

GOOD NEWS for...

ASIAN ART MUSEUM joins the neighborhood Thursday, March 20, with a gala opening, free to all. Compared to its old site in Golden Gate Park, the new, \$160 million museum at the old Main Library will have twice as much art on view — 2,500 objects [from its total collection of 14,000 pieces] spanning 6,000 years — and triple the space, 29,000 square feet of gallery space for the permanent collection and 8,500 square feet for special temporary exhibitions. Architect Gae Aulenti's past coup was converting a derelict Paris train station into the celebrated Musée d'Orsay. Museum marketing associate Ellen Oh says she's pushing for discount admission for neighbors, special nonprofit rental rates for the 11,600 square feet of event space, and children's programs for neighborhood kids that, she hopes, "will help fill in the gaps in the museum's Southeast Asian collection." Hours will be Tue.-Sun., 10 a.m.-5 p.m. except Thur., when it will be open until 9 p.m. First Tuesday of each month is free. Admission: \$10 for adults, \$7 seniors, \$6 kids 12-17, free for all the other young ones.

PHOTO BY KAZ TSURUTA



Italian travertine stone gleams in the museum's grand stairway.

TL BUSINESSES: 265 have taken advantage of Power Savers, a pilot city program that helps small businesses save 30%-50% on PG&E bills, mostly by installing energy-efficient lighting. Funds for this successful program run out in April, but, says program marketing manager Patricia Parra, "We're very happy with the results, especially in this community. By April, we'll probably do another 75 here." In terms of different neighborhoods, she says, the TL's participation is the third largest in the program. Power Savers' goal was to do 4,000 business in a year, citywide, and it's done 3,200. Participants get free advice on how to save money plus a written work plan that includes an average 30% discount on labor and materials. There's still time to sign up. Contact Parra at 355-3712.

— MARJORIE BEGGS

This column needs regular infusions. If you have some good news (no events, please), send it to marjorie@studycenter.org.

FUTURES COLLABORATIVE

How best to do good in the 'hood

Improvement group ponders its role

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

IT was the last item on the Feb. 12 agenda, but it had the potential to be a big — and eerily familiar — story: the birth of a new decision-making organization in the Tenderloin.

The Futures Collaborative has met monthly since September 2001, regularly drawing 25-35 people. Most are service providers, with a smattering of residents and, recently, a few business owners.

Hosted at the St. Anthony's Foundation offices, the meetings are packed with info about the latest projects, often brought to the table by developers or managers seeking community feedback and, surely, blessings. Some get more than they bargained for.

In 18 months, group members and their respective agencies have raised red flags and helped build hurdles to some developers' plans — Hastings was forced back to the drawing board on its proposal for a seven-story garage, and several adult entertainment entrepreneurs were stopped dead in their tracks.

But it's still just a forum for sharing what's what in the TL. No paid staff, though TNDC's Katie Mullin has done staff-type work, unofficially, since the group's inception. No regular chair, though the Rev. Glenda Hope of S.F. Network Ministries does the honors at most meetings. And no effort to reach consensus on sticky issues.

"So, should we be incorporated as a neighborhood association?" Hope asked the group.

"Well, I'd ask if we have the resources to establish one," said Michael Nulty, co-president of Alliance for a Better District 6. "Who would provide them? And are we duplicating what's being done by other groups?"

The gauntlet down, several picked it up.

"This is an invaluable place to get together from different corners of the neighborhood," said Sam Dodge, program director of Central City SRO Collaborative. "The fact that everyone keeps coming back means there's a place for this group."

John Burkitt, Dalt Hotel resident and TNDC board member, said the time is right for the group to be "incorporated as the strongest group we can be" in order to help guide development in the neighborhood.

Hope suggested that incorporation might not be necessary. The group could be staffed, she said, through an MOU [memorandum of understanding] with an existing organization, TNDC, for example, which could officially assign Mullin to handle Collaborative matters.

Someone protested that without incorporation, there's little power.

"But the group has de facto power," countered St. Anthony's Foundation board member Robin Polastri. "The question is, how can we make this group more effective with the power that's already been given to us? A letter from the group has a lot of weight, but the next steps need to be planned carefully."

Susan Bryan, Nulty's co-president, said she was concerned about the group being "top-heavy" with service providers. "If we become decision-makers for the neighborhood, then everyone has to realize who you represent," Bryan said. "Would there be a conflict between the Collaborative's and the providers' mission state-

ments?"

Hope suggested that a subcommittee write a mission statement.

"We've discussed this before," Nulty said a little wearily. "This all sounds like growing pains, and I think we should check with other community groups and stakeholders and see what they think this group should be."

Dennis Isner, member representative of the Northeast Community Federal Credit Union, put in a pitch to stay informal. "The group's been effective because it's just a meeting — we have common interests but not the decision-making responsibilities that can eat away at an organization."

Concerned about inclusiveness, Roger Gordon, executive director of Urban Solutions, asked, "What about all the folks who don't get paid to be at this table — how can we get to them?"

Because the group doesn't "do" decisions, it couldn't vote on next steps. But it did schedule a small working group meeting for two days later to draft Collaborative principles and bring those ideas to an interim meeting for all interested participants. The working group included Hope, Mullin, Isner, Gordon, Elaine Zamora (property owner, 118 Jones) and Al Wimberly, Boeddeker Park program director.

Two weeks later, Feb. 24, 15 people assembled, and tried to thrash through the next steps. But the announcement of the meeting location had come via e-mail at the 12th hour, and many, including the *Extra*, got it too late to attend.

Hope told the *Extra* later that there were some tense moments at the meeting: "David Baker said that he hasn't been attending Collaborative meetings because they are 'an exercise in futility,' and he went on at length about that. I have to say it was very familiar from old Tenderloin meetings."

Still, the interim meeting group managed to set up three subcommittees: Steering, to develop a mission statement; Merchant Outreach; and Neighborhood Development.

Nulty, his brother John, Hope, Burkitt and Mark Aaronson, Hastings prof and director of its in-house Civil Justice Clinic, sit on the Neighborhood Development subcommittee.

"I call the subcommittee Healing Old Wounds," Michael Nulty quipped afterward.

ONE GOING UP . . . 160 apartments for seniors

In the TL and SoMa, it's not exactly what goes up must come down, but with housing, it sometimes feels like that.

Among other agenda items at the February meeting was a presentation

of plans to build a 14-story, 160-unit building for seniors at 990 Polk near Post. The one- and two-bedroom apartments will be "affordable," with 75% of them under Section 8, explained Scott Falcone of Citizens Housing Corp., a group that has developed SoMa properties. TNDC will be partners with Citizens Housing Corp. at the new senior digs, scheduled to open at the end of 2005.

"We've just put in our design to the city," Falcone said, "and we're working on getting financing, starting the EIR process and making presentations to community groups like this."

On the double-lot site are a dilapidated laundromat, empty for five years, and a surface parking lot. The new building will include 3,800 square feet of ground-floor commercial space.

Are you looking to get small businesses in there? asked a Collaborative member.

"We been talking with the Lower Polk Street Association about some kind of neighborhood services going in there," Falcone said.

And what about parking? another asked.

"We did an informal study of five other buildings for seniors," he added. "We found that we only need parking spaces for about 10% of the units."

And how are you defining seniors? asked a third.

"Sixty-two."

. . . ONE COMING DOWN 12th St. hotel to be razed

A few blocks away, at the Civic Center Hotel, 20-12th St., residents just got notice that their building was scheduled for demolition, according to Dodge of the SRO Collaborative.

"The building is owned by the Plumbers Union Trust," Dodge said. "There are lots of long-term tenants in there, mostly men. This seems totally out of the blue, even irrational — the owners say the building is unreinforced masonry, so they want to demolish it rather than fix it."

Dodge has been meeting with tenants, he said, and has been trying to schedule meetings with union reps. "We want to see if they know what the Trust is doing."

Dodge said he wasn't sure how many people will be ousted by the demolition. "My best guess is it's about 175 people, since 146 units are full and 10 are empty."

A week after the Collaborative meeting, political pressure was percolating, Dodge said: Supes Chris Daly and Tom Ammiano have sent letters to the Plumbers Union "expressing their outrage" and requesting a meeting. ■

CENTRAL CITY

EXTRA!

SAN FRANCISCO

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