

Mailboxes still not installed in all SROs

8 months after deadline, only 16% have complied

BY TOM CARTER

INSTALLATION of individual mailboxes at SROs for each tenant, guaranteed by a city ordinance two years ago in a victory over the Postal Service, has slowed to a snail's pace.

At the current rate, it will take almost 11 years to complete the job. And some SROs will never get them.

There are 503 SROs and just one postal employee assigned to oversee the involved installation process. The lobby of every SRO is different, so many hotels are waiting their turn to be inspected and told specifically what to buy for the expensive installation; others, with banks of boxes already installed, await final approval by the postal worker before they can be used.

"It's a bottleneck," says tenant organizer Peter Masiak of the Central City SRO Collaborative. "The law was passed without working with the post office."

Since the Board of Supervisors passed the law in December 2006 requiring individual lock boxes, 82, or 16%, of the city's 503 SROs have installed the boxes and been certified, USPS spokesman Augustine Ruiz Jr. said in a recent email.

"The law was passed without working with the post office."

Peter Masiak
SRO COLLABORATIVE

Some SROs can escape the requirement altogether if they don't have adequate space in their ground floor lobbies.

"Because this is centralized residential deliveries, USPS only delivers on (the) ground-floor level," the email said. "Some hotels have space constraints and/or second floor lobbies. USPS will not deliver on upper floors."

The S.F. Department of Building Inspection (DBI) is bound by USPS restrictions.

"The post office won't deliver up a floor, or in the basement, or in a lobby where there is insufficient space to install mailboxes that meet their requirements," says Rosemary Bosque, chief housing inspector. "We work with the (hotels) as required for compliance, and where the post office delivers is policy, unless they change it."

To start the expensive process, the hotel requests a USPS inspection to get advice on "mailbox setup and numbering." A standard, 30-door aluminum mailbox system costs \$525, according to the Website mailboxesdepot.com. Cost would be considerable for an SRO such as the Mission Hotel at 16th Street and South Van Ness with 297 units. The SRO pays for installation, too.

The post office has to approve and certify the finished "gang-box" installation. But the P.O. is "not the policing agency" to see that SROs initiate their legal obligation. DBI's outreach to such organizations as the S.F. Apartment Association, Bosque said, ensured that all 503

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CENTRAL CITY



SAN FRANCISCO

'AN EXCITING PLACE'



PHOTOS BY LENNY LIMJOCO

Residents relax along the central thoroughfare of Boeddeker Park with its limited foliage.

Boeddeker boon

\$3 million-plus for Tenderloin park's future makeover

BY TOM CARTER

MILLION-DOLLAR changes are coming to Boeddeker Park — but not for three years. The investment is almost sure to be more than the \$3 million that configured the park in the mid-1980s. No doubt, too, the park's community building will be renovated, perhaps get a

second floor, an idea that surfaced last year in public meetings.

But any detail is speculative. Ideas coming from community meetings starting in 2010 will help determine the makeover, and how extreme it might be. The total amount Boeddeker will receive also may not be known until 2010.

Mayor Newsom, the Rec and Park Department and four corporate representatives announced at a June 19 City Hall news conference that Boeddeker would be one of three city parks sharing \$8 million for improvements through the Trust for Public Land.

But the sum involves some fundraising by the trust that's still going on. Banana Republic, Levi Strauss Foundation, McKesson Corp. and Pacific Gas and Electric Co. each put up \$1 million for park renovation. The trust studied the city's parks for the past few years and chose Hayes Valley Playground, Balboa Park and Boeddeker as recipients, a plan the mayor's office and Rec and Park approved.

The trust has until Aug. 31 to raise the \$4 million match or it will be held back. But trust officials are confident. On July 24, Jacob Gilchrist, a manager for the trust's Parks for People project, said \$2.3 million had been donated so far.

"We've got \$3.5 million more outstanding in grant requests now," Gilchrist said, "and we're not stopping at \$4 million. We will continue to fund-raise for Boeddeker Park for several years. As each project continues and becomes a real project, it gets easier to do."

Headquartered in San Francisco, the 36-

Tenderloin Police Station across the street from the park is seen in the background.

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GOOD NEWS for...

TAX FILERS In the three central city ZIP codes — 94102, 94103 and 94109 — more than 4,000 people are eligible for the government's economic stimulus payment because they collect Social Security or veterans' benefits. It could mean as much as \$300 in their pockets, but first they have to file an ESP tax return. Free help filing is available at the IRS' walk-in Taxpayer Assistance Center at 450 Golden Gate. For more information: United Way's Earn It!Keep It!Save It! Program: Go to uwba.org and click on program info at bottom of page.

FILIPINAS GRAPPLING with breast cancer can join a new SoMa support group that meets every other Monday. Conducted in Tagalog, the group is offered by the Filipino Senior Resource Center, which won a grant from the Avon Foundation to address the rising rate of breast cancer among Asian American women. First meeting was in July. The group offers education, social and emotional support, and arts and crafts. Meetings are at the center, 953 Mission St., Suite 61. Next meeting: Aug. 18 at 1:30 p.m. Call 278-0484.

THE 'HOOD A University of Illinois study found: "The greener a building's surroundings were, the fewer crimes reported." So grab your gloves and join co-sponsors North of Market/Tenderloin Community Benefit District, The New Tenderloin and Friends of the Urban Forest for another neighborhood tree planting, Sat., Aug. 9, 8 a.m.-3 p.m. Meet at 8 a.m. at 118 Jones for coffee and muffins, move to 40 Jones for a tree-planting demonstration, then spread out in teams to plant 25 trees throughout the Tenderloin. Most will replace damaged or dying trees. But some are new, like those that will be planted in front of the Book Concern Building at 83 McAllister. Volunteers also are needed to unload trees Aug. 8 at 7 a.m. Information: Elaine Zamora, 440-7570 x 21 or ezamora@sbcglobal.net.

BIZ FAVES Nominations are open for Urban Solutions' fourth annual San Francisco Neighborhood Business Award. Before Aug. 15, submit the name of any unsung small retail business you think contributes mightily to your community. New this year is a special "green" category. A first-tier panel of judges — small-business owners, city leaders, residents, Urban Solutions staff and clients — reviews the 200 or so nominations and pares them down to less than 20. Urban Solutions staff check out these finalists and write up their observations for the final judges panel, which picks three winners plus honorable mentions. The awards party, tix going for \$50, will be Oct. 7 at Mezzanine nightclub, 444 Jessie off Mint Plaza. To nominate your favorite entrepreneur: urbansolutionsSF.org/nominate.

If you have some good news, send it to marjorie@studycenter.org or tom@studycenter.org.

Safe place to shoot dope — some say it will save lives

Mayor loses interest in hot-button topic

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

SETH Katzman stood confidently to make his presentation at the Tenderloin Futures Collaborative July meeting, but quickly acknowledged his topic wasn't popular with neighborhood activists — or Mayor Newsom.

"Last October, the mayor said he'd be open to considering safe-injection sites," said Katzman, rep of Alliance for Saving Lives and Conard House director of supportive housing and community services. "Now he's not because he's running for governor."

Katzman came hoping to find even a glimmer of support for the controversial idea of establishing medically supervised locations — perhaps in Public Health clinics — where IV users bring their own drugs, inject themselves in the privacy of clean carrels, and exchange and dispose of needles safely. Such sites operate in Vancouver, B.C., and 27 European cities.

In October, TL Capt. Gary Jimenez met a wall of resistance at a Friends of Boeddeker Park meeting when he proposed a temporary, screened-off injection site at the back of the park. Hearing all the opposition, he conceded, "Maybe it's a stupid idea." More recently, the captain said he still wants to keep it on the table.

Katzman insists the sites work: "They get users off the streets, there are fewer needles on the street and fewer pass-outs. They help prevent diseases, and social work staff can offer not just recovery programs but other help, too."

"Why can't funds be used instead for rehab, rather than to worsen addiction?" asked Ed Evans.

Funds for rehab are "already there," Katzman said, "but many people don't avail themselves of that (option)."

He couldn't estimate the cost of a safe-injection site, but hospitalization and emergency services for users cost the city so much, he said the site would save "tons of money."

"Where would it be located?" asked David Villa-Lobos, Community Leadership Alliance director.

Best would be where most injection users are, Katzman answered — the Tenderloin and the Mission.

Not what Collaborative members wanted to hear.

"Your proposal would just dump more addicts here," said one man. "It's so disrespectful of the people in this neighborhood."

"Providing a safe haven like this, aren't we just asking for World War III?" wondered Hastings CFO David Seward.

Katzman countered that the war is already happening. "We've got the problem right now. Why not give (addicts) the opportunity to use more safely?"

Alliance for a Better District 6 President Michael Nulty commented dryly that people don't use the neighborhood's public bathrooms — installed to reduce another unwanted behavior. "Why would they use this site?" he asked.

Collaborative Chair Glenda Hope called time on the topic.

The Extra contacted the mayor's office about his waffle on the proposed sites, and got back this email from Joe Arellano, deputy communications director:

"Until we have offered every IV drug user treatment, we are not considering movement in the direction of safe-injection sites."

MARIAN RESIDENCE BECOMES MEDICAL RESPITE

Father John Hardin put a positive spin on the news that St. Anthony Foundation is shuttering the Marian Residence for homeless women and 10 other programs. For a dozen years, the Marian has readied its clients to move into more permanent housing by providing 27 transitional beds and 30 emergency shelter beds.

"We had to make cuts in many programs because about 40% of our operating budget is bequests, and that money just isn't coming in anymore," Hardin, St. Anthony's executive director, told the Collaborative.

Marian Residence at 1171 Mission St. will close at the end of August.

Its new tenant, Hardin said, is one whose work fits snugly with St. Anthony's mission. The Department of Public Health and the nonprofit CATS (Community Awareness and Treatment Services) will lease the building and provide 80 medical respite beds for women and men.

Betty Traynor, chair of Friends of Boeddeker Park, told Hardin she was disappointed the Marian is closing. "Will you try to continue to help other homeless women, not just those from the Marian?" she asked.

"Closing Marian was one of the most difficult decisions we had to make," Hardin said, "but it cost \$1.3 million to run it — it was the Hilton of shelters."

After the meeting, The Extra got more details from Marc Trotz, DPH director of housing and urban health.

"CATS and St. Anthony's are in lease negotiations right now," Trotz said. CATS, which serves dually diagnosed homeless people, will provide the nonclinical services — food, janitorial and basic client care — while DPH will supply nurses, nurse practitioners, social workers and the respite director.

For 15 years, CATS has leased 39 Fell St., formerly the McMillan Center, a medically supervised sobering center. That lease is up at year's end, and the owner wants CATS out, Trotz said.

The back story: A year ago, McMillan switched from being a sobering center to medical respite for men and women.

"Medical respite means recuperation stays for those who need continuing medical assistance and supervision after they leave the hospital," Trotz said. "The average stay is 34 days, and the service priority is finding them more permanent housing."

DPH also staffs a second medical respite site in a wing of Episcopal Community Services' Next Door homeless shelter at Polk and Geary. Together, 39 Fell and Next Door have 60 medical respite beds, and they have had a good track record, according to Trotz, placing 40% of their discharges in residential settings, including drug treatment, to help keep them from returning to the streets.

Combining the two sites at the three-story Marian Residence will be more cost-efficient for the city, Trotz said. Men will be on the first floor, women on the third, CATS admin on the second, plus 10 beds on the first floor for drop-ins to sober up.

Trotz expects the new facility — as yet unnamed, he said — to open by January. ■



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City inspector has the skinny on food

BY TOM CARTER

LAURENCE Pong of the Public Health Department had the lowdown on meat, and it was surprising.

The price of supermarket packaged steak commonly gets knocked down 25% the day after the printed expiration date, and 50% on the day after that, he said.

"And on the third day it goes to land fill," Pong said, his voice rising dramatically. "But guess what? It's fine. It's good for you — it's aged!"

The revelation amused the audience of 25. Even TL police Capt. Gary Jimenez smiled broadly. Jimenez had invited Pong to be the main speaker at the April community police meeting after the captain's audience survey showed food safety a high priority topic. The neighborhood, with the city's lowest per capita income, has no supermarket, and penny-pinching hints are welcome — if they're healthy.

The meat could be a little green, even stinky, and it wouldn't hurt you, Pong said. But supermarkets don't want customers turning up their noses at food, so they dump it. Of course meat in bad shape should be washed, and then thoroughly cooked to rid it of pathogens, if it's to be eaten, Pong said. Europeans have done that for centuries, masking the smelliest, decomposing — but quite tender — meat with heavy doses of spices and herbs.

"Cooking will make it safe," Pong said.

The DPH principal inspector and training manager has been with the department 32 years. He lectures a few times a year around the nation at conferences and knows how to raise an audience's eyebrows.

Another surprise was that the expiration dates on packaged food, cans and bottles is "arbitrary. It's just someone's best guess," Pong said, "and it's okay, not dangerous" to consume them after the date. Some retail stores deal in expired castoffs, and the San Francisco Food Bank relies heavily on them. But they don't last indefinitely. (See sidebar.)

The Environmental Health Section of DPH, where Pong is assigned, inspects 6,700 restaurants a year, and most of Pong's 20-minute talk was about inspecting them, how they are graded and what it takes to shut them down.

Among the common violations is storing food at the wrong temperature (cold food must be kept below 41 degrees Fahrenheit). Timing the refrigeration of hot food in deep containers is particularly tricky, too, because the center of the mass lingers in the dangerous temperature zone, requiring four more hours to be ready to refrigerate. Other problems include the presence of insects, flies, rodents and mold; pesticides, cleaning compounds — even glass and metal shavings — gone awry; and unsanitary habits that promote invisible bacteria and viruses that make people sick.

"Clean doesn't always hack it," Pong said. "What you can't see can hurt you. But we don't walk in with microscopes."

What closes a restaurant down faster than anything is backed-up sewage, rodent infestations and no hot water. Restaurants stay closed until they fix the problem and get reinspected.

Each restaurant is inspected at least once a year.

They start off with a score of 100. Inspectors mark them down for infractions they find in any of 68 categories. A major violation like staff not washing hands, or improper food storage temperature, knocks 12 points off.

A restaurant that gets three straight 90-plus scores makes the honor role. It receives a colorful, 5¼ by 8-inch poster to display, indicating excellence in food safety and sanitation, "a badge of honor," Pong called it. About 1,500 receive it each year. But if one doesn't get a 90 or better on its next inspection, the symbol is removed and the restaurant must earn three more 90s or better to get it back.

Barely passing is a score of 70.

"It's not a decent score," Pong said afterward, "and we work with them (restaurants) to get them to stop any high-risk practices."

The health code has, since 2004, required restaurants to post the most recent inspection report in public view. A restaurant must also furnish the scorecard grade to anyone who requests it. The grade is also available on the DPH Website by clicking on Health Department, then checking the box "How does this restaurant rate?"

If a restaurant gets a low score, it keeps it for a year, even if the department works with management to quickly fix everything.

"We don't change the grade until after the next regular inspection comes around to establish a new score," Pong said. "The restaurant has to live with the bad score from that initial inspection for a year."

Rats menace restaurants all over town, Pong said, and his description of the Norway sewer rats living in the city's stinking sewers was not for the squeamish.

"The rats you see running around above ground are young ones; the old ones have chased them out of the sewers," he said. "They are gigantic, big as cats, and they have vast harems down there."

Once, he said, a rat ran up the leg of an inspector who was examining a restaurant.

"And boy," Pong said, "the restaurant was closed like that. True story." (See sidebar.)

He distributed to anyone who wanted it a thick information folder from the department's Environmental Health Section with information for prospective food service employees on what they need to know about preparing and serving food. Each retail food facility must have at least one employee who is food safety-certified after passing an examination. That person (or persons) is responsible for the safe food handling and teaching the techniques to other employees.

The test is given in English and Cantonese, and on request in Vietnamese, Korean, Arabic and Japanese. ■

How long food lasts

THE Food Marketing Institute, Cornell University and the University of Michigan developed these guidelines for how long you can use products after their "use by" and "sell by" dates. The San Francisco Food Bank follows the guidelines, which are reprinted from its Website.

DRY/CANNED GOODS	Storage life past the code date
Rice	2 years
Flour	12 months
Canned goods, low acid (meat, fish, gravy, stew, beans, soups, carrots, corn, pasta, spinach)	5 years
Cereal	12 months
Condiments (ketchup, mustard, salad dressing, salsa)	12 months
Mayonnaise	3 months
Jams/jellies	12 months
Pasta	2 years
Oils	12 months
Peanut butter	9 months
Bottled water	1 year
Baby food	consume by code date
Vinegar	2 years
Soda: diet	3 months
Soda: regular	9 months
REFRIGERATED	
Cottage cheese	21 days
Milk	7 days
Whipping cream/aerosol whipped cream	30 days
Yogurt	10 days
Sour cream	21 days
Other fresh juices	14 days
Refrigerated salsa*	7 days
Unpasteurized juices* (i.e. Odwalla)	consume by code date
Kern's nectar*	28 days
Tofu*	21 days
Deli meats	consume by code date
Margarine	5 months
Butter	3 months
Eggs	5 weeks
Egg substitute	10 days

* The suggested shelf life of these items is based on Food Bank staff phone conversations with the manufacturers of these products.

Perils of apparel in rat attack

FOOD Inspector Lisa O'Malley remembers the day a rat ran up her leg "like it was yesterday" instead of 14 years ago on Good Friday. She was reinspecting a Clement Street restaurant for a rodent infestation that the owner said was gone.

"In those days I wore a skirt — maybe 4 inches above the knee — nylons and heels," O'Malley recalled. "I was in the back to see if the owner had plugged all the holes in the wall when I heard a scratching behind one of the walls. Then this huge rat came flying out — literally flying out of the wall at me. I was 6 feet away, it happened so fast, imagine!"

The rat landed on O'Malley's left thigh. She felt the claws go through her skirt and nylons to her skin. O'Malley remembers screaming an obscenity. Then the rat sprang off and ran into another room. She looked in disbelief at the owner. He was standing with his arms folded, she said, as if nothing had happened.

"He said, 'I want to open.' And I said, 'No, you're closed. A rat ran up my leg!'"

The owner went to her superiors to object. But they upheld her decision, and to this day repeat in awe the bizarre story.

"Now I am very cautious when I go into a basement and I carry a flashlight," O'Malley said. "And I wear pants and boots." ■

— TOM CARTER



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Little Saigon now official — a 2-block cultural gateway

BY HEIDI SWILLINGER

IT'S in stone now — literally. Two marble pillars unveiled in the Tenderloin on July 15 cap a five-year quest to establish Little Saigon — the cultural and commercial center of the city's Vietnamese community.

The 3.5-ton pillars at Eddy and Larkin streets, each adorned with a mythical creature denoting prosperity, mark the official entrance to a Tenderloin neighborhood with roughly 300 Vietnamese-owned businesses. The community was established by refugees who fled Vietnam after the 1975 fall of Saigon.

The Board of Supervisors approved the Little Saigon designation for the two-block stretch of Larkin between Eddy and O'Farrell streets in 2003. It took five years to resolve funding and design issues for the pillars. City Administrator Ed Lee said the city kicked in \$72,000 — roughly half of the money; the Vietnamese community contributed the rest.

The new pillars sport five layers of anti-graffiti coating, as well as a ring of pigeon spikes to discourage roosting. Neighborhood association groups will be responsible for upkeep, Lee said. Among them are the Southeast Asian Community Center, Vietnamese Elderly Mutual Assistance Association, Vietnamese Veterans' Association, Vietnamese Community Center, Vietnamese Women Mutual Assistance Association, Au Co Vietnamese Cultural Center and the Vietnamese Merchants Association.

Lee says the city is home to about 20,000 Vietnamese. Many live in the Tenderloin, and Lee, among others, credits their presence and hard work for helping to transform a neighborhood with too many empty storefronts and gritty sidewalks. "They're taking over formerly blighted buildings," he said. "You see less blocks that seem abandoned and uncared for."

Although the Little Saigon designation applies to the two-block stretch of Larkin, "the real Little Saigon is much bigger," according to Philip Nguyen, executive director of the Southeast Asian Community Center. Vietnamese-owned businesses are spread over a 12-block area — to the south as far as McAllister Street and to the north as far as Geary Street. Next to the Larkin Street stretch, the biggest concentration of businesses is on Ellis Street between Hyde and Polk, says Nguyen.

The neighborhood's special designation has the potential to lure even more businesses, said Lee, who anticipates shops and specialty stores designed to attract tourists. "They want to establish themselves as a good destination point," he said.

Community leaders can also apply for grants and funding for additional improvements, such as art and greening projects, said Lee.

Many in the crowd at the July 15 dedication ceremony said the pillars are a good start. "The Tenderloin has come a long way, from what I hear," said Bert Nguyen, who moved from Orange County to study at Hastings College of the Law. "This will help continue the upward trend."

Ahn Tran, one of a contingent of San Jose residents who turned out for the dedication, added that the new pillars are an inspiration to San Jose's much larger Vietnamese community, which is working to estab-

lish a permanent Little Saigon designation of its own.

Philip Nguyen pointed out that the pillars also serve as a concrete symbol of endurance and adaptability. "We are a group of people uprooted from our own country," he said. "Little Saigon reminds us of our roots and why we are here."

A fund-raising dinner to cover costs and upkeep for the pillars is set for Aug. 17, said Nguyen. For more information, contact him at 885-2743. ■



PHOTO BY LENNY LIMJOCO

Mythical marble animals called kylins usher in visitors to Little Saigon.

Betty Traynor's tireless effort helped cinch the deal

► CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

year-old national Trust for Public Land is committed to transforming neglected public parks that are accessible to children.

"We looked at 10 different sites and chose ones with existing groups that were involved and interested in doing things," Gilchrist said.

Volunteer Betty Traynor has kept the monthly Friends of Boeddeker meetings running smoothly since the rotating committee chairmanship died two years ago. She avidly pursues and follows up on committee goals and attends weekend volunteer cleanups. Another compelling factor, Gilchrist said, is the 3,000 children in the city's densest neighborhood.

The three parks will divide the \$8 million. Hayes Valley is first in line for improvements next year, then Balboa Park in 2010, followed by Boeddeker in 2011.

Community input for Hayes Valley is well along. A third meeting to discuss the design of the playground and clubhouse at Hayes and Buchanan streets is scheduled for 7 p.m. Aug. 14 at the park.

"The Police Department and the city in general are excited about Boeddeker but there's an absence of community process in it now," Gilchrist said. "We won't be thinking about designing until early 2010

when the community meetings will start. And we will continue coming to Friends of Boeddeker Park meetings."

When Gilchrist began attending Friends' meetings at the clubhouse two years ago, he said he was sizing up parks and looking for major project ideas to fund at an unspecified future date.

Boeddeker's current configuration came about in the mid-1980s. The 2.5-acre plot had been created in 1978 as Central City Park to provide the TL some green space. It supplanted Downtown Bowl. After a \$3 million face-lift, it was renamed in March 1985 to honor Father Alfred Boeddeker, the Franciscan priest who founded St. Anthony Dining Room two blocks away. Other renovations, including a new children's playground and remodeled recreation center, came in the 1990s. The Rotary Club also put \$200,000 into access ramps, new fencing, a small lawn and a tots play area.

Located in the middle of the city's poorest neighborhood, Boeddeker took on endemic problems as a harbor for drunks, addicts and dope dealers. It grew notorious. For years, scores of volunteers trying to clean and beautify the park have appealed for more police patrols. Sometimes cops have effectively reduced problems, sometimes not.

But a project last year, spawned by the trust, got people thinking critically about the park's design. Its spiky, 6-foot-high fence and massive iron gate make Boeddeker look like a fortress, and its grounds are inefficiently planned, critics say.

Gilchrist's Boeddeker Park reports to the trust's board and volunteers in 2007 had immediately fascinated some architects. They wanted to do a comprehensive redesign. A dozen of them from local firms and 15 other volunteers ended up contributing \$25,000 in pro bono work.

The design, among other changes, put a lawn in the middle of the park with a circular promenade around it, created a second, smaller community house by the north gate, added a slim two-story building on Eddy Street near the community building's front door to house a little cafe with its upper wall — facing the lawn — functioning as a movie screen.

There was no cost estimate; it was a fantasy exercise. But residents and others who saw the design at Friends' and Collaborative meetings were surprised that Boeddeker could be something other than what it is, and some criticized aspects of the plan.

"It (the redesign) will be considered minimally, if at all," Gilchrist said. "It has never been our intention that it would be a starting point, and it's not

Asbestos found at SomArts' Port facility

BY HEIDI SWILLINGER

THE eviction notice from the Port of San Francisco couldn't have come at a worse time for SomArts, the South of Market arts organization that provides staging and lighting for neighborhood events throughout the city.

Port officials had warned SomArts that it might have to clear out of the Pier 70 warehouse where it stores staging equipment after a January storm damaged the roof. Executive Director Ernest Rivera hoped to work out an arrangement that would allow SomArts to stay while repairs were made. But Port spokeswoman Renee Dunn said architects who inspected the historic warehouse discovered asbestos, which meant the building had to be vacated for a repair job she estimated would take six months.

The Port issued a formal 30-day eviction notice in June, just as SomArts was preparing for its busiest season of the year. Between August and October, the organization will stage numerous community events, including Japantown's Nihonmachi Street Fair, Bernal Heights' Outdoor Cinema screenings,

Xicana Moratorium Day in Dolores Park; the Community Day Gospel Festival in the Bayview and the Blues Festival at Fort Mason.

"If we don't have a place to store our equipment, we can't build stages. We'd have to shut down," said Mary Molly Mullaney, SomArts office manager.

The organization has rented warehouse space from the Port since 1996, said Mullaney. Before that, SomArts stored its scaffolding, handicap lifts and other staging equipment at its cultural center at 934 Brannan St. The storage space has since been transformed into an art gallery, she said.

In addition to the eviction notice, Port officials informed Rivera rents will go up if he opts to move back when repairs are finished. Dunn says SomArts currently pays below-market rates for warehouse and outdoor storage space at Pier 70. The warehouse space could go up from 45 cents per square foot to as much as \$1.10; outdoor space, which SomArts currently rents for 20 cents per square foot, could go up to 32 cents, said Dunn.

She said Port officials tried to find alternative space for SomArts, "but there's nothing available at the rate they're paying now. We don't have anything comparable."

SomArts has put out feelers for a new location, but, said Mullaney, "It's hard to find that sort of industrial space anymore, now that Mission Bay is developing.

People don't want to be next to the ugly warehouse."

In the end, Rivera and Port officials worked out a deal during a meeting in late July. SomArts will empty the warehouse by September so that repairs can begin, but will continue to store equipment outdoors at its current rental rate. Rents will go up when repairs are finished, but Rivera hopes the Port will negotiate.

For now, he's happy. "I feel the Port has recognized the value of the tenant," he said. "Rather than dismissing us and sending us away, they're willing to work with us — and that's what I wanted all along." ■

SOUTHSIDE

Hyde Street P.O. to go full service

BY TOM CARTER

THE Civic Center Post Office at 101 Hyde St. that Tenderloin activists fought to improve will be renovated and upgraded to full service "hopefully" by the holidays, officials said at a public meeting in the State Building.

"We want it open by December," Jim Wigdel, post office spokesman, said at the June 19 meeting.

After interior renovations, which could take two months, Civic Center will become a two-window retail facility, Wigdel said. Staff will handle express, international and registered mail and rental boxes, sell stamps, weigh parcels and serve general delivery patrons. A drop box for letters will be in the lobby. Whether the facility will handle passport applications will be determined by the U.S. State Department, but that isn't considered part of full service, officials said. No exterior changes are planned.

Renovation will reduce the number of rental boxes by about half, to 3,000 or 4,000, Wigdel said. He assured patrons they will keep their current box numbers. He later said that 2,160 of the available 6,035 boxes are rented.

Operating hours will be determined after analyzing hours of other full service stations, Wigdel said. Currently, the post office is open weekdays, 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., and Saturdays, 7:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

For the past two years the post office shaved six evening hours off its open lobby time, had no working stamp machine and closed its mail drop boxes.

Meanwhile, as foot traffic diminished inside, drug dealing on the sidewalk increased. These issues, plus lack of retail service, brought neighborhood forces together.

More than 40 people attended the meeting, including Postal District Manager Winifred Groux and representatives from the mayor's office and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

A Postal Service news release announced in May that the Civic Center post office would go full service in response to the activists' five-month campaign and 1,000-signature petition. During construction, the release said, general delivery mail service would continue.

The grassroots victory was reminiscent of the TL activists' public transportation success four years ago when Muni tried to change bus service on Geary Street east of Van Ness Avenue. Activists persuaded Muni to retain — instead of eliminating — certain bus stops on the 38-Geary line. But the post office struggle had wider neighborhood participation and the public support of Tenderloin Capt. Gary Jimenez.

Wigdel said the lobby will have no stamp machine: It's too high-maintenance. When retail windows are closed, he suggested buying stamps online, which caused a groan from the audience.

"I know that caused a big groan," Wigdel said. "But we are phasing out the machines nationwide. They are old and we just can't get parts. They are basically obsolete."

Wigdel made it clear that profitability would rule 101 Hyde's future.

When the audience raised the issue of intimidating drug dealing outside, Wigdel said the sidewalk is the bailiwick of the police, and the post office would hire no security.

The post office had sent postcards to notify citizens in the 94102 and 94103 ZIP codes of the meeting. But half the audience, by a show of hands, said they had not received one. The cards also announced that the Fox Plaza substation at 1390 Market St. and the Federal Building office at 450 Golden Gate Ave. would close.

At the meeting, officials said the post office in the Federal Building basement would stay open and the Fox Plaza office wouldn't close until 2010 when its lease expires. Meantime, USPS Real Estate Specialist Ron Borkgren said he has been looking at alternative sites. The move should be as near Fox Plaza as possible, he said, and within the two TL and SoMa ZIP codes.

Someone in the audience suggested the vacant Merrill's drugstore at Seventh and Market streets, which had served as a postal substation with limited services after the 1989 earthquake closed the Main Post Office at Mission and Seventh. It was a site Borkgren said he hadn't been aware of, and other postal officials showed interest.

But the site on the front burner, Borkgren said, was right across from Fox Plaza at 1355 Market St. ■

1 for Boeddeker

the basis of a design. But there are lessons to learn from it."

One observation was that people inside the community building can't look out and see what's going on in the park, suggesting need for a second story.

"A lot of ideas are valid," Gilchrist said. "But we're not going to impose our ideas."

What struck the architects about Boeddeker continues to intrigue other outsiders.

"Each park is different," Gilchrist said, "but there's a lot of interest in making Boeddeker an exciting place. It's such a contrast. It's just two blocks from the cable car turnaround on Market Street where tourists are, and it's a totally different world. And that's compelling to people."

At the July Friends of Boeddeker meeting, Steve Cismowski, Rec and park's regional neighborhood liaison, said his department has to determine the park's needs.

"The community doesn't always have operational needs at heart," he said, "and we have to approach it from that angle."

With so many competing perspectives and such a complex makeover, it will be a test for the community to see if people can agree on how to revise the park to meet the needs of the Tenderloin tomorrow. ■



This is a rendering of the Boeddeker Park of the future as envisioned by a dozen architects who found the park so appealing that they must have had a ball with this design.

TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

SPECIAL EVENTS

People in Plazas summer music: Mint Plaza: Aug. 8, Nerio Degracia (mambo jazz); Aug. 15, Cubanacan (Cuban); Aug. 22, Smooth Blues; Aug. 29, Benny Watson Quartet (swing). At Boeddeker Park: Aug. 12, Pat Wilder (blues); Aug. 19, Groovy Judy (rock); Aug. 26, TBA.

Tenant Associations Coalition 10th anniversary event, Wed., Sept. 3, noon-3 p.m., 201 Turk community room. Award ceremony, door prizes, refreshments. Information: 339-8327.

COMMUNITY: REGULAR SCHEDULE HOUSING

Supportive Housing Network, 2nd Thursday of the month, 3-5 p.m., location TBA. Contact: Kendra Fuller, 421-2926 x304.

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

HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH

CBHS Consumer Council, 3rd Tuesday of the month, 3-5 p.m., CBHS, 1380 Howard, room 537. Call: 255-3695. Advisory group of consumers from self-help organizations and other mental health consumer advocates. Open to the public.

Health & Wellness Action Advocates, 1st Tuesday of the month, 5-7 p.m., Mental Health Association, 870 Market, Suite 928. Call: 421-2926 x306.

Healthcare Action Team, 2nd Wednesday of the month, Quaker Center, 65 Ninth St., noon-1:30 p.m. Focus on increasing supportive home and community-based services, expanded eligibility for home care and improved discharge planning. Light lunch served. Call James Chionsini, 703-0188 x304.

Hoarders and Clutterers Support Group, 870 Market, Suite 928. Call for dates and times: 421-2926 x306.

Mental Health Board, 2nd Wednesday of the month, 6:30-8:30 p.m., City Hall, room 278. CBHS advisory committee, open to the public. Call: 255-3474.

National Alliance for the Mentally III-S.F., 3rd Wednesday of the month, 6:30-8:30 p.m., Family Service Agency, 1010 Gough, 5th Fl. Call: 905-6264. Family member group, open to the public.

SAFETY

Safety for Women in the Tenderloin, every 3rd Wednesday, Central City SRO Collaborative, 259 Hyde St., 4-6 p.m. Informal, friendly environment, refreshments, gender sensitive to LGBTQ community and sex workers. Discuss how to make Tenderloin SROs safer for women. Information: Alexandra Goldman, volunteer campaign coordinator, 775-7110 x102.

Neighborhood Emergency Response Team Training (NERT). Central city residents can take the S.F. Fire Department's free disaster preparedness and response training at any neighborhood location. See Website for schedule and training locations, www.sfgov.org/sffdnert, or call Lt. Arteseros, 970-2022.

SoMa Police Community Relations Forum, 4th Monday of the month, 6-7:30 p.m. Location changes monthly. To receive monthly information by e-mail, contact Meital Amitai, 538-8100 x202 or mamitai@iisf.org.

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

NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT

Alliance for a Better District 6, 2nd Tuesday of the month, 6 p.m., 230 Eddy. Contact Michael Nulty, 820-1560 or sf_district6@yahoo.com, a districtwide improvement association.

Boeddeker Park cleanup, 3rd Saturday of the month, 9-noon, organized by the Friends of Boeddeker Park. To RSVP to work or for information, call Betty Traynor, 931-1126.

Central City Democrats, meets four times a year, 301 Eddy St. Community Room. Addresses District 6 residential and business concerns, voter education forums. Information: 339-VOTE (8683) or centralcitydemocrats@yahoo.com.

Central Market Community Benefit District, board meets 2nd Tuesday of the month, 989 Market St., 3rd Fl., 3 p.m. Information: 882-3088, <http://central-market.org>.

Community Leadership Alliance. CLA Community Advocacy Commission monthly meeting, City Hall, Room 34. Subcommittee meetings and informational forums held monthly at the Tenderloin Police Station Community Room. Information: David Villa-Lobos, admin@CommunityLeadershipAlliance.net.

Friends of Boeddeker Park, 2nd Thursday of the month, 3:30 p.m., Boeddeker Rec Center, 240 Eddy. Plan park events, activities and improvements. Contact Betty Traynor, 931-1126.

Gene Friend Recreation Center Advisory Board, 3rd Thursday of the month, 5 p.m. Board works to protect SoMa resources for children, youth, families and adults. Gene Friend Recreation Center, 270 Sixth St. Information: 538-8100 x202.

North of Market Planning Coalition, 3rd Wednesday of the month, 6 p.m., 301 Eddy. Call: 820-1412. Neighborhood planning.

North of Market/Tenderloin Community Benefit District. Call District Manager Elaine Zamora for times and dates, 440-7570.

SoMa Leadership Council, 3rd Wednesday of the month, 6 p.m., The Arc, 1500 Howard St. at 11th. Emphasizes good planning and good government to maintain a diverse, vibrant, complete neighborhood. Contact: Jim Meko, 624-4309 or jim.meko@comcast.net.

South of Market Project Area Committee, 3rd Monday of the month, 6 p.m., 1035 Folsom, between 6th & 7th Sts. Health, Safety and Human Services Committee meets monthly on the first Tuesday after the first Monday, 1035 Folsom, noon. Information: 487-2166 or www.sompac.com.

Tenderloin Futures Collaborative, 2nd Wednesday of the month, 10 a.m., Tenderloin Police Station Community room, 301 Eddy. Call 358-3956 for information. Network of residents, nonprofits and businesses sharing information and taking on neighborhood development issues.

SENIORS AND DISABLED

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

Senior Action Network, general meeting, second Thursday, 10 a.m.-noon, St. Mary's Cathedral. Monthly committee meetings, 965 Mission #700: Pedestrian Safety, third Wednesday, 10 a.m.; Senior Housing Action, third Wednesday, 1:30; Information: 546-1333 and www.senioractionnetwork.org.

SUPERVISORS' COMMITTEES

 City Hall, Room 263

Budget and Finance Committee McGoldrick, Elsbernd, Mirkarimi, Daly, Chu, Wednesday, 1 p.m.

Land Use Committee Maxwell, Sandoval, McGoldrick, Monday, 1 p.m.

TENDERLOIN HEALTH

a continuum of care

Outreach and Community Events August 2008

Health Promotion Forum

Topic: Women's Health

Speaker: Speakers from Planned Parenthood, Lyon-Martin, The Women's Building, and SFWAR

Date/Time: Tuesday, August 26, 12 pm - 1:30 pm

HIV Treatment Forum

Topic: Keys to Success — Part 1

Speaker: Jennie Vanderlaag, Gilead Sciences

Date/Time: Monday, August 18, 3 pm - 4 pm

Client Advisory Panel

Come talk with Tenderloin Health's Board Client Representative(s) and program managers about plans for Tenderloin Health. Also provide input on new services and how we can improve.

Date/Time: Wednesday, August 13, 11:30 am - 1 pm;
Wednesday, August 27, 11:30 am - 1 pm

Volunteer and Intern for Tenderloin Health

Orientation: Sunday, August 10, 12 pm - 6:30 pm
220 Golden Gate Ave., 3rd Floor
lunch provided

You must register for volunteer trainings.
Stop in/call Emilie (415) 437-2900 ext. 234.

For a schedule of our current groups or for more information
call 415.431.7476 or go to www.tenderloinhealth.org



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swimming
kick boxing
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KATHERINE HART
Adored her grandkids

Katherine Hart had a heart attack at the Elm Hotel, where she lived for 13 years. Paramedics performed CPR as they wheeled her through the lobby, but she died shortly afterward in the hospital. It was June 29. Ms. Hart was 66.

Too overcome by her death to attend a July 8 memorial, her partner of 13 years asked Anna Cooper, the Elm's assistant support services manager, to give everyone his message: Ms. Hart had lived in San Francisco for 30 years, and she adored her six grandchildren and her stuffed animals.

At the memorial, a table in the hotel lobby held a large candle and a vase with a bouquet of white flowers: roses, gladiolas, mums and lilies set off by fresh greens. Lacking a picture of Ms. Hart for the table, management had framed her name with her birth and death dates.

Hotel Services Manager Wes Flowers noted that while Ms. Hart wasn't in good health — she needed a wheelchair to get around — she was someone people were glad to pass in the hall.

"She was always witty, making the best of a bad situation," Flowers said.

"Katherine always had a smile," Cooper said. "She was a very pleasant lady and she will be missed." ■

—MARJORIE BEGGS

JOHN TRIPLETT
U.S. Navy veteran

When Episcopal Community Services began providing supportive housing services to residents of the Elm Hotel in 2004, staff found a most willing helper in John Triplett.

He not only was a member of the resident council, advocating changes to improve conditions for his neighbors, he also organized the annual resident "picnic" — held in the lobby — and took responsibility for a nicety seen in few SROs: free coffee three times a week, which he made in a huge urn that sat on a table in the lobby. Often there were free cookies as well.

Mr. Triplett had lived at the Elm for 20 years when he died June 26 of liver cancer. Ten residents and staff attended a memorial for him July 3. Mr. Triplett, a veteran who had served in the Navy, was 67. ■

—MARJORIE BEGGS

CHRISTOPHER CLANTON
'Lightning wit and infinite jest'

When Connie Clanton visited her brother, Christopher Clanton, at St. Francis Hospital, she asked him if there was anything she could get for him.

"Chris was intubated for pneumonia at the time and he could barely speak and couldn't eat," she said, "but he let me know he wanted Reese's peanut butter cups."

Her brother had been in and out of St. Francis Hospital several times before he died July 7 at age 47, and she recalled his last days for mourners gathered for his July 16 memorial at the Elm Hotel. Those days were precious to her, she said, because until she heard about his failing health in May, she hadn't seen him for many years.

"Sam — that was Chris' nickname — always loved to eat," she said. "Our mother, who couldn't travel here today, wrote this poem and sent it with me to read."

Sam liked nearly every kind of food.
Oranges, apples, nuts and cheese
And when his mother gave him carrots,
he'd say, "I want more of these."

Brussels sprouts and cabbage,
Celery and green beans.
How to get enough,
He'd plot and plan and scheme.

"Give me lots of vegetables,
meat and potatoes too.
I will eat them one by one,
Or even in a stew."

"Cereal and crackers,
muffins, bread and jam,
milk and eggs and plenty of juice,
I can eat them, yes I can."

Only one food,
Sam strongly resisted.
Broccoli he would not eat,
He stubbornly insisted.

"Don't give me broccoli,
Mother if you please.
I don't want to eat them.
They look like little trees."

"You're right," his mother said,
trying her very best,
trying not to laugh
while Sam ate all the rest.

Mr. Clanton's neighbor across the hall at the Elm, C.J. Flanagan, remembered him fondly as someone who ate popcorn all the time and was very quiet. "But every now and then," she said, "he'd play music really loud on his radio for three minutes, then shut it off."

Mr. Clanton grew up in Bakersfield, the middle child of five siblings, and lived in many locales, including Napa, where he worked in wineries. He moved into the Elm three years ago. No one knew how long he'd lived in San Francisco, but Connie Clanton believes it was 10 years or more.

"He was the smartest of all of us," she said. "He was a man of lightning fast wit and infinite jest. At St. Francis he was almost a celebrity because of his cheerfulness."

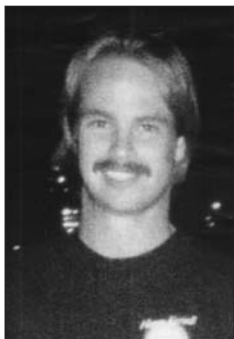
Matloub Rahmey, a physical therapist at St. Francis Hospital, recalled Mr. Clanton as a "sweet and appreciative man. I taught him some breathing techniques that seemed to help him. It was a gift to have known him," he said.

Mr. Clanton's appreciation spilled over into much of his life. Before he died, he told his sister about the things that had made him happy in recent years: moving into the Elm, a Care Not Cash hotel, after being homeless, and working with the gardeners at Golden Gate Park through the city's PAES (Personal Assisted Employment Services) program, which gives employable adults a cash stipend and work-related education and training.

Nanette Clanton, another sister who lives in Texas and who also came to San Francisco to see her brother in his last days, said the family had lost track of him almost 20 years ago in "a conflict over lifestyle." Still, to her, he was the brother who was "so good-looking, we always wondered why he didn't go to Hollywood. And he loved to laugh and didn't like any fuss — he sure wouldn't want to see us bawling over him," she said, trying not to cry.

At the end of the memorial, Connie Clanton opened a shopping bag filled with Reese's peanut butter cups, which she piled near a picture of her brother. ■

—MARJORIE BEGGS



ERNIE MERCHANT
On the cover of TNDC's Strategic Plan

Ernie Merchant, the face of the moment of TNDC, but for 15 years the heart of the Ritz Hotel, died in June after battling illnesses for several months.

The former nurse's aide and maintenance man greeted each day with a smile, was generous and got along with everybody, said the three friends who attended his memorial June 11.

Mr. Merchant was one of the Ritz's best-liked residents.

"He was a beautiful human being," said one man. "He shared with everybody and he loved (doing it)."

A black and white photo that was taken of Mr. Merchant, wearing a hat and jacket in front of TNDC's Ambassador Hotel, graces the cover of the nonprofit developer's "Strategic Plan, 2008-2012," along with a color photo of the beautiful hotel itself. His friends said he once worked at the Ambassador, but the photo, showing his stoic but warm likeness, was a random choice among many of TNDC residents.

Mr. Merchant died May 20 at Pacifica's Gift of Love AIDS hospice, run by the Missionaries of Charity, after fighting failing health for months. He was 69.

Mr. Merchant left his hometown of Middletown, Ohio, to make his life in the Bay Area, the friends said. He served in the Army but didn't go overseas. He had a brother but lost track of him, and was once married but had no children. Mr. Merchant was a nurse's aide at UCSF Medical Center and S.F. General, and in maintenance at the nearby Ambassador Hotel and at other hotels.

Tyrone Perry, a 12-year friend, said that in January he didn't see Mr. Merchant for a week. Staff said he went to the hospital and never returned.

"He was an energetic man and took pride in himself," Perry said. "He helped people individually, and shared his food and his room."

Three bouquets in cellophane lay on a table without a vase in the hotel's community kitchen where the memorial was held. ■

—TOM CARTER



PHOTO COURTESY TNDC



Join Tenant Associations Coalition of San Francisco

TENTH ANNIVERSARY

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Wednesday, September 3, 2008

12:00 Noon – 3:00 PM

201 Turk Street, Community Room

Co-Sponsors partial list:

111 Jones Street Apartments, Alexander Tenants Association, Alliance for a Better District 6, Central City Extra, Grand Liquors, La Voz Latina, Lisa for Hair, Market Street Association, Mental Health Association of San Francisco, North of Market Planning Coalition, St. Anthony's Foundation, Safety for Women in the Tenderloin, San Francisco Helps! Resource Guide, Shih Yu-Lang Central YMCA, Subway Restaurants, Tenderloin Economic Development Project, and Turk Street Family Apartments

<http://10thanniversarytac.blogspot.com>

1 postal employee to inspect 503 SROs in city

► CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

SROs were contacted about the requirement.

The one staffer that the U.S. Postal Service has assigned to the task is overwhelmed by sheer volume, Masiak says.

"How many can one person handle doing the whole process?" Masiak asks. "In a month maybe you could do 10. That'll take four years. And 10, I think is high."

The mailbox legislation by Supervisor Chris Daly came after SRO Collaborative activists and tenants put pressure on the Postal Service to change its designation for SRO hotels from "transitional housing" — which warranted only a single bundle delivery — to permanent residences. Front desk clerks receiving the bundles sorted and distributed mail in varied receptacles, even using cardboard boxes.

Tenants complained of lost and delayed mail, missing government checks and mail getting into the wrong hands. They said the SRO rooms were their permanent homes, citing long residencies. Moreover,

they said, they had a right to privacy and security.

Rep. Nancy Pelosi, called for a congressional inquiry.

USPS Customer Services Manager Robert Reed relented. He promised that mail would soon be going into any SRO that had private, approved boxes. Daly's legislation, written without post office input, followed making the change official.

The Residential Hotel Mail Receptacles ordinance requires SRO owners to install individual mailboxes within one year after the measure passed. That was eight months ago, so they all should be in by now.

SRO tenants who believe the owner hasn't complied can petition the Stabilization and Rent Board for a rent reduction. But no one has yet come to the board, according to Delene Wolf, executive director.

Daly, when running for re-election in 2006, told The Extra he considered the mailbox ordinance one of the 10 best laws he had gotten passed. But because it wasn't crafted with post office consultation, it failed to take into account USPS restrictions that now exempt certain SROs with insufficient

space, and the lack of manpower that's bogging down the legislation.

Some SROs are 70 years old or more with space limits and can't comply with USPS specifications.

The glitch caused "some consternation" last year, the June 2007 issue of Apartment Association News reported. The mailbox law was "in flux," it said, and invited any SRO owner who had successfully installed boxes to explain how it was done.

"We didn't get any calls or emails," said Sean Pritchard, government and community affairs director. "We have received a few calls telling us there are space problems. Two weeks ago an owner called and said he had no room for them and wanted to know what to do."

Pritchard said he called the Department of Building Inspection and was told owners had to follow the law but that having "no space" qualified as an exemption.

"What needs to happen," Masiak says, "is a meeting between the post office and Department of Building Inspection." ■

Bringing Back The Heart of the Presidio

Discover the birthplace of San Francisco at the heart of the Presidio, the historic Main Post. Imagine the once lively center of a military post as a home for history and culture...past, present, and future.

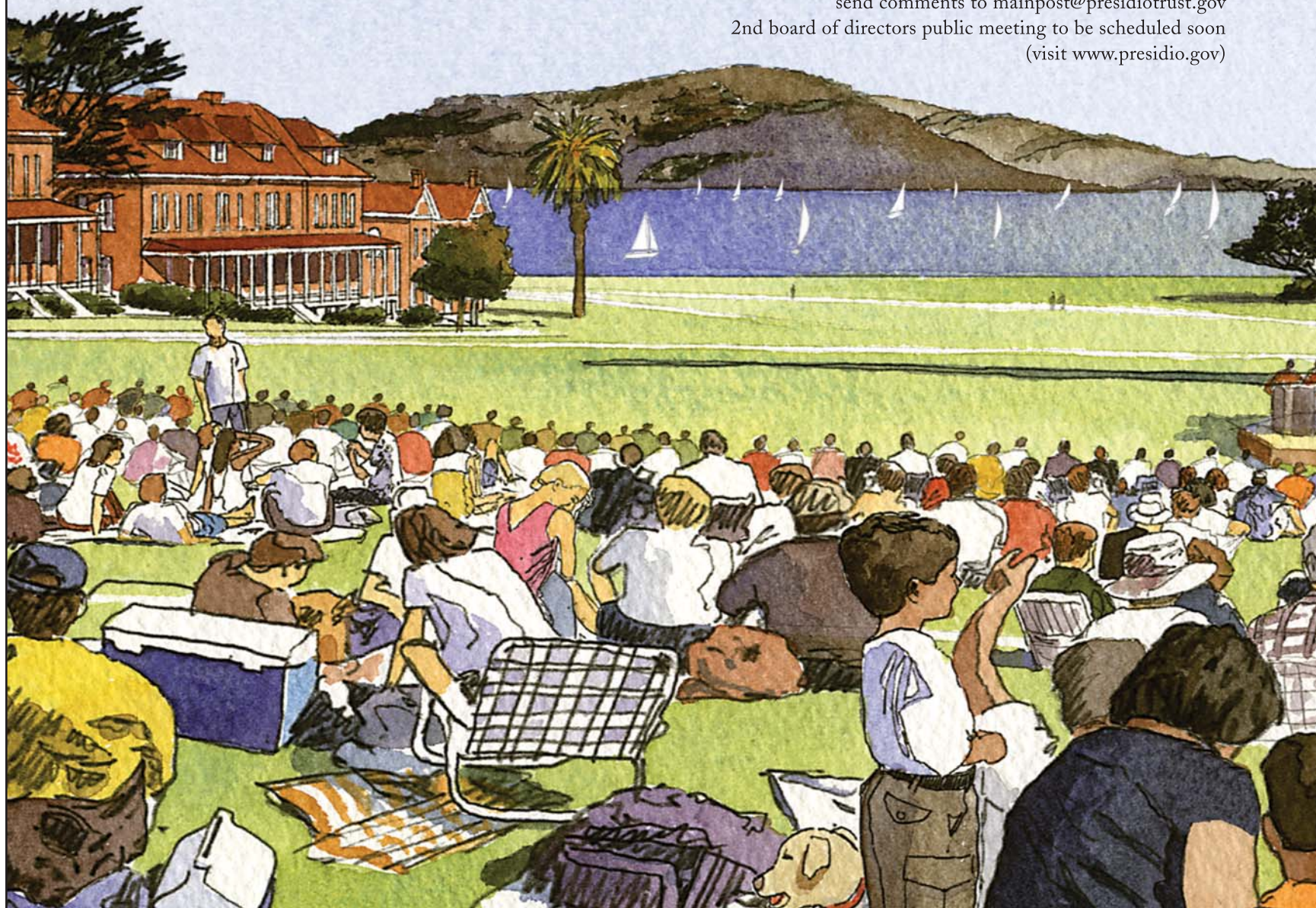
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