



News

Mayor Breed Proposes Creation of First Downtown Entertainment Zone and Announces Grants to Support Downtown Events

Proposed legislation will enable local restaurants and bars to participate in beverage sales during outdoor events and activations. New grant program will fund entertainment and other revitalization projects.

May 03, 2024

San Francisco, CA – Today, Mayor London N. Breed joined Senator Scott Wiener (D-San Francisco), the Office of Economic Workforce and Development (OEWD), business and community leaders to announce new legislation that will create San Francisco's first "entertainment zone" in Downtown, which will allow restaurants and bars to sell alcoholic beverages for consumption during outdoor events and activations.

The legislation establishes a framework for the designation of future entertainment zones, revises local open container laws to permit the operation of these zones, and designates Front Street, between California Street and Sacramento Street, as the City's first entertainment zone. San Francisco was authorized to create entertainment zones under SB 76, authored by Senator Wiener. If approved, this zone will allow local bars and restaurants to operate and sell alcoholic beverages as part of organized outdoor events that take place on this block.

To support activations in entertainment zones and throughout Downtown, Mayor Breed has also directed the Office of Economic and Workforce Development to partner with San Francisco New Deal to launch the Downtown ENRG (Entertainment & Nightlife Revitalization Grant) Program, a program that will offer up to \$50,000 to fund new economic revitalization projects to support new activities, events, and campaigns to attract patrons and increase downtown activity.

"San Francisco's Downtown is seeing a new surge of excitement, and we are thrilled to be the first city in California to take advantage of this new law to bring opportunities that foster joy for our residents, workers and visitors," **said Mayor London Breed**. "I want to thank Senator Wiener for creating opportunities to bring more energy to our Downtown and his unwavering commitment to bettering our City. As we continue to do the work, our goal is to encourage more fun and accessible outdoor community events. Our message is clear: San Francisco is having fun, thriving and open for business."

"Activating our streets with fun, community events is a powerful tool to accelerate downtown recovery," **said Senator Wiener**, author of SB 76. "I authored SB 76 to empower San Francisco to create street vibrancy, particularly downtown. This new entertainment zone does exactly that, in addition to dovetailing with the rest of Mayor Breed's comprehensive plan to give people more reasons to come downtown."

"Creating spaces where residents and visitors can come together and enjoy art, culture, and outdoor entertainment is a critical part of our work to revitalize and transform our Downtown," **said Sarah Dennis Phillips, Executive Director of the Office of the Economic and Workforce Development**. "I am excited about the future of Downtown, including the Entertainment and Nightlife Revitalization Grant Program, which will help our local bars and restaurants thrive and be successful in new ways. It's time we get

more creative with how we bring fun, excitement, and vibrancy to our neighborhoods, this legislation and grant program are steps in the right direction.”

San Francisco’s First Entertainment Zone

San Francisco’s proposed Entertainment Zones build off of Senate Bill (SB) 76, introduced by Senator Wiener and passed at the California Legislature last year. The Entertainment Zone Act paved the way for San Francisco – the only city in California currently – to designate entertainment zones to operate during special events permitted by the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC). Under the bill, San Francisco could establish entertainment zones through the adoption of a local ordinance by the Mayor and the Board of Supervisors.

Mayor Breed’s legislation would enable three bars along Front Street (Schroeder’s, Harrington’s, and Royal Exchange) to sell open beverages for consumption during special events in the zone. These bars, along with the Downtown SF Partnership and BOMA, are working to launch a new recurring street closure on this block that could involve live entertainment and other activities during the zone’s operation. Similar programs have been successful in supporting small businesses and commercial districts in a number of other states, including Michigan, Ohio, and North Carolina.

“San Francisco’s local bars and restaurants are an important part of what makes this city unique, fun, and captivating,” said **Ben Bleiman**, Owner of Harrington’s Bar & Grill and President of the Entertainment Commission. “Seeing small businesses like ours working together on our block to organize new activities and events that will attract people to our local spots is a major milestone. We are telling residents, visitors, and businesses that we are ready to see Downtown San Francisco activated with exciting public spaces because when people have fun it benefits local businesses, Downtown, and the entire city.”

“Downtown San Francisco needs a nightlife renaissance post-pandemic. Launching California’s first ever entertainment zone on Front Street is significant and will catalyze more reasons to come downtown,” said **Robbie Silver, Executive Director of the Downtown SF Partnership**. “Rethinking the use of public space by opening streets for pedestrians is a proven economic strategy to reinvigorate downtown. The Downtown SF Partnership will optimize Front Street with fun programming, building off its signature activations like Let’s Glow SF, Drag Me Downtown, and Landing at Leidesdorff.”

Mayor Breed's legislation will be introduced at the next Board of Supervisors meeting on Tuesday, May 7th.

Downtown ENRG (Entertainment & Nightlife Revitalization Grant)

The arts, culture, nightlife and entertainment sectors play critical roles in the transformation of San Francisco downtown and in commercial corridors citywide by delivering unique experiences that attract residents, workers, and visitors.

Qualifying projects for the grant program could include unique and expanded live performance programming at downtown venues, outdoor events connected to adjacent businesses, the establishment or operation of "entertainment zones", and new festivals that occur across multiple venues, among other ideas. Eligible program expenses include permitting costs, planning expenses, marketing material and design, event coordination, food & beverage, artists stipends, equipment, and on-site staff.

To maximize impact, priority will be given to projects involving collaboration between multiple existing businesses to attract patrons to a corridor and projects or campaigns in Mid-Market, Civic Center, Tenderloin, SoMa, the Financial District, Union Square, or Yerba Buena.

"Nightlife and entertainment venues are vital businesses that contribute immensely to the culture and identity of San Francisco. Investing in their success is critical to fostering vibrancy in our city. Downtown ENRG is set to redefine the future of our downtown district as a diverse, creative, and vibrant destination," **said Simon Bertrang, Executive Director of SF New Deal.**

The application for the Downtown ENRG grant is now open. Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis, with priority given to applications submitted before June 15, 2024. To learn more, please visit www.sfnewdeal.org/ENRG.

Entertainment Drives Revitalization

The creation of entertainment zones and grants program are components of the [Mayor's Roadmap to San Francisco's Future](#), and build on a series of recently announced entertainment initiatives designed to showcase and support the San Francisco music and entertainment sector, boost neighborhood vitality, activate open spaces and enhance the City's economic revitalization through arts and culture.

Combined, the goal is to secure an important new source of revenue to boost San Francisco restaurants and bars while transforming Downtown as a 24/7 destination.

Last month, Mayor Breed announced the City's new SF Live Concert Series, which debuts on May 4 at the Golden Gate Park Bandshell. Additional events will take place across May and June at Fulton Plaza, Union Square, and the Jerry Garcia Amphitheater, and at locations citywide through November. More information about all upcoming SF Live events may be found at www.sflivefest.com. Other economic activations, including Vacant to Vibrant which will announce its second cohort later this month, and Bhangra and Beats, will soon kickoff its second series of outdoor events.

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