



Buys 2nd sweeper, goes to SoMa, cleans 7 days a week

The Tenderloin Sidewalk Improvement Program celebrated its second anniversary and launched the latest addition to its sidewalk cleaning arsenal, the Tennant 7200, a 1000-pound, battery-powered sweeper-scrubber, at U.N.Plaza on May 22.

Sharing the spotlight with the Department of Public Works, which took advantage of Public Works Week to pass out length-of-service pins to about 75 DPW employees, meant that the audience for the event was dominated by men wearing International Orange vests. You could get your photo snapped sitting behind the wheel of a spanking new DPW street sweeper or inspect the other trucks and sidewalk sweepers that formed a semicircle at the center of the plaza.

District 6 Supervisor Chris Daly, dapper in brown suit, made an early appearance, telling the crowd that the late Supervisor Harvey Milk would have celebrated his 71st birthday on May 22. Why bring up Harvey Milk on a day celebrating clean streets? Daly reminded his audience that Milk gained national publicity by

championing a city ordinance to require dog owners to clean up after their pets.

"This community deserves to be clean," Daly said. "And, thanks to the Sidewalk Improvement Program and its partners, who are making it a better place to live, especially for the 3,500 kids who live here, it's a cleaner place."

The addition of the new machine means the program can clean sidewalks seven days a week and extend the area it covers South of Market to Minna Street between 5th and 7th streets. And because the new contraption is smaller than the program's first sweeper-scrubber, the 4,200-pound, gas-powered Tennant 8210, it can maneuver in tighter areas to scrub sidewalks between poles and mailboxes. Its lighter weight also makes it safer for sidewalks that cover the sub-basements of some Tenderloin buildings.

TSIP already has extended its cleaning efforts to seven days a week and added an extra shift to keep the machines running until 6:30 p.m. on week days.



Full coverage of the new South of Market area is awaiting some sidewalk repair by DPW, including reinforcing sidewalks covering subbasements.

According to Megan Lim, TSIP staffer, scrubbing more Tenderloin sidewalks will push TSIP costs to around a \$250,000. Operating the new machine adds a little under \$100,000 to the annual budget. Three drivers will guide the Tennant scrubbers, two of whom are SLUG employees.

The mayor was scheduled to appear but, as is often the case, he was running behind schedule. Fortunately, program organizers had provided for entertainment. The Heart of the City Dixieland Jazz Band, a three-piece group with banjo, tuba and a trumpet player doubling on trombone, kept the audience tapping their feet while waiting for the climax of the show.

In keeping with the clean-streets theme, members of the cast of Stomp, currently appearing at the Marine's Memorial Theater, briefly danced and formed their own percussion section with push brooms.

The audience also was treat-

ed to three appearances of the Norcal Drill Team, a popular feature in Bay Area parades in recent years. Dressed in matching gray uniforms accented by red turtlenecks, the six Norcal garbagemen entered the performance area pushing their wheeled, 20-pound aluminum garbage cans as the band played "Roll Out the Barrel." The squad lined up, three facing south and three facing north, performed a country square dance do si do, presented arms with the cans, then threw the cans over their shoulders and ran off in single file. Each appearance filled only 30 seconds of the 90-minute wait between Daly's speech and when the mayor showed up.

As a black limo pulled to the curb on Market Street, the tuba player counted down and the band began playing "San Francisco" as the



TSIP's new sweeper

mayor strolled across the plaza, stopping to inspect the cleaning equipment on his way.

Tenderloin housing developer Art Evans, an early supporter of the TSIP, introduced Mayor Brown by noting the cleaner sidewalks had been a goal of the Tenderloin 2000 plan.

"Now we're spending \$250,000 a year for street cleaning in the Tenderloin," Evans said.

Brown then took the podium and exclaimed, "It's looking good. United Nations Plaza was dedicated as a gateway to government," he said, "and we should be able to look on it with pride. It's for everybody—residents, transients and workers in the nearby buildings."

Brown then stepped down from the podium to get behind the wheel of the new sidewalk scrubber.

"Everyone get out of the way," Evans shouted.

The mayor put the machine in gear and it began to move slowly, carving a large circle of freshly scrubbed brick on the plaza surface while the audience applauded. ■



Mixed-use model: Community theater in senior housing complex

When a group of nuns decided to build senior housing in the Tenderloin, it didn't take EXIT Theatre much to convince the sisters to incorporate a showcase for the performing arts into their plans.

As a result, at Taylor and Ellis streets stands a new six-story building with housing and health services for seniors on fixed or low incomes—and a state-of-the-art community theater, EXIT on Taylor.

Through their combined efforts of planning and negotiating with designers, government agencies, neighborhood representatives and a cast of many more, the developers—the nonprofit Mercy Housing California, a consortium of Roman Catholic nuns dedicated to meeting housing needs—and EXIT Theatre have produced an innovative model of mixed-use development.

In fact, some say, the collaboration is worthy of a standing ovation.

Way back in 1869, Taylor and Ellis was the site of a parochial school run by the Sisters of the Presentation. After the earthquake and fire in '06, the nuns moved elsewhere, but did not sell the property.

They leased the location to a variety of enterprises, a gas station, a parking lot and, from 1982 to 1991, the depot for the Air-Porter bus and shuttle.

Now, in honor of the founding sisters, a gold plaque designates the spot as the Presentation Senior Community: 93 units—31 one-bedroom apartments, 61 studios and one that's a two-bedroom for the resident manager. Approximately 2,500 people applied for the apartments that are now occupied. The tenants pay rents ranging from \$150 to \$200 per month, with HUD subsidizing the rest.

On the Ellis Street ground floor are the office, reception and dining rooms typical to other senior complexes. But, in this particular project—and Mercy Housing has 23 developments in the City—there is an area for a special elderly health care center.

Just around the corner on the building's eastern side, a marquee outside in bold black script reads "EXIT on Taylor." The inner lobby here is painted tropical blue and green with wall sconces of matte silver providing ambient light.

Over the years EXIT has

made a name for itself, acting as a kind of "off-Broadway" in the City's theater district. Three other established EXIT venues are within walking distance, all at the William Penn Hotel on Eddy.

It was in the lobby of the Cadillac Hotel, also on Eddy, where EXIT, in 1985, first got its break. Two years before, founder Christina Augello, a native of Buffalo, N.Y., from a longtime show business family, came to California. She started booking vaudeville acts and method actors at Tenderloin residential hotels. In 1993, EXIT moved from the Cadillac to the Penn, all the while earning a dual reputation—for doing original live theater and for providing community performing groups with affordable space.

Ten years ago, EXIT introduced the first annual San Francisco Fringe Festival. Fringe X begins Sept. 6. Performers from several continents will gather in the neighborhood for 10 days of nonstop theater: comedy, tragedy, experimental, confrontational, whatever. Last year's festival staged 250 performances by 50 performing groups.

Fringe is madcap, whirl-

wind. In contrast, the pairing of the senior housing project with theater EXIT took a steady six years from conception through construction. Jane Graf, Mercy Housing president, says it was understood from the start that EXIT would be the downstairs tenant.

Graf has known EXIT's administrative head, Richard Livingston, for 15 years, serving with him on various Tenderloin boards and participating in neighborhood activities. Graf and others in the Mercy group really wanted the theater on the premises to ensure legitimate nightlife in a safe place for neighborhood residents.

It was a high ceiling and a slope that cinched the deal. Project developer Barbara Gualco explains, "We knew that we wouldn't have to pay a premium to incorporate the theater in the plans." Architects Hardison Komatsu Ivelich and Tucker put the slope on Taylor Street to good use by designing a 17-foot ceiling. It was just what EXIT needed for staging. In another, ground-level venue, such a ceiling would have been impractical to achieve in terms of costs and architecture.

Only two conditions—

other than standard code issues—were mandated by HUD, the federal financing agency: no sound through the walls and no access to the living area from the theater.

EXIT on Taylor has 2,400 square feet—enough to be small and intimate, large enough for dance. It features an open stage, 75 movable seats, a control booth for lighting and sound, and dressing and rest rooms. A custom hardwood floor makes the setting ideal for dance and movement pieces—"and for senior-style aerobics," adds Graf, which is exactly the kind of use the space will get when the theater goes dark.

Opening night is Saturday, June 9, with an original adaptation of works of Nikolai Gogol by local Sean Owens and former S.F. resident, Jason Craig, now living in New York. The show runs for three weeks.

Tickets are \$12 to \$18. For reservations call the box office at 673-3847 or log on to the Web site—www.theexit.org.

How did EXIT get named? No one remembers. Inspired by Jean-Paul Sartre or, maybe, the S.F. Fire Department. ■