

Groundbreaking for 137 units in 2 Glide projects

81 apartments for families, 56 studios

BY TOM CARTER

THINGS are looking up for low-income families who want to live in the Tenderloin.

With a big promotional flourish on a sun-splashed day, ground was broken March 11 on Mason Street for 81 affordable one- to four-bedroom apartments.

A crowd of 150 youths and officials, some carrying shovels, marched like a disciplined anti-war protest from Glide Memorial Methodist Church down Ellis Street to the noisy construction site where 56 studios for the formerly homeless will also be built.

The Rev. Cecil Williams and Mayor Gavin Newsom led the throng. Williams, Glide's CEO, is chairman of Glide Economic Development Corp., the nonprofit formed in 2000 to guide the grandiose Tenderloin Pavilion project, of which the two buildings on Mason Street are a trickle-down \$71.5 million derivative.

To build the family housing, GEDC hooked up with Millennium Partners, the for-profit developer of the Metreon, the Four Seasons Hotel and Residences at 735 Market, and, under construction, the lavish 60-story Millennium Tower at 301 Mission with 415 luxury condos.

"Step by step we're realizing our vision of a healthy and vibrant neighborhood."

Rev. Cecil Williams
CHAIRMAN, GEDC

At the 125-149 Mason site, the milling crowd filed into a huge white tent to the bouncy strains of a Glide jazz combo where a fine buffet lunch and libations waited. The Chez Paree strip joint and the relocated Old Poodle Dog restaurant, famous for its good but expensive French food, previously occupied the contiguous lots.

Next to the tent, a noisy hydraulic excavator, running into some pre-1906 foundation, was scooping up nine cubic yards of dirt and rock per bite for the 81 apartments for low-income families. The breakdown: 22 one-bedrooms, 34 two-bedrooms, 20 three-bedrooms and 5 four-bedrooms. A half dozen apartments will be ADA-compliant.

Millennium, GEDC's seeming unlikely partner, found a good fit for satisfying its off-site inclusionary housing obligation from its luxury condo tower at 301 Mission, according to spokesman Sean Jeffries. City Planning directed Millennium to build 72 units for GEDC but it's doing 81, the company said.

"We wanted to have an impact," Jeffries said. "These projects will truly make a difference in this underserved area."

The L-shaped building at 125 Mason will have an eight-story section facing the street and 14 stories set behind with courtyards, outdoor play areas for children, decks and 13 basement parking spaces.

Paula Collins, GEDC project manager, estimated the \$45 million job would be finished in up to 18 months. People will think "it's luxury housing" because it's "the best in

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PHOTO BY TOM CARTER

Victoria Manalo Draves went from Kessling Street to making history as an Olympic diving champion. She was the first Filipino to win a gold medal.

From gold to green

The story of SoMa Olympic champion, park's namesake

BY TOM CARTER

LIKE a magic hand, the sport of diving reached down into the South of Market 66 years ago, scooped up Victoria Manalo Draves when she was sweet 16 and gave her a glorious ride to the stars. Then it gently set her down in Southern California where she dis-

appeared into a quiet life as a wife and mother.

Certainly Draves earned the trip. Her hard work, determination and ability to overcome discrimination that might have discouraged others paid off. Still, it was unimaginable and against the odds what the little Filipina could achieve when she played jacks with her girlfriends on her stoop at 61 Kessling St. Her immigrant parents couldn't afford the ballet lessons she longed for, or a bicycle. But it didn't stop her from learning to ride on a friend's bike.

"We made do," she recalled, when interviewed at her Palm Springs home.

The maze of opportunities that Draves eventually seized culminated in her big splash at the 1948 Olympics where she won two gold medals. She became the first Filipino to win a gold medal — the first Asian to win diving gold — and the first woman to win in both the platform and springboard diving. Going in, she was the 1946-48 U.S. National Diving Championship winner off the platform and, in 1948, the springboard winner as well.

Draves went on to tour worldwide in grand, professional swim shows with celebrity champions and movie stars like Johnny Weismuller, Buster Crabbe and Esther Williams. She was a celebrity herself, getting the red carpet treatment at palaces, diving for presidents and sellout crowds.

Then Draves disappeared from Northern California for more than 50 years and was ostensibly forgotten until her triumphs were exhumed by dedicated Filipino historian Fred Basconcillo (see accompanying story). He found her living in Palm Springs with her husband Lyle Draves, who was her



PHOTO BY LENNY LIMJOCO

This park on Folsom Street was named for the Filipina diver who made history.

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