SAN DIEGO’S GASLAMP QUARTER: THE 30 YEAR OVERNIGHT SUCCESS.
JIMMY PARKER

Principle, Productions by Parker

Urban District Development Assistance through administrative best practices, board engagement, community building, event creation & enhancement, governmental partnering, late-night management, parking utilization and staff development.

Executive Director - Gaslamp Quarter Association (2004 to 2015)
Board Member – Gaslamp Quarter Association (1998 to 2004)
Chair – Gaslamp Quarter Association (2000 to 2003)

Started working in the Gaslamp Quarter in 1984
GASLAMP QUARTER: THE “STINGAREE”

“...the Stingaree where there were notorious bars with equally notorious names – Seven Buckets of Blood and Old Tub of Blood.” The SD Union
GASLAMP QUARTER: THE “STINGAREE”

The original heart of “New Town” San Diego, the area that would become the Gaslamp was founded as the commercial area of downtown. Shipping was the life-blood of the area, and everything came into and left the region through the 5th Street Pier.

PRINCIPLE BUSINESS USES

- Ship Repair & Supply
- Produce Markets
- Lumber & Hardware
- Mercantile
- Laundry (Asian)
- Warehousing & Transportation
- Workforce Housing
- Metal Work and Foundry
- Government
- Saloons, Gambling Halls, Brothels
GASLAMP QUARTER:
NEGLECT & DECAY

During World War Two, the Stingaree had a resurgence of its colorful past and was the destination for sailors, soldiers and marines on leave. The bawdy and wild behavior coupled with the post war growth of the suburbs, the district quickly achieved a seedy and dangerous reputation as San Diego’s Skid Row.
GASLAMP QUARTER: COLLECTIVE CLOUT

The all volunteer Merchants Association, led by property owner and former City Councilman Tom Hom, successfully petitions the Federal Government to get the entire district placed on the National Historic Register. The designation spares the buildings of the district from the city’s redevelopment wrecking ball that had already started to claim some of the oldest structures in the downtown area.

They begin work on a planned district ordinance with then City Architect, Michael Stepner to protect the existing structures, limit vice regulated businesses and encourage active adaptive re-use of the historic structures.
These volunteers also had the understanding that they could not continue to shoulder the effort to rebuild the area and that it was going to take a full-time, professional effort to keep the momentum going in the district.

In November 1982, the businesses owners of the district voted to form a Business Improvement District, specifically charged to protect and promote the district.
Under this new organizational structure, the property and business owners were able to move quickly to:

- Keep Local Control of Area Planning
- Protect the Historic Fabric of the District
- Work Directly with Law Enforcement on Area Safety
- Initiate the First District Promotions that featured Restaurant and Retail over Social Services.
GASLAMP QUARTER: COLLECTIVE CLOUT

The Gaslamp Project Area Committee (PAC) of the Gaslamp District Council set out to enhance the character and soul of the district with key right of way improvements done in partnership with the City of San Diego.
The Gaslamp PAC was so successful that the district was not included in the original area of management by the Downtown Redevelopment Agency. It was decided 1991 by the GQA to fold into the redevelopment area only after the following conditions:

- Revised Planned District Ordinance (PDO) officially designating the Gaslamp as San Diego's Dining and Entertainment District
- The GQA remain advisory with specific oversight on the PDO
- District Improvements:
  - Gaslamp Archway
  - Gaslamp Square Park
As the official City Council designated Dining and Entertainment District the renamed Gaslamp Quarter Association moved to enhance its position with events, conventions and promotions:

- COMIC CON
- CORPORATE BLOCK PARTIES
- FIFTH AVE AUTO SHOWCASE
- GASLAMP HOLIDAY PET PARADE
- HALLOWEEN
- KIFM JAZZ FESTIVAL (1996-2012)
- MARDI GRAS
- NEW YEARS EVE
- POINSETTIA BOWL GASLAMP MARCH
- RUGBY 7's WORLD SERIES (Petco Park)
- SD PRIDE (FLAG PROGRAM)
- ST. PATRICK'S DAY
- STREET SCENE (1984-2004)
- SUPERFEST 1998 (SUPER BOWL XXXII)
- WORLD BASEBALL CLASSIC (2006)
GASLAMP QUARTER: COLLECTIVE FUNDING

Utilizing the stability created by the assessment funding, in 1996 the Gaslamp Quarter Association invested in staffing to leverage skills to accentuate the promotional portfolio while dramatically enhancing their fundraising efforts.

By 2008, the organization was raising $7-8 in return for $1 of assessment. When including the generated marketing value of the promotional programs, the return ratio easily exceeds $10 for every $1 of assessment.
GASLAMP QUARTER:
COLLECTIVE SUCCESS!

New Town, Stingaree, Sailor’s Entertainment District, Skid Row. The Gaslamp Quarter has been known by many names since the salt flat of San Diego Bay was transformed into downtown San Diego.

GASLAMP QUARTER TODAY

- Sixteen and ½ City Blocks
- 400 Plus Business Members
  - 80 Retailers
  - 90 Restaurants
  - 30 Nightclubs
  - 200 Professional Service
- City’s highest concentration of affordable housing
- Over 90 Historic Buildings
- Ten Hotels (3 in Construction)
- Eight Bus Stops (Two BRT)

- Two Trolley Stops
- Two Parks
- Two Public Parking Structures
- One Pocket Park
- One Plaza
- One Pedestrian Scramble
- One Ballpark
- One Convention Center
- One Major Shopping Mall
- More than 8 Million Annual Visitors