

Boeddeker's a 9 — special, but down from 2nd place last year

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Friends meetings in search of underused, needy parks that could become a project if they had an active, supportive group of volunteers.

"When we started the planning back in 2006," says Gilchrist, now a supervising project manager with Rec and Park. "We were really committed to investing in the park for future generations of Tenderloin residents. We created some bold ideas for improving Boeddeker — the fact that the park received such high scores is a reflection of our commitment to listening to and integrating the ideas of our staff and partners."

The dream that came true celebrated its second anniversary Dec. 15.

Each year since 2005, under a Charter amendment, a planning team from the controller's office has evaluated the city's parks based on the type of facility, size and the geographical area it supports. The team grades a dozen features, including restrooms, trees, table seating areas and children's play areas. Some parks have more such features than others.

As a whole, the eight District 6 parks didn't do too bad, either: 85.8%, up .3%

from an average of 85.5%, about the same as the previous year (see sidebar). That puts D6 in fourth place among the 11 supervisorial districts. The score was also a tad higher than the city average of 85.5%. A score of 85 is pretty good, the report said, indicating adequate maintenance.

A data shocker in the report was the Tenderloin Children's Recreation Center's score. The center on Ellis Street near Hyde plummeted 20.1 points in fiscal 2015-16 to 71.9% from its 92% score the previous year — continuing the slide from 96.1% five years ago. The report cited "litter, paint and rust/rot on play structures" as a common problem at parks with the biggest decreases.

By contrast, Boeddeker Park, long the ugly sister of Tenderloin playgrounds, nailed a perfect 100% for its playground feature for the second straight year, making it the all-city leader again. Its green and royal blue play equipment in the 2,800-square-foot children's playground includes a slide, swings and huge jungle gym, still pristine and resting on a comfortable surface made of 100% recycled rubber. Boeddeker offers full-court basketball. ■



RATINGS FOR DISTRICT 6 PARKS

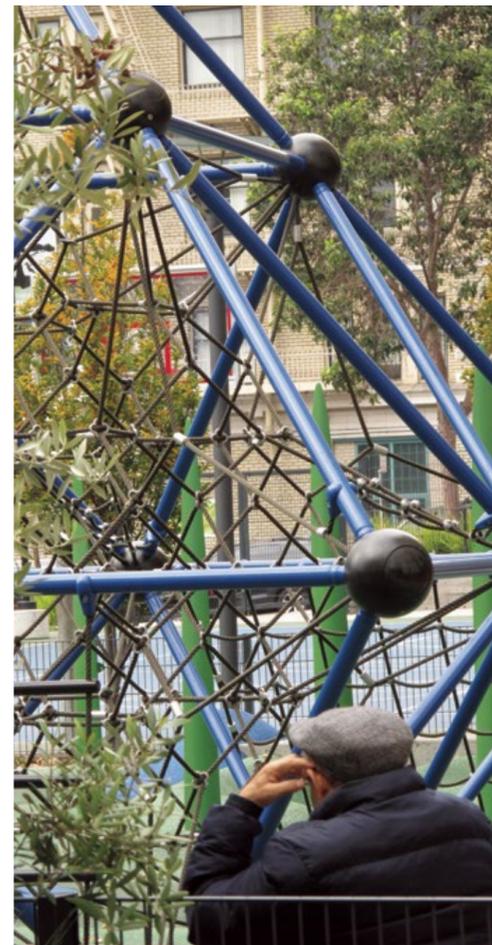
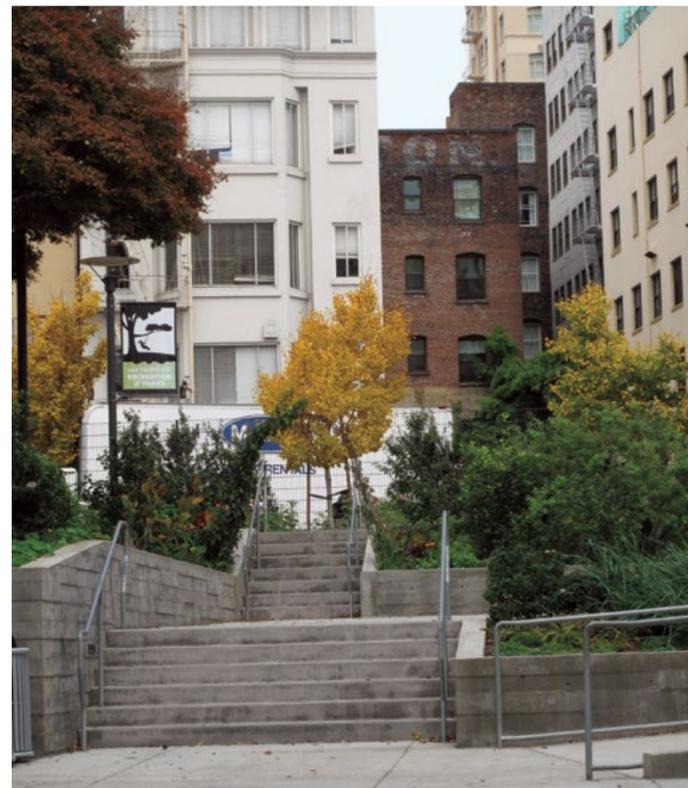
The eight parks in District 6, which serve 74,000 residents, did fairly well in the last evaluation by an inspecting team from the controller's office, although none showed the dramatic improvement from five years ago that Boeddeker Park has.

Boeddeker jumped 21.2 points from a 74.9% rating in the 2011 report to 96.1% in 2016, as the little fifth-of-an-acre Sgt. John Macauley Park at Larkin and O'Farrell streets moved up from 86.9% to 90% in the same period.

The biggest drops were at Tenderloin Recreation Center on Ellis Street, 82.8%, down from 96.1%, a loss of 13.3 percentage points; Gene Friend Recreation Center on Sixth Street at Folsom, 96% to 85.1%; Victoria Manalo Draves Park, nearby on Folsom, lost 8.4 percentage points, going from 96% to 87.6%.

The others: the 5.4-acre Joseph L. Alioto Performing Arts Piazza in Civic Center, 76.7% down from 80.8%; South Park, at 64 South Park Ave., 92.5%, down from 94%; and Turk-Hyde Mini Park 79.3%, down from 83.5%.

— Tom Carter



Far left, PE teacher Noah Blakely and his students use Father Alfred E. Boeddeker Park regularly, walking the half-block up from City Academy at 230 Jones. Here, they assemble at the high school regulation-size basketball court for class. Top, Seniors use the park for contemplation, tai chi workouts, walks and visiting friends. Above, The royal blue climbing structure is the centerpiece of the 2,800-square-foot children's playground. Left, Paths and stairs flanked by the park's verdant, terraced Celebration Garden lead to a golden ginkgo at the northeast end of the park, on Ellis Street.

NOTES FROM THE TENDERLOIN

Ed Bowers has been poetizing in the Tenderloin for a long time. Bowers covered the neighborhood's Art Beat for *The Extra* for a while, then led poetry jams at the iconic 21 Club. His homage to that dive bar, "21 Poems for the 21 Club," was published by Study Center Press. Prolific Bowers became an award-winning journalist with his rhythmic riffs on Tenderloin National Forest, the Main Library and other neighborhood highlights on the front page of *The Extra*.

Here is the lead from a tome he shared at the Poetry in the Park event in October.

Boeddeker Park

In the
human world the
Land of the Dead
is where
lost poems go
to die

outside
Boeddeker Park.

The park was
originally built
by vultures
as a nest
composed of yellowed
obituary columns,

their blind eyes and
feathers

falling on

forbidden words.

Ancient spirits
read their disembodied midnight
poems,

outside,

beyond children and cops,
around
a merry-go-round
tree

to prisoners of
World War 3

glowing in the dark neonnights
full of poetry,

illuminating its
whispered curses
in blank verse

shot from

Saturday night specials.

— Ed Bowers



Neighborhood poet Ed Bowers on Turk Street in 2015.

LISE STAMPFLI