

GOOD NEWS for...

MAIN LIBRARY USERS The Board of Supervisors library advisory committee has weighed in on the planned \$5 million upgrade of the Main Library reading room and book borrowing system. Its conclusion: Be sure it's people-friendly this time. The committee advises renovating the dreary first-floor reading room and making it easier and faster to borrow books. Construction is to begin by midyear and end in early 2007. The first-floor layout is being rejiggered. Closed areas are now open and books taken out of storage are displayed in the reading room. The information desk will be larger and check-out automated. A king-size, superfast sorting machine will speed up book processing. The Library Citizens Advisory Committee wants to be sure the reading room encourages — well — reading, to say nothing of browsing or studying. It recommends more natural light, comfortable seating and brighter and warmer electric lighting, addressing a major failure in the 10-year-old, \$109 million edifice. Currently, the reading room has low ceilings and no windows or natural light because much of this area is below the sidewalk. Expect comfortable, easy-to-move work chairs throughout the library and clear direction signs at all entrances and on the upper floors. The committee urges more comfy seating around the atrium on all floors, as well.

— SUE CAUTHEN

BUDDING ENTREPRENEURS Central city neighbors interested in starting or expanding a for-profit business can get a quick leg up by contacting Legal Services for Entrepreneurs. The nine-year-old project links volunteer attorneys from top Bay Area law firms with low-income people who can't afford one-on-one legal help. The attorneys provide free consultation on incorporation, trademarks, leases, contracts, employment issues and zoning, but not on disputes, claims or lawsuits. The length of the consultation "depends on the situation," says Robert Clarkson, a Hastings Law College student who is helping promote the services in the Tenderloin. Many pro bono lawyers so enjoy the work that it becomes an ongoing relationship, he added. "Doing outreach in the Tenderloin has been quite interesting. While there are language barriers and some suspicions about what's being offered — and about lawyers — once people understand they appreciate the assistance." LSE, which also runs free legal workshops for groups of entrepreneurs at community organizations, and offers services in English, Spanish and Vietnamese, is a project of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of the S.F. Bay Area. Information: 543-9444 and www.lccr.com/lsehome.htm.

If you have some good news, send it to marjorie@studycenter.org or tom@studycenter.org.

Westside finds another home

3 mental health programs may move to the Warfield Building

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

Westside Community Mental Health Center Director Abner Boles got a polite reception but no support when he told the Collaborative in December about plans to move three mental health programs into the services-saturated Tenderloin, on Golden Gate near Leavenworth.

Two members of Boles' staff returned in March with news of a new location for the programs.

"We're in negotiations now to locate the services at 988 Market — that's the ground floor of the Warfield Building, plus three floors above it," said Alys Herring, Westside director of operations. "Three programs would go there — adult crisis, adult outpatient and Assertive Community Treatment."

Those programs, which serve a couple hundred clients, currently operate out of space in a building at Turk near Gough that owner St. Paulus Church wants back. The idea of locating the program on Golden Gate fell through, Herring said, because the building is being sold.

"I think this new location is much more acceptable than the one on Golden Gate," said Chaplain Earl Rogers of the S.F. Rescue Mission.

Others agreed, citing the advantages of placement closer to public transit and commerce and a little more distance from the densely residential inner Tenderloin.

"We hope to get agreement with the Warfield owner [David Addington] by the end of March, build out in four months and relocate within six months," Herring said.

Reminded that Boles' announcement three months earlier had drawn fire, she was asked how people who opposed it could make their feelings known about the new location.

"After the property is agreed on and we complete contract negotiations, there will be Department of Public Health hearings," Herring said.

Added Westside Deputy Director

Duane Poe, not realizing that he was fueling an almost cold fire, "The challenge for nonprofits that deliver these services is to find appropriate space. The fact is, this is where many clients live and it's where landlords will rent to us."

Jim Thompson, property manager 165 Turk, wasn't letting go easily.

"I think what we're hearing is the chicken and egg," he said. "Do the services come first or the people? The Tenderloin has been appointed to be the place where these services and these people belong, and that puts us in a quandary. People in other neighborhoods need to invest in solving these problems, too."

TL resident Bruce Windrem wandered, perhaps wisely, off the topic of Westside's relocation, observing that there's a reason the central city draws "these people": "It's what we can afford. I'm labeled 'mental' myself, but this is going to stay a blighted neighborhood unless there's more opportunity for everyone."

Before closing the discussion, Collaborative Chair Glenda Hope, director of S.F. Network Ministries, gave the Westside reps an insightful parting shot:

"By having programs near where they live, people in other neighborhoods can learn about the needs of mentally ill people and how they can help."

SUMMER OF DESTRUCTION

As she's done regularly for almost three years, Paula Lewis, St. Anthony Foundation operations director, gave an update on plans for its new headquarters at 150 Golden Gate.

Final drawings are 75% complete, hazardous material abatement starts in April and demolition is scheduled for June and July.

"It's going to be hand-demolition — no blowup or wrecking ball — and will be minimally intrusive to the neighborhood," Lewis said.

The four-story building will come down in three stages: Utilities will be removed from upper stories and pushed to the center of the

building; the guts will be demolished from the inside; and the exterior will be removed brick by brick.

Many at the meeting raised concerns about trash accumulating, rodent control and sidewalk access during construction.

Elaine Zamora, Tenderloin Community Benefit District general manager, wondered if there would be security beyond the traditional fencing, especially during demolition. "Because of all the 'activity' in that location, I think you should have it," she said.

Alliance for a Better District Six President Michael Nulty asked if the site would be well-lit.

Lewis admitted she didn't have all the answers, but she made notes and promised to get someone from Nibbi Brothers construction to come to the next meeting to give folks the exact skinny. ■

LETTER

LETTER TO THE EXTRA

I was disappointed to see that in the Central City Extra you cited several liquor stores by name in the TL as locations I said were trouble spots. Yes, there are locations in the TL which are trouble spots and several of those locations have small markets and liquor stores close by. But often these are hard-working, struggling merchants who would love nothing better than to have their areas free of crime. By implying that I somehow connect the stores with the criminal activity at these locations does nothing but create mistrust between myself and the merchants I'm trying to work with and protect.

— CAPT. KATHY BROWN
Tenderloin Police Station

Editor: Reporter Tom Carter used the hot spot intersections furnished by Capt. Brown and visited the locations and was able identify the stores where crowds were milling about outside.

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SAN FRANCISCO

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