

## Loophole allows \$500,000 SROs sold as condos in west SoMa

300 units in works; task force trying to halt the trend

BY TOM CARTER

PRIVATE developers are using a loophole in the Planning Code to build SROs South of Market that they can rent at market rate or possibly sell as \$500,000 minicondos. But a citizens advisory committee is bent on stopping the nascent trend they believe is misdirected.

SROs can only be built in certain parts of western SoMa and nowhere else in the city. More than 300 SRO units are in the Planning Department pipeline.

One of the largest projects — 102 units, each a scant 250 square feet — is to be completed in November at 77 Bluxome St. Ironically, Charles Breidinger, who owns it with his brother John, sits on the committee that would condemn the practice. The brothers have another market-rate SRO project slated for 32 units at 1140 Howard St.

**“It was a different era and nobody dreamed how prices would take off.”**

John Elberling  
HEAD OF TODCO

disabled on fixed incomes who can't afford more than a small room. Most SROs are built or renovated by non-profits.

But the code didn't limit building to nonprofit developers or say SROs had to be rented to poor folks.

“We wanted to encourage the rebuilding of SROs after the '89 earthquake,” says John Elberling, who served on the council and heads TODCO, a neighborhood nonprofit developer. “And we limited it to just SoMa to see if it could work. It was a different era and nobody dreamed how prices would take off.”

Now, anybody can put up an SRO in SoMa's special use district, “mapping it out as a condo to rent, or to sell anytime,” Elberling says. “It's typical.”

And it's a far cry from what the problem-solving committee had in mind. The example was set by the first private developer to use the code in 1997. That's when the Yerba Buena Commons opened at Third and Harrison: 257 rooms, all affordable, most of them 200 square feet. In early July, it had 10 vacancies on Craig's List, twice the usual number because the recent management change hasn't caught up yet, a Commons spokesman said. And for an income under \$31,680, with three

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

### DALY SAVES THE DAY

Gets the money for Bindlestiff



PAGE 3

### SATURDAY NIGHT AT 7-ELEVEN

Celebration turns into birthday bash

PAGE 4

### TENDERLOIN OBITUARIES

Neighborhood activists  
Dunn, Walkup, others

PAGE 7

# CENTRAL CITY



SAN FRANCISCO

## FARMERS' MARKET MILESTONE



PHOTOS BY LENNY LIMJOCO

*Mariachis stroll through U.N. Plaza as the Farmers' Market celebrates its first 25 years.*

# 25 years, still fresh

## Heart of city greengrocery turns silver

BY JOHN GOINS

THE closest thing to a supermarket for the Tenderloin — with its cornucopia of fresh produce at affordable prices — is the Heart of the City Farmers' Market at U.N. Plaza. On June 21, the market marked its 25th anniversary.

The farmers' market is the main source of fresh fruit and vegetables for the salad bowl of ethnic cultures here who welcome a taste of home, and the seniors, disabled and other fixed-income folks who need fresh food for the many health benefits. The market is a resource that grew organically — and quickly — by word of mouth.

“When we first started we had 12 booths,” Heart of the City Manager Christine Adams said with a laugh. She was seated in her white van in front of the federal office building at the market. “We weren't even on the plaza. We were in a little walkway between the federal building and 10 United Nations.”

But now, on Wednesdays, Heart of the City averages about 50 booths, she said, and Sundays, close to 40.

John Garrone, who sells specialty mushrooms he grows on a farm in Moss Landing just north of Monterey, wasn't sure how many customers come to his busy stall. “I have no idea. The only estimate I can go by are the bags. We use somewhere between 500 to 1,000 bags, but not every customer uses one bag,” Garrone said he had been working at the market for “well over 20 years.”

In addition to the usual white buttons and crimini, Garrone always carries oyster mushrooms, shitake and portabellas plus half a dozen other varieties, and, when in season, wild chanterelles, morels and, occasionally, even white and black truffles.

The most booths ever were 98, said Adams. “That was around 1987. But there was a lot of repetition. We had four fish trucks selling the same thing. I found that when the market is packed like that, it looks good, but people aren't making the money.



*A colorful sign proclaims the silver anniversary.*

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

# GOOD NEWS for...

**S.F. MHA** The Mental Health Association of San Francisco was the only West Coast organization to take home an award last month from the National Mental Health Association's annual meeting in Washington, D.C. Recognized for its annual standing-room-only conference on hoarding and cluttering, the S.F. association received the Innovation in Programming award, one of six presented at the June meeting. "These honorees are models of outspoken advocacy that break down stigma and disparities to cultural, economic and social barriers to mental health care one project, article and interview at a time," David Shern, the national association president and CEO, said in a press release. "Award winners are husbands, wives, sons, daughters, authors and tireless volunteers — and all of them strive to raise awareness and enact real change throughout the mental health movement." Besides the hoarding and cluttering conference — this year's will be Oct. 26 — S.F. Mental Health Association sponsors a semi-monthly Hoarding and Cluttering Peer-Support Group that helps consumers recognize if they have a compulsive hoarding disorder and provides training and resources to manage clutter. <http://www.mha-sf.org/index.html>. The group meets 6-7 p.m., the second Mon. and fourth Wed. of the month. Call for location, 421-2926.

**SOMA AND TL** Kids who got free lunches during the school year will continue to get them during the summer — and 20% more lunches will be served over last year. The program — available Mon.-Fri., June 26-Aug. 18 — at 140 locations citywide, will provide 6,000 lunches, including fresh fruit from local produce vendors. Anyone under 18 is eligible and you don't have to be enrolled in any program. The Department of Agriculture pays for it and the school district prepares and delivers the food. The San Francisco Food Bank says 34,000 kids are eligible for the meals during the school year and 25,000 partake. Marguerite Nowak, the food bank education manager, says, "Increasing to 6,000 is much needed, yet it's modest considering the scope of the need." Lunch sites also encourage reading after lunch, library visits, walks and line dancing to promote a combination of healthy food, education and fitness. The central city sites are: Tenderloin Children's Playground, 570 Ellis, noon-1 p.m.; Tenderloin Boys' and Girls' Club, 115 Jones, 1-1:30 p.m.; Shih Yu Lang Central YMCA, 220 Golden Gate, 1-2 p.m.; Salvation Army TL unit, 1 Grove, noon-12:45 p.m.; Indochinese Housing Development, 735 Eddy, 12:30-1:30 p.m.; and the Gene Friend SoMa Rec Center, 270 Sixth St.

**ART AND SAFETY LOVERS** June 24 was the kickoff for a mural on the Tehama Street face of the Cingular Wireless building, 951 Howard. Called "Slow Down: Children at Play," the mural will feature the faces of neighborhood kids, taken from photographs, intertwined with images of the street's trees and buildings. Cingular is funding the project, the Tehama Street Neighborhood Association is coordinating, and it is being designed and supervised by Tehama St. resident and artist Sharon Anderson. Neighbors are welcome to come help paint from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Sundays, July 16, 23 and 30. Everyone's invited to the block party and unveiling of the mural in September, date and time to be announced. Information: <http://geocities.com/stehana/Tehama/Mural.html>.

If you have some good news, send it to [marjorie@studycenter.org](mailto:marjorie@studycenter.org) or [tom@studycenter.org](mailto:tom@studycenter.org).

# Bracing for the Big One

*Disaster trainings to be offered at Glide*

BY TOM CARTER

**T**WO months after the big earthquake centennial fuss, Erica Arteseros was trying to build a fire under the 18 people at the June Tenderloin Futures Collaborative meeting. The S.F. Fire Department lieutenant was on a disaster preparedness mission. People think disasters don't happen to them or if something does happen, the government will take care of things, she said. Apathy is her constant foe.

Her brow knitted in concentration, Arteseros delivered data like darts.

"Less than 10% of San Francisco residents are prepared (for disaster)," she said.

"There are 1.5 million people in San Francisco every day. And in a disaster, 911 would be overwhelmed by the response.

"In the 1989 earthquake, the Marina got the priority and the Sunset and Tenderloin waited. As they would again."

Arteseros looked around the room.

"How many people have ever used a fire extinguisher?"

Two hands went up, a showing consistent with the paltry preparedness figure. A few looked sheepish, as if it was a shame fire hadn't threatened them when an extinguisher was handy.

This was all to the good. Arteseros wanted people to feel any sort of guilt and sign up in droves for the Neighborhood Emergency Response Team's course at Glide, which she was touting.

"I am here to give you skills," Arteseros said.

Indeed, the SFFD's NERT program trains people on how to save lives and protect property, starting at home, and to help their neighbors. The 20-hour training is free. Six class sessions, one a week, deal with preparedness, utilities shutoffs, disaster medicine, search and rescue, team organizing, even terrorism awareness.

Since 1990, NERT has trained 15,000 people as key responders, Arteseros said.

Although earthquakes have done the major damage, there's now an emphasis on terrorism. It is covered in the fifth session along with procuring equipment to distribute. For equipment or materials that are commandeered for emergency use, Arteseros says, the law now allows owners to be reimbursed for what they give up.

An emergency kit and "determining who" shares it is key to survival, Arteseros said. "My 7-year-old niece is helping pack the kit," she said. "You need to involve people."

Will there be shelters in a disaster? someone asked.

"Don't count on it," she said. Some shelters have been predetermined, other possibilities are being studied, but she would not reveal specific locations.

"Keep a (battery-run) AM-FM radio handy," she advised.

Neighborhood activist John Nulty asked if Twin Peaks would be the only safe place in the event of a tsunami.

Arteseros didn't give a direct answer.

Do we have an early warning system for tsunamis? someone asked.

"Not my area of expertise," she said.

"We'll all meet on Potrero Hill," someone piped up, to laughter.

Chaplain Earl Rogers of the Rescue Mission asked how employers should respond.

Macy's, the Federal Reserve Bank and The Gap are have disaster plans and supplies, she said. Charles Schwab has "food and water on every floor."

What about stored water and what if it doesn't get replaced every six months?

"In a disaster, I'd drink it," she said. "But change it anyway." In the worst of times, she added, drink toilet tank water, adding 2-3 drops of bleach per gallon to purify it.

The Rev. Glenda Hope, Collaborative moderator, said she didn't think she could do all six NERT sessions a few years ago but was so inspired after the first one that she sailed through all the rest. "I felt so empowered," she said. "I'll be 70 in two weeks and weigh 110 pounds and if I can do it, anybody can. I really encourage people to do it."

The Tenderloin NERT training will be in Glide's Freedom Hall, on Tuesdays, 6-9 p.m., July 25-Aug. 29, according to the NERT office. Call (415) 970-2022 for information.

The day after Arteseros' visit, a 4.7-magnitude earthquake jolted Gilroy and Morgan Hill, causing no damage but was felt in Marin County. The U.S. Geological Survey puts the odds of a major quake hitting the Bay

Area by 2036 at 67% and figures it will take up to five days for help to arrive.

## COMMUNITY JUSTICE VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Representatives of the Community Courts in the Tenderloin and SoMa made a plea for more volunteers to help mete out justice in their own neighborhoods.

Community Courts were started in 1998 by the district attorney's office and other government bodies in response to the rising number of misdemeanors clogging the court system. Misdemeanor cases didn't allow the victim to participate in holding the offender responsible, but the victim can in the city's 12 Community Courts.

These alternative courts give residents a say in determining what discipline fits the crime: fine, community service, program or referral.

"A cop is there and somebody from the DA's office, and a volunteer explains the process," said Mark Ellinger, a photographer who has served on the SoMa and TL courts since 2001.

Volunteers get a four-hour training, go on an availability list and rotate into service, three or four on a panel.

"We ask questions of the offender and discuss what the solution might be," Ellinger said. "We try to get the offender to assume some responsibility. There are a lot of substance abuse, homeless and mental health issues.

"It's just one day a month and it's up to 2½ hours at the most. It's really worth it. You work with the DA's office and police and I've always been real skeptical of them. But they really engage with us."

Lisa Block, director of Safety Network and the court's liaison for SoMa and TL, said she has

➤ CONTINUED ON PAGE 7



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# Daly's \$317,000 puts Bindlestiff back in business

*Supe's clout ensures full buildout for struggling SoMa theater*

BY TOM CARTER

**B**INDESTIFF Theater got \$317,000 closer toward realizing its dream of occupying the theater shell at the Plaza Apartments, an empty 4,409-square-foot space that awaits buildout for the peripatetic performance company.

The San Francisco Redevelopment Agency Commission on June 20 voted to add that amount for the buildout budget of the theater at 185 Sixth St.

The nation's only Pilipino performing arts theater occupied the space in the building before Redevelopment bought the Plaza Hotel in 2000 and renovated it. Under an agreement, Bindlestiff, which moved to a location around the corner, was supposed to come up with \$500,000 for tenant improvements.

At the June meeting, Bindlestiff board member Alex Torres said the group was very close to the goal. Funds included \$100,000 from the Mayor's Office of Economic Development that came in May, \$60,000 from the Mayor's Office for Community Development, donations, leftover money from its original contract and matching funds.

By the board's calculation, Torres said, \$317,000 was needed to complete the buildout.

Supervisor Chris Daly urged the commission in a letter to fund the buildout. "Over the last few years, I have reiterated my position that the Redevelopment Agency should, as promised, ensure the rebuild of Bindlestiff Theater," he wrote. "While the new space promises to be a



PHOTO BY LENNY LIMJOCO

**Alex Torres, Bindlestiff board member:** "We have ... a groundswell of support now."

great improvement from the small black box theatre that was Bindlestiff before the renovation of the Plaza, the Agency should make good on your promise not to displace Bindlestiff despite the organizational limitations of this small grassroots organization."

Daly is also chairman of the supes' Budget and Finance Committee.

Redevelopment project manager Mike

Grisso had suggested \$250,000 but the commission went with the \$317,000 figure. If the Board of Supervisors approves the budget with the additional money this month, the next step is for Bindlestiff and Grisso to work out a lease agreement.

"We have a certain momentum, a groundswell of support now," Torres said in an interview. "If we don't do it now, who knows what will happen." ■

## Move to halt \$500,000 SoMa SROs

▶ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

months of pay stubs to prove it, the asking rent was \$700.

Elberling now serves on the Western SoMa Citizens Planning Task Force, which advises City Planning on a 20-block area that takes in 77 Bluxome and four other sites that are on the books to become privately developed SROs.

"The developers are happily exploiting the loophole," said task force Chair Jim Meko. He sees this as a parallel to the live-work experiment from the same era. It was supposed to be for poor artists working where they lived but the spaces got "sold as \$1 million condominiums," he said. And minicondos, he said, will be snapped up by "yuppies from Singapore."

Because of whom they have served historically, SROs get breaks on planning restrictions. The definition of an SRO is 350 square feet maximum with no density limit for units. They can go to 400 square feet if they have a bathroom and kitchen. About a third of what other residential open space requires is required for SROs, and only one parking place for 20 units instead of the usual one-for-one. There is no exposure requirement for SRO units, either, such as facing an alley, street, yard or courtyard.

"We will consider interim controls in our July meeting to shut it (the trend) down," Meko says. "I'm hoping the Planning Commission will do this. After all, it's their code that's being exploited by this loophole."

Market-rate SROs fly in the face of affordable-housing advocates who want low-income people to find housing.

But developers see little condos as an ownership opportunity allowing the young middle class to stay in the city and "get a piece of the rock," as Noe Valley real estate agent Raul Arriaza says. He is part-owner of 149 Dore St., now a vacant lot, where eight SRO units are planned.

"If it's built, it can be a starter place, affordable ownership, some equity," Arriaza says. "Plus it adds to the tax base of the city. I see it as a win-win situation. I don't know why people would be against it. It brings more housing that's needed."

A living room, bedroom, kitchen and bathroom all in one space can be "a great beginning." But he said he had no idea what a condo that size would fetch in the marketplace.

A subcommittee of Meko's task force estimated they would go for \$400,000-\$500,000.

Arriaza's costly four-year process to get the project this far along is stymied now by the city and he says he won't set prices "until we know what we can do."

What's holding up these and dozens of other projects is an unofficial moratorium on condo building referred to as "2660." In March, the Board of Supervisors reversed a Planning Commission decision that had exempted a condo project at 2660 Harrison St. from an environmental impact report. The supes told the developers to do the impact study themselves and determine what effect the project would have on blue-collar jobs and affordable housing in the area.

The Planning Department declared the ruling would apply to more than 50 similar projects. So now, developers can wait in line for the department to do the impact study — some say it will take nearly a year — or they can do the expensive review themselves.

Attorney Sue Hestor led the successful appeal of 2660 before the board, saying the city didn't know the impact of this and other changes in the eastern neighborhoods, according to an April 12 Examiner story on the construction halt. The city is overbuilt with market-rate housing and lagging on affordable housing, Hestor said. If the limited available land is gobbled up by private developers, especially in industrial zones,

she warned, nothing will be left.

Once land goes to residential it never gets turned back, Meko points out. He worries that service-light-industry areas south of Harrison are being lost and the mixed character of the greater neighborhood sacrificed. Indeed, a strip of land off a cul de sac at 8 McLea Court in the task force's area is zoned SLI, and it is to become a 40-foot building with 30 market-rate SRO units.

In the suspended meantime, the Planning Department is working up a study to be ready in the fall on what effect new market-rate housing has on affordable housing. Amendments to the Planning Code are on several supervisors' desks awaiting the result.

The Breidinger brothers' Bluxome Street condos have avoided the current uncertainty among developers. For now, they intend to rent units from \$800 to \$1,200 monthly, a boost from the \$750-\$1,000 Charles Breidinger quoted to the Chronicle in March 2005. Ten of Bluxome's 102 units will, by inclusionary law, be priced below market rate.

Breidinger told the Chronicle's Charlie Goodyear there was "tremendous demand for smaller units by single people" who were priced out of buying a \$500,000-\$600,000 condo.

At the time, Supervisor Tom Ammiano tried to push affordability down even further. He proposed an ordinance limiting SRO rentals to people making less than \$39,000 a year, but the Planning Commission didn't support the idea and it didn't fly. Now Breidinger is wavering on his four-story project at 1140 Howard with the 350-square-foot larger units, which City Planning whittled down from five stories.

"I'm not sure we would rent them, or if we'll be able to proceed," he says. "It's on hold like a lot of projects. The area is being rezoned, the inclusionary may jump to 20% and more fees may be added, plus interest rates are rising as are building costs. We'll have to wait to see how it shakes out." ■

# Central city cornucopia celebrates its 25th



▶ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

We slowly had to hone it down. I think everyone is making money now.”

It costs “over \$100,000 to operate the market,” said Adams. “We have a million-dollar coverage for this van. We have a million-dollar coverage for my office, a million-dollar coverage for the plaza, \$700 a month for our garbage. It costs money to run a market.”

Adams said the market sells “tons” of fresh produce. “There are thousands of people who walk through on Wednesdays. Right now we’re getting into fresh corn — asparagus just finished, cherries are through. We have apricots, peaches, nectarines, plums, oranges all year, and broccoli. There’s something all year. That’s why this market can hold its own in the

winter.

“The farmers pay \$25 for a booth in the winter,” she said, “and a whopping \$26 in the summer. They pay that each time they come.”

To qualify for a booth, “it must be your own grown product,” Adams said. “You have to have all of your paperwork, your certificates with you. And then, if it’s something different and I don’t have it, I’ll give you a shot.”

The farmers set the prices, she added.

According to Adams, the farmers come from all over — Stockton, Sacramento ... “South City is my closest and my furthest is Death Valley.

The best thing about working at the market for the past 25 years is the “idea of getting fresh quality food to the public,” Adams said.

“Chris has been a driving force in cleaning up this area,” Gary Alfieri of Alfieri Farms said.

“In the last six years it’s been quite nice.”

“I feel bad for the farmers when people come and steal from them,” Adams said. “I hate to say it, but it’s the people who don’t have jobs. I’m not going to call them homeless because a lot are not homeless.”

“We’re a year-round grower,” said Alfieri, who offered the reporter a sample of delicious almond brittle. His farm in Modesto specializes in nuts and fruits. “Winters are pretty slow,” he said. “Some days we get 30 to 40 people.”

“Now, when we have table grapes it can go up to 100 people,” he said.

About nine farmers’ markets operate in San Francisco, and Heart of the City is not affiliated with any other farmers’ market, Adams said.

“We did that purposely. We can have our own rules and we can open and close when

we want. But we do have rules from City Hall and Sacramento.”

“We’ve been coming here for 10 years,” said Anthony Elm, a farmer from Fresno. “We grow mainly a lot of ethnic products — limes, Filipino oranges, different kinds of basil for Indian people, and a lot of different hot peppers — we kind of specialize in those.”

Richard Kombrowski has shopped at the market since 1983. “I buy fruits and vegetables; sometimes flowers. I like the atmosphere,” he said. “The produce is very good. It seems to be fresher than what you get in the supermarkets. And in the winter there are tremendous bargains.”

The Heart of the City Farmers’ Market is open 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Wednesdays and Sundays. ■



PHOTOS BY LENNY LIMJOCO

Thousands of people who shop on Wednesdays and Sundays may run across Arthur Escoto. The freelance food sculptor is invited by vendors to turn produce into works of art such as these two floral watermelons.

## Saturday night and it was no party at the 7-Eleven

### Fact or fiction: The Extra checks out a TL resident’s complaint

BY TOM CARTER

IT’S an often heard story in the Tenderloin, a street person is shamefully mistreated, blows the whistle, but gets no satisfaction. Some stories are true, some not, and truth always seems to change according to who’s telling it.

But Sidnie Smart has a witness, and 7-Eleven staff and a corporate investigator confirmed the incident, though they told it somewhat differently.

The police filed a report that doubted Smart’s story of brutality; however, she cited seven errors in the Southern Station report, including the misspelling of her name.

Something happened to Sidnie Smart on June 10, her 55th birthday, around 8:20 p.m. It was a Saturday and she wanted to celebrate. But she didn’t have any money. It was the weekend and the credit union, where she has \$100, was closed, and her poll-worker check hadn’t arrived. She got the bright idea of robbing her piggy bank; it had 107 pennies.

Michael Wood, her friend who lives on the same third floor of the Vincent Hotel, was broke, too.

In the evening, they decided to take the 107 President Lincolns for a walk. It had been a hot day and Smart’s strawberry hair, swept

up on her head, looked like a wilted bouquet. On Market Street, they dropped in at the 7-Eleven between Fifth and Sixth streets. Smart went to the long counter near the door. She chose a little plastic-wrapped sugar cookie and when her turn came lined up 10 stacks of pennies, 10 each. This triggered an abusive and humiliating exchange with the clerk that Smart recalls vividly.

“We don’t take pennies,” the clerk said.

“What about for making change?” Smart asked.

Nope, he said.

A customer, a man in a suit, put down a dollar for her. She thanked him. The clerk took the dollar.

No change? she asked. The clerk responded by pushing the stacks of her pennies off the counter. They clattered on the floor.

“Get down there where you belong and pick them up,” he said.

She bent down and started to pick them up. “I’ll bet in Bangladesh we’d both be down here,” she said, incensing the clerk. He hustled around the counter after her. She yelled, “I want to see the manager, and, if you hit me it’s assault!”

She saw another employee, older than the clerk, come walking out of a back room toward them, but he stopped to observe. Smart said by this time she was retreating, getting

near the front door. So was Wood.

“I’m not going to hit you,” Smart quoted the clerk, “someone else is.” He pulled a \$5 bill from his wallet and stepped outside to where some skinheads and a black man were loitering. “Want to make \$5?” Smart heard him ask a stocky, 5-foot-9 black man. “Then beat her ass.”

The black man, half-drunk and with “bloated cheeks,” she said, took the money, then grabbed Smart who was in the doorway in a headlock. He pulled her east down Market Street, she said. “I was screaming my head off.”

Wood, 35, thin, blond hair and large eyes, couldn’t believe what he was seeing, he said.

It was 10 days since the incident and Wood was sitting with Smart at a back table in a donut shop near the Vincent Hotel.

Smart and Wood told their story to The Extra. Smart sometimes sobbing as she digressed into her checkered past of alcohol and heroin addiction, 35 years of prostitution, rape, abuse, “being thrown from cars like garbage,” she said. Her sleeveless top revealed a large floral tattoo on her left shoulder meant to cover scars from surgical digs and skin grafts necessitated by bad smack. But she would gather herself and continue. Her mind was quick, her vocabulary glib and versatile, her pale blue eyes warm and understanding.

“I was screaming and went limp, trying to wiggle out of his grip,” Smart said. “And I did, and there was a phone right there and I got the receiver and was calling 911 and he grabbed it out of my hand and started beating me in the face with it. But then the skinheads yelled, ‘She’s calling the cops,’ and they ran off and the black man did, too.”

Smart said the man had dragged her past Ultra Image and the Social Security office to in front of the abandoned Designer Labels for Less store, a painful 100-foot trip.

She said she talked frantically to a woman at 911 who said the call would go on a priority list. But no cops came. Wood, unable to find help, had then returned to Smart’s side. He said he wiped the blood from her split lip with paper napkins. Smart said next she called the Tenderloin Task Force. An officer there told her the south side of Market was not their territory but call Southern Station, she said.

“I wasn’t going to stand there with that man still loose in the area,” she said. “I was so sick and tired, not having any money, not having help ... the Tenderloin ... my birthday.” She started to sob. “What’s going on in this country?” Her misty eyes were pleading. “People are so hateful and violent. It hurts my heart.” She wiped tears away with napkins Wood handed her.

A week later at the 7-Eleven, clerk Jessie Singh is minding the cash register. Customers come and go, grabbing a drink, packaged food or sweets off the shelves, or asking for cigarettes at the register and paying, all in less than two minutes. Some have lots of change. One man in a wheelchair had 60 nickels. People sometimes bunch up at the register. Still, at 9:30 a.m. the rest of the store is empty. Between occasional lulls, on average, Singh probably served two customers a minute.

His store manager, Baljit (Becky) Kaur, stands by his side. “Yes, sir,” he says to a customer leaving. “Miss, Miss,” he calls after a woman heading for the door after paying. “You forgot this.” She came back to pick up a soft drink.

Singh recalls that a woman came in June 10, about 9 p.m. and put “50 or 60 pennies” on the counter and said she wanted a cookie. The store was busy, Singh said, and there was a long line. “I say to her, ‘I don’t have time to count them,’” he said, growing agitated at the memory. “Then a man — he works at Crazy Horse (a skin club across the street) — gave her a dollar because he was on his break and in a hurry.”

The woman wanted the few cents change but Singh said he told her that she had given him nothing — it was the man’s change.



Sidnie Smart shows a nasty bruise she says she received from a beating on Market Street.

The 7-Eleven owner, Parminder Dhirgra, was in the back room on the computer, Kaur said, and they saw a big line at the cash register on the 15-inch monitor and heard the conversation. Dhirgra went out to the front to

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

# Birthday bash at Market Street 7-Eleven

► CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

check on things, Singh said. Dhingra told him to give the pennies back to the woman. He did, he said. She took them and left.

"She talk shit," Singh said. He couldn't recall the words. He denied coming around the counter, pulling out \$5 and paying someone to beat her.

"I am working," he said. "There's a big line. I can't leave the cash register. And I don't know anybody out there (outside)." Later that afternoon he ran around the counter to open the door for a regular customer in a wheelchair.

Smart says she was so beat up and exhausted that she didn't call Southern Station until Monday. She called from the same Market Street pay phone, she said,

and police arrived in a few minutes to take her statement. The officers went inside the 7-Eleven, but Kaur, the manager, and Singh, the clerk, weren't there. A clerk called Kaur and the police told her not to erase the security videotape. Kaur said she would be there after 4 p.m. But the police didn't come back, she said.

Smart got a copy of the police report. In it, Officer Aaron Ballonado said Smart had "insisted" on making a police report. He concluded: "I do not believe the event that occurred on June 10, 2006 is entirely accurate. Based upon our examination of Smarts eye area, there were no signs of laceration, bruising or redness which would corroborate Smarts information."

The report was sloppy, Smart said. Aside from faulty punctuation, she counted seven errors. The incident time was 40 minutes ear-

lier than stated, and her name, Sidnie Grace Smart, was misspelled Sidney Grae Smart. Her phone number and address were wrong, too. She said the report didn't mention the clerk's involvement in the alleged \$5 hit, either. But clearly it did. "Jessie told the unknown black male 'to beat her up,'" the report said.

That Monday she said she also called 7-Eleven customer service to complain. Through a circuitous routing, during which she took copious notes, she ended up leaving information for Jack Dyal, an investigator, she said.

A couple of days later, she said Dyal called her and said the owner, Darminder Dhingra, had showed him the Sunday tape — 1:30 a.m. to 3:30 a.m. — and he saw nothing alarming.

The incident occurred on a Saturday about 8:20 p.m. and the 911 call was at 8:28 p.m. Why Dhingra, who wasn't there that night, showed him a tape of hours after the incident Dyal didn't know, Smart said Dyal told her.

Dyal is a field inspector who visits 7-Eleven store No. 33393 every Wednesday afternoon to check supplies and equipment, Kaur said, and confirmed that Dhingra showed him the film.

Reached by phone in the East Bay, Dhingra said he wasn't supposed to talk to the media. He said to call 7-Eleven headquarters and gave an 800 number. Asked about the tape that Jack Dyal saw, he repeated, "Call that number."

Dyal did not return phone calls.

The 7-Eleven store, traced by its phone number (415-618-0207), has no complaint record with the San Francisco Better Business Bureau.

Smart planned to see Oakland lawyer, Andrew Wolff. He scheduled her a late afternoon appointment on Friday, July 7. She took BART over but said she walked the wrong way out of the station, missed the appointment and had to reschedule for July 11. She showed up with her paperwork and notes, plus the photos she said she took of herself in the mirror after the attack. They show nothing definitive on her face but do show a bad bruise on the inside of her right upper arm. "He must have really grabbed me hard there," Smart said. Wolff, she said, interested in the case ■



PHOTO BY LENNY LIMJOCO

**7-Eleven No. 33393** has an unblemished record with the Better Business Bureau, but one Tenderloin resident had an ugly run-in with a clerk on her 55th birthday.

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**Claudia Zongoro** is transferring as a Business major to San Diego State University.



**Patrick Ifesinachi Emelife**, majoring in Biochemistry, is transferring to Stanford University in Palo Alto.

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**PATRICIA WALKUP  
FREDERICK HOBSON  
JAMES LEO DUNN  
JIM BERK  
Activists**

District 6 lost four of its neighborhood activists recently: Patricia Walkup who spearheaded the Octavia Boulevard project, former supervisorial candidates from the Tenderloin, Frederick Hobson and the creative-dreamer James Leo Dunn, and SoMa senior Jim Berk.

Ms. Walkup, a leader in the Hayes Valley Neighborhood Association, worked doggedly for years to create the tree-lined, six-lane Octavia Boulevard and park after the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake crippled the Central Freeway. She died June 6 after a long battle with diabetes and related complications that prevented her working for 15 years, the Chronicle reported. She was 59.

The Board of Supervisors passed a resolution in June urging the Rec and Park Department to name the Hayes Green park for her.

Ms. Walkup came to San Francisco 30 years ago from Texas where she had been a school teacher. In Hayes Valley she advocated for sustainable transportation and more affordable housing and open space. With architect Robin Levitt, she lobbied to get the Central Freeway torn down and the Octavia project built. They organized campaigns for ballot measures in 1997, 1998 and 1999.

Her friends described her as "tireless" and "selfless." In recent months, Ms. Walkup pushed for more retail and indoor recreation in redeveloping a Hayes Valley UC Berkeley Extension campus.

In resolutions on June 6, the Board of Supervisors recognized the contributions of Ms. Walkup and Supervisor Chris Daly commemorated Mr. Hobson and Mr. Dunn. All three had been members of Alliance for a Better District Six at some point.

One of the last activities of Mr. Hobson and Mr. Dunn was serving on a committee to save tenants from Section 8 evictions from the apartment building where both lived at Turk and Hyde. No tenants were evicted.

Mr. Dunn, a familiar sight in the Tenderloin with his long white beard, three-piece suits, cowboy boots and fedora, died of a stomach aneurysm on May 11. He was 61.

Most of his working life, he was a cabbie. In the days when he wore a handlebar mustache, other drivers called him Wyatt, a reference to western hero Wyatt Earp. But Mr. Dunn listed his occupation on his candidate form for supervisor as an inventor.

At the time of his death, he was an announced candidate for the board for the third time. Although he finished far down in candidate fields in 2000 and 2002 that were led by Daly, he was best known for a wild plank in his 2000 platform. It called for a tunnel to be built under Nob Hill along Taylor Street by homeless workers. The tunnel would not only provide jobs and enhance traffic flow but it would house the homeless in the tunnel's catacomb walls. Mr. Dunn got 197 votes.

Two years later, he proposed that gigantic glass tetrahedrons be built on pylons above the city for the homeless. But this was less popular. He got 149 votes, last place among nine candidates.

Mr. Dunn was also active in the North of Market Planning Coalition, Central City Democrats and Tenant Associations Coalition.

Community and political activist Frederick Hobson took on issues as close to home as the affordability of his apartment building and as large as LGBT rights and AIDS public policy. Mr. Hobson died May 15. He was 56.

His most recent efforts involved working with city agencies and officials to offset Section 8 subsidy cuts, as they affected the

low-income, seniors and disabled people who lived in his building.

Mr. Hobson, who came to San Francisco in 1973, served on many boards and commissions — San Francisco Tomorrow, the Citywide Drug Abuse Advisory Board, the Animal Care and Control Commission, the Rent Stabilization and Arbitration Board, the San Francisco Health Authority. He was a 14-year resident of the Tenderloin.

An animal lover and advocate, he left behind cats Drucilla and Wilse, nightingales Florence and Beau, and lorikeet Aloysius.

Jim Berk's most recent appointment was by the Board of Supervisors to the Western SoMa Citizens Task Force last fall. The long-time resident of the Silvercrest Residence at 133 Shipley St. was a SoMa activist although he once served on the executive committee of Alliance for a Better District 6.

With long gray beard and ponytail, the retired electrical engineer looked like father time. He co-founded Safe on Sixth, was its Clean Team coordinator, and he helped develop a plan for SoMa earthquake and disaster relief. He was a member of the Yerba Buena Neighborhood Council and had been on the South of Market Project Area Committee.

As an engineer, he had worked on the UC Berkeley's radio telescope and helped build the Stanford Linear Accelerator. He became president of the Palo Alto area's Service Employees International Union local after going to bat for employees who Stanford terminated a day before they gained permanent employee status, his son Jason Berk said. Mr. Berk was handy away from the job, too. He built a sailboat in the 1960s, the son said.

Mr. Berk knew he didn't have much time to live after his annual doctor's visit in late 2005, his son said. He died of heart disease in January, at age 79. A memorial was held in East Palo Alto for him in March. He is survived by his former wife, Glenda Jones, and two daughters and two sons.

— TOM CARTER  
Michael Nulty collaborated  
in the preparation of this report.

**RICK NELSON  
Dreamer**

Rick Nelson, a devout Catholic who said his rosary, loved his cat and was proud of the three-room, Polk Street apartment that he died in on May 20. He was 44, the medical examiner's office reported.

"He was very Catholic," said his friend Cecil Baker. "We watched Sunday service on TV together. We liked the prayer time."

A memorial, attended by four people was held June 22 at the Ambassador Hotel where he lived.

"He was real happy to get an apartment," the Ambassador social worker said at his memorial.

"The manager found him," Baker said. "He was HIV-positive, but died from emphysema. He couldn't quit drugs and he couldn't quit smoking."

Mr. Nelson, who worked in an adult bookstore on Market Street for \$5 an hour, according to Baker, was from St. Louis, and a longtime resident of the hotel, living there for 16 years before finally moving into an apartment six months prior to his death.

"Karma, his cat, died in January, a month or two after they moved into the place," Baker said. "Karma would insist on running out into the hallway with Rick chasing behind him — the cat just out of his reach. It always looked like she was trying to get him to exercise."



Jim Berk

"I remember Rick quite well," said the Rev. Glenda Hope, who conducted his memorial. She recounted a story that a previous minister at the hotel had told her about him. "Rick was coming down the stairs very regally — like a model — clad only in his skivvies and a long feather boa. He said (to the minister): 'I had a dream that your church became a mighty temple.'"

"He was very giving," Baker reflected, "and never let go of his dreams. If people were in trouble, he'd allow them to stay in his room — sometimes longer than he wanted them to."

Asked what Mr. Baker dreamed about, Baker said, "To outlive AIDS."

— JOHN GOINS

**LESTER TATE  
Collector**

Lester Tate was known as a generous figure around the Tenderloin, easily recognized by the winged eagle hat he always wore, dark shades, the long necklaces and his jackets — embellished with various charms, amulets, skull and crossbones patches and playing cards. Some said he looked like a voodoo priest.

His memorial service on June 14 at the West Hotel was celebrated by a half dozen of his friends who revealed that Mr. Tate was a collector extraordinaire.

"He collected everything, you name it," said West social worker Tomiquia Moss.

A porcelain rabbit holding a bowl, outdoor chairs, jewelry and stash boxes were just a few of the items that found their way into his collection. And suitcases. "He loved to collect suitcases," said one of his friends at the service. "He was a bit of a loner. Super-generous. A recycler," who mined trash cans and dumpsters in the neighborhood.

Mr. Tate restored and sold or gave away the goods he accumulated in his small room on the fifth floor. He was found there June 1, several days after he succumbed to a liver condition, his friends said. Although they thought he was in his late 50s or early 60s, Mr. Tate was just 44, records show.

Mr. Tate was from the Modesto area and a resident of the once-disreputable West Hotel at 141 Eddy St., a dilapidated, 99-year-old building that the Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corp. bought in 2003. After a two-year renovation, it was reopened and Mr. Tate moved back in.

"He was a kind person," said one mourner. "If you needed something, he'd give it to you. He wasn't one of the bad guys, that's for sure."

— TOM CARTER AND JOHN GOINS



**Seeking volunteers  
for Community Courts**

► CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

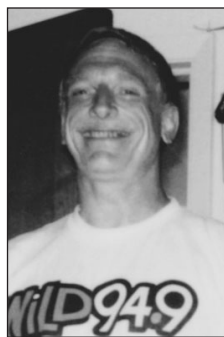
seen some offenders "really get it," realizing they've violated the community and need to make up for it.

For the 12 Community Courts in the city, there are 70 volunteer jurists, which is about right, according to the California Community Dispute Service that trains volunteers.

Volunteers handle 12-20 cases a session and receive no stipend, Ellinger said. The TL court meets the fourth Monday of the month at 111 Jones St. at 10 a.m.; SoMa court meets at The Rose at Sixth and Minna, Tuesdays at 10 a.m. The courts handle misdemeanors only.

"What about going to the bathroom on the street?" activist Bruce Windrem asked.

"Those cases go to traffic court," Ellinger said, "We were trying to get them routed through Community Courts, but it hasn't started yet. When it does, for public urination and defecation the Homeless Outreach Team would escort them to (community) court." ■



# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

## SPECIAL EVENTS

**People in Plazas, Music in Boeddeker Park**, every Tue. at noon, through Sept. July 18, Larry Walker Band (pop); July 25, Colin Williams (New Orleans jazz); Aug. 1, Sabrocito (Latin); Aug. 8, Lady Bo (R & B); Aug. 15, Just Cream (rock).

**SomARTS Cultural Center**, 934 Brannan. Encuentros Encounters: Explorations of Identity, through July 28, part of the Chicano Visions: Artists on the Verge and Chicano Now, the Ceech Marin Collection Exhibit at the De Young Museum; and Printmakers Today, California Society of Printmakers' 93rd annual membership exhibition, through July 29.

## COMMUNITY: REGULAR SCHEDULE

### HOUSING

**Supportive Housing Network**, 4th Thursday of the month, 3-5 p.m., location TBA. Contact: Alecia Hopper, 421-2926 x302.

**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

**CMHS Consumer Council**, 3rd Monday of the month, 5:30-7:30, CMHS, 1380 Howard, Rm. 537. Contact: 255-3428. Advisory group of consumers from self-help organizations and other mental health consumer advocates. Open to the public.

**Health & Wellness Action Advocates**, 1st Thursday of the month, 1-3 p.m., Mental Health Association, 870 Market, Suite 928. Contact: 421-2926 x306.

**Healthcare Action Team**, 2nd Wednesday of the month, Quaker Center, 65 Ninth St., noon-1:30. Focus on increasing supportive home and community-based services, expanded eligibility for homecare and improved discharge planning. Light lunch served. Contact: Aaron Wagner, 703-0188 x304.

**Hoarders and Clutterers Support Group**, 2nd Monday and 4th Wednesday of each month, 6-7 p.m. 870 Market, Suite 928. Contact: 421-2926 x306.

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

**National Alliance for the Mentally III-S.F.**, 3rd Wednesday of

the month, 6:30-8:30 p.m., Family Service Agency, 1010 Gough, 5th Fl. Contact 905-6264. Family member group, open to consumers and the public.

### SAFETY

**Crime and Safety Committee**, meets bimonthly on the Wednesday after the first Monday, SOMPAC, 1035 Folsom, 6 p.m. Information: 487-2166 or www.sompac.com.

**North of Market NERT**, bimonthly meeting. Contact Lt. Erica Arteseros, S.F. Fire Department, 970-2022. Disaster preparedness training by the Fire Department.

**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 Lisa Block, 538-8100 ext. 202 Lblock@iisf.org.

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

### NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT

**Alliance for a Better District 6**, 2nd Tuesday of the month, 6 p.m., 301 Eddy. Contact Michael Nulty, 820-1560 or sf\_district6@yahoo.com. Districtwide association, civic education.

**Boeddeker Park cleanup**, 3rd Saturday of the month, 9-noon, organized by the Friends of Boeddeker Park. To RSVP to work or for information, contact Betty Traynor at the Neighborhood Parks Council, 621-3260.

**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.

**Community Leadership Alliance**, a chartered democratic organization. Quarterly informational forums with guest presenters and speakers, sharing news of upcoming events, proposals, resources. Meetings are first Thursday in Jan, April, July, Oct. Location information: David Villa-Lobos, admin@CommunityLeadershipAlliance.net

**Friends of Boeddeker Park**, 2nd Thursday of the month, 3:30 p.m., Boeddeker Rec Center, 240 Eddy. Plan park events, activities and improvements. Contact: 552-4866.

**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: 554-9532

**Mid-Market Project Area Committee**, 2nd Wednesday of the month, 5:30 p.m., Ramada Hotel, 1231 Market. Contact Carolyn Diamond, 362-2500. Market Street redevelopment on Fifth to Tenth street.

**North of Market Planning Coalition**, 3rd Wednesday of the month, 6 p.m., 301 Eddy. Contact: 820-1412. TL 2000, neighborhood planning.

**North of Market/Tenderloin Community Benefit District**, 1st Thursday of the month, noon, 111 Jones conference room. Interim board meeting. Contact Elaine Zemora, district manager, 440-7570.

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

**South of Market Project Area Committee**, 3rd Monday of the month, 6 p.m., 1035 Folsom, between 6th & 7th. Contact: SOMPAC office, 487-2166.

**Tenderloin Futures Collaborative**, 2nd Wednesday of the month, 10 a.m., Tenderloin Police community room, 301 Eddy. Contact Jerry Jai at 358-3956 for information. Network of residents, nonprofits and businesses sharing information and taking on neighborhood development issues.

### SENIORS AND DISABLED

**Mayor's Disability Council**, 3rd Friday of the month, 1-3 p.m., City Hall, Rm. 400. Contact: 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 Committee** Daly, Dufty, Peskin, Thursday, 1 p.m.

**City Services Committee** McGoldrick, Dufty, Ma, first and third Monday, 1 p.m.

**Land Use Committee** Maxwell, Sandoval, McGoldrick, Wednesday, 1 p.m.

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