

GOOD NEWS for...

TENDERLOIN HEALTH'S DROP-IN CENTER, a haven for the neighborhood's homeless, dodged a lethal bullet. The bulk of its budget — \$797,446 — originally redlined in the mayor's 2008-09 spending plan, was restored just in time to prevent it from closing, said Colm Hegarty, director of development and public relations. The drop-in center at 187 Golden Gate Ave. enables homeless people to access city shelters, provides a bathroom, hygiene supplies, coffee and snacks from 7-11:30 a.m. and 5-11:30 p.m. daily, and serves as a social center and information clearinghouse for the neighborhood. Center staff organized a letter-writing campaign, and clients gathered signatures for a petition to keep the center open. Hegarty said he was relieved that the doors will stay open for another year but lamented the annual uproar generated by the city's budget process. "The city is paying us to spend two or three weeks a year to fight them," he said. "It doesn't make sense."

SOMASIDE **SOMA RESIDENTS** After a year and a half of delays, nonprofit partners South of Market Health Center and Mercy Housing California will break ground in August for their new combo project — Westbrook Plaza — on Seventh Street between Howard and Folsom. The Redevelopment Agency-owned lot will include the \$14.4 million health center and \$30 million worth of affordable housing. When completed, the health center will be triple the size of the converted warehouse at 551 Minna from which it has served SoMa residents for 35 years. With double the number of exam rooms, five dental rooms, an X-ray lab and pharmacy, the new center will be able to serve 10,000 people a year, twice today's number. Marilyn Griffin, South of Market Health Center's director of planning and development, expects Westbrook Plaza to open early in 2010.

200 HYDE TRANSFORMED Tenderloin Community Benefit District Manager Elaine Zamora got a surprise call June 7 from Astrid Haryati, the mayor's new director of city greening, giving her the good news: the parking lot at 200 Hyde at Turk was finally going to be cleaned up. Nine years ago, the now-defunct Adopt-a-Block and 40 neighborhood plaintiffs, led by Michael Nulty, of Alliance for a Better District 6, sued the lot's property owners, SEIU Union Local 87. The 22-car lot was a public nuisance, they claimed, rife with code violations: drug-dealing, illegal street vendors and sidewalks constantly blocked by idlers. The suit resulted in lights being mounted on the building next door to illuminate the lot, but little else. In just the last year, formal complaints from the CBD, TNT and Tenderloin Housing Clinic reached the city attorney's code enforcement team and the mayor's green gal. The result, all paid for by the union: Within a couple of weeks, a decorative, 6-foot-tall, dark green metal fence went up around the lot; parking meters were removed; curbs on both sides of the lot were painted red to discourage drug sales from parked cars. On June 25, workers were busy replacing four diseased trees with nine new cherry trees and African iris plants, all inside the fence so they won't become a dumping ground for discarded needles, formerly a major problem.

DAMAGED EARS Sen. Barbara Boxer is cosponsoring the Hearing Aid Assistance Tax Credit Act, SB 1410, which aims to give senior citizens and parents of hearing-impaired children a tax credit, once every five years, of up to \$500 to help in the purchase of any hearing aid that qualifies under the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act. While the tax benefit will not pay the full cost of any hearing aid, it is a step in the right direction for seniors and parents of hearing-impaired kids to make a life-enhancing purchase. Could be a boon for siren-damaged denizens of the central city.

If you have some good news, send it to marjorie@studycenter.org or tom@studycenter.org.

FUTURES COLLABORATIVE

Tenderloin fantasy — a colorful vision of neighborhood's future

\$63,000 mural for Golden Gate and Jones

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

IF there's one corner in the Tenderloin that cries out for transformation, it's gotta be Golden Gate and Jones: On the southeast corner, sidewalk-seated homeless people and drug dealers use the parking lot's chain link fence as a backrest. Across Jones is St. Anthony's dining room, anchor of a drab off-white building scheduled for the wrecking ball, perhaps within the year.

The spiffy, modern 111 Jones apartment building sits at the northeast corner, but across the street is another pale, undistinguished three-story structure, fully gated at the ground-floor entrance to K & P Sewing Co. That building will spring to life sometime this year when artist Mona Caron starts painting a wraparound mural on it.

"The Tenderloin Community Benefit District has two grants to fund the mural," CBD Manager Elaine Zamora announced at the June Collaborative meeting. "Mona will be working closely with the community so it really will represent the Tenderloin."

The \$63,000 project is being funded by a Community Challenge Grant (formerly the Neighborhood Beautification Fund) and the Mayor's Office of Economic and Workforce Development.

Among Caron's impressive portfolio of murals she's designed, the best known is the Duboce Bikeway Mural on Duboce between Church and Market, a 340-foot-long, undulating portrayal of the city, Bay to ocean, that stretches the entire length of Safeway's north-west wall.

Her Tenderloin canvas will be considerably smaller, but she's hoping for impressive results.

"Situated at eye level on the Jones Street side . . . [will be] the narrative part of the mural," she wrote in an artist's concept statement, reprinted in the CBD May newsletter. "It will depict a fantasy of a transformed Tenderloin neighborhood, set in the future . . .

carefully designed to imply an elevation and emancipation of the current, extant population [but] steering clear from any connotation with gentrification."

She promised to "playfully entertain the viewer, and to inspire and provoke people to envision change in daring, radical terms."

The Collaborative meeting was the first of many she plans to have with people who work and live in the neighborhood.

"What do you have in mind for the subject matter?" asked David Villa-Lobos, Community Leadership Alliance director.

"Nothing," she said. Her design won't take shape until she's talked with lots of neighborhood folks.

"What about defacement?" asked resident Ed Evans. "We have a big problem with graffiti everywhere."

Caron said the painting will be covered with a clear, protective varnish that allows graffiti to be washed off. Her Website describes the Duboce Bikeway Mural varnish as a water-based, acrylic co-polymer called Graffiti Defenz Sheercoat.

What will her project timeline be? wondered Dina Hilliard, Safety Network community organizer.

"There probably will be meetings throughout the summer," Caron said. "Then I'll do sketches and there will be more meetings. The painting itself might start in late August or early September."

And how long will it take to complete? The Extra reporter asked.

"I am one of the slowest-working muralists," she confessed. "It's part of the way I work. Basically, it's going to take a long time — months."

What she wants from her mural, she wrote in her concept statement, is to have the viewer "slow down and step closer," which will bring about "a neighborly way of inhabiting that street corner, one that is conducive to conversation and conviviality amongst residents."

Caron's Website is monacaron.com. ■



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