

SoMa 3-unit could spark citywide trend

Planning intrigued by 'impact tax' for affordable housing

BY TOM CARTER

THE city's full court press for affordable housing raised some eyebrows recently when a proposed three-unit South of Market residential project ran into the strong arm of the Planning Commission and some commissioners asked the developers to ante up for the cause of affordable housing. No law required that, so the builders refused.

The project was approved anyway.

But, because the commission is predisposed to preserve the character of neighborhood housing, some insiders believe this case was the harbinger of a coming trend: a project to replace a single-family home with two or three units may not get approved unless the developer pays into an affordable-housing pot. The same may be true of four and five units being replaced by up to a nine-unit building.

This tit-for-tat tack the commissioners took was proposed recently at a District 6 improvement group meeting. It came as a result of a city planner's pressure on a small SoMa developer to get more affordable housing.

Currently, Section 315 of Planning's Zoning Procedures requires that only housing projects of 10 or more units must make "10% of all units be affordable."

Author of that 2001 legislation, former supervisor now Assemblyman Mark Leno, told The Extra he favored lowering his ordinance requirements down to "three or five units."

"Developers can live with a mandate subsidizing affordable housing if they know the requirement up front," he said. "It should be clear and consistent, known well in advance and taken to the Board of Supervisors to make it law. I would oppose any commission decision like that at a late stage with no notice, after developers have put in so much work and expense. That will kill a project. And it will kill affordable units."

The case in question first came to light at the May meeting of the Alliance for a Better District 6, when a pair of

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33-35 Moss St. may be catalyst for City Planning policy change.

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TNDC'S CURRAN HOUSE



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Diep Do, TNDC project manager, looks over the Curran House interior, under construction.

Unusual development

First new family housing built in TL in 6 years

BY ANNE MARIE JORDAN

TNDC is in the final phase of construction on a rare, but much-needed development: family housing. Curran House — the newest project of the Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corporation — will be ready for occupancy in September.

On Taylor Street, across from Original Joe's, the imposing concrete and glass structure will provide affordable housing to families with children. It is the first such housing in the neighborhood since Glide's Cecil Williams House opened just up the street six years ago.

Up to 300 qualified applicants were expected to participate in a June 10 lottery for the 67 apartments.

From the outset, Curran House — named in honor of Sister Patrick Curran who before her death in 2002 was executive director of St. Anthony Foundation — was intended to be an inviting place for low-income families. Initial planning for the \$23 million project began more than four years ago.

TNDC's research indicated there is a desperate need for family housing in the Tenderloin. With approximately 90% of current Tenderloin housing either single-room occupancy or studio apartments, a family — meaning one or two adults with one child or more — has little chance to find comfortable, let alone spacious living. Many families, to stay

together, resort to cramming into single rooms or even splitting up into two separate small apartments.

Curran House provides an attractive option that is rare in this high-density community. More than half its apartments are generous in size, by Tenderloin standards. In addition to 14 studios, there are 15 one-bedroom, 14 two-bedroom and 24 three-bedroom units, many with two full bathrooms. Each studio has its own bathroom. The larger apartments, according to TNDC guidelines, can accommodate families with up to five children. A number of the apartments are ADA-compliant and wheelchair-accessible.

All apartments — whatever the size — come with kitchen appliances installed. There is carpeting and vinyl flooring throughout and mini-blinds on windows. Also, all of the units are cable-ready for TV and Internet hookup.

According to TNDC Project Manager Diep Do, who has seen the effort through from its initial planning, Curran House is a place that needed to happen.

"It is the first new-construction family housing in the Tenderloin for us," she says, "but we will try to build more. There is no problem renting these units, especially when rents are at an affordable level."

Rents start at \$750 a month for a studio and rise to \$1,153 for a three-bedroom apartment. Ten of the units are reserved for the formerly homeless, and two of these will be studios that rent for as low as \$150 a month, according to Don Falk, TNDC director of housing development.

Of the 21 completed projects owned and developed by TNDC, Curran House — No. 22 — is the agency's second property intended primarily as family housing. Its first family-type venture is at Eighth and Howard streets.

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