

GOOD NEWS for...

EARLY BIRD TAX FILERS Tax-Aid wants you to think ahead to tax time so you can get any refunds you deserve — especially the earned income credit and the child tax credit — and avoid paying to have your tax return prepared. Tax-Aid says its goal is to reach 15,000 low-income San Francisco families “now, before they go to paid preparers and take out refund-anticipation loans, or worse, use their year-end paycheck stub to get a loan before their W2 even arrives.” Tax-Aid is the nonprofit that coordinates free tax-preparation programs for United Way’s “Earn It! Keep It! Save It!” program. Its success rate should inspire: In 2008, Tax-Aid prepared 3,777 returns for free and helped these taxpayers get back \$3.4 million in refunds. Some refunds were more than \$4,500. Information: www.earnitkeepitsaveit.org. or find a free tax site at (800) 358-8832.

COMMUNITY HOUSING PARTNERSHIP They got the news Nov. 18: It is one of two San Francisco nonprofits that will receive Bank of America’s prestigious 2008 Neighborhood Builder Award. The \$200,000 prize recognizes CHP’s 18-year history of providing housing and programs for thousands of the city’s homeless. It currently operates 672 housing units in District 6 and has another 250 units under construction. BofA launched the Neighborhood Builder Award in 2004 and has since given the strings-free support to more than 400 nonprofits nationwide. The other 2008 San Francisco award-winner is South of Market Renaissance Entrepreneurship Center, which helps women and men start or expand small businesses. TNDC won the award last year.

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

Attendance plummets, but regulars soldier on

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

AFTER seven years, the Tenderloin Futures Collaborative may have to rethink its usefulness as a venue for neighborhood information-sharing.

Launched in 2001 to carry on some of the work of the disbanded Lower Eddy/Leavenworth Task Force, the Collaborative’s monthly meetings used to draw 25 people interested in hearing about the latest land use plans, project and program startups and shut-downs, store openings, changes in bus routes and much more.

With a full agenda, Chair Glenda Hope often had to stop one presentation to make sure there was time for the next. Meetings always went full tilt for 90 minutes, right up to adjournment.

At the November meeting, only nine people showed. One was the Rev. Hope and another was Steve Woo of TNDC, who sends out the meeting notices, recruits presenters and prepares agendas. This agenda had only two items on it. The meeting was over in 45 minutes.

The Extra asked a few former regulars what they think is going on.

“Perhaps there has been some shift of interest,” said Elaine Zamora, manager of the North of Market/Tenderloin Community Benefit District. “but there’s still so much going on in the neighborhood, and the need to know is still there.”

She acknowledged that proliferation in the number of meetings held by organized activists may be affecting TFC’s lower turnouts. Seven years ago there were no CBDs, no regular police captain’s meeting or Safety Network meetings, no weekly Community Conveners meetings about youth issues at the Central YMCA and more.

“In the course of being a CBD manager, I get more information about what’s happening in the neighborhood than I ever did before,” said Zamora, who used to attend every TFC meeting, but now is more selective.

YMCA Executive Director Carmela Gold used to be a regular, too. She thinks TFC meetings may have lost some punch, but they remain essential to the neighborhood.

“It’s been a great clearinghouse of new projects, programs and faces in the past,” she said. “I support it in concept and practice, and I learn something new every time I attend. And I like that it’s volunteer-based — not funded or staffed — and that it’s a pipeline where diverse people can gather.”

Gold also believes the many neighborhood meetings these days is healthy, a sign of active involvement.

Hope, chair since TFC started, sees a clear connection between the falloff in participation and meeting content.

“It’s time, again, to start doing active outreach for agenda items,” she said. “The issues are still out there — things haven’t gotten much better in the neighborhood even if there are more active organizations.” Crime and poverty persist, she says, and Tenderloin stakeholders need to track how land is being used.

TNDC’s Woo chalks up meeting attendance dropoff to normal fluctuation. Still, he says support from TFC’s steering committee “has been dwindling,” making it harder for him to do TFC outreach as well as his full-time TNDC community organizing job.

Two days before the December Collaborative meeting, Woo sent out an email to regular attendees saying that he and Hope had decided to cancel, but “we will pick up again in January.”

LATEST ON THE YMCA

The handful of people at the November meeting didn’t come away informationally empty-handed. On the agenda were an update on TNDC’s homeless housing development at 220 Golden Gate Ave. (Central YMCA) and an overview of how the Community Benefit District is faring.

Details of the \$51 million transformation of the Y are solidifying, according to Justin Mortensen, TNDC project manager. All building permits to renovate the 138,000-square-foot building into studios for the chronically homeless are pending. Construction is to begin next year and be completed by 2011.

The 172 units, for single adults only, are expected to rent from \$171 to \$286. They’ll have full bathrooms and “efficiency” kitchenettes — two hot plates, sink and refrigerator. Seventeen of the studios will be reserved for mentally ill homeless people; 61 will be for homeless mentally ill who also are substance abusers or have HIV/AIDS.

On-site support services for this needy population will be extensive, but none are official yet. DPH’s Housing and Urban Health Clinic, which opened in 2005 on the ground

floor of the Windsor Hotel at 234 Eddy to serve supportive housing tenants, is likely to move there, Mortensen said. The space at the Golden Gate Avenue location will give it much more room to serve its 8,600 clients a year.

The Y building will be 100 years old next year, a fitting time to begin its renovation. When complete, it will be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Its auditorium and gym will be preserved and upgraded for use by residents and the neighborhood, but the pool’s a goner. Current tenant Wu Yee Children’s Services will return to the Y site after renovations.

“What’s going to happen to the old grand stairway?” asked Daniel O’Connor, St. Anthony’s community liaison.

“It won’t be an exact replica,” Mortensen said, “but it will capture the essence of what it looked like.”

TL resident Ed Evans wondered if alcohol or smoking would be banned in the new studios. “Many of these tenants are likely to have had alcohol problems formerly,” he said.

Mortensen said the building is unlikely to ban alcohol, but probably would offer harm-reduction services — groups, for example, that encourage healthy behavior rather than punishment or rehab for substance abuse.

CBD BUSY AND IN THE BLACK

Zamora ran down the latest on the CBD — new digs at 134 Golden Gate Ave., publication of its annual report, regular watering of the neighborhood’s trees and a December start for the mural at Golden Gate and Jones.

The office’s Nov. 21 grand opening featured an art exhibit and book release for painter and photographer Patricia Araujo and photographer Mark Ellinger. Zamora said the CBD was hoping to have regular art exhibits in the atrium.

The building’s top two floors house the Tenderloin Outpatient Clinic (formerly Hyde Street Clinic), a tenant since 2004.

The annual report shows that the CBD, whose net assets increased \$41,788 in 2007-08, expects net income to drop from \$175,973 in 2007-08 to \$58,453 in 2008-09. The report also lists every property in the benefit district, its 2007-08 assessment and how much was paid.

“Are any of the properties delinquent?” asked resident David Baker.

Zamora said that five or six owners in the district are late. “We’re about \$66,000 short,” she said.

The Extra counted 26 of the total 611 CBD properties in arrears for their 2007-08 assessment, for a total of \$43,593.

The assessment on 134 Golden Gate, owned, Zamora said, by Craig Larson, was \$1,830.54. And it was paid on time. ■



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An Extra 1 for 2

The holidays make it impractical to produce an issue in December and another in January. So No. 85 is a combo. The next issue of Central City Extra will be in February 2009.