

Big battle over 'ground zero' liquor license

Grand Liquors hit in gentrification of city art district

BY TOM CARTER

GRAND Liquors Market is the first major casualty of the gritty Taylor Street corridor's gentrification as an art district from Market Street to Ellis. Storeowner Karim Rantisi has lost his lease, and angry activists want his liquor license to vanish, too.

The fear and loathing over the notorious, crime-ridden corner that the moribund Grand Liquors occupies at Turk and Taylor has escalated to rabid opposition even to the nearby store where Rantisi plans to move.

Rantisi has gambled big on his new Tip Top Market at 90 Turk St. He says he wants to reinvent himself. Respected as he is for enduring 17 years in the crime-pocked, skid

row milieu — and trying to be a good neighbor in the hood — he's the underdog in his fight for a new beginning.

Rantisi wants to transfer his liquor license from 67 Taylor St. to 90 Turk and vows to get rid of the cheap stuff he now

sells to drinkers who need whatever pocket change can buy. The new market is more than twice the size of Grand Liquors and would feature fresh meats and produce, slushies, 15 kinds of coffee, hot chocolate, ice cream and good wines.

The opposition says go somewhere else, there's too much booze being sold on that block now. TL Capt. Gary Jimenez calls the area "ground zero for violence, a killing field."

The block containing 90 Turk — a former video porn business — is such a bad scene it's scary. The former manager of the Aranda Hotel, an SRO in the middle of the block, once called it the most dangerous block in the city. The area around the SRO is the frequent site of beatings, knifings and occasional shootings. Crowds mill about aimlessly on the sidewalk day and night. At 48

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MAY 2009

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CENTRAL CITY

EXTRA!

SAN FRANCISCO

'HOW ARE YOU DOING?'



PHOTO BY SARA KWAN

"Im doing fantastically fine rite now but I dont know bout next mnth. I went in 2 my situation before the economy took a dive so its not affecting me so much now. But it seems like Im paying twice as much 4 what I need compared to before."

— Johnny Martine, "The Cowboy," Manor House Restaurant

Tenderloin twitter

Man-on-the-street interviews tell mood of the hood

THE world seems all atwitter about Twitter. This social network Website, launched in San Francisco three years ago, is the smallest but the fastest-growing among MySpace, Facebook and other such sites.

According to a Nielsen survey, from February 2008 to February 2009, Twitter grew 1,382%, from 475,000 users to 7,038,000. By mid-April, the numbers had doubled, to 14 million. And, apparently, it's got at least a million applications, to wit:

Mayor Newsom used Twitter to announce his candidacy for governor, and CNN transmits breaking news via Twitter. Surgeons at a Detroit hospital twittered throughout a brain tumor operation so residents could follow the progress and ask questions. NASA used Twitter to send Mars Phoenix Lander program updates. And, for the first-ever Tweet-cast concert, local group Moonalice had its April 3 gig at Slim's digitized into an MP3, then posted a link to the MP3 on Twitter so

fans at home could experience the performance live.

Celebrities perch on Twitter to update fans on their whereabouts. Newsom's gubernatorial tweet reportedly reached all 270,000 of his Twitter "followers," as they're known in Twitertalk. Actor Ashton Kutcher claims he's the first Twitterer to reach one million users, and even NBA star Shaquille O'Neal has more than 800,000 such hangers-on.

So Central City Extra figured we'd get with it, and go out into the hood and get some short and sweet commentary — not by cell, but more normal ask-and-tell. But instead of asking Twitter's lone query, "What are you doing," The Extra's interviewers wanted to know, "How are you doing?" in hopes of getting a snapshot of the neighborhood's mood these days. We translated their comments into Twitertalk; usually we gave them more than the requisite 140 characters to make their point.

We started at Manor House Restaurant, where owner Mimi Yee says business has dwindled but dedicated locals keep coming. ■

PHOTOS, INTERVIEWS AND TWITTERTALK TRANSLATIONS BY SARA KWAN WITH MARJORIE BEGGS AND HEIDI SWILLINGER

SEE PAGE 4



PHOTO BY SARA KWAN

Karim Rantisi faces fierce opposition to transferring his liquor license.

\$8 million Boeddeker makeover in works

First meeting on redesign ideas set for May 13

BY JONATHAN NEWMAN

“A walk in the park” is supposed to be an effortless, pleasurable passing of time. But when the park is Boeddeker, that carefree stroll can take on political and cultural weight. That may all change with a multimillion-dollar makeover in the works.

Tenderloin Futures Collaborative learned April 8 that Trust for Public Land has secured \$1.5 million from private contributions for Boeddeker to supplement the Tenderloin park’s one-third share of \$5 million in corporate grants announced last summer for the redesign of Boeddeker, Hayes Valley and Balboa city parks.

Jake Gilchrist, project manager of the trust, said the city has added approximately \$3 million, bringing the total funding for makeover of the trio of

parks to \$9.5 million. Of this amount, Boeddeker is assured of \$3.16 million, Gilchrist said.

In interviews later, Gilchrist said the trust is pursuing up to \$5 million additional in state Proposition 84 funds — generated by the 2006 passage of water conservation and park bonds — specifically for Boeddeker. If all state funding comes through, a total of more than \$8 million could be applied to the Boeddeker makeover.

The first of at least five community meetings to solicit ideas for redesigning the park and clubhouse begins at 7 p.m. on May 13 at Boeddeker Clubhouse.

A group of young architects in July 2007 put in \$25,000 in pro-bono work to redesign Boeddeker, which has long prompted community criticism, especially its surrounding iron fence that makes it look like a fortress. That redesign didn’t go anywhere, but it got people thinking and it sent Gilchrist back to the drawing board. Now he’s returned with money in hand and looking for ideas.

“We want to know how the park is or is not being used currently, how people feel about design and structure. We will be listening to residents first,” Gilchrist said.

TENDERLOIN ‘WONDERLAND’

In September, the Tenderloin will be renamed “Wonderland,” said John Melvin and Kit Rosenberg of the Fung Collaborative, who announced plans for an exhibition in the streets of art and installations coordinated through San Francisco-based Gray Area Foundation for the Arts. The Fung Collaborative of New York describes itself as “an arts organization without boundaries.”

The organizers hope to secure the cooperation of TL merchants and building owners to donate the use of storefronts, awnings, rooftops and balconies for public displays that focus “on the nature of ‘Home’ and shared neighborhood experiences,” Rosenberg said.

Wrapped sculptures evoking homelessness are to be displayed on the five stair-stepped balconies on the south façade of the Golden Gate Theatre. A video and spoken word installation on the theme of childhood deprivation and sex slavery is planned, but has no site yet.

Central City Hospitality House’s community arts program has offered to provide two Leavenworth Street storefronts for installations and docents to guide viewers through the open space displays. Artists from Spain, Sweden and New York are lined up to install work in public areas and a group of L.A. artists will parade sculpture on a flatbed truck up Interstate 5 when “Wonderland” kicks off, Melvin said. Later, he said he hoped the inaugural street presentations, coinciding with EXIT Theatre’s annual Fringe Festival, would generate community enthusiasm and create momentum for

ongoing biennial exhibitions depicting the Tenderloin that would rival the now-century-old Biennale in Venice.

Without a budget “Wonderland” is relying on the active participation of the Tenderloin community, Melvin said, claiming that securing the use of city space or Arts Commission sponsorship is too costly and time-consuming.

ARTS SURVEY SOLICITED

Quentin Fininen and Dawn Pepka, executive director and project manager of Culture Connections, a nonprofit they said is affiliated with the pro-business SCORE Foundation in Herndon, Va., came to the Collaborative asking for help to administer a survey soliciting opinions from TL residents and business owners about the four-block stretch of Taylor Street from Market to O’Farrell, now designated as a city arts district.

Fininen and Pepka had hoped to link the survey to NOMNIC, but Elvin Padilla Jr., NOMNIC’s executive director, earlier had said that was not the case.

ST. ANTHONY’S BOWS OUT

Sharon Christen, Mercy Housing developer, told the Collaborative that St. Anthony Foundation, unable to obtain city housing funds, has pulled out of its proposed respite housing planned for the second floor of the 10-story building at 121 Golden Gate to be built with Mercy Housing, and so Mercy will use that floor as part of its ongoing senior housing complex.

The respite housing was to be a temporary home for ill Tenderloin residents deemed well enough to leave the hospital, but not recovered sufficiently to return home. Both St. Anthony’s sale of its work-and-rehab dairy farm in Marin County, which it had operated for more than 50 years, and closing of the Marian Residence on Mission Street within the past year are the result of rising costs, falling donations and city housing funds budget restraints.

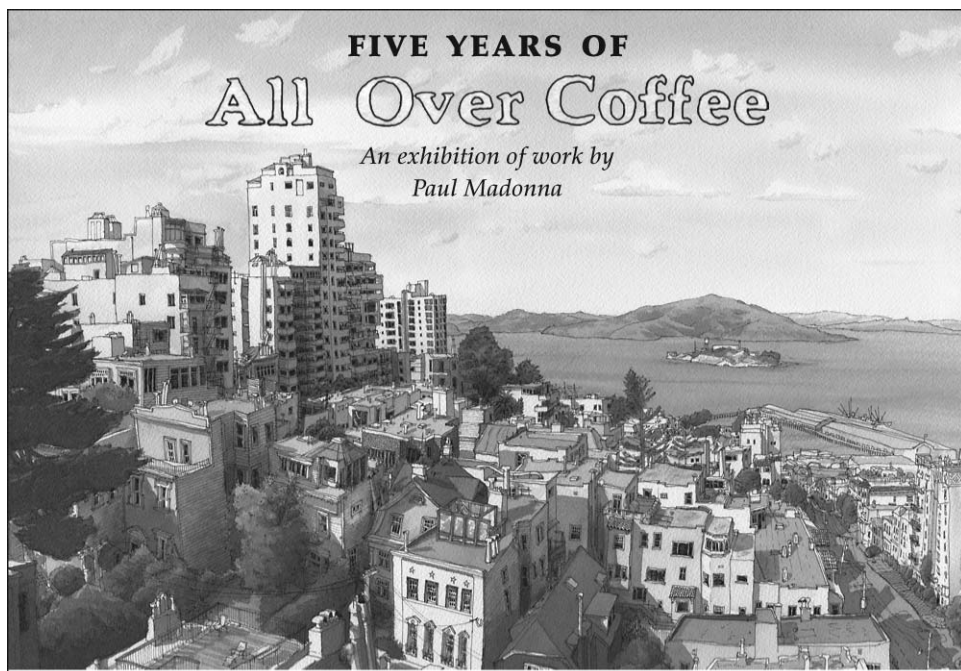
St. Anthony’s will move its dining room temporarily to 150 Golden Gate during construction, then return to 121 Golden Gate when construction is completed. Mercy Housing is seeking a HUD grant to finance the senior housing there, Christen said. If the HUD grant comes through, Mercy will have to offer the senior housing rentals citywide, not solely to TL seniors. Qualified seniors, those whose annual income is 50% or less than HUD’s \$67,800 median income for San Francisco, would pay one-third of the market rate rents. ■

GOOD NEWS for...

TL RESIDENTS Beginning May 4, the Salvation Army’s Kroc Center, which opened last June, gears up for the summer with expanded hours and changes to some membership options. The skylighted gym, for basketball and other sports, now will be open for all ages Mon. through Fri. 3-9 p.m. and Sat. noon-9 p.m. Game room hours, also for all ages, will be 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Mon. through Fri. and noon-9 p.m. Sat. The facility includes a fitness center — with 40 aerobic and cardio machines — and a swimming pool for free swim classes and aerobic exercise. Memberships and use fees, which vary by age, are \$5/day for adults and \$3/day for youth and seniors. New this summer are a 10-day adult pass for only \$35, and discounts on quarterly and annual memberships. Monthly memberships will be discontinued. Info: 345-3400.

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

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 Paul Madonna



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Tenderloin loses 7 of 17 polling places

Casualties of citywide consolidation to save money

BY RUNE LANGHOFF SORENSEN

WHEN voters go to cast their ballot May 19, some will have to find their new polling place. Citywide, 153 polling places are being eliminated, seven in the Tenderloin — down from 17 to 10.

The cut is a consequence of the city's budget crisis. Mayor Newsom asked the Department of Elections to reduce spending by 12.5%, and this is part of the department's response. The upcoming election will cost the city \$3 million, and consolidation of polling places will save the lion's share of the \$200,000 in overall savings.

"I don't think the voters will notice," Charles MacNulty, voter outreach manager, said. "The only difference is that they have to vote in a different place. All voters that have to vote in a new place have been informed and have received a vote-by-mail application. Voting by mail is already what most voters prefer."

Asked if the Elections Department prefers mail-in ballots because it is cheaper, MacNulty said, "We don't encourage or discourage voters to vote by mail. But the process is easier, it's more accessible, and it's more secure. Also, the decision to vote or not to vote will be a more conscious decision, when you have the ballot in your hand and decline to fill it out or not." He said he doesn't believe the consolidation will affect voter turnout.

Michael Nulty, first vice president of Central City Democrats, disagrees.

"I fear that this could be a problem for elders and people with disabilities if they have to walk longer to vote. And that could ultimately lower voter turnout," he said.

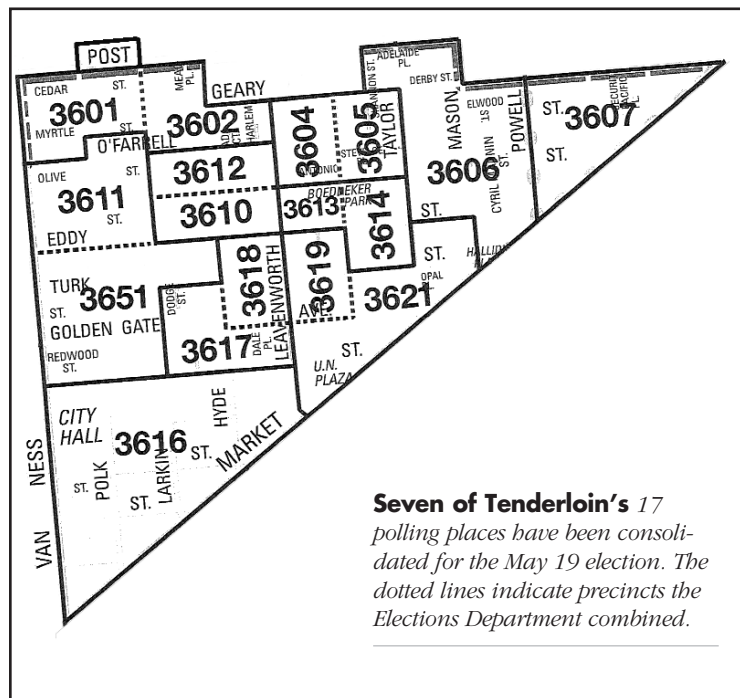
"Also, a lot of people in the Tenderloin count on working in the elections, so this will mean a loss of revenue for Tenderloin residents. For them it's an opportunity to supplement their already low income."

MacNulty said Elections does try to place poll workers near the precinct where they are registered. "But sometimes we don't need any additional poll workers in that area," he said. "At that point, we'd place them outside of their neighborhood or in the standby pool. Also, there are other poll-work staffing requirements such as the language ability of the poll worker."

Each polling place closed saves the city more than \$800. The city pays \$150 to rent each polling place; three or four clerks get \$125 apiece, and the polling place inspector is paid \$165. Total: \$815. The seven polling places eliminated in the Tenderloin will save the city up to \$5,705.

The consolidation of polling places will be kept for the Nov. 3 municipal election, MacNulty said, but all of the normal 561 polling places will be open for the June 2010 primary.

The polling places for May 19 are: Firehouse, 1067 Post; Vietnamese Community Center, 766 Geary; Senior Center, 350 Ellis; Maria Manor, 174 Ellis; Ellis Gardens Social Room, 666 Ellis; Boeddeker Park Clubhouse, 240 Eddy; Lighthouse for the Blind, 214 Van Ness; Hampton Court Apartments, 378 Golden Gate; Dorothy Day Communities, 54 McAllister; Eastern Park Apartments Community Room, 711 Eddy. ■



Seven of Tenderloin's 17 polling places have been consolidated for the May 19 election. The dotted lines indicate precincts the Elections Department combined.

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May 3 - 16, 2009

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— Josh Korblyth

STATEWIDE SPECIAL ELECTION

Tuesday, May 19, 2009

Polls will open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

<p>No on Prop. 1A</p> <p>Yes on Prop. 1B</p> <p>No on Prop. 1C</p> <p>No on Prop. 1D</p> <p>No on Prop. 1E</p> <p>No on Prop. 1F</p>	<p>Rainy Day Budget Stabilization Fund</p> <p>Education Funding</p> <p>Lottery Modernization</p> <p>Children's Services Fund</p> <p>Mental Health Services Funding</p> <p>Elected Officials' Salaries</p>
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Tenderloin answers Twitter-ty

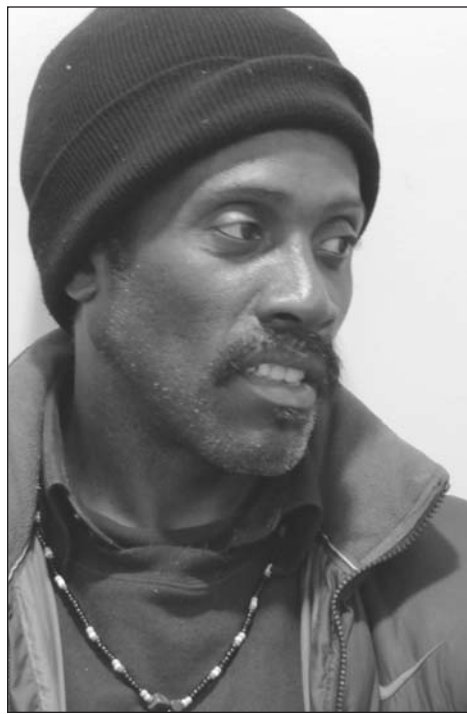
"Biz gone down but we r unlike ne othr restaurant. people not only come here 2 eat, but its a community. they gather here 2 talk & hangout, & I try to provide them a comfortable place 2 meet up."

Mimi Yee
OWNER OF MANOR HOUSE RESTAURANT



"The economys not affecting me. People are saying there are no jobs but slowly there are more. ur seeing more on Craigslist daily."

Herbert Huston
AT THE TECH LAB, 150 GOLDEN GATE



"Business wise we r doing fine, but we r trying harder. It has gone down, but we have no employees so it cuts back on the expenses. Its just my husband and me working longer hours, like 11 to 12 hrs/day, sometimes more. But weve had the place over 30 years and put 3 daughters thru college."

Mike and Jean Aburahma
CO-OWNER, TURK AND LARKIN DELI



"Im here from babies. Im here see my brothe but it proved to not been able t having a r"

Just
LEAVENWORTH



"We r finding it tough. Biz dropped bout 20% since Nov but its slowly picking up. Ive just been here for 1 & 1/2 yrs, and we r just barely making it, but there r plans 2 bring in more business."

Joe Dunphy
OWNER, CELTIC COFFEE COMPANY, MCALLISTER STREET



"Im OK. Ive been blessed w/family in the area. had a great job till Jan. then it collapsed. The economys bad but if u really want a job u can get one just not in the city. I have a job interview tomorrow in Fremont."

Benson Hinga
LEAVENWORTH AND GOLDEN GATE



"Im surviving, but economys hurting me cuz all my programs r getting cut. Its hard. I dont wanna go back 2 doing stuff on the streets. I dont wanna go back 2 doing drugs. I hope they change things soon."

Leauthry Carpenter Sr.
MANOR HOUSE RESTAURANT



"It sux. There r crackheads, drug dealers, bums, breakins, burglaries. We had 9 breakins in 2 weeks on this 1 block. People have become more frugal. They like 2 make their own lunches. Lux items like coffee r on bottom of the list."

Ramind Lee
OWNER OF CAFÉ RAMIND, LARKIN STREET

Battle over Grand Liquors' licens

► CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Turk, Itzhak Volansky, recently evicted owner of McDonald's Bookstore, said the intimidating street scene was a reason his business failed. On the corner is Club 21, where a man was shot to death outside after closing a year ago. And just a few doors from Tip Top at 62 Turk is Tenderloin Liquors.

What has happened now is change that residents never thought would come, brought about by the "art district" push from the mayor's office. Meanwhile, many believe this is an opportunity to boot a liquor license out of an area saturated with them.

Already, typical of the TL, issues and motives have gotten muddled in community meetings Rantisi has attended, even before any

formal hearings on the liquor license transfer.

How Rantisi, 43, came to be evicted is a story with two versions. Standing in his store one afternoon with his attorney, former District Attorney Terence Hallinan, Rantisi explained it all to The Extra.

Rantisi said that in December he met with his landlord, Jack Sumski of Davis Properties, who suggested he rent 65 Taylor St., formerly Club 65. Besides Grand Liquors, Rantisi also rents 63 and 61 Taylor for storage. Sumski wanted him to put in a market at 65 Taylor and would let him have all four locations for \$7,000 a month, Rantisi said.

"I said okay and we shook hands on it, man to man," Rantisi said. "Then I get (an eviction) letter from his attorney in March saying I have 60 days' notice."

"He (Sumski) got a better offer," Hallinan interjected.

"The landlord wanted me out by May 1, but 60 days isn't enough time to move," Rantisi said. "I have to get approval from the city first for the license. I can't move until then. I've asked for an extension."

Sumski told The Extra that he had made the offer but he had stipulated conditions.

"I met with (Rantisi) six or eight months ago," Sumski said. "I offered him that space (at Club 65) if he'd put in a market and stop selling the little liquor bottles, the malt liquor and the fortified wine. That's what causes problems."

"And he agreed. But he didn't do a damn thing about it. I tried to help. I offered. I'd have put money in it, too. But he didn't follow up with me. I did everything I could. I have to

pe query: 'How are you doing?'

n Costa Rica. I have 2
e looking for work + 2
r. I hoped for job opps
o be fruitless. Ive never
o get a job till now. Im
really hard time."

stin Leshua
ORTH AND GOLDEN GATE



"Im doing ok. The environment
around me is changing relatively
more than my own personal life
is changing since Im retired, so
Im not as affected by the slump as
others. But I feel people r behaving
differently. Im hearing about more
deaths and robberies."

Jim Charles
REGULAR, CAFÉ RAMIND



"My husband invested in mutual
funds in 05. Now its half of what it
was. I talked to the bank manager
who said his are dropping 2 but he
says dont worry the value will go
up. I haven't seen it yet!"

Betti Miner
AT THE TECH LAB, 150 GOLDEN GATE



"Things've been up n down.
Sometimes its busy, sometimes not.
Theres a lunch rush, but then it slows
down after 2. I dont think the economy
has anything to do with it."

Jin Lew
EMPLOYEE, LARKIN EXPRESS DELI



"We have a lil more people coming in than
usual lately even with the economy. They dont
buy more or less, just the same amount.
Nothings changed, everythings fine."

Olga Cortez
EMPLOYEE, RIGHTWAY MARKET, O'FARRELL AND LEAVENWORTH



"Right now Im homeless. I applied
for GA but only get 59 bucks. Im living
in a shelter but dont like it. I havent had
a job in 15 years. I used to be a maid
and was in construction. I helped build
Moscone Center but theyre only taking
you if ur certified now."

Joanne Phillips
LEAVENWORTH AND EDDY



"Im on SSI. I get 1100/mo but not enough
affordable housing. Im having a hard time
getting stable + a lots of others r 2."

Terrence Billenstein
LEAVENWORTH AND GOLDEN GATE

se in 'ground zero' gentrification

improve the area and I've got the city behind
me. Now he's moving into that other place.
He was supposed to be out in 60 days, but I'm
giving him an extra month."

So you didn't break the deal?

"I'm not that kind of guy," Sumski said.

Legions have lined up to keep Rantisi out
of the mix and they are itching for the fight.

TNDC community organizer Steve Woo
said he and others rushed door to door to beat
an April 23 deadline for protests to be filed
with the state Alcoholic Beverage Control.
They collected 100 signature protest forms
from residents within 500 feet of the new site.
TNDC itself leases to the Tea Room porn theater
on Eddy Street and two liquor stores —
California Market in the Ambassador Hotel and
Daldas Market at 200 Eddy St. across from

TNDC headquarters.

The SRO Central City Collaborative, an arm
of Tenderloin Housing Clinic that fights for
tenants' rights, is opposed. Director Jeff
Buckley said he had helped get 60 signatures
of nearby SRO residents protesting the transfer.
The collaborative will move nearby, to 48 Turk
St., in June.

The Tenderloin Community Benefit District
is against the transfer to 90 Turk St.

"The CBD will be contacting the mayor's
office, filing objections with the Department of
Alcohol Beverage Control and attending and
testifying at any and all hearings held on the
matter," said Director Elaine Zamora.

In March, the CBD additionally formed a
committee to coalesce community opposition.
Each member representing an organization

was asked to have that entity object, too. And
two members were to ask Supervisors Daly
and Bevan Dufty to hold hearings on the
license transfer.

TL police are opposed because it's a vio-
lent area. "We have no choice," says Capt.
Jimenez. But he doesn't hide his respect for
Rantisi's resolve to cooperate and serve the
community.

Two community meetings in April featured
Rantisi. He requested the first to explain his plans
and answer residents' questions. It was arranged
for April 21 in the police Community Room by
Community Leadership Alliance Director David
Villa-Lobos. Two dozen people were there.

Rantisi and an employee distributed copies
of his floor plan for the 2,600-square-foot Tip

► CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

CLYDE WOOD
Vietnam veteran

Until his death two weeks before his 58th birthday, Clyde Wood felt he was haunted by bad luck, and the worst of it was post traumatic stress disorder that stemmed from his Vietnam War days under fire as a young Marine.

He didn't talk much about these things, even to his caseworker. From the outset he appeared to be a crusty customer when he moved into his sixth floor room at the Care Not Cash Coast Hotel three years ago, which ended his homelessness.

Mr. Wood kept mostly to himself. But gradually, when he left his room using a walker, dozens of residents came in contact with him, and most reached out to him when his health began failing seven months ago. They then found him to be a nice man with a penchant for giving away candy and rewarding people for their kindnesses.

"He gave my daughter candy," said a young blonde mother at Mr. Wood's memorial March 19 at the hotel. "And when I carried his groceries upstairs for him, the next day he tried to give me a dollar. But I wouldn't accept it."

"He was really kind," said another woman. "He gave my dog treats. I'd walk around the block with him all the time."

"A friend told me he had a bad side and could raise hell," said a man. "But so many of us never saw that."

Mr. Wood was the third Coast resident to die in three months and the mood in the SRO was especially somber.

Dennis Reynolds, Mr. Wood's caseworker, saw him the most. Reynolds is a Vietnam War veteran suffering from PTSD, too. He uses a cane now because an old leg wound flared up. Based on their common experiences, he could be expected to build rapport with the reticent man.

"I met him two years ago when I started," Reynolds said, "and he was a distrustful, crotchety old guy and very private about his past. He was using the walker then. When his health started failing, he said he was okay. He didn't access our services either. But that was his choice."

"He was in Vietnam about the same time I was," Reynolds said later. "There was a lot he wouldn't talk about. And he was distraught about things that had happened to him in his life. He had a hard exterior. I think he was very alone. But he had a lot of friends here and in the neighborhood, and they showed up to help him downstairs. He'll be missed."

Other than his military service, little was known about Mr. Wood's past.

Mr. Wood, despite the walker, looked healthy until seven months ago, when he started to decline. Another piece of bad luck followed in January and February. The hotel elevator was out of order for 23 days, according to residents. Mr. Wood struggled up and down the stairs, weak and losing weight from his 5-foot-8 frame. One resident who had helped him said it took Mr. Wood "two hours" to get up and down from the sixth floor.

In February, Mr. Wood was taken to the VA Hospital. When he returned three weeks later, Reynolds thought his health would improve. But it wasn't the case.

March 5, when Mr. Wood summoned Reynolds to his room to check his "bugged" telephone, the caseworker was shocked at the sight of him standing at the door in his socks and underwear.

"He weighed 50 pounds if he weighed an ounce," Reynolds said. "He was a living skeleton."

That day an ambulance took Mr. Wood back to the VA Hospital. He died three days later. The VA would not reveal the cause of death. Mr. Wood was buried with honors at the Golden Gate National Cemetery in San Bruno. ■

—TOM CARTER

KAREN MONJE
A spotless housekeeper

Karen Monje was remembered as a no-nonsense but caring person at a March 6 memorial at the Lyric Hotel on Jones Street.

She died on the floor of her bathroom, said Chris Eunice, her husband and caregiver. "She just went to sleep." She was taking methadone and other prescription medications and had been found unconscious by others many times, he said. She was 56.

Ms. Monje was born in San Francisco in 1952, he said. Her mother died years ago, but she had several sisters and two children, although Eunice said he had been unable to locate them.

With the exception of Eunice, the only mourners at the service led by Rev. Glenda Hope were hotel staff, a few fellow residents and a man named James, who knew Ms. Monje when she lived at Canon Kip. James recalled her as "a nice lady."

"She was always a cheery, happy person," he said. "She seemed even happier after she moved to the Lyric. It brought more structure to her life."

One of her neighbors shared less pleasant memories of Monje. "I found her to be rude and loud," he said. "The first thing she ever said to me was 'Do you have a microwave oven?' I said no, and she never said another thing to me."

He recalled seeing her on the street, unable to stand, and watching other people trying to steal from her. "I think in reality she had a good heart," he concluded. "She made me realize I wasn't very friendly either. I'm sorry she's gone."

"Over time, I found her to be a nice and caring person, although she did keep to herself," a hotel staff member said.

Eunice said that Ms. Monje had been on disability since getting in a car accident with her son several years ago. Her 4-year-old son was unhurt, but she was severely injured and in a coma for days. "She was lucky to be alive," he said.

He said he met her 25 years ago in the Mission District; they married 15 years later at City Hall.

"She kept the house spotless," said Eunice, who's been married three times. "She was the best woman I ever had."

He thanked everyone for attending her memorial service. "I have a lot of pain and sadness right now," he said as tears came to his eyes. "It's a rough world out there. Enjoy life as long as you have it." ■

—HEIDI SWILLINGER

MICHELLE VAN RIJN
'Soul and sunlight'

A roomful of distraught mourners gathered March 6 to remember Michelle Van Rijn, who jumped to her death from a window in the five-story Coast Hotel, where she had been a resident. She was 49.

Residents described her as a woman "full of genuine soul and sunlight" who was warm and caring toward everyone she met.

One man said that though he'd known her only a few months, she always looked out for him. The

week before she died, Ms. Van Rijn knocked on his door early one morning to make sure he kept his General Assistance appointment, and even gave him \$2 for the bus. "She was supportive of everything I've ever done," he said.



Another man recalled Ms. Van Rijn reaching out to him when he was going through a particularly troubled time. "I had a dire need, and she looked after me," he said. "She always had a happy smile and a cheery attitude."

One man said Ms. Van Rijn had spent time in Zimbabwe, and may have been born there.

Nearly two dozen people gathered in a circle in the sun-drenched community room of the Coast Hotel, as the Rev. Glenda Hope conducted Ms. Van Rijn's memorial. Several wept openly, others comforted a man who was distraught.

"Michelle and I met in precarious places," he told the group. "But even on the worst days, we'd find some magic."

A table held a photo of Ms. Van Rijn, bouquets of flowers and candles. One tenant brought a book of drawings Ms. Van Rijn had made of his dog, which died recently. She had done a good likeness from a photograph, and also had done a second drawing of the dog with wings. In beautiful calligraphy, she had written, "I see him skipping now, because you gave him wings of love — look how big his wings are."

The manner of her death was a particularly harsh blow for her friends at the Coast Hotel, where many residents are physically or mentally fragile. Before her memorial service began, a staff member reminded the group to reach out for help if they are troubled, and added that special grief support groups will be offered for a few weeks.

Nobody expected her suicide, said one resident after the service ended. "Everything I got from her was always positive," he said. "She had one of the straightest heads of anyone in this hotel." ■

—HEIDI SWILLINGER

RONALD URRUTIA
Musician

When he was well and still active, Ronald Urrutia used to play the piano in the lobby of the Alexander Residence, delighting fellow residents and staff. On weekends, he'd dress up sharp and play gigs, performing on keyboard, cello, flute or congas.

But the music has been silenced. Mr. Urrutia died Feb. 9 from sarcoma, a soft tissue cancer that was being treated with chemotherapy. He was 55.

At a Feb. 26 memorial in the Alexander's community room, 20 residents and friends gathered to remember Mr. Urrutia. Sister Irene McDonnell of St. Anthony Foundation officiated.

"I was his hotel social worker here," said Betty Duran. "Whenever we had a party, Ronald always volunteered to play his drums — it always made the party more alive. But after he was sick, he couldn't play. He had a provider who came to help him, and I brought him food. He was very kind and generous with a big heart."

Mr. Urrutia's sister, who lives in Brisbane, told The Extra that her brother was born in San Francisco, was a vet and had worked for the city as a driver before he went on disability.

"He had a lot of life in him," she said. "He was a caring person — he gave food to the homeless — and I was very close to him. He was my only family. I loved him and I miss him."

At the memorial, resident Devra Worcester said she'd been friends with Mr. Urrutia for "10 or 15 years," as long as they both had lived at the Alexander. "He had a lot to give, but his illness kept him from giving. I know he was working on a piano composition, working over and over and over on it. I hope he finished it."

Fellow musician Jerry Tubis said he and Mr. Urrutia had been good friends for several years, united by their common love of music.

"Ron had such a big heart," Tubis said, "and he was always straight up with people — he either loved or hated you. And he was very religious."

Tubis said Mr. Urrutia was diagnosed with cancer last year, but he was taking care of himself: "The last time I saw him, two days before he died, I think he sensed his time was coming to a close."

Mr. Urrutia had been released from the hospital several days before he died, in his room at the Alexander. ■

—MARJORIE BEGGS

Peer Support Line
575-1400
Office of Self-Help
1095 Market St., Suite 202

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

SPECIAL EVENTS

League of Women Voters Ballot Measure Forum, Tue., May 12, 6 p.m., Alexander Residence Community Room, 230 Eddy St. Hosted by Alliance for a Better District 6 with community partners S.F. Elections Department, S.F. Mental Health Association, St. Anthony's Foundation, Tenant Associations Coalition and affiliates, Tenderloin Housing Clinic, TNDC. Info: 820-1560.

Boeddeker Park renovation meeting, Wed., May 13, 240 Eddy clubhouse, 7-9 p.m. First of a series of meetings to discuss the park's redesign, funded by a grant from Trust for Public Land in partnership with Rec & Park. Refreshments. Info: Jacob Gilchrest, 495-5660 ext.344, or Jacob.gilchrest@tpl.org.

5th Annual Asian Heritage Street Celebration, Sat. May 16, 11 a.m.-6 p.m., Larkin Street near McAllister, in front of the Asian Art Museum up to Little Saigon district. Artists, DJs, martial arts, Asian pop culture performances, j-cars, Muay Thai kickboxing ring, food, karaoke contest, arts and crafts, anime, free community health screenings and prizes. Free. Info: www.asianfairsf.com.

Volunteer Symposium, May 19, Le Colonial restaurant, 20 Cosmo Pl., 6-8:30 p.m. Free. Sponsored by S.F. Young Democrats, highlights 10 citywide organizations that need volunteer help. Learn about public service opportunities. Refreshments. Proceeds from sponsors will be donated to S.F. Food Bank. Info: http://sfyd.org/symposium.

NEW ART EVENTS

12th Annual United States of Asian America Festival, opening reception May 7, SomArts Cultural Center, 934 Brannan St., presented by Asian Pacific Islander Cultural Center. Visual arts, storytelling, film, free. Through May 31. Info: apiculturalcenter.org.

Official opening of Tenderloin National Forest, Cohen Alley between Leavenworth and Ellis streets, Sat., May 9, 10 a.m.-9 p.m., a project of the Luggage Store. Music, dance, spoken-word performances and interactive activities throughout the day plus a celebration of the completion of "Cultural Geometry," hand-carved stone mosaic walkway, by Rigo 23. Info: luggagestoregallery.org.

Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune by Terrence McNally, directed by Michael Haven with Ben Ortega and Cheryl Smith. EXIT Theatre, 156 Eddy, Thur., Fri., Sat., 8 p.m., and Sun. at 2 p.m. through May 24. Romance of a waitress and a short-order cook in New York City. Tickets \$15 (\$12 students, seniors): BrownPaperTickets.com.

The In Betweens by Margery Fairchild presented by Dark Porch Theatre. Live music, dance, comedy set in 1885, starring Stuart Bousel and Christopher P. Kelly. EXIT Stage Left, 156 Eddy, Thur., Fri., Sat., 8 p.m., through May 30. Tickets \$15-\$20: BrownPaperTickets.com or email darkporchtheatre@gmail.com.

Tour of Patrick Dougherty Sculpture, plaza in front of City Hall, first Tuesday of the month through November, 12-1 p.m.. Free docent-led tour of "The Upper Crust," 18,000 pounds of willow saplings woven into the plaza sycamores. Info: www.sfartscommission.org/pubartcollection or 252-4638.

In Our Own Pictures and In Our Own Works, through June 19, Mon.-Fri., 8 a.m.-8 p.m., ground floor City Hall, artwork from The Sixth Street Photography Workshop and Central City Hospitality House. Presented by S.F. Arts Commission's Art at City Hall Program.

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.

Angry activists at meeting rip into liquor store owner

► CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

Top Market and a statement about his proposed business upgrade and how eager he was to work with the neighborhood and the authorities. All he wanted to do was to transfer his off-sale liquor license from Grand Liquors to Tip Top Market, a few doors away.

A majority opposed the transfer. They blamed the harrowing street scenes on booze and were skeptical that Tip Top would be any different. Villa-Lobos said a compromise might be found.

"I see no benefit of having another liquor store there," said the most vocal and insistent voice, David Chin, manager of Hotel Metropolis at Turk and Market. "What assurances do we have that it won't attract bad elements? We have to call the police all the time now."

Some opponents conceded Rantisi was really trying to be a good neighbor, but they worried that nothing would change as long as alcohol was involved.

But resident and disability advocate Ed Evans was happy about Rantisi's move to the Tip Top and pleased with the store's plan for "plenty wide" accessibility.

"It's a quality store," Evans said. "And it's better than having an empty property that attracts people to hang out in doorways."

Leonard Priestly, a former TL resident, said Rantisi is a businessman who has "always tried to make the community safe." Alliance for a Better District Six President Michael Nulty said Rantisi had

been a good neighbor and has contributed to the neighborhood.

A majority of the crowd walked to the new site where Rantisi revealed in an interview that he's spending \$200,000, using a line of credit.

Even dusty and under construction the space is impressive. Rantisi has installed a huge 17-door cooler at the east wall, two freezers, a place for a meat market, a 36-foot section for fresh produce. Nulty said such a market was specified as a prime community need in the neighborhood's seminal planning document Tenderloin 2000.

The tenor of the next meeting a week later was different, quickly growing hot and angry. More than 40 people had filed into the police Community Room when Rantisi spoke, Hallinan at his side. He said his lease was unexpectedly canceled and reiterated his intention to upgrade his business and eliminate cheap booze sales.

Newspaper vendor Clyde Conrad fired the first volley from the second row. In a loud voice he grilled Rantisi about his check-cashing policy. Rantisi reluctantly admitted to a 3% charge.

"One of your employees charged me 22%!" Conrad shot back.

In an apparent departure from the Community Benefit District's official position, Villa-Lobos stood and interrupted with a torrent of support for Rantisi. At the March TL CBD land use committee meeting, Villa-Lobos had been assigned the task of asking Aspen Apartments management to file an objection to the license transfer with ABC.

Villa-Lobos remained standing and advocating for Rantisi until SRO Collaborative's Buckley asked, "David, do you have a question?" As Villa-Lobos took his seat, Conrad shot back at him, "You can pick up your check outside."

Paul Hogarth, a Tenderloin Housing Clinic lawyer, took on Rantisi like an angry prosecutor. He demanded to know if Rantisi had disclosed on his applications to the Department of Building Inspection for building permits at 90 Turk St. that his market business would include liquor sales.

"What does DBI have to do with alcohol?" Hallinan interjected.

Rantisi calmly added that he felt he had complied with all the codes and had consulted often with Capt. Jimenez.

"We were aware of all these things," said the captain. He indicated that Rantisi has done nothing illegal. "But the issue rests with the Planning Commission. Then it'll go to the supervisors."

No hearing dates for Planning or the ABC have been set. Rantisi's is not a simple transfer because the Tenderloin became a Special Use District years after he got his license in 1992. He must get conditional use approval from Planning to move within the SUD.

To end the discussion, Jimenez said he had invited Tenderloin Liquors owner Ahmed M. Said, who does a brisk business in single-beer and malt-liquor sales, to say something at the meeting. Said stood, scotching a rumor that he was losing his lease at year's end, and announced he has 10 more years to go at 62 Turk St. ■

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