Two fruitful decades

It's been the Heart of the City for 20 years, and the Civic Center farmers market celebrated on June 13 two decades of bitter melon and bok choy; tree oysters, shitaki and chantrelles in season; dates from the desert; cuttlefish, squid and cod among the dozens of fresh seafood varieties; kiwis, oranges, lemons to pomelos; lemon grass, garlic, greens galore; tomatoes, apples, apricots, plums, kumquats, other fruits too many to list; Thai chilis, habaneros, jalapenos, serranos, even bell peppers.

A cornucopia of foods for many cultures.

Heart of the City Farmers Market is essential to the families and residents of the central city. It brings freshness, variety and the spices of life every Wednesday and Sunday.

The plaza got spiffed up for the occasion, and shoppers wished the farmers many happy returns. ∎

– Geoff Link

Suggestion to the Task Force: Keep on keepin' on

The Task Force is in a quandary. Where does it go from here? The neighborhood development projects it initiated two years ago have all gotten off the ground.

Adopt-A-Block has become a leading private-sector player in the role of neighborhood safety.

Tenderloin Sidewalk Improvement Program is expanding. It bought a second street sweeper, increased its hours and widened its coverage. (See story on p.6.)

The Facade Improvement Program has spruced up 14 Tenderloin buildings and is now into a second round of face-lifts.

A Merchants Association is under way through the Southeast Asian Community Center.

Central City Extra is publishing regularly and is seeking ways to become self-sufficient.

This all has happened through the Lower Eddy/Leavenworth Task Force, which has been funded by the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund and the city's Grants for the Arts.

But the funding has run out.

The Task Force's dream project, the Tenderloin Pavilion that was to generate $1 million a year for the community, was snatched away late last year by a group headed by the Rev. Cecil Williams. This knocked the wind out of the Task Force's sails and set the organization adrift without hope of reaching that promised land, the Pavilion.

Systematic neighborhood improvement requires an organization with a staff member to coordinate meetings, keep an eye on property and land-use changes, report details, explain process and give advice to the group.

Now there's talk of starting a new organization, because members can't agree on a fiscal sponsor for the Task Force. NOMPC has messed up too often and TNDC, which has been

EDITORIAL

Geoff Link

the fiscal sponsor, has joined the Glide pavilion project.

But why start a new group?

One couldn't be formed and become a tax-exempt 501(c)3 in time to take over for TNDC by Aug.

Why not find a new fiscal sponsor? It doesn't have to be anyone from the neighborhood. Get a new sponsor and go back to the same funders for a new phase of organizational development.

All the same players — the residents, service providers and merchants who comprise the Task Force membership — would still be involved.

The projects don't need as much money as at first, though all need continuing assistance. The primary need is for a staff member to replace Brad Paul.

The funders have all been around long enough to know that if Rome couldn't be built in a day, the Tenderloin can't be changed in just two years. The Task Force has reached a level of success and needs a hand up to the next level.

The funders might even know other foundations to partner with to help the Task Force maintain momentum.

Perhaps the Haas foundation that Paul works for could be persuaded to join the effort.

The Task Force has accomplished so much. Its programs are successful. It has able and visionary chairs in resident David Baker and merchant Tariq Alazraie.

Better to keep the Task Force breathing than to let it die and have to start all over. That will make sense to the funders. Just ask them.

Besides, the Lower Eddy/Leavenworth Task Force programs and philosophies could be exported to SoMa.

Expand the model, don't build a new one. ∎

TL Task Force to call it a day on Aug. 8

explain the committee's proposed organizational chart and issues paper, which he had copied onto a flyer and left to be passed out when the subject came up.

Baker introduced the topic of what to do about the Task Force now that the funding has run out with much work undone.

"When the Task Force was formed, it was known that at some future time we would disband," Baker began. "So the problem is, will there be some successor organization.

"Unless you have an advocacy organization, you're easily victimized by any and all forces.

All these issues pop up, and if we're not monitoring them, we'll lose control of the neighborhood.

"We don't want to fall victim to developers, which we will if we don't have an advocacy organization."

Baker said the Task Force Executive Committee had met and recommended that the Task Force set the date for its own demise, believing that t he deadline would pump up the pressure for the organization to evolve or disband.

"A staff is essential," Baker said. "Brad has staffed our organization, but he has accepted work elsewhere. He has continued as a volunteer. But that won't work.

"I'm apprehensive, because I have a big emotional investment in the neighborhood. Few neighborhoods are as cosmopolitan as the Tenderloin. How best can we preserve that?"

This generated a number of responses from around the table.

Craig Adelman, the No. 2 man at TNDC, said: "TNDC will bring on a paid staff person to do community organizing."

Several people made the case for using NOMPC as fiscal sponsor of the renewed effort,

a role NOMPC has played in the past, each time managing to mess up somehow.

Roscoe Hawkins, who represents St. Boniface, suggested: "Seems like it would be better to partner with something that's already in existence. How can we work better with components that are already here so we don't have to reinvent the wheel again?"

Susan Bryan, Tenderloin resident and NOMPC board member, said: "NOMPC has just installed a new Board of Directors. NOMPC has been here for many years. There was strife before I got here and there will be strife after. We should not assume that NOMPC won't work."

Michael Nulty, also a NOMPC board member in addition to the other hats he wears, talked about representing the residents, then said: "At these meetings we constantly talk about agencies bickering. Starting a new agency

means more meetings. A new organization means a new bureaucracy. If we already have workable entities, why can't we all just get along?"

"NOMPC had an honorable history and did many good things," Baker said. "Then it fell on hard times. NOMPC did succeed. But it also failed. And I want this organization to have a clean break and a fresh start."

"It's incredibly important that these be an organization that, as Michael Nulty said, represents the residents," said Richard Allman, a former NOMPC executive director during one of NOMPC's various down times.

"I move that August 8 be the last Task Force meeting," said Adelman.

"We could change it later," Baker said, "but it provides us with a timeline and pressures us to act.'

Nulty seconded Adelman's motion, and it passed 11-0. ∎