

## Boeddeker design snafu — a wedgie

BY TOM CARTER

**A** GLITCH in the blueprint for Boeddeker Park's \$6 million makeover that planners thought they had found a solution for has created another problem spotted in the nick of time by street-savvy park activists. Now the planners are back to the drawing board.

The first problem surfaced at a Friends of Boeddeker Park meeting in March when Project Manager Alejandra Chiesa from Trust for Public Land, the nonprofit that spearheaded the park redo, was explaining a structural change. She sketched a section of the park's northern part, showing a swing gate for the service entrance on Ellis Street, which also is the emergency exit from the park.

But, according to building code rules, the gate cannot swing outward and block the sidewalk, a restriction park designers apparently were unaware of. Their planned alteration that Chiesa drew showed a 60-foot-long section of the 7-foot-high north fence angled inward, ending at a gate that would open out to the west side, she said, not north onto the sidewalk, as originally drawn. This left open, next to the sidewalk, a long triangular space that widened as it led to the gate.

Trevor Long, one of the seven people at the Friends meeting, immediately saw trouble.

Long and his wife, Janet, have worked 2½ years at Youth With a Mission, a service program adjacent to the park on Ellis and across from Glide Memorial Methodist Church where hundreds of poor folks line up for its soup kitchen and services. The Longs are familiar with the habits of people living on the street and the mounds of trash that accumulate.

Trevor Long said the open wedge would soon become a hangout and crash site for overnights. Others, including Friends Chair Betty Traynor, quickly agreed.

"They would just throw trash over the fence there," said Janet Long. "And food, too. There would be a terrible smell. It would have to be cleaned every day."



PHOTO BY TOM CARTER

**Boeddeker Park's** renovation at the northern side, as seen from Presentation Senior Community next door, includes a jog in the fencing away from the sidewalk, creating a wedge that some say will be problematic. A solution is being sought.

"I am glad you brought up this problem," Chiesa said. "I agree we need a solution."

Several options were mentioned but quickly discarded. Some sort of moveable wall or gate, maybe with decorative metal flowers, could close off the wedge, artist Amy Blackstone suggested. Blackstone designed the decorative bulletin board outside the main gate, which is still standing, and has a contract to do more work for the new park.

Chiesa said she would take the problem back to her office and hoped to have a solution to report at the April

18 Friends meeting. When the northern section is finished, workers will begin laying the foundation for the new clubhouse, she said.

Blackstone showed colorful sketches of her project, which is to be four 6-by-6-foot see-through panels that will go on the fencing round at the Eddy-Jones street corner. The panels will be green metal stalks with metal flowers of varying sizes and colors, "galvanized, which will stop the rust."

The bulletin board, posted with park updates, will remain up for several more months. The park makeover is to be complete by April 2014. ■

**THE NEIGHBORHOOD** A new community Website, Epicenter-SF.org, premiered March 27 to publicize arts, culture, community events, dining, shopping and nightlife within the boundaries of the Central Market, Civic Center and North of Market/Tenderloin CBDs bounded by Fifth Street and Mason Street on the east, from Mason to Polk and Turk from Polk to Gough on the north, along Gough and South Van Ness to Minna on the west and Minna back to Sixth plus Folsom from Sixth to Fifth on the south.

The CBDs, the Office of Economic and Workforce Development and the Arts Commission are collaborating on the Internet project. The site includes a business directory for local merchants to trumpet their goods and services. To calendar your neighborhood event or announce your mid-Market business, go to Epicenter-SF.org.

### CALIFORNIA RESIDENTS

Anyone who gets SSI, food stamps, Medicaid and other public assistance or earns less than \$15,000 a year can get a cell phone and free service under the federal Lifeline Assistance program that helps homeless and others connect with family, friends, shelters, housing and potential employers.

To enroll, call Assurance Wireless at (800) 395-2171 or go to assurance-wireless.com, fill out the paperwork and wait about 10 days for a cell phone good for 250 voice minutes and 250 text messages monthly. Six weeks later or so, the state will forward an application to establish eligibility and, if those papers are in order, the free service continues. California will review eligibility once a year. Funds for the program are generated from a portion of the universal service fee current phone users pay for monthly service, about 2% of the bill. ■

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master blesses their worldly goods. The senior is persuaded to place her jewelry and money in a bag and bring it to the scammers, who will arrange for the blessing. Presto, a switch is made and

the targeted senior returns home with a bag of worthless scrap paper — jewelry and money gone for good.

Anni Chung, Self Help executive director, estimates elders in San Francisco have lost more than \$250,000 to the scammers. Self Help will use its \$3,500

to organize viewings of an SFPD video describing in Cantonese the crooks' technique and methods and to distribute among the elderly a distinctive blue cloth bag for them to carry. The bag is boldly printed in English and Cantonese — Beware of Street Scams.

Livable City will use its grant to create a new program — Play Streets for All — a spinoff from the 5-year-old Sunday Streets. Where Sunday Streets requires closing 2 to 5 miles to traffic and temporarily rerouting public transit, Play Streets will use only a block or two of car-free open streets, without disrupting Muni, to stage recreational activities aimed at kids and families.

Four neighborhoods will pilot Play Streets this year, the Tenderloin on Aug. 18.

The SF LGBT Aging Policy Task Force, created by the Board of Supervisors last year, will use the grant to conduct focus groups to test the validity of certain assumptions about LGBT seniors, especially those who came of age in the 1950s and '60s. Bill Ambrunn, chair of the task force, said they place less trust in law enforcement, are more reluctant to report themselves as victims of elder abuse and curtail their daily activities from fear of attack.

Ambrunn said that when the information is tabulated, the task force will make policy recommendations to the board. A focus group for transgender seniors living in Tenderloin SROs is

planned for midsummer.

Asociacion Mayab, which provides social services and emergency support to the Mayan community, estimates that 15,000 people from Mexico's southeastern provinces, Yucatan and Quintana Roo, now call San Francisco home and a third live in the Tenderloin. Most speak only Mayan, and many are undocumented and culturally isolated, said Alberto Perez, Asociacion Mayab director of programs.

"They can be targets for the bad guys," he said. "We'll use the money for outreach and to build a bridge between Mayan speakers and the Police Department. Our community needs to know it is okay to report the crimes against them. We'll try to get a dialogue going with the Police Department." Perez hopes the first community meeting with the SFPD can occur in early June.

United Playaz will put the grant toward its after-school and summer sports programs for SoMa kids ages 7-13 — basketball, flag football, baseball and soccer — all designed to teach the young how to work with their peers and resolve conflicts peacefully. A winning attitude helps as well. Last month the UP girls and boys basketball teams each took first place in the Rec and Park Tournament.

Each nonprofit got half of its Neighborhood Justice Fund grant last month. They'll get the rest on completion of their project. ■

### CENTRAL CITY



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**PHONE:** (415) 626-1650

**FAX:** (415) 626-7276

**EMAIL:** centralcityextra@studycenter.org

**EDITOR & PUBLISHER:** Geoffrey Link

**SENIOR WRITER/EDITOR:** Marjorie Beggs

**COMMUNITY REPORTER:** Tom Carter

**REPORTERS:** Jonathan Newman, Mark Hedin, Brian Rinker, Eric Louie

**DESIGNER:** Lise Stampfli

**PHOTOGRAPHER:** Mark Doneza

**CONTRIBUTORS:** John Burks, Ed Bowers

**DESIGN CONSULTANT:** Don McCartney

**DISTRIBUTION:** Mark Hedin

**EDITORIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE:** David Baker, Michael Nulty, Debbie Larkin, Brad Paul, Tariq Alazraie

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