Utilized the City of San Diego's Storefront Improvement Program and the Public Right of Way Enhancement (PROW) program to improve storefronts and grant permits for sidewalk seating.
  - Expanded the district's address signage program to enhance the visibility of storefront addresses with a unified theme.
- 11. Activation of Vacant Spaces:**
- Embraced the utilization and activation of vacant lots, underutilized spaces, and vacant storefronts with art and events, showcasing the diverse communities that make up El Cajon Boulevard.

Our commitment to design and improvements remains unwavering as we strive to create a more vibrant, sustainable, and visually appealing El Cajon Boulevard for the benefit of our communities and businesses

### **Business Promotion and Development Overview:**

The Boulevard BID, spanning approximately 4.5 miles through Mid-City, traverses six vibrant neighborhoods: University Heights, North Park, Normal Heights, City Heights, Kensington, and Talmadge. With six lanes accommodating multi-modal transportation and the strategic placement of two Rapid MTS bus lines, the corridor thrives with Transit Oriented Development, boasting connectivity from Hillcrest to College on its ends.

Recent strides in recovery are evident through burgeoning development along the Boulevard, complemented by the rise of home-based businesses, constituting a quarter of our membership. In response to this dynamic economic shift, FY24 saw an increased commitment to supporting our members and neighbors through new initiatives, capital resources, events, promotional opportunities, and enhanced community engagement.

## Key Initiatives and Activities:

1. **County Community Enhancement Grant:**
  - Efficiently oversee funding from the County Community Enhancement grant to execute Boulevard promotional activities, public art installations, and food distribution initiatives.
2. **Business Spotlights and Engagement:**
  - Promote local businesses through written spotlights, fostering personal connections with each business to document the history, diversity, and evolution of the business district.
  - Conducted 62 business spotlights, 42 in-house business walks, and collaborated with the City of San Diego Economic Development team on 2 business walks with associated partners.
3. **Monthly E-Newsletter and Social Media Presence:**
  - Produce a monthly e-newsletter highlighting restaurant spotlights, events, business resources, arts initiatives, and positive news related to El Cajon Boulevard.
  - Continue developing a strong presence on the El Cajon Boulevard Facebook page and Instagram.
4. **LISC Partnership and Access to Capital Program:**
  - Partnered with local non-profit organizations to secure funding through LISC to establish and promote ethnic and geographic business clusters.
  - Administer the Access to Capital Program, encouraging small business owners to open, expand, and relocate to El Cajon Boulevard, fostering economic growth.
5. **Boulevard Guide and Vision Zero Initiative:**
  - Design and print the Boulevard Guide, a map showcasing unique businesses on the Boulevard.
  - Collaborate with Circulate community partners on the Vision Zero initiative, working towards enhanced safety and walkability.
6. **Cultural District Evolution:**
  - Collaborate with The Little Saigon Working Group, Viet Vote, and other partners to implement projects focusing on the district's cultural sustainability, safety, and increased growth.
7. **Placemaking Projects and Community Engagement:**
  - Work with local schools and volunteers to develop and implement placemaking projects.
  - Continue reaching out to area business owners and residents to address concerns and gauge preferences for the district's evolution.
8. **Holiday Shopping Promotions and Annual Meeting:**
  - Promote holiday shopping through national Shop Local Saturday, a holiday shopping guide, and an initiative called Stroll the BLVD.
  - Develop partnerships to activate lots, distribute essential goods, and incubate business startups.
  - Host an Annual Meeting each January to showcase the El Cajon Boulevard BIA's work, recognizing outstanding business owners and partners.

As we look ahead, our commitment to driving business to The Boulevard remains unwavering, with a focus on innovation, collaboration, and sustainable growth for our diverse and dynamic

community.

### **Special Events and Community Engagement Overview:**

Given the layout of the El Cajon Boulevard Business Improvement District, hosting large annual events that involve street closures presents logistical challenges due to the vital MTS bus service and the corridor's role as a key transportation route for residents. However, the district seizes the opportunity to host smaller events on activated lots and low-traffic streets, reinforcing the brand of specific hubs and fostering neighborhood identity. These events serve as magnets, attracting new residents, developers, and entrepreneurs while amplifying messages of Transit Oriented Development (TOD), Safe Streets, and Multicultural Communities within San Diego's vibrant landscape.

#### Key Initiatives and Activities:

1. **Little Saigon Working Group Collaboration:**
  - Collaborate with the Little Saigon Working Group, LSF, and partners to highlight the Vietnamese business cluster along El Cajon Boulevard, featuring events like Saigon Nights and celebrations of outdoor street food culture.
2. **Business Hub Signature Events:**
  - Partner with business owners within the business hubs to host signature events such as Mardi Gras, Stroll the Blvd, Dia Des los Muertos –Camino de Almas, and Saigon Nights.
3. **Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives:**
  - Strengthen partnerships with the IRC, focusing on serving immigrant and refugee communities. Aim to create more opportunities for African residents and BIPOC entrepreneurs.
4. **Supporting Partner Events:**
  - Provide support for events like the Beer Fest, Vegan market, and cultural events organized by partner groups and nonprofits.
5. **Individual Business and Cluster Events:**
  - Support individual businesses and business clusters in organizing one-off events, encouraging the local community and wider San Diego audience to explore unique offerings on The Boulevard.
6. **Fair@44 Activation:**
  - Host food trucks at Fair@44 to boost business recruitment, activate the space, and provide safe outdoor seating opportunities.
7. **Community Engagement in Response to Pandemic:**
  - Manage the Fair at 44 lot to foster community entrepreneurship, educational opportunities, and the distribution of essential goods, including hosting weekly free lunches in partnership with Transfronteras to serve the community and address food insecurity.
8. **POPUP15 Lot Activation:**
  - Manage the POPUP15 lot to promote community activation, bicycle education, involvement on the I-15 bridgedeck, and utilization by City Heights residents and



local nonprofits.

**9. Town Halls and Community Input:**

- Host Town Halls to capture community input on infill development, safety, and mobility throughout the district. Promote development site and business attraction opportunities through networking and publicity strategies.

**10. Copley-Price YMCA Collaboration:**

- Maintain close coordination with the Copley-Price YMCA, aligning mission statements to best serve surrounding communities and neighborhoods.

Through these diverse initiatives, the El Cajon Boulevard Business Improvement District actively contributes to the vibrancy, diversity, and community well-being of the entire district, fostering a sense of pride and connection among residents and businesses alike.

### **Celebrating and Fostering Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

In alignment with the City of San Diego and the broader business community, The Boulevard is at the forefront of initiatives promoting diversity, inclusion, and equity. The Blvd. BIA's board and staff exemplify diversity, fostering an environment that values individualism, culturalism, and equal opportunities for all.

Building on our longstanding commitment to social and cultural diversity, we took significant steps last year to codify and set a new standard for our future directors, staff, and contractors. In FY24, we seized opportunities to create more inclusivity and level the playing field, nurturing growth across all segments of our Business District and neighboring communities.

Key Achievements:

**1. Transparency and Compliance:**

- Re-committed to transparency through our compliance with the Form 700, ensuring accountability in our operations.

**2. Anti-Harassment Policy:**

- Implemented an annual signed acknowledgement of our Anti-Harassment policy and practices, reinforcing a culture of respect and inclusion.

**3. Handbook Updates:**

- Updated our Employee and Board of Directors handbooks, eliminating all gender-restrictive language and references. Introduced comprehensive Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion language, along with our Anti-Harassment policy.

**4. By-Laws Amendment:**

- Amended our By-laws to make them gender-neutral, reaffirming our commitment to equity and embracing a more inclusive governance structure.

**5. Training Initiatives:**

- Board members and staff participated in training sessions designed to inform and equip The El Cajon Boulevard BIA to identify opportunities for inclusivity,

ensuring a strong commitment to serving all and fostering a culture of affirmation.

**6. Community Space Commitment:**

- Demonstrated our commitment to Diversity and Equity at Fair@44 by providing space free of charge to host immigrant and refugee entrepreneurs and makers. This collaborative effort involves partnerships with IRC, Accessity, La Maestra, and individuals from diverse backgrounds who now call The Mid City home.

These initiatives underscore our dedication to creating a welcoming and supportive environment for all members, staff, and directors. The infectious culture of saying "YES" permeates our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, making The El Cajon Boulevard BIA a beacon of unity in the Mid City community