

\$8.5 million Boeddeker makeover under way

Park will close 16 months during the transformation

BY TOM CARTER

STATE AND LOCAL officials joined Tenderloin leaders at Boeddeker Park to ceremoniously break ground and laud the park's future, but it took a 13-year-old to tell what the often-criticized park has meant to a kid growing up in the tough, dense neighborhood.

The acre patch with the broad brick walkway running through it, small playground, single hoop basketball court and badly designed clubhouse had been Nedu Anibogu's personal refuge.

"It's been my school's park for 20 years," said Anibogu, taking his turn at the microphone Nov. 13. He sported a maroon sweater from the private San Francisco City Academy a half-block away,

"I began coming here nine years ago when I was in kindergarten," he went on confidently, talking to the crowd of 60. "It was hard to make friends at first, but I did. And here was always a safe place to go

after school. I always had a good feeling about the park. It was a shining light." He paused. "There are 30 new kids in school and we need more of their bodies around here, instead of sneaking into movies."

That drew guffaws.

The park's importance to the city's poorest neighborhood that's cramped for open space was never clearer. But its light that shined for Anibogu is expected to grow far brighter after the renovation, to be finished in spring 2014. The

final tab will be \$8.5 million. That includes the \$5.3 million construction contract approved by the Board of Supervisors in October and "soft costs" over five years of rising prices, hiring designers, planning, fees and even fundraising, according to the nonprofit Trust for Public Land, which initiated and drove the project.

"Nothing is more reflective of our mission than Boeddeker Park," said Sam Hodder, TPL's state director and the event's MC. "The community was remarkably en-

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Nedu Anibogu
S.F. CITY ACADEMY



PHOTO BY MICHAEL NULTY

Nedu Anibogu, 13: "I always had a good feeling about the park."

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CENTRAL CITY



S A N F R A N C I S C O

URBAN JOURNALISM



PHOTO BY LENNY LIMJOCO

At the Main Library, a federal repository of books, one of the main attractions is the bank of computers people use for free. Ed Bowers tells why else the library is such a special place.

POET'S TENDERLOIN TOUR

Neighborhood landmarks seen very differently

BY ED BOWERS

THE MAIN BRANCH of the San Francisco Library is at 100 Larkin St. You can't sleep there; but if you can keep your eyes open, you can read books and rest your feet. There are restrooms and a coffee shop downstairs that sells good food.

If you are a poet, then this is a special place. Here your fallen comrades display their life's work in the stacks. These writers, offered free to the public, did what you are doing now. They sat in the library and wondered if anything they wrote would ever be allowed to live there.

If you are a poet you will visit the San Francisco Library. I know that. See you there.

Main Library, a special place

Words come from silence.

The House of Words has silence built into its foundation. Visiting the library is like entering a giant head containing all the words in the world put into different combinations and at the center of this Universal Wisdom is the silence after an eternal question mark.

No wonder people are encouraged to be quiet in the library. To enter here is to admit your ignorance; so be silent and learn. It's what we don't know that brings us together.

On the streets the dreams and schemes of the human heart express themselves in radical ways that never the less leave their lives a continuing mystery.

In the library you will get answers to questions that become questions to answer.

There is no escape from the ignorance of words, except silence, which is their essence. Silence speaks volumes to say but one thing:

There is no escape from yourself; everyone in the Tenderloin has a photographic memory of his mind stored in the library either in rhyme or prose, archetype or pulp, biography or epic poem.

— G.L.

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