

# City invests in Tenderloin

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contribute to the area's cultural interests and generate jobs for low-income residents — a perfect fit for the museum, Shaw says.

## HISTORICAL MARKERS

The Uptown Historic District's listing on the National Register of Historic Places in February 2009 also sparked a building plaque project.

In the historic district's 33 blocks, 380 of the 470 buildings are considered architectural, historic or cultural "contributors" to what makes the area unique — and for \$259.50, building owners can buy and put up a plaque that says so.

By mid-March, 80 owners were on board and plaques were appearing all over the Tenderloin. Shaw, who spearheaded the project, is confident they'll easily get to 100.

March 10, in a media- and Tenderloin stakeholder-packed community room at the Ambassador Hotel, Shaw, Mayor Newsom and TNDC Director Don Falk (TNDC owns the Ambassador and 14 other plaque-worthy buildings) unveiled the 50th plaque to go up.

The Uptown District's first plaque went up March 3 at THC's building at 126 Hyde. Unlike the Ambassador, 126 Hyde has no notable history, Shaw said, so the text on the plaque is "pretty basic": the building's construction date (c. 1923), its inclusion in the Register of Historic Places and the district name.

Other plaques have a bit more info: The one on the Padre Apartments at 241 Jones says it first was the Crystal Hotel, then the Padre Hotel. Also, "Located across the street

from the former Musicians Union Hall, this hotel was well known for providing lodging to local and traveling musicians."

Building owners who purchase a plaque get to approve the text. They can take a crack at describing their building's claim to fame, if they wish. Otherwise, Shaw and plaque project manager Sarah Wilson will draft the language.

"TNDC drafted the text for all 15 of their plaques," Shaw said. "The Ambassador had a lot of history that Sarah and I edited and condensed."

Wilson's job is funded by a \$15,000 Workforce Development grant last year to the Tenderloin Community Benefit District. The CBD, in turn, allocated the funds to a new nonprofit, Uptown Tenderloin Inc., formed to coordinate the historic district's activities.

Shaw also heads up the new organization, housed at THC. Board members include Hastings CFO David Seward, housing consultant Brad Paul, Cadillac Hotel co-owner Kathy Looper, former Hilton Hotel PR rep Debbie Larkin, and Tenderloin CBD General Manager Elaine Zamora.

After the Ambassador plaque dedication, Shaw told The Extra that the Tenderloin has "incredible untapped potential" and could have been a far worse place without so many people dedicated to its preservation.

"This all could have been high-rises," he said. "Areas like this are usually redeveloped or torn down."

The Tenderloin is almost ready to bestow on San Francisco a new title, Shaw says: "The only U.S. city that has preserved the old buildings and the residents' quality of life in its inner city without gentrification." ■

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