

# TNDC tenants organize to have a say citywide

## Kim's City Hall swearing-in gives new group legitimacy

By MARJORIE BEGGS

THE TENDERLOIN has a new organization with an ambitious agenda: Residents in more than a dozen TNDC buildings have chosen fellow tenants to advocate for policies that range from improving neighborhood life to fighting citywide gentrification.

As voting members of the East Tenderloin Resident Community Association, the tenants have elected a council of 11 who will meet at least monthly to decide issues they want to tackle. In that, the association will be like other resident-focused organizations in the TL — Alliance for a Better District 6, Tenant Associations Coalition, Central City SRO Collaborative — advocating for neighborhood improvements at community meetings and City Hall hearings. Unlike them, they also will advise their landlords, TNDC's board of directors, about their concerns. (See sidebar on Community Housing Partnership's new and similar Community Congress.)

What makes the TNDC resident council special is that D6 Supervisor Jane Kim will swear in the members at City Hall June 12.

"My neighbors don't have much of a voice about the changes that are happening in the Tenderloin and citywide, something I call hypergentrification," says new council member Curtis Bradford, an Alexander Residence tenant who got 152 votes in the election, the most of any candidate. "I'm not afraid

that we'll be forced out of our homes — we feel safe in our homes, but there are services that we depend on that are run by nonprofits. They're the ones that are having to leave the neighborhood."

### TNDC'S EAST WING

In all, 470 ballots were cast at 13 buildings owned by TNDC, the Tenderloin's largest nonprofit housing developer: Alexander Residence, West Hotel, Ambassador Hotel, Maria Manor, O'Farrell Towers, Curran House, Dalt Hotel, Antonia Manor, Kelly Cullen Community, Civic Center Residence and the Turk/Eddy Apartments. When Franciscan Towers reopens next year after major renovations, association membership will rise to 14 buildings.

The 13 buildings comprise 1,536 units, each getting to cast one ballot. So why an 11-member council? Why not one building, one member?

"The idea is that each member represents the entire community, even the city as a whole, not his or her individual building," says Otto Duffy, 23-year resident of the Ritz and Election Committee spokesman. "Also, 11 parallels the Board of Supervisors."

TNDC's housing portfolio includes 30 SROs and apartment buildings north and south of Market Street, and in the Western Addition, Lower Haight and Mission District, plus another six buildings being developed. The 14 in the association are clustered east of Leavenworth, and most, but not all, are SROs housing single adults who have much in common. Living alone by choice or



PHOTO LORENZO LISTANA

Thanapa Simpanth and Curtis Bradford were elected to the new resident council.

circumstance, their independence may lead to loneliness and other problems. They're also worried about personal safety out on the streets, a concern they share with families.

For now, geography dictates the size of the association, though it could grow once it's up and running smoothly.

"With almost 3,000 tenants in all our buildings, we wanted to make sure the organizing and electoral processes would be manageable," Hatty Lee, TNDC community organizer, wrote in an email. "We wanted the residents to be able to participate (in the association) in a meaningful way without getting lost in all the numbers."

Lorenzo Listana, a Curran House resident as well as a TNDC staff community organizer, says that the idea of the association and resident council was his, but "the residents did the work and planned the execution. We were just there to support them."

### ELECTION DAY

TNDC's community organizers work out of an office at 149 Taylor St., on the ground floor of Curran House. That's where the first hand-delivered, handmade ballot box arrived at 5:30 p.m. on May 9.

"Here we go!" shouted someone from the back of the room as Ward Loggins came in grinning, carrying the big white box from the Ritz Hotel where

he is a resident.

Planners had decided that if 30% of the units cast ballots, that would be a good turnout.

"Everyone was getting their feet wet for the first time in this, planners, residents, candidates — we weren't sure what to expect," Bradford said later. He got involved with forming the association "from the start," he says, then switched over to become a candidate as soon as recruitment began. He considers himself an activist, having worked with Market Street for the Masses, organizing for marriage equality, advocating for Proposition C, the city-financed trust fund to increase affordable housing, and other efforts.

By 6:30 p.m., all the boxes had been delivered and the counting began. Three hours later, two dozen people gathered to hear the results: 470 ballots had been cast and 13 discounted as spoiled, resulting in a 30.5% turnout.

The winners were Alexander residents Bradford, Reginald Meadows, Thanapa Simpanth and Rosalia Tuvera; Charles Armenta from Kelly Cullen Community; Sallie Lu, O'Farrell Towers; Marilyn Michael, Dalt Hotel; Morena Perez, Curran House; Henry Webb and Dave Seiler, Civic Center Residence; and Connie Moy, Maria Manor.

Moy, 84, mother of seven, grandmother of 14, great-grandmother of four, has lived at the Maria for 20 years.

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## CHP's residents organized, too

TNDC isn't the only nonprofit housing developer whose tenants are getting organized. Community Housing Partnership has 12 buildings, most in the Tenderloin and South of Market. For years, tenant councils have planned events and discussed their buildings' day-to-day concerns, such as bedbugs — "the important local issues of community living," says James Tracy, CHP community organizer.

But early this year, residents in eight CHP buildings formed a new Community Congress to tackle CHP-wide issues such as grievance procedures. CHP is revising theirs.

"CHP comes from a background of experimenting with democracy," Tracy says. "When we make decisions, we consult with tenants."

Congress members, currently two tenants each from eight buildings, nominate themselves for the one-year post and are elected by fellow residents, says Amakh Sul Rama, CHP community organizer, who facilitates their monthly meetings. The congress' role is to advise CHP, but members have one powerful responsibility: They now nominate the four tenant reps who will rise through the ranks to sit on CHP's Board of Directors.

"That used to be one of my jobs," Tracy says.

— Marjorie Beggs

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Serving as a Board of Director member is a rewarding volunteer opportunity allowing individuals to help navigate and oversee the organization's mission and goals for the North of Market / Tenderloin neighborhood and community. Qualified applicants must be a North of Market / Tenderloin property or business owner, or resident.

Applications are accepted up until the Annual Board of Director's meeting and elections, June 16th, 2014, 4 PM at [134 Golden Gate Ave., Suite A, San Francisco, CA 94102](http://134 Golden Gate Ave., Suite A, San Francisco, CA 94102). All NOMTL CBD meetings are open to the public.

The North of Market / Tenderloin Community Benefit District (NOMTL CBD) exists to facilitate the transformation of the Tenderloin into a cleaner, safer, more vibrant neighborhood. [nom-tlcbd.org](http://nom-tlcbd.org)