

# Surcharge at restaurants in city growing

## State, national experts say it's an only-in-S.F. trend

By JOHNATHAN NEWMAN

**I**F YOU DINED OUT in San Francisco in the last seven years, you probably encountered the infamous surcharge noted at the bottom of your check. You know the one. The wording varies from restaurant to restaurant, but usually contains some version of "SF employer mandated surcharge" followed by the restaurant's calculations, adding 2.5% to 4.5% or more to the bottom line cost of your dining experience.

Guess what? The practice of surcharging customers — originally promoted as a mean-spirited way to pay for restaurant workers' health care — isn't going away. Local industry watchers and city administrators believe it's here to stay — and it's growing.

Gwyneth Borden, executive director of the Golden Gate Restaurant Association, expects more restaurants to impose a surcharge on food and beverages, a practice that began in 2008 as a way of scapegoating the city for requiring health care for workers. Borden noted that a business has a right to exact a surcharge for any purpose.

"More and more have found that it is a reasonable way to maintain control of certain costs — not only the San Francisco health care costs, but the increased local minimum wage requirements, which will go into effect this year, as well as rising rents in the city and, for some, the

increased costs of maintaining a reliable flow of goods and produce from local sources," she said.

The city Office of Labor Standards Enforcement in 2013 found that 188 employers reported collecting \$14,966,306 in surcharges from their customers to cover "in whole or in part" the cost of employee health care benefits.

Reporting the surcharges is voluntary, so more restaurants likely apply this bottom line booster, or they don't

have 20 or more employees, the trigger for requiring health care, a traditional fringe benefit many restaurants begrudge their workers apparently.

The city's annual reporting doesn't ask employers what business they're in, only the number of workers, the type of health care coverage and how much they paid for it. Whether all 188 employers who reported the surcharge were restaurants is unknown, but there's no evidence that industries other than restaurants are surcharging.

In all, 4,393 employers citywide reported paying \$2.1 billion for health care for an average of 258,091 workers each quarter. Employers with 20 to 99 workers last year paid \$1.55 per hour on top of minimum wage for health care coverage. This year the rate increases to \$1.65. Businesses with 100 or more employees pay \$2.48 per hour, which on top of the current \$11.05 minimum wage is clearly a sizable, arguably unfair, sudden blow to the restaurants' bottom line.

While acknowledging that the dining surcharge raised some customers' hackles at first, Borden believes a grudging acceptance is now in place.

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Ex-SNCC leader pitches his book on Selma

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Easy work, few requirements

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### FEWEST TREES IN CITY

Tenderloin's canopy: 4.1%

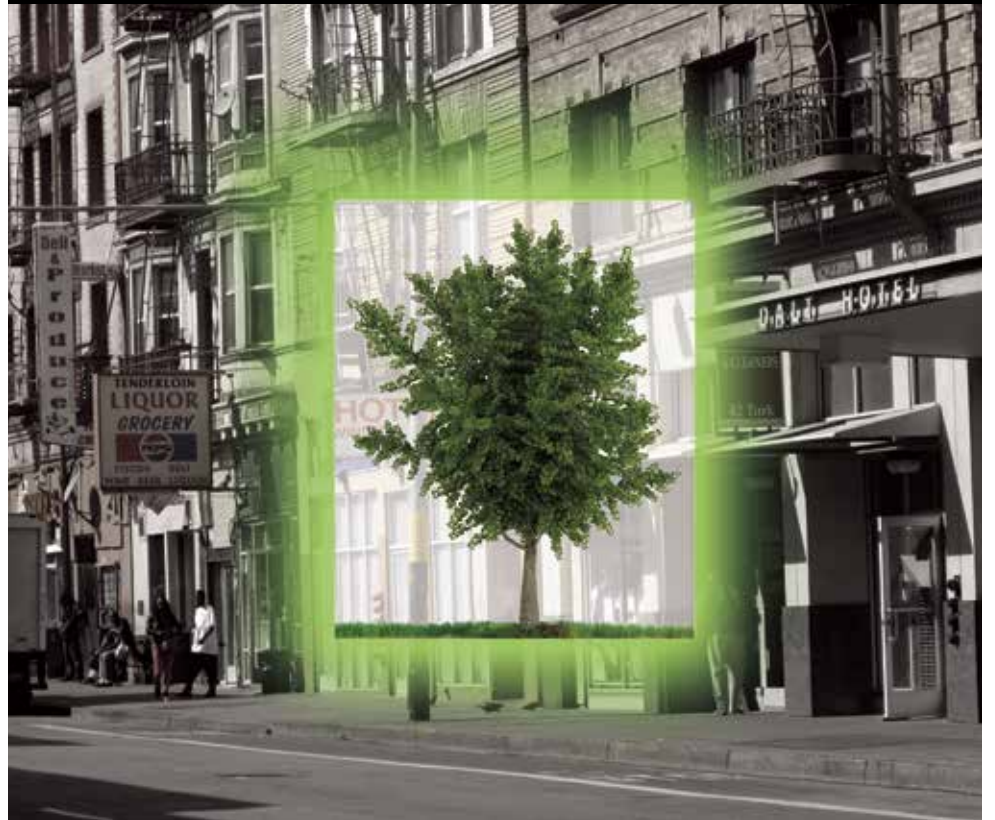
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# CENTRAL CITY



SAN FRANCISCO

## TENDERLOIN TREES



DIGITAL ILLUSTRATION LISE STAMPFLI

**Trees, among the many endangered species in the Tenderloin, will be in the spotlight, likely in May, when Friends of the Urban Forest will help property owners plant several dozen trees, the first mass planting in the neighborhood since 2011.**

# Touch of green in TL

## Band-Aid coming to patch up hood's tattered canopy

By MARJORIE BEGGS

**S**AN FRANCISCO HAS 105,000 trees on its sidewalks and median strips and an estimated 500,000 more in parks and backyards. Trees aid air quality and are good for property values. They improve people's physical and mental health, combat climate change, welcome wildlife, manage stormwater runoff, reduce wind, encourage commercial areas' vitality. One study even found that people drive less aggressively on tree-lined streets.

Sounds good — 600,000-plus trees — but it's not.

The city's tree canopy, the layer of leaves, branches and stems that covers our 49 square miles when viewed from above, is just 13.7%, according to a 2012 Planning Department survey. That percentage puts us far down the list of U.S. cities, near the bottom with Chicago and Jersey City, and is less than half the 33% average of metropolitan areas.

The news is worse for the Tenderloin and SoMa. They're at the very bottom of the city's canopy list with trees covering just a shade over 4% in both neighborhoods. By comparison, gloriously green Golden Gate Park tops the list, with 47.7% coverage.

A tree's chance of making it in the Tender-

loin is probably about the same as a resident's. Not so good. And at least one study confirmed that like people, trees have a harder time thriving here than elsewhere in the city.

Owner neglect, vandalism, vehicle emissions and cars and trucks running over small trees take their toll.

"Three years after planting, TL trees have only a 60% to 70% chance of thriving," says Phil Pierce, Friends of the Urban Forest policy and outreach director. "Citywide, it's 80%."

Tree tales are relevant today because another Tenderloin planting is scheduled for this spring, probably in May. Friends of the Urban Forest will coordinate the effort — as it has more than a dozen times before — and is expecting at least 50 trees to go in this time.

Tenderloin trees have been a Central City Extra focus almost since we began publishing.

"The Re-greening of the Tenderloin," our November 2004 lead story, detailed the planting of 35 trees donated by TL property owner and co-founder of Adopt-A-Block, Charles Mosser, and coordinated by Friends of the Urban Forest.

"Trees," Mosser told The Extra back then, "give a flourish to the neighborhood. They make it seem more residential than commercial."

Friends of the Urban Forest has been part of almost every TL planting since 1982, a year after it formed. Our re-greening story reported that, in 18 years, Friends of the Urban Forest had organized neighbors and planted — or replanted — 523 trees in the Tenderloin.

How many of those trees are still standing, how many were replacements for dead

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# Ex-SNCC leader Rep. Lewis packs 'em in pitching civil rights graphic novel

By MARK HEDIN

THE OSCARS all but snubbed “Selma,” but one of the stars of its story, Atlanta Rep. John Lewis, “The Boy From Troy,” as he says Martin Luther King Jr. used to call him, drew an overflow crowd to the Main Library’s Koret Auditorium on the evening of Feb. 18.

Lewis, who turned 75 three days later, was in town to promote the second installment of “March,” an autobiographical graphic novel — comic book — that details his role in the civil rights movement, from lunch counter demonstrations in Nashville late in 1960 to the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, in August 1963, and beyond.

He was the president of SNCC, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, which was to the left of King’s pastor-led multitudes. SNCC had less patience. He preceded King to the podium at the March on Washington, after controversially toning down some aspects of his planned remarks. Since 1987, he has represented Georgia’s 5th Congressional District, including most

of Atlanta, in the House.

My Brother’s Keeper, the Western Addition youth choir, opened the program with “A Change Is Gonna Come” and “We Are the World.” Then spoken word artist Chinaka Hodge electrified the auditorium with her composition dedicated to Jordan Davis, 17 when shot dead in 2012 as he sat in his car with friends listening to music at a gas station in Florida.

Following brief remarks by Board of Supervisors President London Breed, who said that without his work, she “wouldn’t be here today,” Lewis took the stage.

He said he grew up in Alabama, working on the 100 acres that his sharecropping parents bought for \$300 and his family still owns. He had a talent for raising chickens, he said, but aspired to “preach the gospel.” On occasion, he and his siblings would corral the chickens, and he would preach to the flock as his siblings managed the perimeter.

“They never quite said ‘amen,’” he said, “but I’m convinced that some of those chickens that I preached to tended to listen to me much better than some of my colleagues listen to me to-

day in Congress.”

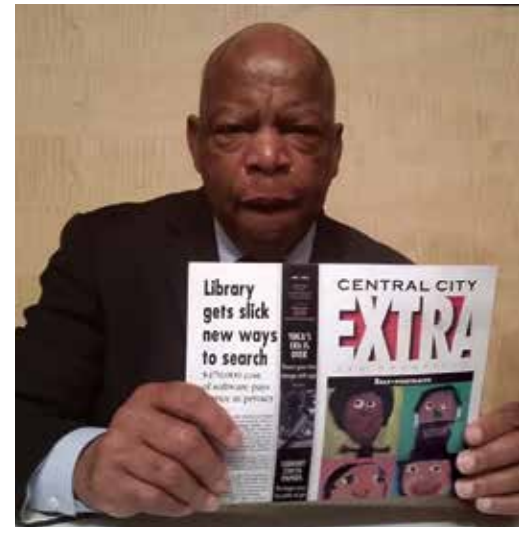
He recounted his first-ever meal at a Chinese restaurant, outside Washington, D.C., on the eve of the Freedom Rides, where his integrated group enjoyed their meal while acknowledging it might prove to be their last supper.

Sure enough, the group was attacked by Klan members in Rock Hill, S.C., and he was left lying in a pool of blood, Lewis recalled. Decades later, his attacker — never arrested — visited him at his D.C. office with his son in tow to apologize and ask for forgiveness, a tale of redemption of almost apocryphal proportions.

He recalled Lowndes County, between Selma and Montgomery in his home state of Alabama, whose population was 80% black, yet not even one black person who lived there was able to register to vote prior to the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

“The vote,” he said, “is precious, almost sacred. It’s the most powerful, nonviolent tool we have, and we must use it. We’ve made progress, but we’re not there yet.”

“I’m still hopeful,” he said. “In spite of being arrested and going to jail 40



MARK HEDIN

Atlanta Rep. John Lewis, with Martin Luther King on the Selma March, holds the February issue of *The Extra*.

times during the '60s and being arrested five times since I've been in Congress, I'm not going to turn back. And you must not give in. This city, this state, is known for leading the way.”

His legislative aide, Andrew Aydin, who wrote the text of “March,” followed Lewis to the stage. He was inspired to write the book, he said, after Lewis told him how a dime comic book, “Martin Luther King and the Montgomery Story,” which King had helped edit, was a

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## Hoodline, The Extra's online partner

CENTRAL CITY EXTRA has begun working closely with Hoodline, a network of neighborhood bloggers.

Hoodline cements its already significant Tenderloin coverage with stories from *The Extra*.

And *The Extra* gains a presence

online, sharing the digital stage with a new generation of journalists.

Old school meets new school.

It's going to be fun learning from Eric Eldon, co-founder, Nuala Sawyer, district editor, and other members of the Hoodline team. Most intriguing is that

they are working on a tool that will digitally pry off the top of City Hall so we all can peer inside and review the vast reservoirs of data: Hoodbot, they call it, and it's close to launch, Eldon says.

It's an investigative tool that can release the profound potential of accessible public data such as zoning variances, city department budgets and much more, perhaps enabling one reporter to do the work of a four-member team in the newsroom of a metropolitan daily.

Hoodline hopes to hire local writ-

ers and partner with local publications so the city is filled with neighborhood bloggers who provide micro coverage — new businesses opening and old ones closing in their hood, local politics, major crimes and accidents, plus investigation pieces, tree plantings, candidates nights and so on.

All the stuff of a neighborhood's life.

It's a smart idea. Central City Extra is pleased to play a role. ■

— Geoff Link  
Editor & Publisher



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<b>The Knox SRO</b> located at 241- 6th St. & Tehama is accepting applications and has an <b>OPEN WAITLIST</b>	<b>SRO – 1 Person or Couple</b> Room size: 10 ½ x 18 (Semi-Private) bathroom 7 x 7 Unit amenities: sink, microwave, refrigerator, 2-burner stove, closet, single bed Building amenities: small gym, library, private lounge, roof top garden, community kitchen, laundry facility, 24 hour staff & surveillance	1 person \$34,600/year 2 person \$39,520/year Minimum income of \$1,374/month	Move-in deposit \$687 Monthly rent \$687 plus utilities
<b>Hotel Isabel</b> located at 1095 Mission <b>CLOSED WAITLIST</b>	<b>SRO – 1 Person</b> Shared bathroom Unit amenities: sink, microwave, refrigerator, 2- burner stove, closet and single bed	1 person \$34,600/year No minimum income Closed	30% OF INCOME Requires a Certificate of Homelessness
<b>Bayanihan House</b> (Non-assisted units) located at 88 – 6th St. & Mission. <b>OPEN WAITLIST</b>	<b>SRO – 1 Person or Couple</b> Room single: 10½ x 12, shared bathroom Double occupancy: 12x12, shared bathroom Unit amenities: sink, microwave, refrigerator, 2-burner stove, closet, single bed Building amenities: community kitchen, 24 hour staff & surveillance, laundry facility	1 person \$30,275/year Couple \$34,580/year Minimum income of \$889.40/month	As of Jan. 1, 2015 Move-in deposit \$590 Monthly rent \$590 Utilities included

TDD: (415) 345-4470

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# Restaurant surcharge only-in-S.F. fee

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"Initially, there was a fear that the surcharge method would be rejected by consumers. Our surveys seem to show that diners prefer it to a general, ongoing change in menu prices. If you see a price for a sandwich or a bowl of soup that strikes you as too much, you won't pay it. You won't order the item and you're not likely to return to the restaurant, no matter how many explanations you hear about the cost of doing business in a metropolitan economy like ours," she said.

Restaurants have learned they can get \$15 for "barrel-aged" cocktails and \$17 for all-organic hamburgers and still add a surcharge. And some have learned that, with the right wording on the surcharge notice, they can collect whatever the traffic will bear. Until 2014, when the city closed the legislative loophole, they could pay the health care costs from the surcharge largesse, and pocket the rest.

In 2008, when the city's Health Care Security Ordinance required nonprofits with 50 or more employees and for-profit businesses with 20 or more employees to pay for health care for their workers, only the restaurant industry balked.

Loudest and longest laments came from some of the city's high-profile, high-priced restaurants and their nonprofit trade group, the Golden Gate Restaurant Association, which fought the ordinance when the Board of Supervisors was writing it, then attacked the law with lawsuits and appeals, culminating in an unsuccessful attempt to persuade the state Supreme Court to overturn it.

## SCAPEGOATED THE CITY

When the litigation dust settled with the ordinance intact, many restaurants began collecting the cost of their health care obligations in the form of a surcharge on the diner's tab, shaming the city for "unfairly" compelling health care coverage. The kooky city of San Francisco required them to pay for what most industries take for granted — employee health care — so they took it out on their customers but scapegoated the city.

Some diners took the bait and griped about government bureaucracy. Others took the restaurants to task, questioning the need for a surcharge when a discreet tinkering with menu prices could have disguised the health care cost without throwing it into the diner's face and saying the city made me do it.

It eventually became clear that

some restaurants were making the surcharge a big bonus for their business. The restaurateur got to keep any money collected but unpaid on health coverage at the end of the year.

When the Wall Street Journal reported on San Francisco's restaurant surcharge, citing a \$100,000 windfall by One Market, an annual top 10 American-style restaurant at the foot of Market Street, the response came from the principal in the ownership group, Michael Dellar. He said his business collected a surcharge, not only to recover health care costs, but also to offset the city's higher minimum wage — \$9.92 hourly at that time — as well as the city's 1.5% payroll tax and requirement to provide nine days of paid sick leave annually for each employee.

When the city's Office of Labor Standards Enforcement released figures that One Market had collected \$122,515 through the menu surcharge and spent only \$14,612 toward employee health care expenses, Dellar zipped his lip.

## HERRERA OFFERS AMNESTY

But Dellar was not the only restaurateur who appeared to get more than he gave. City Attorney Dennis Herrera launched a campaign against surcharge fraud in 2013, offering amnesty to restaurants that took in more than they paid out, and promising to sue non-compliers. Herrera's point was that the law required that every cent collected under a surcharge labeled "health care costs" must be applied to employee health care. If you tell your customers you're collecting to fund health care benefits, you've got to spend it on health care benefits. If you pocket the money collected, you are defrauding the public, Herrera reasoned.

Underpinning the city attorney's carrot-and-stick offer was an Office of Labor Standards Enforcement audit that revealed some of the big-name establishments were not in compliance with the health care regulations. Fog City Diner took in more than \$103,000 in surcharges and spent but \$30,935; Wayfare Tavern took in more than \$303,000 and spent \$68,018. Squat and Gobble Café, with four locations in the city, took in more than \$160,000 and spent nothing on employee health care benefits.

The Golden Gate Restaurant Association protested, saying that any problems were the result of paperwork errors or inadvertent failures to spend the collected funds on health care within the proper time period.

By December 2013, Herrera announced the completion of his com-



DIGITAL ILLUSTRATION LISE STAMPFLI

pliance campaign, claiming settlements by 38 dining establishments had resulted in health care distributions of more than \$2 million to nearly 4,000 eligible employees. Herrera didn't have to sue, and he thanked the association for its input.

While local turmoil was bubbling, the nation was grappling with the implications of universal health care insurance and Obamacare, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, that became law in 2010.

The federal mandates on certain employers and what health benefits they must provide employees have been pushed back several times. Republicans keep trying to kill Obamacare and the Supreme Court this month will hear arguments challenging the federal health insurance funding rules.

But the future life or sudden death of Obamacare won't affect the city's health ordinance. For starters, city requirements have lower thresholds than the federal law. Employers' coverage requirements kick in at 20 employees, not 50, and, unlike the federal program, requires coverage for both full-time and part-time employees — work eight hours a week and you're covered.

## 1 RESTAURANT PER 238 PEOPLE

In 2013 the Department of Public Health tallied more than 3,500 restaurants in the city, a number that raised San Francisco to No. 1 in the nation in restaurants per capita. That's a restaurant for every 238 people.

Most don't have 20 employees, so they're not required to offer health care benefits. Will restaurants that do now remove the surcharge? Ellen Love, senior administrative analyst for the city Office of Labor Standards Enforcement, thinks not.

"We've seen changes in the wording that some restaurants use to define the surcharge for their customers, saying the surcharge covers health care in part and other costs as well," Love said. "Our office only asks that the business report the amount collected for health care. We track compliance. The amount collected for health care and the amount expended on health care benefits must match."

Love acknowledged that other costs collected in the surcharge drag-net are not divulged under the city's self-reporting rules. Since 2009 the State Board of Equalization has treated surcharges as subject to sales tax, 8.75% in San Francisco.

An informal review of restaurant surcharges reveals a range of menu notices identifying various reasons for the additions to your dining check. Some-time restaurants under the same ownership express different rationales.

Diners at Bix, a North Beach mainstay since 1988, are advised that a 4% surcharge is added to all food and beverage sales "to offset costs of San Francisco ordinances." Doug Biederbeck heads the group that owns Bix as well as the Ferry Building's MarketBar and Pacific Heights bistro Florio. At MarketBar and Florio, the menus' surcharge notice is a bit more inclusive, although the percentage remains steady at 4%, added to "offset S.F. City and County ordinances, taxes & fees," letting customers know that City Hall is to blame.

## BOULEVARD, WAYFARE TAVERN

Boulevard, Nancy Oakes' signature spot in the landmark Audiffred Building, adds a 4% surcharge "for San Francisco employer mandates including Healthy San Francisco." Oakes was announced last month as a semifinalist for a James Beard Foundation award as Outstanding Chef.

Wayfare Tavern adds a "4% surcharge to assist in complying with San Francisco mandates."

As robust as the surcharge is in the local restaurant scene, no national trend is noted. Christin Fernandez, media director for the National Restaurant Association, reports that among the 300,000 members of her group surcharging is not a favored method of offsetting costs of doing business.

"From a public relations perspective, surcharging is probably not the best option," Fernandez said. "In our group we see surcharging most often when the restaurant doesn't have a fully developed HR infrastructure. Remember, too, that 90% of our members have fewer than 50 employees. They won't be subject to the Obamacare regulations, and they won't be compelled to pay health care benefits."

The California Restaurant Association, a 22,000-member nonprofit trade group, doesn't see surcharging growing statewide.

"I don't think restaurants throughout California are moving in that direction yet. It could be an option given the federal requirements, but we haven't heard of any trends suggesting that is becoming the norm," spokeswoman Janna Haynes said.

In the end, consumers may determine the fate of the surcharge in San Francisco. Does that grilled cheese and bowl of pea soup go down easier if the menu price is slightly higher, or will the flat-out extra dollars at the bottom line of the bill prevail?

Or, if the tip becomes added automatically to the bill at 18% or more — a growing trend in the city — will restaurants keep the S.F. surcharge?

If they do, will the amount be calculated before — or after — the tip? ■

## CENTRAL CITY

# EXTRA!

NEWS IS A COMMUNITY SERVICE  
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# Touch of green to patch TL's canopy

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trees, how many were replacements of replacements — none of that is known. But back in 2000, an Urban Forest survey painted a grim picture: It counted 223 living trees, about half healthy and the rest just OK or struggling, plus six dead trees and nine empty plots. All told, that's less than half of the trees it had planted in the Tenderloin. The rest had died uncertain deaths.

Today, Pierce calculates that in the past 15 years, his organization has helped get 212 trees planted in the hood. Their mortality rate hasn't improved. Three or four of every 10 planted won't last three years.

Three years is a benchmark because Urban Forest follows up neighborhood plantings with an annual visit to each tree during those critical years. Most cared-for trees are established by then.

## A VOICE FOR TREES

Six years ago, John Nulty, former TL resident and activist who's been a voice for trees since the mid-1990s, surveyed the Tenderloin and found 20 dead or dying trees. This January, in preparation for the spring planting, he went out again and this time tallied 52 distressed tree plots — 18 were empty, 23 had stumps and the other 11 had been cemented over, their poles or grates were protecting bare ground, or they'd been beheaded, lopped off 5 or 6 feet above their base.

101 Hyde illustrates the problem. Nulty says the corner once had eight trees, four on each side of the Post Office. Back in 2004, Elaine Zamora, who would be named manager of the new Tenderloin CBD the next year, personally paid for five of them.

Only three of the eight are still standing.

"One was taken out so cars could see the street signs," Nulty says. "Then the police wanted another one taken out. Then two on the Hyde Street side were wrecked when they put up the scaffolding for the mural." One's fate is unknown.

Nulty heads up the Tenderloin Tree Campaign, formed 10 years ago with Zamora and TL resident David Baker when the ax fell on a huge Norfolk Island pine at 606 Ellis. The tree's other claim to fame is it had stood in front of one of the Tenderloin's last single-family homes (see The Extra's Issue No. 73). Efforts to save the Norfolk Island pine failed, but tree-lovers got the city to expand protection to landmark and significant trees citywide. Today, about three dozen trees around the city have landmark status, none in the central city.

Nulty in 2011 received kudos for 35 years of arbor and other activism from Friends of the Urban Forest and from Rep. Jackie Speier. Her certificate of recognition says, "You are a Johnny Appleseed of organizing; wherever you go, organizations sprout." John's brother, Michael, received a similar commendation at the event.

## URBAN FOREST PLAN PASSES

A City Planning consultant in 2012 surveyed publicly planted street trees in four neighborhoods — Bayview, North Beach, Outer Sunset and Western Addition — and used the 24,858 trees found there to extrapolate data about arbor health and benefits citywide.

Among the findings: 7% of the inventoried trees were in poor condition or dead, a little over half were in fair condition and a third were in good or very good condition.

The survey also found that for every \$1 spent on public trees, city residents get \$4.37 in physical, social and aesthetic benefits — numbers that prompted the Board of Supervisors to finally pass a years-in-the-making Urban



PHOTO LISE STAMPELI

**More dead than alive**, this tree on Hyde Street near Golden Gate Avenue reflects the neglect common in the neighborhood.

**"Tree care is the key to the Urban Forest Plan's success — DPW could be out maintaining trees every three years, not every 12 years like it does now."**

Phil Pierce

FRIENDS OF THE URBAN FOREST

Forest Plan.

Their unanimous approval of the plan Feb. 10 says they're all in favor of planting 50,000 more street trees citywide in the next 20 years and setting a goal for canopy coverage that will give us some street cred, treewise.

The plan's other major goal is to change who's responsible for tree care. Right now, the onus is on property owners who opt to put in a street tree, while DPW tends those it plants. The plan makes the city responsible for all existing and projected 150,000 street trees, not just those it plants.

Nice idea, but the supes didn't allocate any of the maybe \$20 million needed to back it up. Voters may be asked next year to approve an annual parcel tax of \$60 to \$80, Supervisor Scott Weiner, who introduced the legislation, told the Chronicle.

Trees aren't cheap to buy, but the big-ticket item is maintaining them, and property owners don't always do due diligence.

"If an owner hires someone who doesn't use good arbor practices, trees not only are unlikely to thrive but it can create really hazardous conditions," says Ray Moritz, certified forester and owner of Urban Forest Associates who works with businesses, residents and government entities all over the Bay Area. "The city's plan to take over maintenance will be a game-changer if the

money can be raised."

When Friends of the Urban Forest sponsors plantings, it helps with annual inspections and provides lots of tips for keeping trees healthy. The Tenderloin CBD went that one better: When it was established in 2005, it included an annual budget line item for tree maintenance.

"That's gone now," confirmed David Seward, Hastings CFO and current CBD treasurer. "We're having some financial challenges and our budget is barebones — sidewalk-cleaning and graffiti-removal are about all we can afford. Still, I'm sure it will be put back, maybe in a year or so."

The plan's call to add 50,000 trees sounds like big jump, but it isn't. Over 20 years, that's only 2,500 a year, though it's 40% more than San Francisco plants each year now. Friends of the Urban Forest, working neighborhood by neighborhood, puts in 1,200 and DPW the rest. The city's Urban Forest Plan cops to the fact that the 50,000 trees also include "a portion" of replacements for removed or dying trees, thus it "does not represent a significant increase in forest canopy."

Pierce says the plan "may change how we do business but we'll still be planting trees in the central city every couple of years. Tree care is the key to the plan's success — DPW could be out maintaining trees every three years, not every 12 years like it does now."

## THE SPRING PLANTING

Concurrent with the upcoming neighborhood planting is a long-planned greening around Hastings, part of an almost \$2.5 million project that will stretch along both sides of McAllister between Leavenworth and Larkin streets. The county Transportation Authority put in \$1.8 million and Hastings \$640,000 for the streetscape changes: corner bulb-outs to improve pedestrian safety, lighting, sidewalk widening and replacement — and 18 ginkos, those hardy, deciduous trees whose origins go back 250 million years. Planting them will be the kickoff for the community event.

To be a part of it, you must be a building owner and ante up \$135 for each tree you want to plant on your property. Friends of the Urban Forest



COURTESY COLIN HUSSEY, 2011

**Doug Lybeck**, Friends of the Urban Forest community outreach manager, left, presents John Nulty with a certificate recognizing his work in the TL.

consults with owners about the kinds of trees that work best in this unforgiving environment. But, basically it gets down to ginkos and Brisbane box. And these trees will be larger than most of those planted in other neighborhoods, Pierce says, the better to withstand potential vandalism.

At that size, they can retail for up to \$550 each, but, as always, Friends of the Urban Forest subsidizes them. So for \$135, you get a more mature tree, cement removal, permitting and the three years of follow-up care. Volunteers and a cadre of neighbors get the fun of planting day, with all tools supplied, coffee and pastries in the morning and a potluck lunch when all the trees are in.

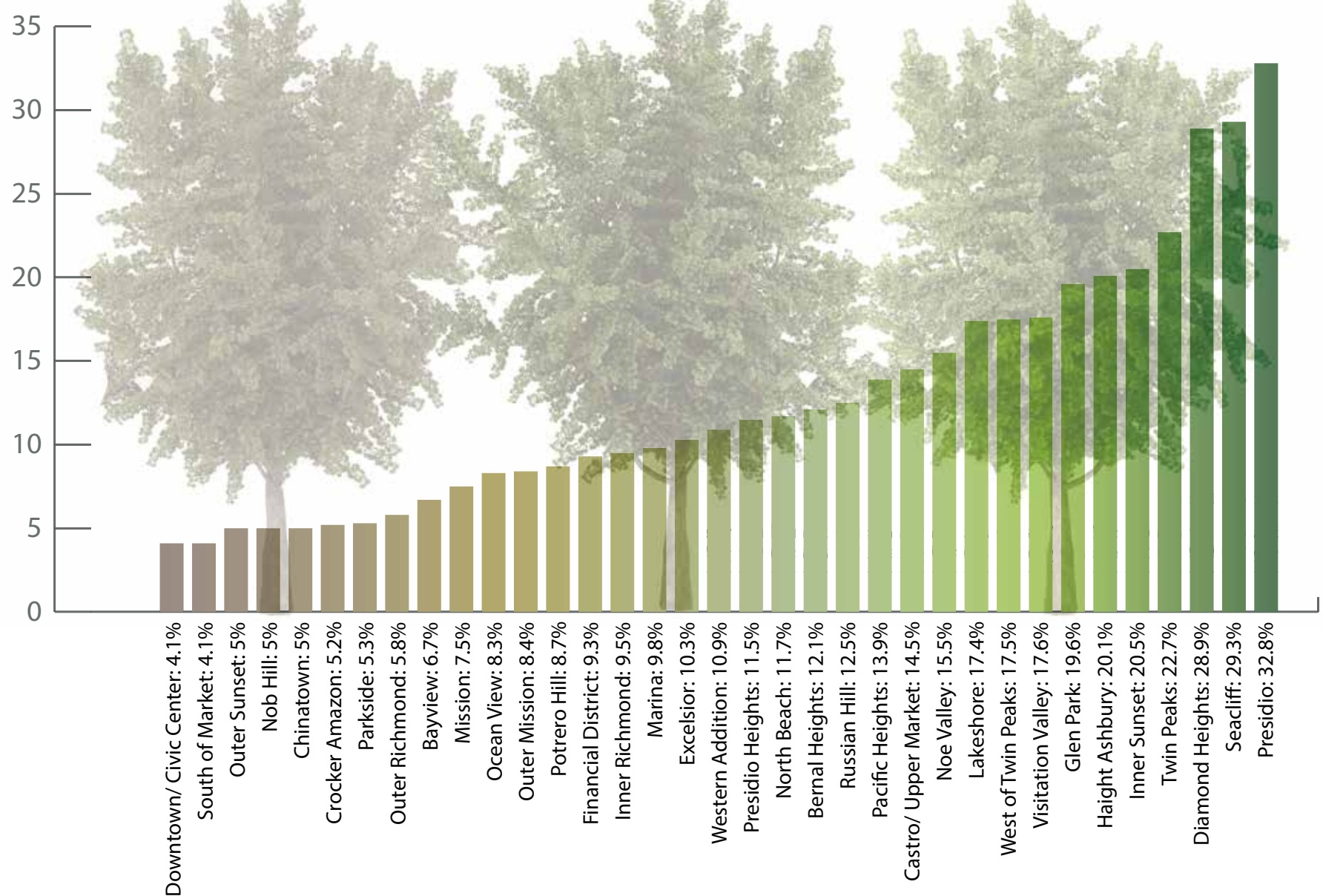
The deadline for signing up for a tree during the general Tenderloin planting will be in early April, but there's no need to wait. To apply or volunteer: [fuf.net/eform](http://fuf.net/eform) or call 268-0773.

For more tree stories, see those by Eric Eldon, editor in chief at Hoodline, The Extra's new neighborhood journalism partner: [bit.ly/1wf8rFG](http://bit.ly/1wf8rFG) and [bit.ly/1LTKvk0](http://bit.ly/1LTKvk0).



# How green are San Francisco's neighborhoods?

Percentage of tree canopy coverage



SOURCE: S.F. PLANNING DEPARTMENT, 2012 DATA. DIGITAL ILLUSTRATION: LISE STAMPELI

**The Tenderloin, and even the rest of District 6, has the least greenery of all S.F. neighborhoods at 4.1%. The most, not surprisingly, is the Presidio with nearly a third of it covered. The life expectancy of a tree in the Tenderloin is also the lowest in the city with more than a third dead or dying within three years of planting.**

## Why cabbie went to Lyft

*Details ease of hire by e-ride firm vs. rigorous training, background checks*

What it takes to be a cabbie is a lot more than what a Lyft driver goes through to get his pink mustache.

Cornelio Greer has been both cabbie and ride-share operator. He told *The Extra* what was required before he could get behind the wheel in both capacities and the regulations that pertain to each. Here's what we found the public surrenders for the convenience of a Lyft or Uber ride:

Training to become a taxi driver, Greer told *The Extra*, "was real intense, and there's a lot of steps to it."

To begin with, he had to write a 10-sentence essay for the S.F. Municipal Transportation Agency, telling what he typically does on weekends. It "didn't seem relevant and still doesn't now," he told *The Extra*.

Robert Lyles, SFMTA deputy spokesman, said the essay is the second part of a two-step process to verify drivers' English-language skills.

Greer then needed to provide SFMTA with a 10-year DMV printout and get a live-scan background check through a federal database. After that, he was required to sign up for a weeklong training course at one of four cab companies. The first day, he said, was on how to use maps, plus the fare meter, the dispatch radio and taxi console.

He was also trained in paratransit safety driving and had to pass a final test on all the material covered. Once he'd cleared those hurdles, he said, he was approved to take a Scantron test of 60 to 80 questions following a full-day SFMTA taxi operator course led by either a retired cop or a taxi investigator.

Finally, two weeks after beginning the course work, he was ready to go. "I've had physical jobs," Greer, 26, said, but "after driving in a cab for eight to 10 hours," he was so exhausted "I didn't want to eat or cook."

After paying the "gate fee" of \$80 per day to rent the medallion and fuel the cab, he said, "You would have \$10 days and you would have \$100 days."

He worked about a week for DeSoto. A friend suggested he consider working for one of the companies that are driving taxis out of business. "I spent two days researching the hell out of it," Greer said, and decided to try working for Lyft. "Uber seemed a little more uppity and fussy."

"I downloaded the app and signed up online. It took about three days for them to respond, then finally they send a Lyft driver to examine your car, take pictures so people know it's your car, and go for a ride-along for maybe



MARK HEDIN

**Cornelio Greer, ex-taxi driver, at the wheel, pink Lyft mustache on dash.**

10 minutes. It was really nonchalant," Greer said. His 2011 Ford Fusion easily passed the requirement that a driver's car be less than 8 years old.

The Lyft driver told him, "You seem safe, know the streets and stay focused," even while talking with his passenger, something Lyft encourages its drivers to do, along with fist-bumping.

"In another two days," the native San Franciscan said, "a box came" with supplies for the job, including the familiar pink mustache for the grille, which, he said, the company doesn't require its drivers to use.

"I don't really know what kind of background check they did," he said. "They did ask for insurance," but not for "DMV (driving record printout) or a live scan," he said.

"I'm not 100% sure," he said about his insurance coverage, "but I think they do cover us, but only when we're driving with a passenger."

So far, Greer said, he's enthusiastic about working for Lyft. Instead of the exhausting eight-hour shifts at the wheel of a cab, he can switch the app on and off at his convenience. When his girlfriend tells him that she needs more time at the office before being picked up, for instance, he picks up a fare or two to pass the time. "It's cool," he said.

Greer said he typically works from 7 a.m. to noon and from 4 to 8 or 9 p.m.

"I haven't picked up anyone from the airport, but I've dropped people off there." ■

— Mark Hedin



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## KENNETH LIMA AND MICHAEL ARPAN Memories from the Ritz

Rev. Paul Trudeau of City Hope ministries presided over a double memorial at the Ritz Hotel on Eddy Street on Jan. 21 for two former residents of the SRO.

It was a small group who gathered on a sunny afternoon in an upstairs room. About 10 people were in attendance, including this reporter, Trudeau, a singer and two social workers.

Michael Arpan was born July 6, 1944, and died Jan. 12, at age 70. Kenneth Lima was born April 9, 1969, and died Dec. 30 at age 45.

After operatic singer Molly Mahoney sang "Be Thou My Vision," Trudeau read through Psalm 23's "The Lord is my shepherd" passages as those in attendance fought back tears and sniffles.

Next, Trudeau shared a poem by Tom Gordon, "When It's Our Time," which sought "reassurance that love is not lost."

Mr. Lima's cousin, Denise Dorey, was first to speak when Trudeau invited people to share their thoughts and memories about Messrs. Arpan and Lima.

Her cousin's death, of congestive heart disease, she said, "wiped out all my savings" because he left behind \$1,200 in unpaid bills. "Ken and I were opposites in that way," she said, about how they managed their business. Because of the unexpected expenses, she said, "all the rules of the game are changed."

"I did all I could to help him," she said. "I thought I was going to bring him from the hospital," California Pacific Medical Center. "He should have taken Viagra," she said, claiming the drug has "lifesaving" applications as a heart medicine.

Her cousin, she said, "had bad luck



DENISE DOREY

### Kenneth Lima

from a baby. He should have had heart surgery when he was a baby. He was in awful pain the past six months."

"Ken was an air hockey champ," Dorey said. He also graduated from ITT Tech in Santa Clara and worked at a company called Atmel. "They poisoned him and he got a cash settlement in the late '90s."

She said he'd grown up in Mountain View, and had an affinity for poker. "He had a hard time beating me, though," she laughed. "We used to play online poker tournaments," and for Mr. Lima's 40th birthday, she said, they went to Thunder Valley, near Las Vegas.

Michelle Tucker, another Ritz resident, said Mr. Lima, who she'd known for two years, "was one of my best friends here. We used to talk about our

dreams," she said. "He wanted to be a cartoonist. He did good impressions. I miss him so. He was a good guy."

"He was real nice," said a man named Lee.

Mr. Lima was active in the community as a member of the Medical Cannabis Patient Working Group and applied to the Board of Supervisors Rules Committee for an opening on the Medical Cannabis Task Force in late 2011.

"If he couldn't help you out of a problem, he'd at least make you laugh," Dorey said. "One thing we all have in common, we love our cats."

Tucker concurred. "He would babysit my cat Frankie. We had our differences, but he was still a friend. I didn't realize he was in such pain. We used to watch 'Jeopardy.' He was real smart."

"No matter how bad a day I had, he'd always cheer me up. He called everybody 'mate,'" Tucker said.

Less was said about Mr. Arpan.

One person who did speak up, Michael, another Ritz resident, said Mr. Arpan, "the guy with the bicycle, the soldier," appeared to be Native American and "struck me as a guy who would not be in fear of anything. I'm sure as he went through the passage he was."

"He looked good in yellow," Michelle, another attendee, said.

"It's hard to lose two people in two weeks," Michael said.

Mahoney brought the joint memorial to a close with "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" and was applauded for her effort. ■

— Mark Hedin

## Rep. Lewis at Main Library

► CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

valuable tool in '60s organizing. It was eventually republished in Spanish in South America, banned in apartheid South Africa, and, in an Arabic translation, served as a blueprint for resistance at Cairo's Tahrir Square during the Arab Spring movement in 2011 and beyond, Aydin said.

He echoed Breed's earlier comments about the potential of the graphic novel format to reach a wider, younger audience.

When the event concluded, the line of people buying books and waiting to meet Lewis and have their copies signed extended all the way to the back of the auditorium and out the door. ■

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# COMMUNITY CALENDAR



ASHLEIGH REDDY

**Youth Speaks** poetry slam finalist  
*Char'le Bishop performs March 7 at the Main Library.*

## ARTS EVENTS

**Thursdays at Noon films**, Main Library, Koret Auditorium, noon-2 p.m.: March 5, "Cheaper by the Dozen (1950); March 12, "The King and I" (1956); March 19, "Coal Miner's Daughter" (1980); March 26, "The Young Victoria" (2009).

**Youth Speaks Teen Poetry Slam**, Semi-finals, March 7, 7-9 P.M., Main Library, Koret Auditorium. Final Slam, March 21, 7-10 p.m., Nourse Auditorium, 275 Hayes. Poetry by 13- to 19-year-olds. Info: youthspeaks.org/performances/youth-speaks-teen-poetry-slam.

**Merola Goes to the Movies**, operas on film. Jules Massenet's "Manon," March 22, 1-4 p.m. Info: <http://sfpl.org/index.php?pg=1017025501>.

**DIS/PLAY**, March 24-April 23, SOMArts, 934 Brannan St. Exhibition of more than 30 Bay Area artists and groups, with and without disabilities, who deconstruct disability culture and shatter assumptions about access in the arts. Opening reception, March 26, 6-9 p.m., features demonstrations and performances. Info: [somarts.org/display](http://somarts.org/display).

**WritersCorps Live: 20 Years of Youth Voices**, March 36, 6:30-7:30 p.m., Contemporary Jewish Museum, 736 Mission St. Youth poets and teaching artists share the stage with NoViolet Bulawayo, winner of the 2011 Cain Prize for African Writing. WritersCorps is a joint project of the S.F. Arts Commission and S.F. Public Library. Info: [sfartscommission.org/WC/events](http://sfartscommission.org/WC/events).

## REGULAR SCHEDULE HOUSING

**Tenant Associations Coalition of San Francisco**, 1st Wednesday of each month, noon, 201 Turk St., Community Room. Contact Michael Nulty, 339-8327. Resident unity, leadership training.

## HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH

**CBHS Client Council**, 3rd Tuesday of month, 3-5 p.m., 1380 Howard, Room 515. Consumer advisers from self-help groups and mental health consumer advocates. Public welcome. Info: 255-3695. Call ahead as meeting location may change.

**Healthcare Action Team**, 2nd Wednesday of month, 1010 Mission St., Bayanihan Community Center, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Focus on increasing supportive home services, expanded eligibility for home care, improved discharge planning. Light lunch. Call James Chionsini, 703-0188 x304.

**Hoarding and Cluttering Support Groups**, weekly meetings, conducted by Mental Health Association of San Francisco, 870 Market St., Suite 928. Info: 421-2926 or [mentalhealthsf.org/group-search](http://mentalhealthsf.org/group-search).

**Legal clinic**, 4th Thursday of the month, 507 Polk St., 10 a.m.-noon. Legal help for people with psychiatric or developmental disabilities who need help with an SSA work review, sponsored by People with Disabilities Foundation. Sliding-scale fee. By appointment only: 931-3070. Info: [pwdf.org](http://pwdf.org).

**Mental Health Board**, 3rd Wednesday of the month, 6:30-8:30 p.m., City Hall, room 278. CBHS advisory committee, open to the public. Call: 255-3474.

**Tenderloin Healthy Corner Store Coalition**, 4th Thursday of the month, 3 p.m., Kelly Cullen Community Building, 220 Golden Gate Ave., 2nd floor auditorium or 5th floor gym. Public meetings to discuss legislation that encourages corner stores to sell fresh food and reduce tobacco and alcohol sales. Info: Jessica Estrada, [jessica.healthytetail@gmail.com](mailto:jessica.healthytetail@gmail.com), 581-2483.

## SAFETY

**SoMa Police Community Relations Forum**, 4th Monday of each month, 6-7:30 p.m. Location varies. To receive monthly email info: 538-8100 x202.

**Tenderloin Police Station Community Meeting**, last Tuesday of month, 6 p.m., police station Community Room, 301 Eddy St. Call Susa Black, 345-7300. Neighborhood safety.

## NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT

**Alliance for a Better District 6**, 2nd Tuesday of each month, 6 p.m., 230 Eddy St. Contact Michael Nulty, 820-1560 or [sf\\_district6@yahoo.com](mailto:sf_district6@yahoo.com), a districtwide improvement association.

**Central Market Community Benefit District**, board meets 2nd Tuesday of month, Hotel Whitcomb, 1231 Market St., 3 p.m. Info: 882-3088, <http://central-market.org>.

**Friends of Boeddeker Park**, 3rd Thursday of the month, 3:30 p.m., park Clubhouse, Eddy and Jones. Info: Betty Traynor, 931-1126.

**Gene Friend Recreation Center Advisory Board**, 3rd Thursday of month, 5 p.m. Works to pro-

tect SoMa resources for all residents. Gene Friend Rec Center, 270 Sixth St. Info: Tim Figueras, 554-9532.

**Tenderloin Community Benefit District**. Full board meets 3rd Monday at 5 p.m., 55 Taylor St. Info: 292-4812.

**Safe Haven Project**, 4th Tuesday of each month, 3 p.m., 519 Ellis St. (Senator Hotel). Contact: 563-3205, x115, or [centralcitysafehaven@gmail.com](mailto:centralcitysafehaven@gmail.com).

**SoMa Community Stabilization Fund Advisory Committee**, 3rd Thursday of month, 5:30 p.m., 1 South Van Ness, 2nd floor. Info: Claudine del Rosario, 701-5580.

**Tenderloin Futures Collaborative**, 3rd Wednesday of the month, 11 a.m.-noon, Tenderloin Police Community Room, 301 Eddy. Presentations on issues of interest to neighborhood residents, nonprofits and businesses. Info: 820-1412.

## SENIORS AND DISABLED

**Mayor's Disability Council**, 3rd Friday of month, 1-3 p.m., City Hall, room 400. Call: 554-6789. Open to the public.

**Senior & Disability Action** (formerly Planning for Elders/Senior Action Network), general meeting, 2nd Thursday of month, 9 a.m.-noon, Universal Unitarian Church, 1187 Franklin St. SDA Housing Collaborative meeting, 3rd Wednesday, 1 p.m. HealthCare Action Team meeting, 2nd Wednesday, 1010 Mission St., (Bayanihan Community Center). For info about SDA's Survival School, University and computer class schedules: 546-1333, [www.sdaction.org](http://www.sdaction.org).

## DISTRICT 6 SUPERVISOR

**Jane Kim**, member, Land Use Committee, School District, Transportation Authority; chair, Transbay Joint Powers Authority Board of Directors; vice-chair Transportation Authority Plans & Programs Committee

Legislative aides: Sunny Angulo, Ivy Lee and April Veneracion

[Jane.Kim@sfgov.org](mailto:Jane.Kim@sfgov.org) 554-7970

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