

First Kroc Center since pilot features gym, climbing walls, range of games

► CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

financial decision: It would replace rather than renew. An adjacent site — previously a parking lot — was included in the expansion.

The Kroc Center and Railton Place are the latest and plushiest additions to a lower Tenderloin development boom that is transforming the worst part of the neighborhood into a residential and office enclave, in a few years a nonprofit service provider's paradise and a nicer place to live.

The YMCA, St. Anthony Foundation, UC's Hastings College of the Law, TNDC and Community Housing Partnership are among the other major players with projects in the pipeline that are within two blocks of the Salvation Army's new digs — hundreds of residential units and thousands of square feet of commercial space.

Early in the design process, a staggeringly large amount of money was bequeathed to the Salvation Army by Joan Kroc, widow of the late Ray Kroc of McDonald's fame.

In 1998, she commissioned a 12-acre Salvation Army development in San Diego with features such as indoor ice-skating rink, a sports field, a skateboard park, three swimming pools and five community buildings. All in all, it was a classy retreat with a bundle of enrichment opportunities for low-income families. The venture was so successful that before she died in 2003 she decided to leave \$1.5 billion more to the Salvation Army to create similar community centers around the country.

This is the first of those.

'I CAN'T WAIT' TO LEARN TO SWIM

But San Francisco isn't like most of the country. Buildings here go up, not out. So, even with the generous Kroc gift, there would be no soccer field or 25-meter-long competition pool, as in San Diego.

But there is a pool plenty big enough for aquatic exercise and swim lessons. That's OK for Leila, who is 11 and has never before had a chance to learn how to swim. "I can't wait," she says.

Summer swim classes will suit Leila just fine. And there will be much more for her and other school-age children to do at the new community center all year long.

On the other side of a wide see-through glass wall is the gymnasium. Natural daylight pours in from skylights above, making the gym light and airy with energy savings to boot.

Six backboards rim the gym's college-regulation court with bleacher seating on the sidelines. It's pretty much a basketball venue, yet the court can easily transition to volleyball or badminton.

Desso Linotop is the flooring — a manufactured material with inherent spring that is iron-man tough. Even the swishing of roller blades can't scratch its durable finish.

In one corner of the gym is an unusual piece of athletic equipment that possibly could be taken for sculpture. It's really a make-believe mountain a little more than 7 feet high and

easy for kids to have a simulated rock-climbing experience without ropes — or fear.

The Freedom Climber has a rotating disk within a compact square frame that moves clockwise and counter clockwise by mere force of the climber's weight. You step on and grip rubber projections for ascent and descent — all manual fun, no electricity involved.

A tall climbing wall — the more typical style — is upstairs in the outdoor courtyard with a roof garden that provides a welcome touch of greenery against the concrete cityscape.

But there won't be much time for meditation amid the containers of shrubs and bamboo — an interactive electronic game called Neos, located here, is guaranteed to bring out whoops and hollers. It's life-size, not handheld, and tests skill and agility in kids as well as adults, if they are energetic enough and like fast action.

GAME ROOM AND FITNESS ROOM

In the game room are some old-fashioned tabletop favorites: Ping-Pong, pool, foosball and air hockey. Capacity: 111. And, yes, there are video and computer games, too.

A professional-like dance studio is on the fourth floor to be used by ballerinas as well as hip-hoppers. And, maybe, once in a while, there will even be the sound of Benny Goodman or Artie Shaw, background music when the seniors do their exercises. A chairlift is available for anyone not quite able to make it up the stairs.

The fitness room, equipped with 40 of the latest in cardio and aerobic machines, should be a big draw for those who like to build up a sweat.

Arts and crafts, graphics and other classes will be offered. And, just to prove that it's not all fun and games and physical exercise, there are offices and other rooms designated for the serious business of meetings, presentations, tutoring and homework.

Rohit, a fourth-grader, plans to do math and reading after school at the center. But, he says with a grin, he also wants to play all the new games.

Maj. George Rocheleau, who has taken on the formidable job of managing everything from administration to program planning, expects the new center to become a hangout right away — a good kind of hangout, where kids can be nurtured and inspired.

As for playing games, he says, "Boys and girls need to learn how to win and how to lose. They need to be challenged to improve and to succeed."

The administrator says he selected a lot of the games and equipment himself. Thirty-three years of service in Salvation Army youth programs throughout the Bay Area and beyond has given him some idea of what makes kids happy.

This father of three grown sons also has a background in carpentry. He came aboard one year ago when construction was midway checking over floor plans and interior installations, even taking care of such a small detail as selecting the exact location of the basketball scoreboards.

Rocheleau and his wife, Dawn, also a major, are a team. She works right next door and is in charge of the residential operation at Railton House — named in honor of an early Salvation Army founder.

She manages the residence and oversees all of the programs affiliated with the housing unit, including ones for adults in recovery. The housing population will be a mix of veterans, people in drug and alcohol rehabilitation and former foster kids from 18 to 24.

"Many of the youths who age out of the foster care system are out on the streets without having skills to make it on their own," she says.

At Railton House, 27 apartments are set aside for former foster children. Each will be offered a completely furnished apartment, for which they'll pay affordable rent, plus they will get skills training — as basic as balancing a checkbook and preparing a dinner to applying for a job.

FUTURE-ORIENTED BUT ROOTED IN PAST

The program even has been set up to look ahead two years or so when the youths will be required to move on, thereby giving others a chance to live here. When it's moving time, a portion of the rent money will be returned to each of the young adults to help them get them started in the outside world.

Future-oriented in concept and style, this imposing eight-story building with 135,380 square feet delivers a mighty punctuation to the neighborhood.

The exterior is contemporary. Surface materials are a combination of exposed concrete, plaster infill and a curtain wall of alu-

minum. Modified bay windows project at an angle beyond the flat facade. Vivid colors of red, yellow, turquoise and mint trim windows for splash.

Even though a very modern-day expression of architecture, the building's design reflects a sense of connection to the past. "We looked at the old neighboring buildings for their historic vocabulary," says architect Bob Herman.

Inspiration for his design came from the type of old building it is, with a tall, ground-floor lobby combined with retail space and, often, an illuminated blade sign out front. Above would be several floors of housing, topped with an attic and a prominent cornice.

"I wanted to honor the architectural history of the Tenderloin, but at the same time, relate this new building to the future, symbolizing hope and possibilities for the new residents," explains Herman.

Inside, there was a conscious effort to keep the place bright with a feeling of openness. Careful interior planning helped to provide an illusion of added space throughout.

There are two distinct front desks — one to serve residents, the other to assist anyone wanting to enter the community center. Throughout, there are security checks and camera monitors.

The Roy & Joan Kroc Corps Community Center will be open to all Tenderloin residents and nonresidents, day and night, Monday through Friday, with reduced hours on weekends. Limited garage parking may be available before and after staff work hours. Exact hours for the center and parking are still being worked out.

There will be a seniors' lunch program each weekday in the street-level dining room that transitions into a place of worship on Sundays. This is also the area that would serve as a neighborhood center in the case of a major disaster such as an earthquake.

All applications for housing at Railton House must be made through established



Railton House kitchens all come with appliances and custom cabinetry.

social service agencies. No on-site applications are being accepted.

Cost of membership for the Kroc Center varies. For now, adults pay \$20 monthly, with a reduced \$10 fee for youths and seniors. Family memberships are \$40 a month; \$30 if there is one parent only. Drop-in visits run \$3 to \$5, depending on age.

Partial scholarships are available for youths and for families. A campaign is under way to raise an additional \$5 million to fund endowments to help pay for these scholarships and also for the foster youth housing program.

United Parcel Service, Bank of America, Wachovia, Wells Fargo and other companies, as well as the Yuen and Herbst foundations have been involved. The Kroc Center's annual operating budget will be about \$3 million, with an additional \$1 million for Railton House.

The Kroc bequest of \$32 million, along with funding from various other private and public sources, went to the project's construction and outfitting. An additional \$27 million of Kroc funds is in endowments to be used, over the years, for a portion of operating expenses. ■



PHOTOS BY LENNY LIMJOCO

St. Anthony's beloved Marian Residence, all SoMa programs to close

► CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

planned Learning Center and services at the Madonna Senior Center. Two outreach employees will be sent to the Social Work Center at 150 Golden Gate, St. Anthony's new five-story administration building.

Left untouched: the dining room, free medical clinic, clothing and housewares, Father Alfred Treatment Center, Social Work Center and Madonna Residence, 51 units for low-income women over 60.

The board's recommendations come after a two-year program evaluation, Aviani said, though the situation could change over the next six months. But St. Anthony will now only operate programs in the Tenderloin.

"The farm is isolated and it will close," Aviani said. "It doesn't make sense for St. Anthony's to put resources there. We will be expanding the Father Albert Rehabilitation Center here where we have overlapping services and programs and the medical clinic."

MOVING ACROSS THE STREET

The shift comes just after St. Anthony completed its five-story administration building at 150 Golden Gate Ave., a property bought in 1999 that employees are just now getting ready to move into.

Across the street, at 121 Golden Gate Ave., St. Anthony will build with Mercy Housing a \$66 million, 10-story building, supplanting the three-story building that now houses the dining room and the clinic. The clinic will move permanently across the street and the dining room temporarily when demolition starts next year.

But the money for 121 has to be raised, and 150 is not yet free and clear either. In March, Aviani told The Extra in an e-mail that the foundation is still looking for those final dollars.

"We'll finish out our capital campaign for 150 and then launch the campaign for 121," Aviani wrote.

FARM BECOMING TOO COSTLY

The dairy farm at 11205 Valley Road outside Petaluma appears to be at the height of its development. It was a gift to St. Anthony in 1954. The dream then was for it to provide food for the dining room, but the bucolic land was found unsuitable for farming, according to Stenger. For a while it was a pig farm and provided some meat. But, in 1970, it became a working dairy farm where penniless addicts and alcoholics from the streets of San Francisco could stay for six months, get clean, get themselves together.

Now, 40 men live on the farm. They receive daily counseling in a 12-step program while working at the organic dairy — even helping deliver calves, as one man did — and tilling a one-acre garden started in 1993. Actor Martin Sheen explains the farm in a four-minute narration on St. Anthony's Website.

The farm has 250 cows that are milked twice a day, producing 1,800 gallons of milk that is sold to Clover Stormetta. The farm has a new creamery and this year plans to sell organic butter to Clover Stormetta, a potential buyer of the farm.

The farm's fame is spreading. The Associated Press and Los Angeles Times wrote about the rehab program this year and in November the Oakland Tribune's business section featured the farm's biogas system that converts cow manure into 40 kilowatts of electricity, enough to run the creamery.

"For a long time the farm helped subsidize our work with the homeless," the Press Democrat quoted Stenger as saying. "But, with the price of feed, the farm is becoming something we have to subsidize. It's no longer the best place for us to put our energies."

In a climate of record prices for rice, corn and wheat, the farm makes about \$162,000 a year, but the treatment program costs

\$800,000, Aviani told Associated Press.

There is great hand-wringing over these draconian steps within St. Anthony's "culture of caring" where people are sensitive to even small changes, according to an employee who requested anonymity.

KEEP IT HUSH-HUSH, STAFF TOLD

Three years ago the foundation was just weeks away from closing its Living Room to save on staff and food. The popular, five-day-a-week, drop-in respite program inside the Madonna Residence served free breakfast to seniors, had several programs and stayed open until 4 p.m. But, as reported in the June 2005 Extra, a chapter of the Secular Franciscans volunteered to take it over.

The foundation didn't want the latest pending closures disclosed, fearing that the publicity would send an erroneous message that the foundation was crumbling and possibly scare potential donors away, said the employee, who had attended a May meeting at which staff were told of the board's decision.

A second employee said staff were told that if they didn't act "professional" and direct inquiries to the foundation's public relations office — but instead spoke to the press — their severance package would be in jeopardy.

Aviani called the employees' comments "disconcerting to hear." She said that the restructuring is simply to put the future on solid footing. Any story saying "the sky's falling would be extremely detrimental," she said. "I was at the meeting and that wasn't anything I heard."

A former Marian resident, now at the Madonna, said she and others who had been at the Marian were stunned by the news. The Madonna notified its residents of St. Anthony's closures in a memo May 5 and asked them to keep it confidential.

"The Marian was safe and I felt very secure while I was there," the wistful resident said. "The staff was completely and totally supportive. They care about you and they worry about you. I told my case worker how devastated we all are."

LOSS OF THE MARIAN

The Marian Residence opened in 1996. St. Anthony also owns the one-story building next to it at 1183-85 Mission, used for the clothing and kitchenware program, and the lot next to that at 1187 Mission at Eighth Street.

The Marian gives out 30 shelter beds by lottery at 7 p.m. daily. The bed can be renewed before the next day's lottery and there's no limit on length of stay. Residents

also get three meals a day.

After they've been there a while, some women are chosen for the Marian's 27-bed program upstairs with room and board. Over the course of six to 24 months, staff help them find permanent housing while they work with a case manager.

"The staff was very accessible and you could tell they cared," the Madonna resident said. "When I got picked for the third floor, I had a room with my own key and two roommates. I think it was important for us to meet others. One became a very good friend. We went to Point Reyes together one weekend."

The average age of the Marian's residents is mid-50s. Half the residents in transitional housing have jobs.

Another sign of the times is an increase of seniors.

"People who haven't been homeless before — a half dozen last year — working people or recently divorced or in a financial downturn are showing up," one employee said. "It's because of a lack of affordable housing."

"These women are scared to be around men, and just coming and going is daunting to them. I hope the city recognizes that women on the street are a lot more vulnerable. It's such a valuable resource being lost." ■