

# Boeddeker Park gets \$4.5 million for makeover

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only conservation organization focusing on building parks in cities, has operated in San Francisco since 1972.

Neighbors who made suggestions at TPL's several outreach meetings held at the park were "very satisfied" with the final design and will be well served by it, said Betty Traynor, chair of Friends of Boeddeker Park. TPL also raised \$1 million that it spent on planning and design.

The plot's last major transformation was in 1985 when the then-Central City Park underwent a \$3.2 million renovation and was renamed for Father Alfred Boeddeker. The Examiner observed, "An urban oasis in the Tenderloin opens with hope and trepidation," emotions that have followed the park to the present in a rocky history.

Boeddeker was a perfect fit for the state's requirements. It was an underused park in a poor neighborhood with 5,000 children and had a citizens group — the Friends of Boeddeker Park — that meets regularly to nurture the park.

Competition was keen, with 475 applicants statewide requesting \$1.6 billion but only \$184 million available. It "clearly shows the extent of unmet community needs throughout California," the State Parks website says.

Just 62 projects got funding: 50 are to be new parks; a dozen old ones, like Boeddeker, are to be improved or expanded. The average grant amount was \$2.97 million.

"I think the new park will be much more utilized by the diverse groups in the neighborhood including families, kids of all ages, seniors and nonsenior adults," Traynor said.

"There are so many new features such as the multipurpose basketball court where people can also play other games such as volleyball and badminton; larger grassy area for picnics and socializing; greatly improved children's play areas; adult exercise equipment outdoors; fantastic new clubhouse. I could go on and on with all the improvements. This new park will be a very welcoming showplace for the neighborhood and the whole city."

The police are happy, too.

"The new plan has better view corridors in the park," said Tenderloin Capt. Joe Garrity, "better views of the park's areas for



PHOTO BY LENNY LIMJOCO

passing radio cars, patrols and foot patrols inside the park. It will elevate the security baseline for people in the park."

The idea of an open park with a big lawn and other changes surfaced three years ago. Pro bono architects under the auspices of TPL drew a Boeddeker redesign plan for the Tenderloin community to contemplate, a fantasy just for brainstorming and with no price tag. Encouraged by the response, TPL soon afterward began a campaign with Rec and Park to seek grants for a makeover. The trust developed a similar plan and took it to community outreach meetings at the park and tweaked it after responses from the public.

The new park 25 years ago was at once a convenient hangout for drunks and a haven for drug-dealing, the Tenderloin's No. 1 crime. The heavy fencing — for safety — made Boeddeker look like a fortress, and its brick walkway up the middle harbored a gantlet of dope dealers.

Police from the district station catty corner from the park at Eddy and Jones struggled to quell drug activity. Beat cops would drop by and dealers would cool it, but when they left, activities resumed. Police couldn't see inside the park, and the director in the park office had no sightlines to see what went on outside.

Crowds loitering on Ellis Street caused the north gate to be closed a decade ago.

Hours of operation for the park have varied, but decreased in recent years because of budget problems. Most weekends this year it was closed.

Since the Friends of Boeddeker Park organized in 2002, the park has been kept in good shape by Rec and Park gardeners and green-thumb volunteers who last year won an award for their monthly cleanup and gardening sessions. This year, however, the park's vitality slipped. The City Services Auditor's 2009-10 Parks Maintenance Standards report, which weighs cleanliness, foliage and equipment condition, gave Boeddeker an 85.5% grade, nearly a 9-point drop from its 2008-09 score, its lowest in three years, and four points below the city average, but still considered "well maintained" and in "good condition."

"But since we will have a completely new park in about 1.5 years," Traynor said, "we should be at 100% in 2012."

The Friends will continue meeting monthly, she said, likely in the Tenderloin Station's Community Room. ■

**Looking down on Boeddeker Park from the fifth floor of the Windsor Hotel on Eddy Street. This view takes in the vast majority of the .97-acre oasis. Less than three years from now, it will look very different. The TL Police Station is the low-rise building catty corner from the park's open Eddy and Jones front gate.**

## See you next year

Central City Extra is a double issue this month, wrapping December and January together as a holiday package. Regular monthly issues will commence in February 2011.

## CORRECTION

The South East Asian Senior Meal Program does not accept applications for the Clipper Card as reported in November in The Extra.



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## Christmas Caroling through the Tenderloin



**When:** Sunday, December 19, 4:30 pm

**Where:** Gather at 559 Ellis (near Hyde)

**Who:** Everyone!

Afterwards we share snacks and hot drinks in our community room. Dress warmly and bring any food you'd like to share.



## Interfaith Memorial Service for All our Homeless Dead

**When:** Tuesday, December 21, 5:30 pm

**Where:** Civic Center across from City Hall (Polk St.)

**Who:** Everyone

**What else:** Bring a Candle.



**NOTE:** If you have names to add to the list, please call the number below or bring them to the memorial.

Co-sponsored by The Coalition on Homelessness and San Francisco Network Ministries

San Francisco Network Ministries, (415) 928-6209