

\$30 million SoMa fund has \$0 in it

Rincon Hill towers sales slow, drying up developers' fees

BY TOM CARTER

FIVE of the six approved luxury condo projects on Rincon Hill are on hold, stopping \$30 million in fees that the developers are required to pump into SoMa programs to ease the impact on the neighborhood.

The committee set up to advise the Board of Supervisors and the mayor on how to spend that money is stuck after working more than three years on operational details.

In February, the committee put the finishing touches on its request for proposals that was to be distributed to hundreds of neighborhood nonprofits and interested parties. Meetings were planned to explain the guidelines so they can tap into the money and create beneficial programs.

"We canceled the March meeting," said liaison Claudine Del Rosario of the Redevelopment Agency, which now oversees the SoMa Stabilization Fund Committee. "There's nothing to discuss.

"The RFPs are ready to go," Del Rosario said. "But if there's no building and no money, there's no impact."

"If there's no building and no money, there's no impact."

Claudine Del Rosario
REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

The developers' fee is due at the controller's office when a Rincon Hill building gets its final certificate of occupancy. The committee had expected the first major payments would arrive in early fall 2007. But the first completed building fell behind the expected sales schedule and isn't sold out yet.

The 55-story South Tower, the first of Rincon One's \$290 million twin spires, didn't open until last year. Its developer, Urban West Associates, reports that the tower's 376 luxury condos and 14 townhouses are 75% sold.

A Planning Department spokesman figures the South Tower will likely get its final certificate of occupancy sometime this fall. The city then will be due about \$5 million. An Urban West Associates spokesman said there is no start date for the North Tower, which the developer expected to be ready in mid-2009, and the Planning Department said other projects on the hill haven't broken ground.

Full payments for condos from buyers go into an escrow fund. And since last year Del Rosario has been hounding Urban West for a \$2.5 million advance to move things forward in the neighborhood. But at each Stabilization Fund meeting she reports: No dice.

"I'm trying to negotiate," Del Rosario said in an interview. "But (Urban West Associates) is not obligated to do it. They've set aside

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ART WITHOUT EGO

Art Beat talks with Bhutan sand painters

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City, Pink Diamonds sign agreement

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1906 FIRE THREATENS TENDERLOIN

Photo shot before theater is destroyed

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BIG RENT INCREASES IN FUTURE

AF Evans CEO's take on the economy

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CENTRAL CITY



SAN FRANCISCO

65% NO-SHOWS



PHOTO BY HEIDI SWILLINGER

Community Justice Center Judge Ron Albers bears the case of a cited defendant, among the 1 in 3 who show up at the Polk Street courtroom. Next to her is Public Defender Jeff Adachi.

What would N.Y. do?

Brooklyn head of Justice Center tells why violators there show up

BY HEIDI SWILLINGER

GETTING defendants to show up in court proved a hot-button issue for the Tenderloin's new Community Justice Center, which opened in March.

Defendants cited for misdemeanors and nonviolent felonies in the neighborhood failed to appear in 55 of the more than 90 cases processed at the court in its first month, a no-show rate of 65%.

CJC Coordinator Tomiquia Moss is quick to point out that that's better than the 80% no-show rate typical of misdemeanor cases processed at the Hall of Justice.

But the city's no-show figures are jaw-dropping to James Brodick, director of the Red Hook Community Justice Center in Brooklyn, which served as the model for San Francisco's new court. Brodick says no-shows aren't an issue there because those who commit misdemeanors and nonviolent felonies — such as shoplifting, prostitution and drug-related crimes — are arrested, not merely cited and given court dates as in San Francisco.

"Once we opened up, we were able to get defendants immediately, because they were arrested, held and brought to (the court) within 24 hours," says Brodick. "Any

time you give a citation in lieu of an arrest, you're going to have no-shows. That to me is a major flaw (in San Francisco's criminal justice system), but that involves changing policing."

Holding cells are being built at the San Francisco CJC. Moss expects them to be finished by August. Then defendants who are arrested within the Court's jurisdiction — an area bounded by Gough, Bush, Kearny, Third and Harrison streets — will have their cases addressed quickly. But that won't put a dent in citation-only no-shows.

Presiding Judge Ron Albers has the power to issue a bench warrant when a defendant has been cited and fails to appear in court, if the district attorney agrees the case is worth prosecuting. Police can then arrest the defendant — assuming he or she can be found.

Brodick told The Extra that in Brooklyn, citations are issued only for extremely low-level crimes such as public urination. A "warrant team" goes after the 35% of cited defendants who don't appear before the court. Because the jurisdiction is relatively small, it's easy for cops familiar with the neighborhood to spot or track down wanted defendants. He says the concept could work for San Francisco's CJC, whose jurisdiction, though tiny, accounts for between a quarter and a third of crime reports in the city.

Moss says the Justice Center "is working very closely" with neighborhood police to figure out how to deal with those who qualify for a bench warrant, but notes that none was issued in the court's first month.

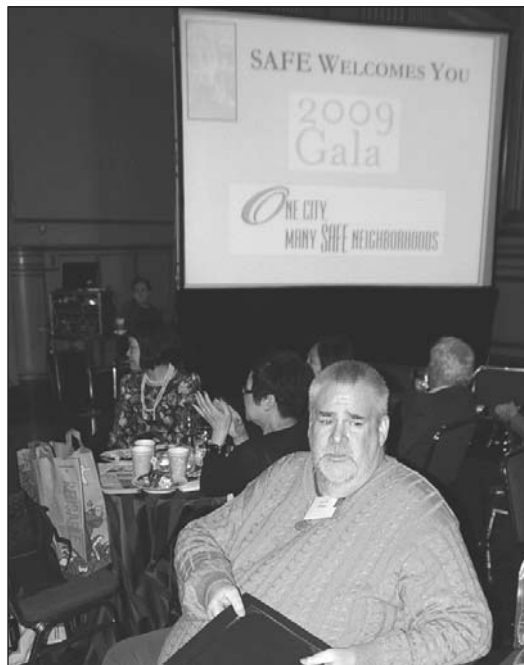
Brodick says police buy-in with the groundbreaking Red Hook project was

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

GOOD NEWS for...

ELDERLY OR DISABLED RENTERS, who may be eligible to have smoke detectors, handrails, grab bars and raised toilet seats installed in their apartments for free. The home-safety gear is offered by Rebuilding Together San Francisco whose volunteers have helped more than 1,000 low-income residents and nonprofits with home repair and renovation projects since 2000. Renters must fill out an application and get a formal okay from their landlord. Once approved, the safety improvements can be done within a month. Rebuilding Together welcomes volunteers experienced in carpentry and handiwork, and will train unskilled volunteers to install basic safety equipment. For an application or to volunteer: 905-1611 or www.rebuildingtogethersf.org.

LONGTIME TL ACTIVIST For 25 years, resident Marvis Phillips has been a Neighborhood Watch block captain, helping to keep the 200 block of Eddy and the Eddy and Taylor intersection safe. At a glittery March 12 fundraiser and award ceremony in the Veterans Building's Green Room, Phillips received a San Francisco SAFE certificate of recognition for his work. "It was moving," he said. "I've received a lot of awards, but I cried for the first time." Neighborhood Watch is one of the best-known programs of



Marvis Phillips at the S.F. SAFE award ceremony.

SAFE, which provides security and safety services to residents and businesses. The 200 block captains citywide sometimes work solo, as Phillips does, or with neighbors to be eyes and ears for problems in their neighborhoods. "Marvis' main role has been keeping a close partnership with the police and with SAFE, and it is unusual to have someone be a block captain for so long," said Cindy Brandon, SAFE executive director. Phillips said he was "shocked" to receive the SAFE award. "I feel very good about a quarter of a century of my life having been used to improve the lives of the people in my neighborhood, and I think I'm good at what I do." Besides being a block captain, Phillips is co-founder of Alliance for a Better District 6 and Central City Democrats, and has held positions with those organizations, NOMPC, Alexander Tenants Association and Tenant Associations Coalition.

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

TNDC seeks state bond money for family housing

Groups being recruited for Taylor St. arts district

BY HEIDI SWILLINGER

TNDC is applying for state bond money to finance a 14-story apartment building at the corner of Taylor and Eddy streets, the project managers said, though the start and finish dates could fluctuate with the tanking economy.

Shannon Dodge and Nick Griffin told the Tenderloin Futures Collaborative at its March 11 meeting that TNDC is after funds from Proposition 1C, a 2006 state bond measure. If the money comes through, construction could start within two years and the building be habitable by 2013.

The project would create 153 apartments, most for working families, with rents from \$591 to \$1,016 for a two-bedroom apartment, and from \$652 to \$1,124 for three bedrooms. Studio and one-bedrooms would be \$675 to \$814. Dodge said 31 units will be for formerly homeless residents, who will pay less.

Michael Nulty of Alliance for a Better District 6 questioned how the project will affect the typically low-income Tenderloin. "Your plan would change the income level of the Tenderloin. How do you justify that?" he asked.

Griffin said many Tenderloin families crowd into undersize apartments, and the new development would ease the cramping. "We don't think it will displace anyone; it will actually attract families that don't have many affordable housing opportunities."

The Rev. Glenda Hope of Network Ministries, who ran the meeting, backed him up, saying her organization has a wait list of more than 300 for its housing units. "Most of them are families," she said. "There is a great need for more housing."

The ground floor has been set aside for commercial use. Dodge and Griffin said TNDC is "committed" to finding a grocer to sign on, but every one they've contacted has declined. If the development fails to attract a grocer within two years, Griffin said, the commercial space will be subdivided into smaller retail units.

Activist Ed Evans said there will be no parking at the new structure, and suggested that might be why no supermarket is interested. But Griffin said that grocers they approached "weren't worried about parking. They were more interested in (population) density." He added that the Tenderloin's concentration of people within easy walking distance is considered a plus.

Oddly, parking is an issue for Walgreens, which has expressed interest in the development, but Griffin said a deal with the chain retailer is a "fall-back" and that TNDC will continue to pursue grocers.

Griffin and Dodge also told the Collaborative they were

meeting in March with the City Planning and Rec and Park commissions, which must sign off on various aspects of the development, including the fact that it will cast shadows on the northern area of Boedekker Park in the morning during some fall and spring months.

ART ON TAYLOR

Elvin Padilla discussed the Taylor Street Revitalization, a project to turn a three-block stretch of Taylor Street from Market to Ellis into an arts district. Padilla is executive director of the North of Market Neighborhood Improvement Corp., which is spearheading the plan.

Padilla said he's looking for arts organizations willing to become part of the neighborhood's arts community, which includes well-established groups such as EXIT Theatre and the Luggage Store Gallery and the newbie Gray Area Foundation for the Arts, which in June plans to open an art gallery, new-media lab and studio space for artists at the site of the former porn theater at 55 Taylor St.

There are also plans to convert floors above the Golden Gate Theatre into artists' studios and office space for nonprofits, and Warfield building owner David Addington says he's discussing ideas for his property as well.

"We want to generate positive foot traffic in the neighborhood," said Padilla. "We think that's going to make a huge difference in terms of activity on that block."

One neighborhood resident said he worries that an arts-district designation could wind up gentrifying the neighborhood, but Padilla said he is committed

to protecting its integrity. "We're seeking arts organizations that are interested in engaging with community" — those that will offer free and low-cost workshops and other art opportunities to residents, for instance.

"The strong presence of housing developments like TNDC's make it a great place to do something like this," he added.

CAL PAC'S BEHEMOTH

The meeting wrapped up with advice from Vincent Brown, a Hastings student, who urged members to consider the impact of California Pacific Medical Center's plans to build a 15-story, 555-bed hospital and other medical facilities at Van Ness and Geary. If approved, construction will begin next year, he said.

Brown, who is following the project as part of his studies, said the master plan has recently been filed with the Planning Department. A hospital spokesman said he expects Planning Commission hearings to start by the end of this year. To read the master plan, visit <http://cpmc.org/plans/links/> and click on CPMC 2008 IMP.

Nulty urged the group to get up to speed on the plan, saying he's attended several CPMC outreach meetings and been the only one there representing the Tenderloin. Some residents are concerned that the new hospital will mean more emergency vehicles and blaring sirens in the Tenderloin, said Nulty, but others think quicker access to medical care could save lives and be worth the inconveniences to the neighborhood. He suggested inviting CPMC representatives to a future collaborative meeting to address the group. ■

CENTRAL CITY
EXTRA!
SAN FRANCISCO

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There's something smoldering at City Hall — the politicians are talking about budget cuts that would shut down neighborhood firehouses throughout San Francisco on a daily basis.

In 2005, we voted to keep our neighborhood firehouses open. Now it's time again to tell the Board of Supervisors: "Don't let politics get in the way of our neighborhood safety!"

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Firehouses in our neighborhood are in danger of being shut down. Act now to protect our neighborhood firehouses.



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Art without ego: Sand paintings of Bhutan

BY ED BOWERS

“**T**HE Dragon’s Gift: The Sacred Arts of Bhutan” at the Asian Art museum is hot. The art was created out of an ancient, nontheistic spiritual path labeled under the huge umbrella of Vajrayana Buddhism, or Tantra. It’s alchemical in nature and aims to transform base desires and emotions into wisdom, compassion and bliss. The exhibition will be at the Asian Art Museum at 200 Larkin St. until May 10.

Those are the facts. Now I have to do some translating to make it understandable in the context of the Tenderloin, where it has flown and roosted.

This art exhibit includes 150 paintings, sculptures, textiles and two monks from a Bhutanese monastery who do sand paintings on the floor. Outside the museum are crack addicts, hustlers, politicians, law students and whores.

The monks pray daily over these sacred artifacts, which are considered not objects but living symbols in the minds of those who have created them. They’re time bombs ready to explode in the minds of all sentient beings, invitations to jump into the void, the space between thoughts, a no-man’s land familiar to every drug-addled crack addict in this district. Anyone trying to escape from his mind by killing his fear of life with chemical death is afraid of the void. Anyone who thinks that the “normal” way of thinking is going to solve anything is even more deluded.

All life is suffering; that’s what the Buddha said. Life is based on desire, and so is death.

The “Sacred Arts of Bhutan” represents an atomic power located deep inside the human mind that is you. You can blow yourself up, or you can transform yourself. You can create or you can destroy. This exhibit is a symbolic representation of this situation.

Michele Dilworth, the museum’s PR manager, kindly allowed me to interview the two Buddhist monks, Neten Dorji and Gyem Dorji, whose specialty is creating sand paintings of mandalas, abstract maps of inner space and evolution. The monks have no attachment to their designs of tiny, hand-placed grains of colored sand that are destroyed soon after they’re created — here today, gone tomorrow — tossed into the river of time and space to be eaten by fish, rather like many Tenderloin residents dying in lonely hotel rooms.

The purpose of these sand paintings is to do good in the moment, then go the way of all things, into the void where they continue to do good in a billion invisible subtle ways with no trendy art lovers in San Francisco staring at them and pretending to be hip. They are the spiritual economy and ecology of an art without ego.

Neten Dorji, who has a passable command of English, once spent three years in a cave alone meditating.

Most people forced to sit in a room alone for three days with no entertainment devices would go insane, their dispositions turning bitter, their minds becoming desperate and mean.

But Neten Dorji is the sweetest guy I ever interviewed.

I started out by asking him how long it takes to create the intricate sand painting.

“Three and a half hours a day, six days a week for a month or two or three,” he answered.

“And then?” I asked.

“They’re put on an altar and meditated on for from seven to 16 days,” he said.

That’s a better showing than most Western art gets. Nobody’s fooling me. Hipsters speed-read a book to say they’ve read it, art lovers look at a Picasso for five seconds, then go out for coffee and brag about what they’ve “seen” to win friends and influence people.

“And then, after they’re meditated on?” I asked.

“They’re slowly thrown in a river,” Neten Dorji answered.

He told me the mandalas represent “the Palace of the World” and that the original sand painters were the Buddha and Padmasambhava, a yogi who came to Tibet, defeated evil demons, and turned a vicious bunch of barbarians into peaceful Buddhists so they could be slaughtered by Chinese communists in the 20th century. Plus, Padmasambhava

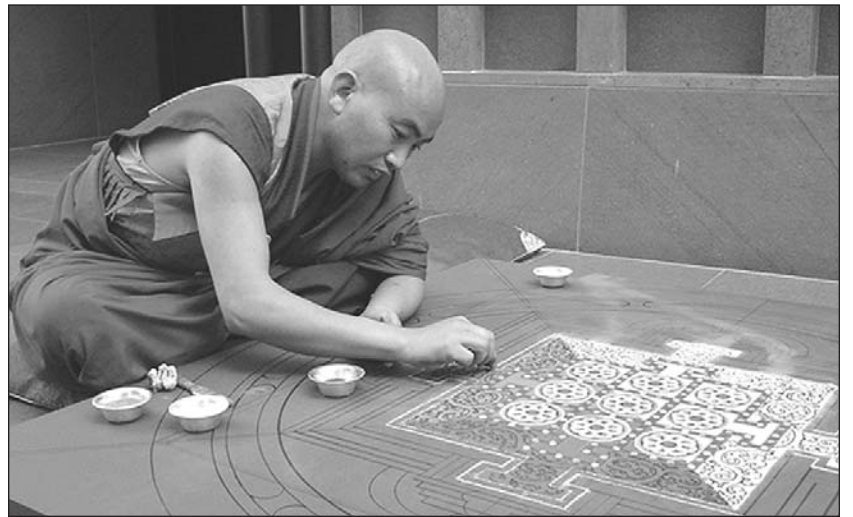


PHOTO COURTESY ASIAN ART MUSEUM

Grain by grain, Bhutanese monk Gyem Dorji painstakingly creates a mandala from colored sand at the Asian Art Museum.

liked to drink wine, so he’s all right with me.

And the Buddha thought all life was suffering, so I guess he created sand paintings to give suffering humans something creative to do besides inflict pain on one another.

“Does creating these sand paintings alter your mind?” I asked.

“They are all a form of the mind.”

I do see beauty in ugliness, but these monks are beyond me. They see something I don’t see, which is what real artists do. The function of art, like science, is to discover new visions that might heal or liberate people, give them maps and ways to go beyond.

I wondered if the sand painters feel sad having their beautiful artifacts, so carefully and scrupulously constructed, disappear into the river.

Neten Dorji smiled.

He is a genuinely happy human. I’m not used to being around people like that and I felt disoriented. Anyone who can sit alone in a cave for three years knows something the rest of us don’t.

“No, I don’t feel sad,” he said. “The fish eat the paintings and the crocodiles and crabs and other things eat them and those creatures get benefit. Due to their karma of eating the sand, they slowly evolve into spiritual beings.”

In evolution, I think he was telling me, slow is best and eating is good, and I agree with him.

Because I’m an aficionado of inner space, I asked Neten Dorji if he experienced or perceived any alternative reality while creating the sand paintings. He blew me off.

“Nobody can talk about that to anyone but someone who meditates, does the practice, and is trained to do it,” he said. “It is not for show off.”

“So you don’t want to brag about your spiritual accomplishments?”

“No,” he said, and smiled again.

I did, too. Every murderous religious nut, guru, politician and well-meaning powerful idiot in the world should learn to shut up and sit alone in a cave and smile.

Neten Dorji’s colleague, Gyem Dorji, spoke little English, but he gave me a nice handshake, more spiritual than walking on water, the warmest, most sincere handshake I’ve ever received.

These two artists have much to teach the Western world: Their art projects originate from something deep within the mind, and they are confident that out of the inevitable destruction of their beautiful creations, something beautiful will be left behind. They don’t take credit for their art and don’t want to be famous. Fame embarrasses them.

Neten and Gyem are the real works of art, examples of how doing art can transform consciousness.

They meticulously take tiny granules of sand between their finger tips to create a solid, yet transient, representation of the Universe of Inner Space — The Big Mind — and create a map out of this tedious and rather boring realm of human suffering and pain.

I could think of worse things to do with my time. I know it doesn’t sound practical, but if everything was reduced to practicality, we would only be insects.

We have to slow down in this society and go beyond fame and fortune, or even the belief that if we obey and listen to the little famous minds with

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

City, Pink Diamonds agree on new rules

THE city’s efforts to squelch the noise and violence at Pink Diamonds took a decisive turn March 24 when Judge Peter Busch approved an agreement between the city attorney’s office and Damone Smith, operator of the self-styled “gentleman’s club” at 220 Jones St. Under the terms of the agreement, any entertainment at the site must meet the following standards:

- Club operators must prominently display notices at the entrance and exits urging patrons to be quiet, peaceful and orderly, to not litter, loiter, vomit or urinate in public, nor drive while drunk.
- Employees must be posted at the entrance and exits 30 minutes before opening and past closing to ensure that patrons respect the quiet and cleanliness of the neighborhood.
- Employees must walk a 100-foot radius from 220 Jones sometime between 30 minutes after closing and 6 a.m. and pick up any trash, clean up any vomit, urine or “similar substance.” Graffiti must be removed within 48 hours.
- There must be a toilet outside for patrons waiting to enter.
- Ventilation inside must be adequate so that windows are not left open with the noise blaring.
- Receptacles for litter and cigarette butts must be at or near the entrance when the building is open.
- Club operators must make every effort to prevent loitering on the sidewalk during club hours, including using security to disperse crowds and to report loiterers to the police.
- The club must employ a licensed and bonded guard company to provide security from opening time until the last patron has left; at least one guard for every 50 customers as well as one guard outside to enforce orderly behavior. The guards must not allow anyone in the building carrying a weapon.
- By April 8, club operators must install a video

camera to record the activities of all who are outside. Video recordings must be kept for at least three months in case the city attorney or police ask to inspect them.

- Club operators must provide a cell phone number “to all interested neighbors” that will be answered by a manager or other responsible person who has authority to adjust club noise volume and respond to complaints.

- A monthly log of all complaints must be maintained, noting time the complaint was received and how it was handled. This log must be available to the city attorney and SFPD on demand.

- Club operators must prepare a monthly report explaining how all complaints in the log were handled and show that report to any neighbor within 100 feet who asks.

- A representative of the club operators must attend the monthly TL Police Station community meeting to hear issues concerning 220 Jones, and must provide anyone at the meeting a copy of the monthly log report.

- A copy of the court-ordered operating procedures must be available at 220 Jones during business hours for public viewing.

Violation of these court orders is considered contempt of court, carrying a penalty of up to \$2,500 for each violation. The court orders remain in effect for one year but can be extended for an additional year if the court finds a violation has occurred.

Pink Diamonds attorney Terence Hallinan commented on the new rules for his clients: “They have no objection to doing all they can to maintain the neighborhood’s peace and quiet. It’s hard to do business in that neighborhood. It’s hard to control what goes on in the street.” ■

—JONATHAN NEWMAN

April 18, 1906: Destruction of the Tenderloin

BY TOM CARTER

UNTIL April 18, 1906, San Francisco had a richly developing culture and was aptly known as the Paris of the West.

As one of the greatest cities on Earth and the ninth largest in America, it was thick with a melting-pot population of more than 350,000. Well-heeled denizens sported the latest fashions and toiled around in horseless carriages.

San Francisco craved the latest sensations from Europe and the East. It throbbed with classical and popular entertainments. Live theater — from plays to minstrels, from opera to burlesque — was king.

Playing a role in the city's vast theatrical scene was the Alhambra Theater on the northeast corner of Jones and Eddy streets, where Boeddeker Park now sits. It eventually was consumed by the fire, seen advancing in the accompanying photo.

Built in 1867, the first Alhambra was located at 325 Bush St., where it was called "the People's Playhouse," and simply "Bush Street." The theater was the harbinger of the entertainment movement west of Montgomery and away from the old established district.

About the turn of the century, the Alhambra moved to Eddy and Jones and opened March 11, 1900, with a flop called "Have You Seen Smith?" The Chronicle's reviewer wished he hadn't. "The performance is not worth commenting on," he wrote.

After pitiful box office sales, the Alhambra closed two weeks later. It reopened Sept. 6 with a smash hit, a nautical farce called "Ship Ahoy" with a cast of 40. The entrance was on Eddy Street and the stage faced south. Tickets were 15, 25, 35 and 50 cents; a box seat cost six bits. The Alhambra Café on the main floor sold Wieland's Lager for 5 cents a draught. Nearby, at 211 Eddy, the Paris Restaurant served meals for 15 cents, coffee and cake for a dime. The site is now the Franciscan Towers SRO and TNDC headquarters.

The Chronicle called "Ship Ahoy" "excellent entertainment."

On the eve of the 1906 earthquake,



PHOTO COURTESY SAN FRANCISCO PERFORMING ARTS LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

The inferno caused by the Great Quake is seen sweeping toward the ornate Alhambra Theater in the lower left corner of the photo, where Boeddeker Park is now.

Theodore Kremer's "Queen of the Highlanders" was playing and apparently holding audiences "spellbound." The next week the theater was planning the premiere of Mrs. Lily Schlesinger's western melodrama "A Cowboy in Petticoats." Alas, it never happened.

The earthquake lasted a little less than a minute. It measured 7.8 on the Richter scale. The fire raged for three days and destroyed at least 28,000 buildings, almost everything east of Van Ness Avenue, the Alhambra among them.

Richard Livingston, co-founder of EXIT Theatre, remembers the bowling alley, Downtown Bowl, which occupied the Eddy and Jones site before Boeddeker Park was established in 1978, and that assassin Jack Ruby once lived across the street.

Entertainment has ruled the northeast corner since its recorded history, beginning in the 1840s when it was a picnic site dotted with

dwarf oaks and blackberry bushes, according to Peter Field, who leads historical City Guides' tours in the TL.

"In 1893, it was actually The National Theater," Field said. "Then it was Scheel's Auditorium and from 1898, up to the fire, The Alhambra."

As the Tenderloin was being rebuilt, a two-story entertainment hall went up at Eddy and Jones in 1920. It was a "dancing pavilion" that held various dancing schools through the 1920s, the start of the flapper era. From 1930-35 it was the Golden Gate Ballroom. The Jones Street cable car line ran by it.

But then the roller skating craze took over. The Golden Gate Roller Rink held forth from 1937-41 before being supplanted by another trend, bowling. It was the Downtown Bowl in 1942 and six years later added to its name, "Billiard Parlor," which was next door. ■

Arrested: Why N.Y. Justice Center defendants show up

► CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

important to its success. "We have a great relationship with the cops. We spent a lot of time making sure everyone knew what was going on."

Albers and Moss say getting the word out about the CJC, from the street on up, is among their top priorities at the moment. They are still developing communications and procedures for working with the four police stations that will be funneling cases to the court, says Albers. For most of March, the court only processed cases referred by Tenderloin Station. Cases began flowing from Northern, Southern and Central stations at the end of the month, said Moss.

VIOLATORS FROM 4 POLICE PRECINCTS

Once all four police stations are regularly feeding into the CJC, the sheer volume of cases will improve the no-show rate, says Moss. Still, she rails at the media focus on the issue, saying, "The measure of success (of the CJC) shouldn't be primarily on no-shows." She contends that critics should focus instead on how well the new court serves clients who do show up.

The CJC is both a court and a social-service clearinghouse designed to create an entirely new system for dealing with crime in the Tenderloin by focusing on its underlying causes — poverty, homelessness, addiction and lack of education.

The Polk Street center consists of two facilities — the courtroom at No. 575, and an office suite at No. 555 where defendants can get referrals to shelter, medical care, job training and educational opportunities; be assessed for mental health and substance use issues; and receive counseling, therapy and case management.

You don't have to be in trouble with the law to benefit from the CJC; any San Francisco resident can tap its services. In fact, Albers makes a point of steer-

ing homeless people he meets in the neighborhood to the CJC to see what the center can do for them.

The court also handles all misdemeanors and felonies that occur within its jurisdiction — whether or not defendants show up.

A few who did appear during a mid-month Central City Extra spot check gave the court raves. Albers praised each defendant for coming to court; he believes positive reinforcement is key to getting people to use CJC services that could lead to changes in their behavior. He sentenced a few to community service, explaining that successful completion would result in a dismissal of charges. Other defendants were steered next door for services.

Homeless residents Shon Stewart and Jennifer Gomez were upbeat after leaving Albers' courtroom. They had been cited the week before for obstructing the sidewalk; Stewart said they were lying on a steam grate near the Main Library to keep warm.

Because they kept their court date, Albers discharged their case after helping them get access to shelter and medical care.

'THIS COURT IS HELPING PEOPLE'

Stewart and Gomez said they followed up on their citations because they didn't want the prospect of an outstanding warrant hanging over their heads. "Plus, this court is helping people," said Stewart. "I think it's a good thing." He added that the short turnaround — less than a week — between their citation and the processing of their case was helpful. At the Hall of Justice, by contrast, the time between citation and court appearance is typically 45 days. "We would have lost the paperwork if (the court date) had been a month from now," Stewart said.

Another defendant who asked to remain anonymous said he was pleased with the outcome of his shoplifting case. Albers had sentenced him to community service and, because he has a history of alcohol abuse — he says he was drunk when he decided to shoplift at Macy's — the CJC offered to

help him find a sobriety program. "I'm already in one, but I plan to keep it up," he said.

He said he followed up on his citation because he's an immigrant and doesn't want legal troubles to prevent him from becoming a citizen someday. "This is great — wonderful," he said of the new system.

REDUCING RECIDIVISM THE BOTTOM LINE

Brodick says nipping small-time crime in the bud is essential to moving the recidivism needle. He recalls the philosophy of a cop he's worked with. "He sees two guys drinking beer on the corner as a potential homicide — they're drinking, then they're drunk, then they're arguing and suddenly someone pulls out a knife. A citation for public drinking nips it in the bud."

Brodick says the Red Hook project shows that if courts adequately address issues that drive crime, repeat offenders who clog the system function more productively and eventually cycle out for good. That, says Moss, is the CJC's overarching mission, and its ability to reduce recidivism is the standard by which it should be measured.

But don't expect overnight success, she warns. "This is a complete system change. It takes years for systems like this to be functional for the people it's designed for."

Brodick said Red Hook planners spent five years setting up services before it began processing judicial cases. By then, the project had won support from the mayor's office, the City Council, the police and residents in the neighborhood it serves.

By contrast, San Francisco's CJC has been opposed — sometimes vehemently — by various supervisors, homeless advocates and even voters, although Mayor Newsom has been a tireless champion. As a result, the court is still struggling to forge relationships and work out logistics with relevant city departments. Albers estimates it will be six months to a year before the new court is operating smoothly. "We had a road map, but this is going to be a work in progress," he said. ■

STEVE CONLEY
Community activist, radio pro

If ever a voice could speak for the Tenderloin it was Steve Conley's.

His measured, rich baritone and the trademark dark beret he wore were familiar at community meetings, neighborhood summits and at City Hall where he weighed in on civil rights, quality of life, and homeless issues. As an activist on many community organization boards, he interrogated or championed a populist cause with polish and style. Sharply intelligent, gentle, and sometimes intense but never overbearing, he was a pro.

The multitasking Mr. Conley was in the radio business 20 years and a TL activist for a decade. And, in his colorful past, he was a musician who had backed up Stevie Wonder and Patti Labelle.

With half a dozen neighborhood friends at his side, he died Jan. 23 in Veterans Hospital of cancer. He was 58.

Ironically, at the end Mr. Conley communicated in writing because he was too devastated by his disease to speak. Retired priest Daniel O'Conner said at Mr. Conley's March 3 memorial that when he asked him if he was religious and wanted last rites, Mr. Conley added yet another distinction to the many hats he wore in his life: "altar boy," he wrote.

O'Connor told the story in the community room at 150 Golden Gate, the new St. Anthony Foundation building where 75 celebrants and city officials including Supervisor Daly and TL Capt. Gary Jimenez paid their respects. The Board of Supervisors and the state Senate both had adjourned in Mr. Conley's memory Feb. 3. The next day, as an Army veteran of the Vietnam War, Mr. Conley was buried with Honor Guard services at the Sacramento Valley National Cemetery.

"He had a gentle, caring voice," said Adrienne Lauby, who worked with him at KPFA. "And he led a wonderfully useful life."

Mr. Conley was known for his love of democracy and his ability to get groups and individuals to work together. A high point in his life was in October 2002 when he co-produced with Michael Nulty, and then directed and moderated, the Tenant Leadership Summit. It was a KPFA, live four-hour feed from 201 Turk St. It brought together 40 community organizations and attracted 125 residents who had attended a monthlong series of workshops on their critical issues. Then they spoke of them on radio at the summit. In 2004, Mr. Conley and Nulty did a repeat at the Blue Cube on Mason Street.

"He was the idea guy, I was the organizer," Nulty said after the memorial. "We used our connections, but it was a six-month process (to create) both. It was an idea that had to be promoted, and he was the voice of the people."

Mr. Conley co-founded with Nulty the Alliance for a Better District 6 and Central City Democrats and was a board member. He also served on the North of Market Planning Coalition and the Tenderloin Community Benefits District boards and was media director for Tenant Associations Coalition.

Mr. Conley also moderated the first 2007 mayoral debate. One mourner recalled how skillfully he could handle difficult guests to maintain order and decorum.

A dozen people spoke at the memorial, several from Pacifica radio, owner of KPFA in Oakland and KPFA in Los Angeles, stations where Mr. Conley worked. Chandra Hauptman read a tribute signed by 11 KPFA co-workers that summarized his career.

"He respected everyone's right to have their say," Hauptman said. "He spoke and wrote forcefully, with an air of self confidence, and encouraged others to do the same. We will greatly miss his presence and his originality."

Mr. Conley attended Pierce Junior College in Winnetka in the mid-1980s and Cal State Northridge 1988-90 as a journalism major with a minor in theater arts. He worked as a freelance correspondent in Asia, the Middle East and Europe covering human rights, economics, social movements and war during a break after joining KPFA in Los Angeles in 1992 and completing its apprentice program.

KPFA made him public affairs production coordinator. He also produced and directed "Morning Magazine" and created the probing "Beneath the Surface," a popular program that's still aired. His programs ranged from a national broadcast of the second Rodney King verdict to live coverage in Germany of the fall of the Berlin Wall to a series on human rights in conjunction with Amnesty International.

When Mr. Conley moved to the Bay Area in 2000 his activism and KPFA work began immediately. That year he received a commendation from the



Board of Supervisors for his outreach to multiethnic communities in developing new supervisorial district boundaries. His main job at KPFA was to get the station involved in diverse communities. He was also a computer expert who knew graphics programs but sold software for network security and storage.

At the time, he was involved with a West Oakland community performing arts venue called The Noodle Factory that had live-work studios. He divided his time between Oakland and the Tenderloin.

Mr. Conley was from Philadelphia. Before coming West after his Army discharge, Mr. Conley had compiled a history as a musician and actor. His resume lists nine plays and the characters he played, including Andre in "My Dinner with Andre" and Morris in Neil Simon's "God's Favorite." But no dates or sites are given. As a musician he listed the major venues where he performed — Carnegie Hall, Madison Square Garden and Radio City Music Hall among them. He also wrote plays and poems.

To the side of the community room, on a table with a bouquet and candles, some of Mr. Conley's personal effects were displayed: the American flag that Nulty, as Mr. Conley's executor, received from the Defense Department at the interment, a stack of Tarot cards, a harmonica and casaba — a rhythm instrument.

"He played many instruments," musician Per Marshall said, picking up the casaba and shaking it before the memorial began. "I knew him in Philadelphia in the neighborhood. He was our hero. He gave me music lessons and really encouraged me. He came out to California before I did but he went to L.A. I came here."

Marshall said Mr. Conley played in Patti Labelle's Brooklyn band in the 1970s and was backup for Stevie Wonder, too. On Marshall's "Night birds" CD Mr. Conley played on "Lady Marmalade," a song about a New Orleans hooker. And Mr. Conley co-wrote "Traveler" on Marshall's "For the Journey" CD.

Marshall later played guitar for the crowd and sang Mr. Conley's composition "Love Will Lead Us," which he had often accompanied on harmonica. Jim Meko, entertainment commissioner and chair of the Western SoMa Advisory Task Force, read this poem that Mr. Conley wrote:

*One person's struggle is shared,
one person's success is heartfelt,
one person's kiss is our loss,
one person's determination inspires us all.*

*We must believe in the one's,
we must believe in the whole,
each person adds to the foundation,
if for only a moment.*

*We should all aspire
with the success of the whole,
then we can all succeed
as one.*

"He was a friend who fought against war and homelessness," Nulty said. "He was passionate. His ego was in his heart."

Mourners were treated to pizza and beverages. An Irish wake with door prizes and entertainment was held March 19 at the Swig Bar, 561 Geary St. to celebrate Mr. Conley's lifetime achievements. Donations for his memorial fund were requested.

Soon Nulty expected Mr. Conley's marble tombstone would be set on his grave in Sacramento bearing the inscription: "A voice of the people." ■

—TOM CARTER

DAVID BERRY
Enjoyed creating art works

Two things stood out about David Berry, a resident of the Lyric Hotel on Jones Street, who died Feb. 20: He had an artistic streak and a great imagination.

The Rev. Glenda Hope led a joint memorial service March 6 for Mr. Berry and another Lyric resident who died recently in unrelated circumstances.

A Lyric staff member talked about work Mr. Berry created during weekly art sessions. "He had his issues, but he will always be remembered through the work he did," she said.

"David always had a thing about crystals," another staff member recalled. "He had a fantastic imagination about entering crystals. I could listen to him for hours."

None of the handful of people who attended the service could provide details about Mr. Berry. Staff members said privacy issues prevented them from discussing his life, and fellow residents noted that he kept to himself most of the time.

After the service, two residents struggled to recall specifics. "He was a very nice person," one man said. "We spoke every day, and he would always ask if I needed anything."

Another resident said that Mr. Berry, who was born in 1961, died of unknown causes at a San Francisco hospital. "He had a mental disability," he said. "I think he neglected himself."

One of them noted Mr. Berry's resemblance to actor Burt Lancaster. "He does look like Lancaster," the other chuckled.

"David had a lot of burdens he struggled with," he added. "I think he's in a better place." ■

—HEIDI SWILLINGER

TERRY JEAN HICKS
Loved to cook

It was standing-room-only at the memorial service for Terry Jean Hicks, who died Feb. 25 in her room at the Coast Hotel on O'Farrell Street. Nearly a dozen family members joined staff and residents in the hotel's community room for a service led by the Rev. Glenda Hope.

Mourners remembered Ms. Hicks as a big-hearted woman who loved to eat and cook. "She'd never let anyone go hungry," said one Coast resident, who recalled how Ms. Hicks helped him regain a job he'd lost.

"She had a heart larger than the North American continent," another tenant said. "Her death hit us all like a freight train."

Ms. Hicks' body was discovered by an exterminator who had come to the hotel to do routine pest control. The cause of death is still undetermined, said her daughter, Sherece Cooks. She was 54.

A flyer distributed at the service described Ms. Hicks, an Oakland native, as "a free-spirited woman who faced and conquered many challenges in life." Cooks said her mother began using drugs at an early age and was never able to wean herself from them, despite several attempts. As a result, Cooks was raised by her grandparents, and she wasn't always able to be close to her mother. "I distanced myself," said Cooks. "If I didn't agree with her lifestyle, she'd be mad."

Still, Ms. Hicks kept in touch with her daughter, as well as her son, Carlos Flagg. She'd spoken with both the week she died. Cooks said she was troubled because she wasn't able to fulfill her mother's last request — Ms. Hicks had asked her to come by with some pork chops, but Cooks said she couldn't because she'd be late for school.

"I feel bad about that," she said.

Cooks said her mother had been diagnosed with lung cancer in December and had been in and out of the hospital for treatment. She'd also recently been hit by a car and had fractured her pelvis. "She wasn't taking care of herself like she should," Cooks said.

She noted that the Coast Hotel had been a good place for Ms. Hicks. "You guys were her family," she said. "She talked a lot about the residents here. Thank you for being there for her."

One tenant returned the sentiment, thanking Ms. Hicks' family members for attending the service. "We all don't always have that option," he said. ■

—HEIDI SWILLINGER



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

SPECIAL EVENTS

Lao New Year Festival, April 11, Civic Center, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Free parade, music, games cultural activities, plus 11 a.m. screening of "Nerakhoon: The Betrayal," 2009 Academy Award nominee for best documentary feature, Koret Theater in the Main Library, followed by Q & A with director Thavisouk Prasavath. Festival hosted by the Center for Lao Studies, the Laotian American National Alliance and the Lao Heritage Foundation. Info: 680-4027.

Housing meeting, April 15, 5:30 p.m., 201 Turk. Meet with neighbors and Planning Department reps to discuss how the city's draft of a five-year housing plan will affect the central city. Spanish and Chinese translation and art corner for children provided. Sponsored by Alliance for a Better District 6, Tenant Associations Coalition, Community Housing Partnership, TNDC and others. Info: James Tracy, 749-2790.

Empress Hotel, an 85-minute documentary about mentally ill or addicted formerly homeless residents living in this Tenderloin SRO, selected to screen at the 52nd S.F. International Film Festival, which runs April 23-May 7. Directed by Irving Saraf and Allie Light, and produced by Saraf, Light and Empress Property Manager Roberta Goodman, the film screens on April 25, 3:15 p.m.; April 27, 6 p.m.; April 29, 6:15 p.m. at the Sundance Kabuki Cinemas, 1881 Post St. Info: lightsaraffilms.com. Tickets www.sffs.org <http://fest09.sffs.org/> or call 925-866-9559.

Free Tenderloin history walking tours, conducted by neighborhood researcher Peter Field. Sun., May 3, 9 a.m., meet at the corner of Powell, Eddy and Market streets; focus on early days, from a few houses surrounded by sand dunes up to the 1920s. Sun., May 10, 9 a.m., meet at the corner of McAllister and Leavenworth streets; focus on 1920s to the present. Info: City Guide Tours, 557-4266 or sfcityguides.org.

COMMUNITY: REGULAR SCHEDULE HOUSING

Supportive Housing Network, 3rd 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, Mental Health Association, 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 Ill-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 Susa 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.

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, 292-4812.

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 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 Avalos, Mirkarimi, Daly, Chu, Wednesday, 1 p.m.

Land Use Committee Maxwell, Mar, Chu, Monday, 1 p.m.

Panel puts SoMa RFPs on hold — no money yet

► CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

money from sales and this (request) is based on what they've sold."

In February, she assured the committee: "As long as buildings get built, we'll get (the money)." It is probable that all the projects that went through the lengthy and expensive approval process will eventually get built, added Benjamin McCloskey, the Mayor's Office of Community Investment's fiscal and policy analyst. But who knows how long it will take?

Early on, South of Market Community Action Network and Asian Neighborhood Design received \$50,000 in Walter & Elise Haas Fund grants to spread the word about the project funds that would be available. The committee held three town hall meetings in SoMa — two last year — to hear what residents want for their neighborhood. A youth center was a high priority. Committee suggestions have ranged from affordable housing to buying land to establishing a loan fund for up to \$20,000 for struggling small businesses, but not startups.

The seven-member committee, created by Supervisor Daly's legislation that established the Rincon Hill Plan fees, researched the neighborhood's characteristics and needs over three years while developing a strategic plan for how best to benefit SoMa. A year ago the committee expected the \$5 million from the South Tower to be deposited with the controller's office "by early fall 2008." In September, it reported to its oversight agency "impact fees have slowed considerably." The committee used the delays to refine its RFP but canceled its November and December meetings for the holidays. The committee can't send out the RFP until funds arrive.

Now the committee is holding back notices that

were planned to go out in March. The RFP categories are: Capacity Building and Community Cohesion, Land Trust Feasibility Study and Pre-development, and Workforce and Economic Development.

City Planning's 2005 12-block Rincon Hill Area Plan decided how to use an underused industrial area once dotted with parking lots. In 2003 the city began to reclassify it and allowed spectacular height increases for a new pocket of luxury apartments, eventually to accommodate a Rincon Hill population of 10,000. With the Transbay Terminal plans, the transformed mixed-use neighborhood just across Market Street from the Financial District would swell to 20,000.

The Rincon Hill Plan's boundaries are Folsom Street, The Embarcadero, Bryant Street, Beale Street, the Bay Bridge approach, and the Transbay Terminal ramps.

Daly negotiated the builders' mitigation fees four years ago, a deal that was considered a coup. Mayor Newsom said the builders couldn't afford more than a \$20-per-square-foot rate. Then Daly stepped in and got \$25 per square foot from them. Of that, \$14 goes to the neighborhood and \$11 to the hill's infrastructure, less an earmarked \$6 million in Mello Roos funds that to go the Stabilization Fund for neighborhood improvements only on city-owned property.

Daly's arm was stronger than the San Diego-based Urban West Associates expected to feel. The firm's managing partner, Mike Kriozere, told San Diego Business Journal in June 2006: "They have a stronger socialist tradition in San Francisco than in San Diego, and they mistrust the profit motive. They believe in extracting more money from the business community."

Crimping South Tower sales has been condo competition from Tishman Speyer's towers called The Infinity — 37 stories at 301 Main St. and 42 stories at 338 Spear St. The project was approved

before the Rincon Hill Plan was adopted and is exempt from the \$14 fee. Main Street is 87% sold but a company spokesman wouldn't comment on Spear Street, which opened Jan. 1.

The \$14 fee from Rincon One's two-tower completion will eventually send \$10 million to the Stabilization Fund.

The \$11 fee was paid by all the hill's approved projects before construction and is earmarked for improvements on city-owned property in the plan area, such as sidewalks, streets, bicycle routes and open space. The committee now has \$2 million of the \$6 million property owner-approved Mello Roos funds. It favors installing pedestrian traffic signals at Victoria Manalo Draves Park on Folsom and Harrison streets. The committee also wanted to renovate Gene Friend Recreation Center at Sixth and Folsom. But the money "isn't enough for what we want to do," Del Rosario says. And Rec and Park staff cuts and budget problems make the center's operations uncertain.

In recent months, the committee's oversight authority has changed three times as the city compresses and combines agencies to diminish a \$576 million budget shortfall. The committee, which meets on the fifth floor of 1 South Van Ness Ave., has been passed from the Mayor's Office of Community Development to Community Investment, which then merged with Economic Workforce and Development, and now it's under the Redevelopment Agency, switches that didn't require the supervisors' approval.

Fred Blackwell, Redevelopment Agency president, announced the transfer at the Stabilization Fund committee's Feb. 19 meeting, saying there was no city opposition and it would take 30-60 days.

"Conceptually, it makes a good fit and we'll have a greater level of coordination throughout the area," he said.

The South of Market Project Area Committee advises Redevelopment. ■

Bankruptcy won't affect AF Evans' affordable units

CEO predicts 'huge rent increases' throughout U.S.

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

THE early March announcement that housing developer AF Evans had filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy seemed to be more bad news for people in the central city already jittery about the economy. The Oakland company has been a big player in affordable housing in San Francisco, partnering in property acquisition and management with nonprofits, among them Asian Inc., Chinatown Community Development Center, Citizens Housing Corp. and Mercy Housing.

But the bankruptcy filing shouldn't alarm, said President and CEO Art Evans, who founded the company in 1977: "We plan to become even more active in affordable housing, even though the market-rate part of our business has really collapsed."

AF Evans operates three separate companies — development, property management and senior communities. Only the development subsidiary is in Chapter 11.

"The property management company is looking for more contracts and trying to expand here in San Francisco and in three other states," Evans said. "We're managing 6,000 units now and want it to grow."

Evans ran down the list of its property involvement in the central city.

In the coming weeks, he was expecting to close the sale of 245-59 Hyde St. to an unnamed buyer, he said. Tenderloin Housing Clinic's Central City SRO Collaborative has its offices at 259 Hyde.

"We acquired the three buildings there several years ago, and wanted to build market-rate condos, but the condo market has dried up," Evans said.

AF Evans also pulled out of the Central YMCA renovation project last summer. It had signed a purchase agreement to buy the Y in August 2005, and TNDC joined shortly after as a partner in renovating the site for affordable housing. Part of the deal included the Y's two parking lots, where AF Evans planned to build market-rate condos. That plan still was in effect two years later, but, by that time, the use of the main Y building had shifted to housing

for the homeless.

"The city wanted the Y to be its premier example of its homeless ventures," Evans said, "and soon we realized that TNDC could do all that we could do regarding the sharing of responsibilities for the project. We didn't want there to be duplication."

So AF Evans withdrew from the entire project, seemingly without acrimony. "[The withdrawal] was fortunate for us. We're happier running it alone," TNDC Director Don Falk told The Extra.

AF Evans still is actively managing the 81-unit Lassen Apartments at 441 Ellis, which it built with Asian Inc. as affordable senior housing in the late 1970s and renovated in 2002.

"[But] we have little to do anymore with our two joint ventures with Mercy Housing — Marlton Manor at 240 Jones and 201 Jones," Evans said. "And at 201 Turk, we're only tangentially involved now." AF Evans built the 175-unit 201 Turk in 1993 with Chinatown Community Development, which still

manages the building.

"It's my favorite project in the Tenderloin," Evans said. "I still go in periodically, just to see how things are."

Evans worries that the slipping economy bodes ill for affordable housing, even as he says his company will try to partner with others in that market.

"[This country] is planting the seeds for huge rent increases because so little is being built," he said. "When the economy does turn around, and especially on the two coasts, there will be an enormous shortage of rental housing."

One idea he's promoting is an old one: Get HUD back into the housing business for apartment stock. He's encouraged, he said, that Carole Galante, president and CEO of BRIDGE Housing — a large-scale San Francisco developer of affordable housing — was tapped by President Obama in March to be deputy assistant secretary for multifamily housing programs at HUD. ■

Art without ego: Sand paintings of Bhutan

► CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

power and charisma that we will remain safe.

Ask any Tenderloin junkie why he likes heroin. He couldn't take struggling with the big picture inside his little mind anymore. He had to slow down. So he chose suicide, instead of meditation or sand painting.

Slow is best, my friends. But heroin is not the way. I remember the black woman with a beautiful face and big eyes, crouching on the trash in front of a rotted hotel. She couldn't have been more than 19, a junkie but a live work of art deader in the water than some museum artifacts.

She was as real as the sand painters and reminded me of one of the Dancing Dakinis, sacred female embodiments of wisdom presented in the Bhutan show and painted by anonymous meditation masters. The Dakinis rock. None of the lap dancers in the Tenderloin can hold a candle to them. Plus,

Western religions don't have any holy representative to compare to these sexy girls.

But of course the Dakinis are not real. They do not suffer. They are empty of ego. They are invisible and exist only in the mind. Only the man who painted them is more invisible. The heroin junkie was full of self. She was suffering.

My mind is a wild horse. I am not interested in anything elite. I cannot be depended on to believe anything that you do, they do, or even I do. But I do pay attention to my mind. It is full of lively and entertaining hatred and love. The "Sacred Arts of Bhutan" presents these two dualities as a unity.

Go to the show and let it affect you in your own way. I'm not a preacher. I don't care about converting you to anything. I have enough problems of my own. But the art is beautiful and its motivation is to benefit all, even you.

The Asian Art Museum is open free to the public the first Sunday of every month. ■

YOUR VOICE VOTE

STATEWIDE SPECIAL ELECTION TUESDAY, MAY 19, 2009

The Last Day to Register to Vote is May 4, 2009.

You must re-register if you move, change your name, or want to change your political party.

Your Polling Place May Have Changed!

The Department of Elections is combining polling places for the May 19, 2009 Statewide Special Election. Make sure to confirm the location of your polling place before going to vote.

Become A Permanent Vote-By-Mail Voter.

When you become a permanent vote-by-mail voter, a ballot will automatically be sent to you before every election. Voting by mail is convenient, easy, and secure.

Visit sfelections.org to download a voter registration form, a vote-by-mail application or to confirm the location of your polling place, or call the Department of Elections at (415) 554-4375.

**Department of Elections
City and County of San Francisco**