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\$35 million, 8-story Salvation Army Community Housing Center



RENDERING BY HERMAN & COLIVER: ARCHITECTURE

The Salvation Army's new center calls for 100 units for recovering addicts and young people forced out of foster care at age 18.

242 TURK ST.

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

THE army is on the move. At 1000 hours on 04/10/03, one of its officers briefed the public.

Col. Bettie Love, looking sharp in her uniform, told the Tenderloin Futures Collaborative about the Salvation Army's plan to raze the former SRO hotel it owns at 242 Turk and purchase the adjoining lot at 230 Turk, currently a 32-car privately owned parking lot. On the lots, the Army will erect a new eight-story building. Working name: Tenderloin Community and Housing Center.

The Army, which has owned the Turk Street building since 1989, spent the last few years contemplating what to do with the aging sites. In the end, \$\$\$ talked.

"The sprinklering costs for renovation were so prohibitive, we decided to just demolish," said Love. "It's going to give us a chance to enlarge our vision to make a real impact on the neighborhood."

Here's the battle plan for the \$35 million, 118,000 square-foot project. The first floor will have a youth center with a full-court gym (aka multipurpose room), small swimming pool, chapel and senior nutrition and activity center. The facilities will be open to the community, as well, "probably for a nominal membership fee," Love said.

Among the 109 apartments in the upper stories, about 70 will be for recovering addicts and 30 for kids who've aged out of foster care at 18. Studios account for 92 of the units, and 10 apartments are one-bedroom — reserved for foster kids who have kids. Another seven two-bedroom apartments will be for Salvation Army staff.

2-YEAR STAYS PLANNED

"The housing is transitional," Love said, "with stays of about two years, though it could be as long as four years if someone needs it to achieve independence."

About 150 kids age out of foster care annually in the city, and within a year about half become homeless, according to Jennifer Byrd, the Army's media relations manager, citing a consultant's report to S.F. Human Services and Community Mental Health. Byrd also told The Extra that the city's five-year "Strategic Plan for Homeless Services 2001-06" named providing transitional housing for recovering substance abusers and those with mental illness a primary goal.

Who will get first crack at the new SRO rooms? Many of the adults will come from the Army's Harbor Light treatment program on Harrison Street in SoMa, Byrd said, while foster youth will be referred by nonprofit agencies like Larkin Street Youth Center.

"We've never served this youth population before," Byrd said. "As we get better known, referrals probably will come from other nonprofit agencies as well as from the city's Department of Social Services."

Salvation Army has filed a conditional use permit for the building, the EIR is pending, and, said project director Stacey Cornell, the project is expected to go before the Planning Commission June 19. Demolition is scheduled for February 2004,

project completion for the end of 2005.

Project financing, Cornell said, will come half from private foundations and individuals, and half from public sources: Federal Low-Income Tax Credits; a Federal Home Loan Bank grant through the Affordable Housing Program; and a California Housing Finance Agency loan.

After Love's presentation, Michael Nulty, Tenant Associations Coalition program director and co-president of Alliance for a Better District 6, asked if the Salvation Army had presented its plans to any other neighborhood groups, and if not, why not as it had been in the works for years.

"We've talked with many agencies," Love said, "especially about the needs of youth and children in the neighborhood." They hadn't made presentations to other neighborhood groups, she conceded, but she said neighbors within 500 feet of the project had been notified in writing of the Salvation Army's plan.

[Once the Planning Department clears a permit application for design and code compliance, the applicant has to give Planning names and addresses so it can send written notices "to all owners and, to the degree feasible, residents of properties surrounding the site and neighborhood organizations in the vicinity of the project."]

"I never saw anything in writing," said John Nulty, a resident of Antonia Manor at Turk and Jones. "Also, I'm concerned about behind your building, where there's a locked gate and in the alley [Wagner Alley] I've seen mattresses and furniture out there — it's a real fire hazard."

Love didn't respond to the comment about the furniture but she said the building does have a breakaway door. Nulty said it doesn't.

But before a battle could flare up, TNDC's Katie Mullin, chairing the meeting, called a halt to the agenda item. It was 1020 hours.

NEW BIZ UPDATE

In the last few months, Collaborative members have been pushing to get more business owners to the meeting table. In April, members heard about four new or reopening businesses, and two of the owners came in person.

Jack Tseng, who had opened the International Noodle House at 690 Van Ness eight days earlier, said the restaurant "serves decent food at reasonable prices in a comfortable environment." Business is good, so far, he said, at this former Lyons Restaurant, which has 169 seats and is open from 11:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. Tseng said his application for a beer and wine license is pending.

Also still hanging fire is the beer and wine license for William Linn and Monika Bernstein's Realspace Art Gallery at 132 Eddy, which, Bernstein told the group, will have its first exhibition at the end of May [exact date TBA]. The partners filed for the license almost a year ago.

Realspace's curtain-raiser, Bernstein said, will be visual sculpture — artists using video and other electronic technology to create sculpture that gallerygoers can interact with.

Another grand opening: Studio Tech Auto Body and Repair at 135 Hyde, formerly a body shop. Owner Glenn Quan was too busy to attend the Collaborative meeting, explained Mullin. She also announced that Punjab Kabab House in the Ambassador Hotel, closed for building renovations since March 2002, will reopen this May. ■

Errata: In issue no. 23 we reported that the new Super Cool Discount at 199 Eddy is owned by Marie and John Duggan. The Duggans do own the building, but the business owner is Issa Kort.

'HOOD PROMOTERS PITCH PARTICIPATION

COLLABORATIVE members Shawn Collins, director of the Tenderloin Sidewalk Improvement Program, and Elaine Zamora, property owner at 118 Jones, sent out a special call to neighborhood businesses to join the Collaborative. TSIP's April newsletter, distributed to 500 property owners, merchants, city officials, social services agencies and residents, carried this pitch:

The Futures Collaborative Wants You!

Tenderloin business and property owners have many problems that affect their bottom line, problems that cannot be solved alone. The Tenderloin Futures Collaborative is a group of business/property owners, city department representatives, social service providers, and resident advocates who meet monthly to discuss issues affecting the Tenderloin and plan solutions to the many challenges facing our community. We are especially interested in building our small business representation. Would you be interested in attending a meeting, receiving our meeting minutes via fax or e-mail, or discussing the Collaborative with another business owner who is a member?

Please contact Elaine Zamora at 440-7470 or Shawn Collins at tenderloinsidewalk@yahoo.com to find out more.