FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is a Business Improvement District (BID)?
A Business Improvement District is a defined area wherein property owners are self-assessed to fund services that improve the overall quality of life for residents and visitors. These services supplement those provided by the City and can include additional cleaning and safety programs, advocacy, beautification, marketing and a variety of other services that go above and beyond to promote this important area. The Union Square BID was the first and sets an example for the other existing property-based business improvement districts through innovative pilot programs and partnerships. We work collaboratively with City, community, and our members to support Union Square.

2. What area does the Union Square Business Improvement District (USBID) cover?
A lively 27-block community surrounding Union Square Park in the heart of San Francisco makes up the Union Square BID. It is generally bordered on the north by Bush Street, on the east by Kearny Street, on the south by Market Street and on the west Taylor Street. Within this service area there are approximately 600 parcels, which include both public and private ownership.

3. What services does the USBID provide?
The original USBID was founded in 1999 and focused primarily on cleaning and safety issues. Today’s expanded USBID continues to recognize the need for providing cleaning and maintenance and critical public safety services, though has since added destination marketing, advocacy, beautification and public realm programs to enhance the experience of the Union Square area and contribute to a safer and more vibrant community.

14 Cleaning Ambassador FTE’s provide 2 sweeps per sidewalk daily, pressure washing every other week, abate illegal dumping and over flowing trashcans, remove sidewalk spills and graffiti and respond to cleaning requests. In 2017 alone, the USBID removed over 467,833 lbs of debris. In addition, over 17,000 graffiti tags were removed.

10 FTE Safety and Hospitality Ambassadors provide the following services: Advise individuals that are disturbing the peace, sleeping/lying on the sidewalk, aggressive panhandling, and serve as safety escorts. Hospitality Ambassadors promptly provided directors to over 64,000 visitors.

3 FTE dispatchers coordinate member services via phone, email and the Union Square Everywhere App between 7am-9pm daily.

A San Francisco Police Department 10B officer is on duty for the USBID for 10 hours daily. This officer mitigates crime, responds to requests from members and ensures enforcement of laws including quality of life matters. Officers responded to 650 incidents in 2017.

4. How is the USBID governed and operated?
The USBID is governed by a 23 member board of directors made up of the property and business owners and other stakeholders representing a variety of interests. The Board sets strategic direction and priorities and the staff executes the strategy. The USBID also follows a management plan and contracts with the City and County of San Francisco.
5. What are the USBID’s advisory committees, and how do I get involved?
The USBID has several advisory committees to help provide ongoing stewardship of the district and advise the Board of Directors. Businesses are welcome to participate in any of the committees to share their expertise and passion for the community. The committees are as follows:
  » Marketing
  » Public Affairs & Advocacy
  » Services & Public Safety
  » Streetscapes & Beautification
  » Finance & Audit

6. How does the BID work with City agencies?
Partnership with City agencies is instrumental to the BID’s mission and success. Members receive supplemental benefits provided by the USBID above and beyond baseline City cleaning and safety services. The USBID also works hand in hand with the City in order to represent, organize and advocate on behalf of the stakeholders of Union Square.

7. How is the USBID Funded?
The USBID is funded through assessments on the property owners of Union Square that is administered by the City Tax Assessor’s Office and collected through property tax bills. The BID’s budget is published in our Annual Report submitted to the City of San Francisco. Per the BID’s management plan with the City of San Francisco and property owners the budget is allocated 65% to clean and safe services, 15% to management and administration and 10% to streetscapes, advocacy, events and destination marketing. A 10% contingency can be allocated to any of these services or other projects.

8. Renewing the USBID in 2019
The current BID was renewed in 2009 for a 10 year term. To continue providing services beyond 2019, the USBID must undergo reauthorization as outlined by our charter from the City and County of San Francisco and our members. In 2019, this process will include both a petition and ballot vote-by-mail for our members, certification from the Board of Supervisors, and ultimately the Mayor’s signature. As we engage our members and convene local stakeholders, we are excited about the prospect for a successful renewal that brings an enhanced budget, enabling us to meet and exceed the current level of services that our members have come to rely on and value, as together we maintain a prosperous and safe community.

9. Who do I contact for services?
To report or request service needs to the USBID’s Dispatch Center, call 415-781-4456 or email cleanandsafe@unionsquarebid.com and our dedicated USBID staff will respond quickly. Your requests will be responded to within 30 minutes. You can also download the free Union Square Everyday App to request cleaning/maintenance and report incidents.