

TNDC gets Collaborative OK for sunlight variance

It wasn't exactly a Solomon-esque decision — pitting a sliver of sunlight in a hard-won, still beleaguered park against five bedrooms in a new apartment building. Still, it gave people at the March 13 TL Futures Collaborative meeting a half-hour's worth of gristle to chew on.

Craig Adelman and Martha Martinez from TNDC described the agency's 10 housing projects currently under development, including construction of an eight-story, 67-unit building at 145 Taylor. It sounds great — 14 studios and 14 one-bedroom, 15 two-bedroom and 24 three-bedroom units. Such larger apartments for families are especially hard to come by in the neighborhood.

The only drawback: During December, for about one hour each morning for four weeks, the building will cast 133.1 sq. ft. of new shadow onto Boeddeker Park. That's contrary to the Sunlight Ordinance (Sec. 295, S.F. Planning Code), which bans any new shadows unless they're found to have an insignificant environmental effect.

To prevent any new shadowing on the park, TNDC would have to reconfigure three apartments into one, a net loss of five bedrooms.

"Assaulting Boeddeker Park is not a way to go about

building affordable housing," Gloria Koch-Gonzalez, Park and Rec TL unit staffer and a staunch advocate of zero-tolerance for new shadows, told the Collaborative. "This takes away one little sliver of sunlight in the darkest time of the year." And TNDC had made a mistake in its presentation materials, she said: The shadowed area in question was not an elevated grassy area and a walkway.

"It's actually part of the community garden," Koch-Gonzalez said, "and the shadow may come in winter, but that's not a dormant time of year in California."

Other people supported her, but mostly the pendulum swung toward housing. "This is about affordable housing and that's what's best for the community," said St. Anthony's outreach worker Roscoe Hawkins.

When Boeddeker Park advisory board member Connie Latch invited everyone to visit the park and see how much it needs sunlight, Adelman responded, "To proceed with development, we need to know the community's wish. We don't want to defer a decision." Today was the day for the Collaborative to say yea or nay.

TNDC financial officer Katie Mullin pulled out a prepared letter from the Collaborative endorsing TNDC's 145 Taylor's sunlight slicing, complete with an attached page for meeting participants to sign. The official request is "to raise the absolute limit for

Julian Low gave an overview of the cuts in store and listened to community comments. The mayor, he said, has asked all departments to first slice 5.5% from their current budgets, then show "on paper" how they'd cut another 10%.

For 15 minutes, Collaborative members said what they didn't want cut from the neighborhood — children's services, mental health programs, homeless centers, public health services — and recommended ways to raise revenues: increase Planning Department fees, sell more ad space on Muni buses, let nonprofit developers rather than city government find ways to increase housing, and the ubiquitous cut-the-fat-from-city-government solution.

Other agenda items: updates on the Hastings garage project (see p.3); the permit revocation for the live-model lingerie shop at 50 Mason ("We won!" crowed the Rev. Glenda Hope. "We're always surprised when that happens"); the status of the Redevelopment Agency's Mid-Market Area plan, scheduled for adoption

in fall 2002, that may affect four triangular blocks jutting off Market Street into the Tenderloin.

A new Polo's on tap — this one's 3 stories

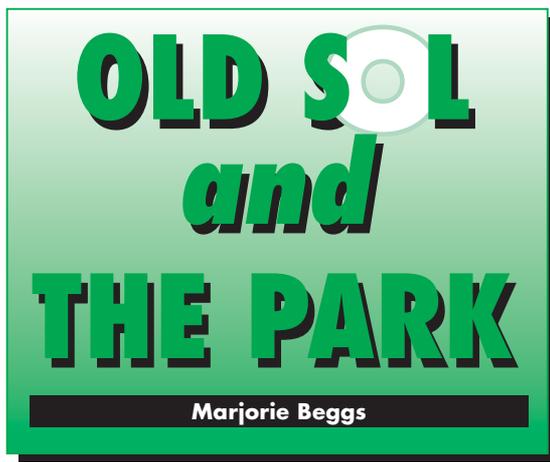
Presentations continued with plans for a new Polo's Lounge and Grill.

It's unlikely that any of the younger members of the Collaborative ever were habitués of the Depression-era restaurant at 34 Mason that closed nine years ago after changing hands several times.

But there was a lot of interest around the table for Polo's latest incarnation: a first-floor bar and restaurant with live music, second-floor billiard room and third-floor lounge that the building's new owners hope to open in early summer.

There'll be a cover charge to get in the door, said co-owner Mike Bovo. The food: \$6 or \$7 burgers and \$12 steaks, and the menu won't be as extensive as the old Polo's.

"We want to run a legal, safe place, maybe with a sports theme, with an attractive exterior — we see this as a destination spot," he added. The owners hope to spiff up the old sign out front, "maybe working with TNDC's façade program." ■



additional shadow on Boeddeker Park from zero to 0.0017 percent." Thirteen people, representing 10 organizations, signed.

Budget cuts loom but don't cut these services

This being March, Tenderloin community members' thoughts turned from sunlight to budgets. Another big hunk of the meeting focused on the city's estimated \$175 million deficit for 2002-03.

Mayor's budget analyst

Community Justice Office doesn't keep regular hours

Vince Almario, a Dept. of Human Services specialist in food stamps, mans a desk at the Community Justice Office on 136 Sixth St. from 1 to 4:30 p.m. on Thursdays.

Since the office's splashy opening Jan. 8, Almario said he's helped about 30 to 40 people. Mostly, however, it's with general problems rather than food stamps.

"When people see the D.A. logo on the window, they think the police are here, so they come in to talk about crime and drugs," Almario said.

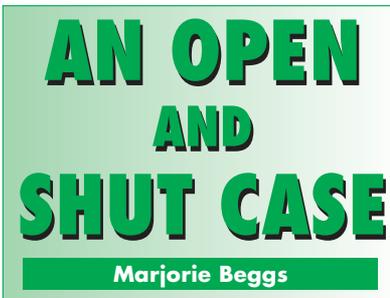
The logo may be a draw, but Almario thinks it also may be keeping some people away. "Everyone can see in. Some people are afraid others will see them in here and think they're snitching. And there's really no privacy once they're in here talking."

There may be other problems. This reporter dropped in on the office one blustery Thursday in early March. Almario, alone in the office, was trying to phone DHS colleague Maureen Davidson, an outreach social worker, but the line was dead. He used his cell phone. When *The Extra* phoned the office the next Tuesday, it rang and rang. No message. No human.

An elderly man stopped by the office looking for a

woman from the Tenderloin Housing Clinic, which also shares the space.

"She told me to come by today," the man said. "I'm paying \$600 a month for a room upstairs [in the Sunnyside Hotel] and she was gonna help



me find something else. I gotta get out of there."

Almario suggested the man come back in about an hour.

"Aw, I can't," he said. "I'll be out drinkin' then — you know, to ease the pain." Despite his troubles, the man put on a cheerful face. He thanked Almario politely and said, "God bless."

The Community Justice Office is supposed to be open 1 to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday, according to office Director Assistant District Attorney Mike Menesini. "We're trying to be diligent about the hours," he said, but admitted it's hard sometimes.

Staffing is a little erratic. Menesini said in addition to Almario, Davidson is sched-

uled Thursdays from 3:30 to 5 p.m., a volunteer attorney is in the office once a week, and project SAFE has been invited to come and give information about neighborhood safety.

When the office opened, Menesini told *The Extra* that he'd be around three days a week. Recently, however, he said that he was "out of commission for a while" during his run for district attorney of Contra Costa County. (He'll be in the November runoff; until then, he'll also keep his current job as mayor of Martinez.)

Amy Petersen, staff to the Restorative Justice Project, the planned TL/SoMa community court, worries that an office that's closed as much as it's open won't serve the neighborhood or generate new clients. "Then they'll say it was underutilized and shut it down," she said.

No one knows if it's underutilized. "We still don't have any stats yet on the number of people using the office," Menesini said, "but we hope to have some soon to evaluate its effectiveness."

Menesini said the office is a resource center for residents and he's upbeat about its future: "It's a great morale booster for people who live in the Sixth Street corridor." ■

611 JONES: Going, going...



PHOTO: CARL ANGEL

The demolition of the Tenderloin's last wood-frame house — to make way for an eight-story condo project — is getting closer to reality. (See *Central City Extra* No. 9.)

The Planning Commission gave the condos conditional approval last October, pending the incorporation of some Planning Department suggestions.

"We thought some of the design elements in the building were too horizontal," said Kenneth Chin, Planning Department staffer. The project architect submitted plans incorporating the suggested changes, and the department signed a variance decision at the end of January.

Then came a temporary stall.

The building's 103-foot height is within the limits allowed in the neighborhood (up to 120 feet), Chin said, but it did slightly exceed a base height limit established by Sec. 263.7 of the Planning Code in 1985.

That ordinance imposed special height exceptions in the Tenderloin and created a North of Market Residential Special Use District. Because "development at heights greater than 80 feet may create pressures on existing affordable housing in the area," states the ordinance, developers are required to contribute "a portion of the value added to the new development."

The formula: \$5 times the total gross square footage of floor space above 80 feet.

As compensation for 611 Jones' 103 feet, the developer had to pay the housing fund \$8,000.

In early March, Chin said he'd just received the compensation check and, with that in hand, he was ready to sign off on the project. Next step: The developer has to get a building permit. Chin was unwilling to speculate how long that might take. ■

Stan Hutton and Marjorie Beggs