

News Releases

The latest news and announcements from Mayor Lee

Mayor Lee Launches Nation's First Living Innovation Zone

First Partnership with Exploratorium Activates Market Street at Yerba Buena Lane with Innovation & Makes Science & Technology More Accessible to Public

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Mayor Edwin M. Lee today, as part of Innovation Month, officially opened the nation's first Living Innovation Zone (LIZ) – an enterprise that links partners with the City to sponsor the installation of innovative exhibit spaces that make science and technology more accessible in public for the public. The first Zone, a partnership with the Exploratorium and the Yerba Buena Community Benefit District (YBCBD), is being launched on Market Street and Yerba Buena Lane

“This unique initiative brings innovation that is sometimes behind closed doors and brings it out into the light of day where we can all learn and be inspired by it,” said Mayor Lee. “I’m excited to see our sidewalks come alive with new ideas, and I believe it is initiatives like these that underscore our commitment to innovation and helps secure our reputation as the Innovation Capital of the World.”

Living Innovation Zones (LIZ) will enhance the public realm by supporting innovators with real-world demonstration opportunities in specially designated public spaces in the City.

“The Exploratorium is thrilled to partner with the Mayor’s Office of Civic Innovation to create the city’s first Living Innovation Zone,” said Exploratorium Executive Director Dr. Dennis Bartels. “The whole idea of the Exploratorium is to inspire curiosity and to facilitate informal learning, and we are able to bring that same sense of excitement to Market Street. It’s to the credit of the City and Mayor Lee that an ambitious project like this, which truly reflects the intellectual and creative capital of the city, can happen in San Francisco.”

The LIZ is part of the broader efforts to activate, revitalize and reconstruct Market Street from Octavia to the Embarcadero. The LIZ allows the City to incrementally make Market Street more inviting, more inclusive and more livable as longer-term projects are being developed. The City is making an effort to simplify the permitting process to give creative people and entrepreneurs a venue to test new ideas and at the same time bring fun and activity to the sidewalks. The LIZ is one of the many types of activities planned along Market Street. As an early prototype of the LIZ program, the lessons-learned will inform a policy to open proposals for other organizations to partner on future LIZ sites that will expand down Market Street to Octavia Blvd.

“The LIZ reflects the creativity of the Yerba Buena neighborhood, the home of so many world-renown museums, galleries and performing arts venues, and serves as interactive welcome mat to draw people into our district,” said YBCBD Executive Director Cathy Maupin. “It’s another example of how we are working with the City and partners to give life to our Yerba Buena Street Life Plan for improving public spaces.”

Funded in part by contributions from individuals through an Indiegogo campaign (www.exploratorium.edu/livinginnovationzone), which ends November 13th, the LIZ will be continuously prototyped with new ideas, and will be adapted to public input. For more information about the Exploratorium’s approach, go to: exploliz.tumblr.com.

The first LIZ features an exhibit called “Whispering Dishes,” which consists of two 8-foot tall parabolic dishes facing each other across a 50-foot part of the sidewalk. The dishes focus sound so that people can easily hear each other whispering, even while surrounded by street noise. For the day of the kick-off, the Exploratorium also showcased their “Singing Bench,” “Rickshaw Obscura,” and a solar-powered charging station for electric bicycles and mobile electronics. The LIZ will be continuously prototyped with new ideas, adapting to input.

With the City's continued effort to be more open and responsive, the LIZ program is built on the success of Open Data and Parklets, extending the scope to enhance the public realm through partnerships. In doing so, LIZ aims to drive a better quality of life for all San Franciscans through innovation. For more information about the Living Innovation Zones, go to: www.sfliz.com.

About the Exploratorium

The Exploratorium is the global leader in informal learning, igniting curiosity and inspiring creativity in people of all ages. The world-renowned science museum creates original, interactive exhibits, on display at more than 1,000 science centers, museums and public spaces around the world. Dedicated to education reform in and out of the classroom, the Exploratorium is a premier professional development center for educators and a creator of award-winning educational resources. Since 1969, the Exploratorium has influenced generations of entrepreneurs, artists, scientists, teachers, students, children, museum professionals and everyday doers, reaching nearly 180 million people annually from around the globe. On April 17th, the Exploratorium opened at Pier 15 in the heart of San Francisco's Embarcadero, where it will celebrate a new era of experiences that encourage critical thinking and awaken wonder for generations to come. For more information, go to: www.exploratorium.edu.

About YCBCD

The Yerba Buena Community Benefit District advances the quality of life for residents and visitors in the Yerba Buena Neighborhood and San Francisco by fostering a safer and more secure community, enhancing environmental quality and beauty, and reinforcing the viability of its economic base. The district encompasses Second to Fifth and Market to Harrison streets with more than 400 shopping, dining and entertainment venues, world-class museums, convention space, hotels, and educational institutions. Thousands of new residences have been built in the last decade ranging from live/work lofts and senior housing to luxury housing and mid-rise apartments that add diversity and vibrancy. YCBCD began implementing programs in 2009, such as a Community Guides program, bike patrol officer program, graffiti removal, street and sidewalk cleaning, neighborhood marketing and other improvement efforts. For more information, go to: www.ycbcd.org.