

GOOD NEWS

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

OUR PARK For the second time since it reopened in December 2014, Boeddeker Park has garnered professional kudos for a job exceptionally well done. When the California Parks and Recreation Society meets in Long Beach for its March 8-11 conference and expo, an S.F. Rec & Park rep will accept the Excellence in Design-Park Planning award. (A second San Francisco park, Cayuga in the Outer Mission, also will receive an award for excellence at the event.) That honor, says CPRS, goes to



SVEN EBERLEIN, 2013

Steel and net climbing structure is one of many award-winning amenities at the renovated Boeddeker Park.

projects that demonstrate “high standards of planning, design, community involvement, operation and maintenance, quality of aesthetics, usability, accessibility and versatility.” CPRS is a 4,000-member, 70-year-old public-interest organization that annually recogniz-

es outstanding achievement in facility design, park planning, marketing and communication, and community improvement. Last year, Boeddeker won the prestigious American Institute of Architecture San Francisco’s design award for its \$9.3 million makeover.

FORUM FOR ACTIVISTS Looking for ways to get more involved in central city politics and policymaking? Every Wednesday, Hospitality House, a Tenderloin agency founded in 1967, hosts a Community Organizing Work Group. The drop-in meeting, 2:30-4 p.m. at 290 Turk St., is open to anyone interested in learning about organizing, building community or just socializing with neighbors. “Topics are driven by whomever is in the room,” says Julia Gallyot, community organizing peer advocate. How to give public comment at City Hall, residential and commercial developments in the pipeline for the neighborhood, how to start a flea market in the Tenderloin and getting involved with the Central Market Citizen’s Advisory Committee

are some recent topics, Gallyot says. Info: jgallyot@hospitalityhouse.org.

PUBLIC ART 1028 Market Street, the proposed mixed-use residential and retail project near the intersection of Market, Taylor and Golden Gate, is moving forward. Once built, it will need large-scale public art to grace the site, say its developers. The long-vacant building is currently home of The Hall’s food and drink concessions and once held the popular second-story Hollywood Billiards, shuttered in 2003. It will be razed to create 186 rental units and 10,000 square feet of ground-floor retail. Developers Tidewater and War Horse are commissioning public art and proposals — from local artists or artist collaboratives — are due March 25. For the RFQ with all the info on the project and the commission, see <http://tinyurl.com/hsflqmk>. The Hall, which issued the RFQ, says it will host community arts workshops to consider guidelines for proposals for finalists. Info: Ilana Lipsett, community manager and culture curator, thehallsf.com. ■

Kim opens door to massage 18 years after Yee shut it

BY JONATHAN NEWMAN

SUPERVISOR JANE KIM in December, in one of her last acts as a member of the board’s Land Use Committee, introduced legislation that would amend a 17-year-old Planning Code provision prohibiting new massage parlors in most of the Tenderloin.

That 1998 rule, sponsored by then-Supervisor Leland Yee, was the result of heavy community lobbying against liquor and prostitution that was associated with storefront massage parlors of which there were 22 in the TL, all cited for solicitation, sex trafficking or racketeering.

Under Yee’s legislation, only health clubs and licensed physical therapists could provide new massage services within the broad boundaries of the North of Market Residential Special Use District, an area that encompasses the vast majority of the Tenderloin.

The first beneficiary of Kim’s ordi-

nance — if it passes after a Planning Commission hearing — could be Onsen Holistic Spa and Tea Room, a Japanese-themed restaurant and spa. Onsen’s owners, husband and wife Sunny Simmons and Caroline Smith, bought a 3,000-square-foot, single-story brick building at 466 Eddy St., formerly City Automotive, specialists in Volkswagen repair, in 2013. They have been rehabbing the structure in hopes that the code gets changed.

In January, the Planning Department found Kim’s ordinance did not trigger the need for an impact review under the California Environmental Quality Act. The next step is a public hearing before the Planning Commission, now scheduled for March 10, to determine if the ordinance fits the city’s priorities on the co-existence of neighborhood businesses and residential enclaves.

Kim’s proposed ordinance would allow a new business to provide massage as an accessory to its main business — in On-

sen’s case a restaurant — if it gets a conditional use permit from City Planning. Applicants for conditional use permits must persuade the Planning Department that their proposed use is necessary or desirable to the neighborhood, resolve any question of potential negative impact and demonstrate compliance with the city’s General Plan. A showing of balance between the neighborhood business and the surrounding residential footprint is basic to answering the conditional use question.

Michael Nulty, executive director of Alliance For a Better District 6, remembers the multiyear campaign to rein in the proliferating liquor licenses and storefront massage parlors back in the day.

“Great work was done by Jim Thompson, property manager of Aspen Apartments, David Baker of North of Market Planning Coalition and Ana Bolton of Adopt-A-Block,” Nulty said. “They collected statistics and presented evidence to the Planning Commission and the board, especially on the difficulties for the neighborhood’s kids navigating public intoxication and the street activity in front of the massage joints.”

But times and real estate values have changed. The Tenderloin is home to new businesses, many are well-funded, and new rules are being made for a city riding the tiger of economic development.

21 Club is gone and will be replaced by Big, a high-end cocktail lounge. Original Joe’s long ago left for North Beach. Its former fire-ravaged site on Taylor now

houses PianoFight Theater and Restaurant. Even in the Tenderloin, vacant buildings fetch millions at sale.

In their appearances at community meetings, Simmons and Smith describe Onsen — Japanese for “hot spring” — as “an environment of relaxation and peace.” They plan to serve Japanese-inspired food traditionally paired with sake, but also wine and beer. And they are constructing a steam room, sauna, communal tub and showers in their building with six rooms for massage and “rejuvenation treatments.”

Kim’s code amendments would allow massage to occupy no more than 25% of the square footage of the business, operate from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. and limit masseurs or masseuses on duty to no more than three at any one time. Kim also calls for practitioners to either get a Public Health permit or be certified by the California Massage Therapy Council. Both require individuals to have at least 500 hours of approved instruction.

The Onsen owners are also seeking a Type 41 liquor license, essentially a beer and wine license for a restaurant, which seldom gets denied.

Nulty seems skeptical.

“I don’t know — a place with a liquor license that offers massage? That might be a first for the neighborhood,” he said.

Onsen’s owners declined to be interviewed for this story. Supervisor Kim did not return The Extra’s requests for comment on her proposed ordinance. ■

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