

Collaborative looks inward, likes what it sees

Marjorie Beggs

"The purpose of having this meeting is to bring key neighborhood stakeholders together in order to share information in the Tenderloin, specifically about zoning and public safety concerns."

— Minutes of Futures Collaborative's first meeting, Sept. 2001

Nine months after the Collaborative emerged Phoenix-like from the ashes of the Lower Eddy/Leavenworth Task Force, participants examined TFC's gestation and found they liked what they'd created. They liked their leaders, too.

"Three of us co-convened the meetings originally," the Rev. Glenda Hope of S.F. Network Ministries said at the May meeting, referring to herself, Katie Mullin of TNDC and outreach worker Roscoe Hawkins of St. Anthony's. "I've been the chair, but I don't have any imperialistic designs on the position."

Hope offered to leave the room so people could talk freely about the moderating duties and whether they should be reassigned, rotated or otherwise changed. Despite murmured objections about it not being necessary for Hope to leave the room, she excused herself anyway.

Mullin took the reins. She asked if meeting monthly worked for everyone and what they thought of agenda topics. Yes on the monthly format. And yes on the topics, though zoning and land use issues have consistently trumped safety in terms of attention.

How to get better

Richard Allman, interim chairman of the Tenderloin Sidewalk Improvement Program and member of the United Nations Plaza Working Group, had three suggestions: "Let's look at expanding [our awareness of] economic development issues, set goals to increase the number of residents that attend meetings, and set a goal of looking at what we're doing every six or 12 months."

"But we don't want to get too

big," said Roscoe Hawkins. "We should stay with the stuff we know — I'm trying to get someone to these meetings to talk about pedestrian safety."

Terry Hogan, a resident of the Alexander Hotel and also a member of the U.N. Plaza group, offered to spread the word about the Collaborative to other residents. John Burkitt, who lives at the Dalt, said he would, too.

Most of the regulars around the table were agency reps — from Hamilton Family Center, Hospitality House, Lutheran Family Services, Neighborhood Safety Network, Northeast Community Federal Credit Union, Rec and Park, S.F. AIDS Foundation, Tenderloin Sidewalk Improvement Program. Also there to make presentations were guests from the District Attorney's Office and the Redevelopment Agency.

But where are the residents?

Business owners are still noticeably absent, as are residents. Hogan and her friend Jeanetta Whitacre from the Alexander were just guests at the May meeting. The only other residents were Burkitt, who also is a TNDC board member, and Michael Nulty, an Alexander resident who chairs both Alliance for a Better District 6 and Tenant Associations Coalition.

[Nulty told *The Extra* later that he always lets other tenants know about Collaborative meetings, but seemingly with little effect. "I don't see the Collaborative itself putting out much effort," he added.]

Burkitt said the Collaborative should vote on development projects and monitor safety concerns more effectively.

Amy Peterson of the Neigh-

borhood Safety Network added that to put the "future" in the Futures Collaborative, they must focus more on long-range goals for the Tenderloin.

None of the suggestions came to a vote, but someone finally remembered the Rev. Hope, presumably still waiting outside.

Hope vanishes

"We're talking too much about business first," said Susan Phillips from the Tenderloin Unit of the Chinatown Community Development Center. "We need to look at the chairman issue."

"I'm for a consistent chair — it gives the group consistency," said Beverly Karnatz of Lutheran Family Services.

"I'd like Glenda to remain as chair," Allman added. "She's doing a wonderful job." Many heads nodded.

The vote was unanimous to have Hope stay at the head of the table. And with a little prodding, Paul Leaman of the Community Housing Partnership agreed to be co-chair and lead meetings in Hope's absence.

Someone went to tell Hope the good news, but she wasn't around. The meeting went on.

Planning for the Plaza

Leaman and Hogan updated the Collaborative about the U.N. Plaza Working Group, which began meeting in March. Fifteen people sit on this Supervisor Chris Daly-instituted effort to make sure stakeholders are in on the plaza's redesign — eight residents and community agency reps appointed by the supervisors and seven reps from relevant city agencies such as Public Works.

There are problems getting members to the meetings,

Leaman said, and "there are groups within the group. They're much more politicized than those appointed by the supervisors. Still, it's an incredible experience watching the group TRY to work." So far, the group is more process than planning, she said.

'Take down the fountain

"I respectfully disagree," countered Hogan, citing a long list of group-generated activities and suggestions: Members took a walking tour of the plaza and looked at plans for other cities' plazas. "And I had the idea," she said, "to put up semi-permanent kiosks with really quality food from different parts of the world. Also, we're trying to get the Orpheum Theatre to put a really good mural on its wall. We want to take down the Leavenworth 'wall' at the entrance to the plaza. And we all agree: take down the fountain — it's a health hazard — and keep the Farmers' Market."

She had two other ideas: statues of children representing different countries playing around a globe, maybe in a smaller fountain, and hiring the homeless to keep the plaza clean.

Another area of consensus, Hogan said, is that everyone wants the benches back.

How much clout does the working group have?

The supes have to approve the plans, Hogan said, "but the Charter says our word goes." He didn't know how long the group would meet, but guessed about six more months.

Awaiting Hastings' decision

The Collaborative won a partial victory in the effort to nix Hastings' proposed 885-car garage at Larkin and Golden Gate, Mullin reported. Though the Hastings board of directors on April 23 unanimously approved the EIR, they delayed the vote on the project itself until their June 7 meeting.

Meantime, the directors are evaluating an alternative mixed-use proposal for a 214-car garage with 155 apartments. Housing was what a contingent of community activists, Hast-

ings students, nonprofits, supes, state Sen. John Burton and Assemblywoman Carole Migden had called for, but they wanted apartments that the public could rent.

If the directors approve the mixed-use plan, the housing will be for students and faculty only, Mullin predicted. And if they approve their original proposal, they'll be sued, she added.

Community court soon

Peterson and Mitchell Salazar from the D.A.'s Office talked up the pilot TL/South of Market community court project, to start June 17. They came to the meeting to get "last-minute applications" from people who want to be panelists — those who will mete out "restorative justice" to neighbors cited for misdemeanors. People accused of foul acts in the TL or SoMa, but who live elsewhere, also can go before the community court instead of a judge at 850 Bryant.

"So far we have 30 applicants," Peterson said. "The panel will consist of four or five neighborhood people."

During the two- to three-hour court sessions, held monthly at the Rose Hotel, the panelists will hear several cases. They'll listen to the alleged miscreant's side of the story, ask him or her enough questions to determine what "punishment" will benefit the community and the accused, then — with the person out of the room — rule on the case.

Salazar stressed that the court is a demonstration project. "We'll do it for four or five months, and if it's working and there are enough cases, we'll split into one court in the Tenderloin and one South of Market," he said. Hence the need for lots of applicants.

Salazar, a strong advocate of community courts, was asked if the program has any downsides.

"Sure, it's voluntary," he responded. "The cited people attend the community court voluntarily and the panelists are volunteers. There's bound to be somebody falling through the cracks."

The Collaborative meets June 12, 10 a.m., 121 Golden Gate. ■

Keeping it clean

The city spends at least 21 hours a week cleaning the U.N. Plaza fountain, according to DPW's "Mr. Clean," Mohamed Nuru, the man whose crews scrub the plaza and SoMa alleys.

Nuru knew of no health hazard with the fountain. He said it closed recently for its semiannual scrubbing and is cleaned of "debris" nightly. Five DPW employees spend three hours a day keeping the plaza clean, usually starting with a washdown between 10 p.m. and midnight.

Redesigning U.N. Plaza

Karen Oberdorfer

At a May 28 meeting of the United Nations Plaza Working Group, members discussed guidelines for a redesign of the plaza and looked over a fresh set of plans brought in by a design consultant.

The 2.6-acre space was originally built in the mid-'70s, then rededicated to the U.N. in 1995. In 1999, the Department of Public Works started talking to community groups about how to improve a place that

"doesn't really function optimally," said DPW's Judi Mosqueda, secretary for the Working Group, which has met four times so far.

Boris Dramov, the city-hired architect, laid out 20 design principles for the plaza renovation based on his summary of the group's previous meetings. Principles include: "Create an inclusive space that fulfills its civic, commemorative and neighborhood roles" and "Create a more equitable place that serves

the diversity of the population in a sustainable manner." As well as remove the fountain, add benches and keep supporting the Farmers' Market.

The current working plans emphasize the plaza's linearity and mall-like appearance, according to Dramov, with four broken up rows of trees lining the space between buildings from Market Street to Larkin.

The next meeting is June 11, City Hall, Room 278, 3-5 p.m. ■



Central City Extra is published monthly by San Francisco Study Center Inc., a private nonprofit serving the community since 1972.

The Extra is published through grants from the S.F. Hotel Tax Fund and the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund. The contents are copyrighted by the San Francisco Study Center, 1095 Market Street, Suite 602, San Francisco, CA 94103. Phone: (415) 626-1650 Fax: (415) 626-7276 E-mail: centralcityextra@studycenter.org Editor and Publisher: Geoffrey Link Senior Writer/Editor: Marjorie Beggs

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Central City Extra is a member of the San Francisco Neighborhood Newspaper Association