

Crime wave mobilizes Tenderloin

Residents organize: Safety chief concern

BY TOM CARTER

COMMUNITY meetings are the lifeblood of activists, and in April their pulse fairly raced. And April buzzed more than in March. For two or three months now, crime and safety has been Topic A in the Tenderloin.

Better than a half dozen community meetings addressed crime and safety last month. Familiar gripes took on a strident tone. Residents were more wary than usual, anxious, if not desperate, for solutions.

Their notorious high-crime neighborhood is experiencing a crime wave. There's been a burst of gang warfare, drug crime, gang killings, bystander and pedestrian fatalities.

A three-month compilation of the latest Tenderloin station statistics shows dramatic jumps in all arrest categories across the board compared with the year-before quarter.

Residents talked of forming a neighborhood watch, getting merchants to help them fight crime, ride-alongs in police cars, walking with beat cops, and direct action at City Hall to ask the powers for help.

Armed gang members are entering our hood and playing rough.

They vented pessimism over the revolving-door justice that lets convicted drug dealers out of jail. For the most part, they praised the police, especially the

efforts of Capt. Gary Jimenez, now the permanent Tenderloin station commander.

Jimenez is on the edge of his seat these days, too. As he leans forward in community meetings, he reports eye-popping arrest figures. Then his voice rises as he tells the crowd that change is in their hands.

"Are you ready to be part of creating The New Tenderloin (TNT)?" the flyer for an April 26 community meeting asked. "The Tenderloin Safety Plan KICK-OFF" shouted from a starburst at the top.

A good 125 people showed up for the two-hour TNT event.

Clearly, the Tenderloin is a neighborhood on the move, perhaps as never before. Just how frayed are the nerves of a central city population beleaguered for years by a corrosive drug scene and careless auto traffic, and now experiencing deadly escalation?

On April 26, the dozen or so neighborhood activists, nonprofits and residents billing themselves as TNT hammered out ambitious anti-crime measures in their community meeting and planned to take their mounting concerns to the Board of Supervisors. The group planned a march to City Hall on May 8, starting at 201 Turk St., stopping along the way at sites where gang killings occurred last month, "to show solidarity," its flyer said. After a 1 p.m. press conference on the City Hall steps they planned to attend the 2 p.m. Board of Supervisors session.

"We won't be on the agenda but

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

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TENDERLOIN HOUSING BOOM

Big jump could hint at speculation

PAGE 2



BUILDING OF FEDERAL BUILDING

Photos document construction stages

PAGE 4

OBITUARIES: MEMORIAL FOR 13

Tenderloin Health restores tradition

PAGE 6

CENTRAL CITY



SAN FRANCISCO

SOUTHSIDE



PHOTOS BY LENNY LIMJOCO

The new Federal Building is built but not yet open to the public. The grand opening is July 9.

A peek inside

A sneak preview of 'extremely green building'

BY TOM CARTER

THE glimmering 18-story Federal Building at Seventh and Mission has certainly gotten its share of attention but it won't be open to the public until probably June, a spokeswoman said. A grand opening is July 9 — by invitation only.

Professional and civic groups can arrange tours through the General Services Administration office, though. And if you're curious about how this \$144 million edifice looks and feels inside, and you've got a friend who is an employee, you might get a personal peek.

What people see inside ranges from impressive to spectacular. From the soaring, slanted support columns inside to the vistas of the city outside, from the Sky Garden on the 11th floor room to the Childcare Center on the main floor — which will be available to the public — the general feeling of spaciousness and light is uplifting and energizing. It prevails despite the domination of gray concrete, black and gray faux marble floors, and silver metal stairs. Imagine the enhancement when every floor gets its colorful landscaping.

Technical people, including members of the American Society of Heating, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Engineers are drawn to the place. On May 3, its Golden Gate Chapter repeated a tour from last year. These folks are crazy about the "very innovative design" of the air conditioning, according to chapter President Glenn Friedman.

Friedman was at the building's only entrance on an early May morning checking off names as 15 engineers arrived. Two building guards near the metal detector were turning anyone away who didn't have business there.

"(The tour) was so popular that we created two more tours this year," Friedman said. Another 15 engineers were scheduled for an afternoon tour after the chapter lunch at the California Culinary Academy.

"We're interested in energy-efficient and user-friendly buildings," Friedman said. "This has natural ventilation and reduces the demand for mechanical cooling. It's attracted

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

May 2, 2007



Up and running: Construction complete, landscaping yet to come.