

GOOD NEWS for...

TENDERLOIN PEDESTRIANS The passage of state Prop K last month — a big 89% victory — extends the half-cent transportation sales tax for the next 30 years and is expected to generate \$2.8 billion for pedestrian-, bicycle-friendly and public transportation projects. Some boons: \$142 million for traffic calming, \$70 million for pedestrian circulation, \$37 million for pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and \$1.7 billion for transit improvements, including extending Caltrain into a rebuilt Transbay Terminal and Muni's Third St. light rail into Chinatown. For pedestrian-related info: Walk SF, 431-WALK.

CALWORKS CLIENTS Changes in state law now allow adults with dependent children in the federally funded CalWORKs program to have more income and still get cash aid. You even may be eligible for back cash aid if the S.F. Department of Human Services denied that aid between October 2002 and July 2003, and if the denial was based on having "excess" income. For eligible adults with dependent children, CalWORKs (California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Children) provides financial support and services for up to two years. For more information about back cash aid, contact CalWORKs at DHS: 557-5725.

SMOKE-FREE HEALTH Saturday, Nov. 22, four residential buildings — Glide House in the TL, Ping Yuen in Chinatown, and the Apollo and Madrid hotels in the Mission — celebrated their decision to make all their common areas, inside and out, officially off-limits to smokers. As part of the Tobacco Free Housing Project, sponsored by the American Lung Association of San Francisco and San Mateo County, the four sites now ban smoking in meeting rooms, entryways, hallways, stairwells, elevators, laundry rooms, balconies, patios, courtyards and play areas. For more information: Michelle Rivelo, (650) 994-5864x302 or micheller@alafsm.org.

— MARJORIE BEGGS

This column needs regular infusions. If you have some good news (no events, please), send it to marjorie@studycenter.org.

Turk Street residents cry foul

Respite housing plan would 'screw' neighborhood, they say

PHOTO BY LENNY LIMJOCO

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

STAND in the middle of the 100 block of Turk and look around at who's on the street. Do you see formerly homeless folks living "stably and unobtrusively," or "people walking around screaming at all hours of the night"?

The latter, answers Jim Thompson, property manager for 11 years of Aspen Tenderloin Apartments at 165 Turk, home mostly to seniors.

The former, says Marc Trotz, director of Housing and Urban Health at the Department of Public Health.

Trotz heads up DPH's Direct Access to Housing program, which houses homeless people with mental and physical disabilities in renovated, master-leased SROs like the Camelot at 124 Turk, which it opened last year. The building had been empty since the '89 quake.

At the November Tenderloin Futures Collaborative meeting, Trotz presented DPH's plans to convert the building right next door to the Camelot, the former Bulldog Bathhouse, 132 Turk, into "transitional housing for people cycling through the system."

The group listened quietly as Trotz described how the 132 Turk owner had approached DPH to talk about using his property for something like the Camelot.

"Nothing has been done yet," Trotz assured the group, "but we're exploring how the site might be used for medical respite housing — a place that fills the niche between shelters and permanent housing. It would be time-limited recuperation time, six to eight months, for these frail folks, an alternative to discharging them onto the streets without care."

He envisioned, he said, medical services in the basement, a dining hall and common space on the ground floor, and living spaces on the top two floors for about 75 people. "We don't want this to be anything like a shelter," he said. "It's a stabilization zone."

Thompson lit into the plan angrily, noting that Turk Street, which he said had been starting to "look up," has deteriorated badly since the Camelot opened. And now the city is planning to bring in another program that will accelerate the process.

"We always wind up getting screwed," said Thompson, former

chairman of the defunct Tenderloin Community on Patrol. "There's no reason why my tenants need to be second-rate citizens compared to people in Pacific Heights."

Trotz seemed fazed. "I'm not here to slip one over on anyone," he responded. "I'm just here to present this, and if it gains momentum, I'll come back again with more information."

He said that the DPH has gotten positive feedback from the Camelot, which provides permanent housing to "55 formerly homeless people who are living there stably and unobtrusively."

John Nulty, who lives at Antonia Manor at 180 Turk, cried foul. "That's not true. People can't even walk down the street safely anymore."

Thompson offered Trotz the vantage point from his apartment, which faces the street. "You can observe yourself what's going on. The Camelot is filled with drugs and disturbances, with people walking around screaming at all hours of the night. And it's getting more violent all the time."

Trotz insisted that it was the first time he'd heard of any problems at the Camelot. "But you're there 24/7 and I'm not," he said to the residents.

Thompson said that he has video documentation of the problems, taken from his apartment, and he offered to share them with Trotz. He left Trotz with a few more angry words about how DPH approaches its responsibility to notify neighbors about what's coming down the pipeline: "The process is insulting, a stacked deck. We're given an opportunity to vent and then [the plans] just go ahead. It's gutted our community."

The Extra talked with Thompson and Trotz a few weeks after the meeting to update the situation. Thompson said Trotz took his card and promised to have the Camelot's manager call him.

"No one's called," Thompson said, "but to their credit — I guess — in the last few weeks, some of the louder people, including a guy who used to come out in his bathrobe screaming every day, seem to have disappeared. It's calmer now."

But the "situation" isn't over, Thompson said. He contacted Mark Aaronson, director of Hastings' Civil Justice Clinic, and asked to have a few law students help him figure out the legalities of the situation — specifically, DPH's responsibility for notifying neighbors when it wants to locate what



Camelot (right) at 124 Turk, and proposal site at 132 Turk.

amount to mental health facilities "in their back yard." A meeting with the students is pending.

Trotz said he wasn't surprised by the community response, having been involved in other NIMBYish confrontations in the past.

"There's no way we can convey to neighbors what a facility like this will actually be like, how well it will be run, as we believe this will be if we go forward with it," he said.

Medical respite housing is not new, he explained, and the term is well-known in the mental health and homeless services fields. [Our Google search turned up almost 93,000 results.] There are, however, no programs in California.

More expensive than traditional transitional housing for the homeless, medical respite reduces emergency room visits and saves money. That according to the Web site of the non-profit Common Ground Community in New York City, which operates the Medical Respite Center.

Trotz said that neighbors will have ample opportunities to get involved in the decision to locate such a facility in the Tenderloin — or not.

"We have a good-neighbor policy — we'll follow all the noticing requirements," Trotz said. "There'll be hearings in Public Health, Planning and more, probably three to five public processes that will have to go on before anything happens." ■

EDITOR AND PUBLISHER: Geoffrey Link
SENIOR WRITER/EDITOR: Marjorie Beggs
COPY EDITOR: Gerry Fregoso
REPORTERS: Tom Carter, Ed Bowers, Karen Oberdorfer
DESIGN AND LAYOUT: Carl Angel
DESIGN CONSULTANT: Don McCartney
ILLUSTRATOR: Carl Angel
PHOTOGRAPHERS: Lenny Limjoco, Mark Ellinger
ADVERTISING/CIRCULATION MANAGER: Joseph Thomas
CONTRIBUTORS: Adrian D. Varnedoe, Diamond Dave, William Crain, Mark Hedin, Phil Tracy, John Burks, Anne Marie Jordan, Eric Robertson, Meg Dixit
EDITORIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE: David Baker, Michael Nulty, Debbie Larkin, Nicholas Rosenberg, Brad Paul, Tariq Alazraie

Central City Extra is a member of the
 SAN FRANCISCO NEIGHBORHOOD NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION