

Why no Y? TL leaders demand answers

No new facility 7 years after Central closed

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

FLOWERS, shrubs, vegetables and herbs line three sides of the vacant lot at 333 Golden Gate Ave. An Anna's hummingbird named Maxine flits among this unexpected Tenderloin greenness, flashing iridescence.

The 12,000-square-foot paved lot, owned by Hastings law school, is where the Central YMCA for seven years has been planning to build a new Y in collaboration with Hastings. Nothing definitive has happened. Fingers are pointing. Explanations for the stall are less than convincing to the ardent supporters who want a full-service Y back in the central city.

"Is there a plan to build a new Y? ... Yes or no?"

Dina Hilliard
TENDERLOIN CBD

The paved lot and leased space next door have been Central Y's temporary home since it shuttered 220 Golden Gate Ave. in 2009 after 102 years. Shih Yu-Lang Central Y pays Hastings a token \$2 per year to use the lot for basketball and the community garden. At 387 Golden Gate, it leases

5,500 square feet of ground-floor retail space in Hastings' garage for a small fitness center, several offices and a meeting area with a kitchen.

Hastings once said it might invest in a new Y on the undeveloped lot, but the recession has hit the law school hard and it's scaled back what it says it can do.

A lot of ducks have to line up before the Central Y project could get moving. In the end, however, it's the association — the YMCA of San Francisco, Central's parent company — that holds the purse strings for major expenditures involving its 14 branches, and only it can press the project start button.

In July, longtime Central members and advocates, unhappy about being kept in the dark, began organizing, put-

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RENDERING BY MWA ARCHITECTS

This rendering is of a new Central Y that was already in the planning stage, the YMCA said in 2009.

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CENTRAL CITY

EXTRA!

SAN FRANCISCO

38 MILLION MEALS



PHOTO BY TOM CARTER

As the wrecking ball descended on St. Anthony's old office and Dining Room complex on Golden Gate Avenue, the great jaws of a huge machine ripped the façade, revealing a mural of St. Francis where an office used to be. The mural soon was chewed up and spit out as rubble.

Dining Room down

St. Anthony's demolishes old, is building new

BY TOM CARTER

WHEN ST. ANTHONY'S warm and friendly Dining Room opened Oct. 4, 1950, founder Father Alfred Boeddeker, who eschewed the cold words soup kitchen, expected to serve 150 meals to the poor. But 400 "guests" arrived. Somehow, all got fed.

The kitchen was in a windowless basement at the end of an auto repair shop ramp and the Franciscan friars, who had bought the 45 Jones St. building, called their success the "Miracle on Jones Street." The miracle of feeding throngs of the poor has continued 365 days a year. The number of meals served last year averaged 2,743; the peak was 3,635.

But the sagging building where 38 million free meals were served in 62 years was demolished in September.

The dining operation moved across the street to 150 Golden Gate Ave. in February. It will move back in 2014 into a \$22 million, 10-story structure featuring an arcade where the people in line are protected from the weather. The new street-level dining room — this one with windows — will be 43% larger, seating for 240 at a time. The building will also have 90 units of affordable housing for seniors, and a full floor for a free clothing program and a social work center for counseling.

The old building had the health clinic, a tech lab and a social work center that annually served 2,000 low-income people. The pro-

grams grew out of needs the friars recognized in the Dining Room.

St. Anthony's wide reputation drew politicians and celebrities. Among the happy servers: Sen. Hubert Humphrey, actors Danny Thomas, James Arness and Jane Wyman. In 2009, Nancy Pelosi helped serve meal No. 35,000,000 and the late billionaire Warren Hellman, "a generous donor," played with his Wranglers band in a fundraiser for the new Dining Room. Last year, the Giants' Barry Zito pitched in to serve, and the day before New Year's Eve the entire University of Illinois football team tackled the chore before their Fight Hunger Bowl game at AT&T Park.

San Francisco mayors loved the place and so did clothier Adolph Schuman, who produced the Lilli Ann line. He got some friends together, including then-Mayor Dianne Feinstein, to create a fund for St. Anthony's. After Schuman died in 1985, the first Saturday every November a special meal was served to honor his birthday. The Dining Room blossomed with cut flowers, tablecloths and festive live music. The food was to die for.

"I remember lamb shanks this big," says Barry Stenger, St. Anthony's communication director, his hand showing a 5-inch span. "Steaks and prime rib, too."

Schuman Days ended last year after 22 years and, because of lean times, the funds were shifted to the general fund to help provide daily meals.

St. Anthony's staff say that more than one-third of its diners rely on the lunchtime meal as their only food each day. They arrive from all over town. Last year they consumed more than 2 million pounds of food.

A fond farewell was staged in February for the building designated for destruction. A local auto repair shop parked cars from the 1940s and '50s out front, nostalgia for the era when it was created. Out on the street, there

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