

YMCA's sweaty property for sale

Salvation Army tells major changes to plans for 242 Turk

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

A brief announcement at the end of the February Tenderloin Futures Collaborative meeting caught many off guard.

The Central YMCA, said Executive Director Carmela Gold, has started the marketing phase of its project to merge with Hastings to create a combo parking garage/housing/YMCA at Golden Gate and Larkin.

The Y and Hastings still are working out the details of the joint project, but the Y has put out feelers to see if anyone's interested in buying its three parcels: the main building at 220 Golden Gate and two adjacent parking lots, at 351 Turk and 145 Leavenworth.

There already have been several "interested parties," said Monica Finnegan of Newmark Global Real Estate Advisors, the Y's contact agency.

A Feb. 28 press release clarified a few points. The Y hopes to break new ground within 12 to 18 months, and the new facility could double the number of youth served and greatly expand programs for seniors. The Y would like the buyer of its current digs to develop it for housing.

Anticipating that some may be sad about the demise of the Central Y in its current location, which opened in 1910, President and CEO Chuck Collins said, "This is not a small decision on our part. We're proud of the role the YMCA has played and want to continue building strong families in the Tenderloin for another 100 years."

LANDMARK A-COMIN'

David Villa-Lobos, Community Leadership Alliance director, made an announcement to Collaborative members that got him a little applause: "The process has begun to designate 230 Jones a San Francisco historical landmark."

That's San Francisco Rescue Mission's home, a good-looking, three-story, all-brick building designed by architect Sylvain Schnaittcher and erected in 1924 for the musician's union, Local 6. "Musician's Union" is engraved above the door.

And therein lies part of this tale. Late last year, Villa-Lobos and other community members decided it was time to put pressure on the Rescue Mission to take down the huge banners it had hung across its façade,

obscuring not only the engraving but much of the building.

Villa-Lobos got City Planning involved. The mission had no permit to hang such banners, Planning found, and issued several violation notices. The banners came down.

Then Villa-Lobos and Alliance members, prompted by the suggestion of City Planner Adam Light, approached Supervisor Chris Daly to see if he'd support their efforts to get landmark status for the building.

"Daly was interested because the musician's hall has historic significance in the neighborhood," Villa-Lobos said.

Maria Kozak, who worked has worked at the union for 30 years, said the Jones site was always a lively place.

"I'm the union's oldest employee," she told The Extra, "and I was really sad to leave the building when we sold it to the Rescue Mission in 1998. This was before my time, but I've heard stories about the bar in the basement, and all the big band people who used to come by the hall. I think it's great about making the building a landmark."

Villa-Lobos filled out the 22-page application for landmark status. The Rescue Mission is not a signer on the application, he said, and he doesn't know how they feel about it. While landmarks carry some benefits — federal tax credits for certified rehabs and the less tangible "bragging rights" for their owners — landmarks also have a reputation for being complicated and expensive to alter, even slightly.

The Extra called the Rescue Mission to see if it was pleased with the idea of the designation.

"I don't know anything about it," said Pastor Ralph Gella, "but it sounds like a good idea. It's a great building."

Daly's staff has the application now. Next it goes to the Landmarks Preservation Board, then on to the Board of Supervisors. At that point, if it wants, the Rescue Mission can appeal the designation.

ARMY'S TURK ST. PLANS CHANGE

Two years ago, the Salvation Army marched on the Tenderloin Futures Collaborative bringing news of destruction and resurrection — of its building at 242 Turk, that is.

The plan was to raze the old SRO, purchase the adjoining lot and erect an eight-story building with gym, pool, chapel, activity centers and 109 units on the top floors. Mostly studios, the units would temporarily house recovered addicts and youth who'd aged out of foster care. Project cost was pegged at \$35 million. Demolition was expected to take place February 2004, project completion the end of 2005.

Last month, Lt. Roger McCort, corps officer for the Turk project, and Stacy Estes, building project coordinator, returned with an update. In mid-March, they said, they'll go

before the Planning Commission to get approval for changes and additions, viz:

The pool, at the back of the parcel, originally was to have a single story above it for a fitness center and a general activity room. The new plan calls for an additional story that will house a 2,500-square-foot dance studio, complete with bar and mirrors, for youth dance classes and senior aerobics, and that private dance teachers can rent.

Another change is that all the units will be studios, Estes said, instead of a mix of studios and apartments, which bumps the number of units from 109 to 113. Of those, three will be for staff.

"We've also decided to reserve 40 of those units as permanent housing for adults with a history of substance abuse," Estes said. The remaining studios will be transitional housing, up to 24 months, for recovering addicts and former foster kids, 18 to 24. Originally, the kids would have been young single parents, who would have gotten dibs on the one-bedroom apartments.

The plan now is to reserve 27 of the studios for the young adults, no children.

"We felt that the [original] population mix wasn't compatible — adults in substance abuse recovery and aged-out foster care youth with children," Estes later told The Extra.

Other changes include four classrooms on the second floor for after-school tutoring, mentoring, and computer training. According to Jennifer Byrd, Salvation Army public information officer, whether to charge the public day-use or class fees or offer memberships for the pool and gym has not been decided.

As Estes concluded her presentation, Paula Lewis, gaffer for St. Anthony's building projects, asked if the new Turk Street structure would be "green" — built with nontoxic, recycled, durable materials that conserve energy and resources.

"We've exceeded the Title 24 requirements (California's building standards code for construction, electrical, mechanical), but no, it's not green," Estes said.

"What about the façade?" asked resident and community activist Michael Nulty. "Has anything been done to make the building a better fit for the neighborhood?"

"We've worked with Planning and made some changes to make it fit better," Estes said, without explanation.

Byrd later told The Extra that those changes were made two years ago, in concert with City Planning, and involved altering the orientation of the metal facing on the front of the building and the cornice treatment to make the structure more "historically consistent" with surrounding buildings.

The revamped timeline pegs demolition for March 2006 and completion of the new building two years later.

The cost? It's ballooned to \$44.4 million, Byrd said. The money is expected to come from federal low-income housing tax credits, tax-exempt bonds, Federal Home Loan Bank Affordable Housing Program funds, California Multi-Family Housing Program funds and private gifts.

By far the largest of the largess will come from the Joan Kroc Funds, which in January 2004 made a \$1.5 billion gift to the Salvation Army for future community centers in four regional areas nationwide. San Francisco, part of the 13-state Western region, is waiting to hear about its proposal to Kroc for \$30 million for its planned center, Byrd said. ■

GOOD NEWS for...

HANDY PEOPLE The San Francisco Tool Lending Center has relocated to 1016 Howard, near Sixth Street. It offers more than 150 tools for all kinds of work — carpentry, concrete, electrical, floor and wall, gardening, mechanical and plumbing — as well as how-to workshops and a reference library of publications and videotapes. Tools — but not power tools — are loaned free for three days to residents and property owners who register by supplying a photo ID and a current bill to verify residence. TLC, open Wed.-Fri. 1-6 p.m. and Sat. 9 a.m.-5 p.m., is sponsored by the San Francisco Public Library. More information: 701-TOOL.

TL SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM, a service of North of Market Neighborhood Improvement Corp., turns five this year and is

celebrating March 23 with a fund-raising bash at the California Culinary Academy. The event, at \$125 per person, will honor the five operators who clean Tenderloin sidewalks seven days a week. TSIP is supported by 88 merchant and property owner sponsors, most of them members of the Fair Share Club, businesses and hotels that monthly pay TSIP \$1 a linear foot or \$1 per residential unit. Other sponsors donate up to \$20,000 a year. For more information about TSIP or the fund-raiser, go to www.tenderloinsidewalk.org or call 409-8747.

— MARJORIE BEGGS AND TOM CARTER

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

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