

# GOOD NEWS for...

**PRESERVATIONISTS** The Tenderloin Façade Improvement Program and the Roxie Film Center were among 25 recipients of 2006 Partners in Preservation awards from American Express and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Part of a nationwide \$10 million, five-year initiative, this year's awards were given to Bay Area historic and cultural landmarks and historic preservation programs. The facade program, operated by TNDC and funded by the Mayor's Office of Community Development, gives building owners grants to restore and upgrade their properties. Since it began in 1999, the program has awarded \$76,000 to restore 11 neon signs, and \$160,000 to improve 18 façades. The Roxie Film Center on 16th Street off Valencia, built just after the 1906 earthquake, is the city's oldest operating movie theater and one of the few remaining single-screen cinemas. The Façade Improvement Program and the Roxie were among the 12 second-tier winners of the preservation awards, each receiving \$5,000. Thirteen other major Bay Area preservation sites, such as Angel Island Immigration Station and the Haas Lilienthal House, split a larger award pot of \$1 million.

**SOMA PARK** Bathrooms will be installed at the new Victoria Manalo Draves Park in the spring, according to the Department of Public Works, a relief for everyone and a boon for Bessie Carmichael Elementary kids who will then be using the park for exercise. "We're still working on details," said Project Manager Rick Thall. "But spring is the time they'll be in place." Restrooms were in the master plan but were eliminated by Mayor Newsom when he was preparing the city budget. The \$400,000 to restore them, plus \$60,000 for a park coordinator, were part of the \$28 million that the supervisors' Budget and Finance Committee added to the mayor's budget in June. The two-acre park on Folsom between Sixth and Seventh streets cost \$3.7 million and is named for the Filipina 1948 Olympic diving champion from South of the Slot. The Grand Opening was Oct. 27. Draves Park has playing fields and grassy areas that won't be ready for recreation until the end of December but its benches, playground and a basketball court are ready and inviting. Until the restrooms are installed, parkgoers will have to cross busy Folsom Street to use the facilities at Gene Friend Recreation Center.

**YOGA & YOU** For body and soul, in the new year try free yoga at Mercy Housing's 111 Jones St. community room. The classes, says teacher Lindsay Wilson, can relax you, decrease stress, tone your body, improve circulation and give you a better night's sleep. No previous experience necessary to join the classes, which meet Mondays at 6:15 p.m. Upcoming dates: Jan. 8, Jan. 15, Jan. 22. Yoga mats provided or bring your own. "This is a great class for low-income residents, social workers and activists of District 6," says Wilson. "For now, the class is for women only. We held a vote and decided this at our first class in July. Subject to change. . . ." Information: [lwilson@mercyhousing.org](mailto:lwilson@mercyhousing.org).

If you have some good news, send it to [marjorie@studycenter.org](mailto:marjorie@studycenter.org) or [tom@studycenter.org](mailto:tom@studycenter.org).

## The real costs of 'free' wi-fi

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

As citywide wireless Internet access inches closer to reality, reps of the S.F. Department of Telecommunications and Information Services are out in the field, bringing the word and trolling for support — even in places like the Tenderloin, where, they admit, delivering free wi-fi to most residents will be a huge challenge.

Since 2004, Mayor Newsom has been touting free or inexpensive wi-fi as a way to bridge the digital divide. Turns out the cyberbridge may cost individuals as much as \$23 a month — a big bite for people on fixed incomes who may skip meals to make ends meet.

"Our TechConnect initiative found that 70% of lower-income San Franciscans lacked Internet access in their homes," Emily Tseng, TechConnect project manager, told the November Tenderloin Futures Collaborative. "That's a larger disparity than in any other city. But we have to try to include them, because it closes other divides — economic, educational, health care."

The plan, as now conceived, is for Earthlink to operate the citywide network, installing about 1,500 radio transmitters on light poles across the city. Then Google will buy bandwidth from Earthlink and offer the free wireless services. The freebie connections will be glacial by modern standards — just a little faster than dial-up services — but anyone can pay Earthlink or other Internet providers \$21 to \$23 a month to bump up the connection to DSL speed. That's where the optimistic, free wireless plan goes haywire.

"The problems we anticipate are inside apartments and above the third floors of buildings," Tseng told Collaborative members, the very places where most of them work and live. "Here in the Tenderloin and in Chinatown are real concerns. If the light pole transmitter doesn't reach you, there are things you can stick in your window, but they'd come with the paid monthly service — they're not free."

Tseng later explained to The Extra that these CPEs (customer premises equipment) pull in the signal much like old TV antennas and, generally, are placed near a window. They come in many shapes and "strengths," she said, retailing for \$50 to \$100, but Earthlink will toss them in with the paid package.

TNDC's Jerry Jai said he was concerned about TechConnect's strategies. "It seems like the city will be making Internet service more accessible to those who already have it, not to those who don't. It also would help if funding were available to help developers," he said, referring to wiring new buildings or those being renovated for wireless access.

"I think there may be tax credits," Tseng said, "but I'll check and get back to you."

Central YMCA Director Carmela Gold said that the Y had to put in a T1 line, a high-speed digital network that comes into a building on fiber optic cable or copper and can be shared by hundreds of computer-users at once.

"Would the city cover the costs

of putting in a line like that?" asked Gold, who soon will be involved in construction of a new Y. The answer: No.

Gold suggested that Tseng convene a meeting of Tenderloin developers and property owners who have similar questions.

"We'd be interested," said Daniel O'Connor, St. Anthony's community liaison. "St. Anthony's and Salvation Army both have computer programs and have new buildings going up. It would be good to know what we can do now, while they're under construction."

Tseng agreed it was a good idea.

"I suggest you set up a specific meeting for the Tenderloin," said entrepreneur and city Entertainment Commission member Terrance Alan. "Tell people: 'Come to hear what we're doing and tell us what you need.' You're the city department in charge of this plan and it's an opportunity to do it right."

In early December, Tseng told The Extra there wasn't much practical assistance that her department could provide owners.

"We're pushing to get wi-fi off the ground first, though we could give some basic advice, such as bringing a CAT-5 wire into their buildings," she said.

CAT-5, according to Webopedia, is short for Category 5 network cabling, twisted pairs of copper wires that can carry high-speed connections.

Tseng said the supes will start hearings on contract negotiations between the city and Earthlink and Google early in the year that will last into late spring. Once the contract is okayed, a test of the system will start a couple of months later.

"It's planned as a pilot," she said. "We'll begin with transmitters in a five-mile-square area — we haven't chosen the area yet — and then the phased-in development of the whole system will take another year and a half."

### INFUSION OF JOBS

Coming in 2007 to your neighborhood: Infusion Lounge, a bar so chic that it will have a dress code — no tennis shoes or white T-shirts without sportcoats.

Christopher Rosas, president of C-Two Hotels, which is building the bar, and Scott Caroen, project coordinator, presented plans for

their latest la-di-da watering hole, scheduled to open in early summer in the Hotel Fusion, 140 Ellis, formerly the Gates Hotel.

C-Two also owns the York Hotel at 940 Sutter, home of the Empire Plush Room, a speakeasy in the 1920s; Stratford on the Square at 242 Powell, with its Tea Room and Gallery; Andante at 610 Geary; Hotel Mark Twain, 345 Taylor; and the La Luna Inn, a motel on Chestnut Street in the Marina District.

"This lounge is upscale," said Caroen, "and it's for an upscale, older demographic, with lots of tourist traffic." The dress code will help keep the "kids" away, he added.

The owners are going after a type 47 liquor license, Caroen said, for a full bar and restaurant, and it will be a transfer from another location, not a new license.

In February, The Extra reported that of the city's total 3,461 liquor licenses, 671 were type 47. Following a 1999 moratorium on off-sale licenses in the Tenderloin, the Alcoholic Beverage Control office also stopped accepting applications for new type 47s because of oversaturation in the neighborhood.

No one at the Collaborative meeting balked at the license, but questions brought the enthusiastic presenters back to earth.

"What outreach to the community do you have planned to benefit the people who live here?" asked Alan.

"We don't have any plans yet," answered Rosas. "That's why we're coming to meetings like this in the community. What would you like us to do?"

Alan shot back, "We want you to hire 50% of your employees from the Tenderloin."

"That's doable," said Rosas. "We're nonunion."

In a Nov. 8 e-mail to Alliance for a Better District 6, subject line "Community Support," Caroen confirmed that he and Rosas had agreed to draft a letter about the 50% hire, and was "hoping" for project support.

A month later, Caroen told The Extra that the license transfer request was ready to go to ABC and that so far, no protests had been logged. Also on tap for him was a meeting with new TL police Capt. Gary Jimenez, he said. ■



CENTRAL CITY EXTRA is published monthly by San Francisco Study Center Inc., a private nonprofit serving the community since 1972. The Extra was initiated through grants from the S.F. Hotel Tax Fund and the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund. It is now assisted by the Kosbland Committee of the San Francisco Foundation. The contents are copyrighted by the San Francisco Study Center, 1095 Market Street, Suite 601, San Francisco, CA 94103.

PHONE: (415) 626-1650

FAX: (415) 626-7276

E-MAIL: [centralcityextra@studycenter.org](mailto:centralcityextra@studycenter.org)

EDITOR AND PUBLISHER: Geoffrey Link

SENIOR WRITER/EDITOR: Marjorie Beggs

REPORTERS: Tom Carter, Ed Bowers, John Goins, Phil Tracy,

Anne Marie Jordan

DESIGN AND LAYOUT: Lenny Limjoco

PHOTOGRAPHERS: Lenny Limjoco, Mark Ellinger

CONTRIBUTORS: Diamond Dave, William Crain, Mark Hedin, John Burks

DESIGN CONSULTANT: Don McCartney

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