

Condo craze hits Tenderloin — plans for 2 conversions told

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

FOR developers planning projects North of Market, the monthly Tenderloin Futures Collaborative has become a de rigueur stop, a place to inform the community about what's coming down the tracks. But there was some rumbling at the March meeting that TFC may be nothing more than a way station — a place where the train stops only to signal. In the last year, the Collaborative has heard about:

- Plans to construct three apartment buildings (at 145 Turk, 421 Turk and 168 Hyde) and a tourist hotel (972 Market).
- St. Anthony Foundation's plan to erect a new building (at 150 Golden Gate), DPH's idea to lease 132 Turk for respite housing and Salvation Army's new center and housing at 230 Turk.
- Hastings' and the Y's garage/housing/rec center (at Golden Gate and Larkin) and the massive Pavilion Project that will occupy an entire square block.

Two more developers made an appearance in March: Scott Haskins of the Hunter Group,

which is proposing to renovate 942 Market into 30 condos; and Herman Weekes, chairman of Career Resources Development Center Inc., which wants to construct a 13-story, 51-unit condo at 655 Geary, between Jones and Leavenworth, site of its two-story headquarters, which it bought in 1987, 20 years after CRDC opened in Chinatown.

NONPROFIT TURNS DEVELOPER

The nonprofit CRDC says it serves 1,000 children and adults a year through its computer lab; job training and placement assistance for clerical, customer service, and health service positions; and after-school services for 8- to 12-year-olds. In a phone interview with The Extra, CRDC Director Linh Le said that virtually all of its clients are poor, and most come from the neighborhood.

With tough times for nonprofits after 9/11 and the economic slump, CRDC decided that its path to self-sufficiency was in real estate, Le said.

The new building will have first-floor retail, CRDC offices on the second floor, and the condos — ranging from studios to two-story units — on the 11 floors above. Weekes said they'll be mostly "moderate-income, in the \$400,000 to \$450,000 range," with "up to 20%" of the units—10-below-market, to meet the 12% minimum requirement of the city's Inclusionary Housing Ordinance.

A computer lab in the basement will offer CRDC classes from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and will be open to the public until 9 p.m.

"The budget for the building is about \$14 million right now," said Weekes, "but it's a moving target. Banks will loan us 75% to 80% for the construction and we have to put up 20% to 25% in equity," no problem for CRDC because it owns the land.

Weekes said he came to the Collaborative to get community support. TNDC's Jerry Jai, who staffs the Collaborative, told Weekes the group doesn't take positions on developments, but that individual members can do so, if they wish.

The project is moving through the city planning process unopposed, Le later told The Extra.

"Our neighbors are all happy about the plans," he said. "On one side of us is the new Oakwood apartment, on the other a small grocery with apartments above, and across the street is a garage and the Alcazar Theatre. A lot of our clients are also our neighbors."

942 MARKET LANDMARK

The condos at 942 Market, near Mason, will be one-, two- and three-bedrooms, and 13 of the 34 units below market, said Haskins, vice president for development at the Hunter Group.

Turning the seven-story building into living space will be a sea change for the 1908 structure, which was designed as offices by the Reid Bros.,

noted and prolific San Francisco architects, who also designed the Fairmont Hotel, the Call Building, Civic Auditorium, the original Cliff House, the Geneva Car Barn and First Congregational Church. The building's other distinction is that it was developed by Elise Drexler, one of the city's earliest active woman landowners and developers.

The class-1 historic building is a city landmark that the Hunter Group, a small East Bay developer, bought in 2000. Hunter Group will do, Haskins said, a "historic renovation" — gut the interior but leave the façade virtually unchanged. He expects the project to cost \$11 million.

"There will be no public subsidies for the building," Haskins told the Collaborative members. "We're hoping to use the Mills Act to help defray costs." The 1976 California Mills Act cuts property taxes in half in exchange for the owner's agreement to preserve the historic resource. The city Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board must approve building plans.

Currently, the office building is less than half full, Haskins said. In its heyday, many nonprofits called the place home. One, Compass Community Services, still occupies two floors. It is a 90-year-old nonprofit serving homeless and poor families "We worked with them to help them buy space in the renovated building," Haskins said, "but it didn't work out, so now we're helping them find a new location."

At Compass Community, Executive Director Erica Kisch said their lease expires next January, and that's when they'll move.

"We've been here since '95," Kisch said, "and the Hunter Group has been wonderful helping us find new space. We'll definitely stay in the neighborhood."

Haskins' colleague, Michael Yarne, a land use and housing attorney with Farella Braun Martel, spent a few minutes telling Collaborative members about the Hunter Group's other project at 690 Market in the old 16-story Chronicle Building. There, the offices will be converted into residential and hotel use, but much more upscale than 942 Market.

The projects are linked, Haskins explained to The Extra later, through the Inclusionary Housing Ordinance, which requires residential builders to increase the number of below-market-rate housing units we project from 12% to 17% if they build those units elsewhere. So 40% of the units at 942, Haskins said, will be below-market rate and count toward satisfying the 17% requirement at 690 Market.

Collaborative members had few question for Haskins, but at meeting's end, after the developers had left, resident David Baker mused: "These developers are just trooping in here, aren't they? And we don't have the structure to vet what they're telling us."

Richard Allman, chairing the meeting in Glenda Hope's absence, reminded Baker that for two years, off and on, the Collaborative had considered and rejected the idea of moving beyond its information-sharing structure.

"Well," Baker said, "we're not playing much of a role in shaping our destiny, are we?" ■

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