

\$8 million Boeddeker makeover in works

First meeting on redesign ideas set for May 13

BY JONATHAN NEWMAN

“A walk in the park” is supposed to be an effortless, pleasurable passing of time. But when the park is Boeddeker, that carefree stroll can take on political and cultural weight. That may all change with a multimillion-dollar makeover in the works.

Tenderloin Futures Collaborative learned April 8 that Trust for Public Land has secured \$1.5 million from private contributions for Boeddeker to supplement the Tenderloin park’s one-third share of \$5 million in corporate grants announced last summer for the redesign of Boeddeker, Hayes Valley and Balboa city parks.

Jake Gilchrist, project manager of the trust, said the city has added approximately \$3 million, bringing the total funding for makeover of the trio of

parks to \$9.5 million. Of this amount, Boeddeker is assured of \$3.16 million, Gilchrist said.

In interviews later, Gilchrist said the trust is pursuing up to \$5 million additional in state Proposition 84 funds — generated by the 2006 passage of water conservation and park bonds — specifically for Boeddeker. If all state funding comes through, a total of more than \$8 million could be applied to the Boeddeker makeover.

The first of at least five community meetings to solicit ideas for redesigning the park and clubhouse begins at 7 p.m. on May 13 at Boeddeker Clubhouse.

A group of young architects in July 2007 put in \$25,000 in pro-bono work to redesign Boeddeker, which has long prompted community criticism, especially its surrounding iron fence that makes it look like a fortress. That redesign didn’t go anywhere, but it got people thinking and it sent Gilchrist back to the drawing board. Now he’s returned with money in hand and looking for ideas.

“We want to know how the park is or is not being used currently, how people feel about design and structure. We will be listening to residents first,” Gilchrist said.

TENDERLOIN ‘WONDERLAND’

In September, the Tenderloin will be renamed “Wonderland,” said John Melvin and Kit Rosenberg of the Fung Collaborative, who announced plans for an exhibition in the streets of art and installations coordinated through San Francisco-based Gray Area Foundation for the Arts. The Fung Collaborative of New York describes itself as “an arts organization without boundaries.”

The organizers hope to secure the cooperation of TL merchants and building owners to donate the use of storefronts, awnings, rooftops and balconies for public displays that focus “on the nature of ‘Home’ and shared neighborhood experiences,” Rosenberg said.

Wrapped sculptures evoking homelessness are to be displayed on the five stair-stepped balconies on the south façade of the Golden Gate Theatre. A video and spoken word installation on the theme of childhood deprivation and sex slavery is planned, but has no site yet.

Central City Hospitality House’s community arts program has offered to provide two Leavenworth Street storefronts for installations and docents to guide viewers through the open space displays. Artists from Spain, Sweden and New York are lined up to install work in public areas and a group of L.A. artists will parade sculpture on a flatbed truck up Interstate 5 when “Wonderland” kicks off, Melvin said. Later, he said he hoped the inaugural street presentations, coinciding with EXIT Theatre’s annual Fringe Festival, would generate community enthusiasm and create momentum for

ongoing biennial exhibitions depicting the Tenderloin that would rival the now-century-old Biennale in Venice.

Without a budget “Wonderland” is relying on the active participation of the Tenderloin community, Melvin said, claiming that securing the use of city space or Arts Commission sponsorship is too costly and time-consuming.

ARTS SURVEY SOLICITED

Quentin Fininen and Dawn Pepka, executive director and project manager of Culture Connections, a nonprofit they said is affiliated with the pro-business SCORE Foundation in Herndon, Va., came to the Collaborative asking for help to administer a survey soliciting opinions from TL residents and business owners about the four-block stretch of Taylor Street from Market to O’Farrell, now designated as a city arts district.

Fininen and Pepka had hoped to link the survey to NOMNIC, but Elvin Padilla Jr., NOMNIC’s executive director, earlier had said that was not the case.

ST. ANTHONY’S BOWS OUT

Sharon Christen, Mercy Housing developer, told the Collaborative that St. Anthony Foundation, unable to obtain city housing funds, has pulled out of its proposed respite housing planned for the second floor of the 10-story building at 121 Golden Gate to be built with Mercy Housing, and so Mercy will use that floor as part of its ongoing senior housing complex.

The respite housing was to be a temporary home for ill Tenderloin residents deemed well enough to leave the hospital, but not recovered sufficiently to return home. Both St. Anthony’s sale of its work-and-rehab dairy farm in Marin County, which it had operated for more than 50 years, and closing of the Marian Residence on Mission Street within the past year are the result of rising costs, falling donations and city housing funds budget restraints.

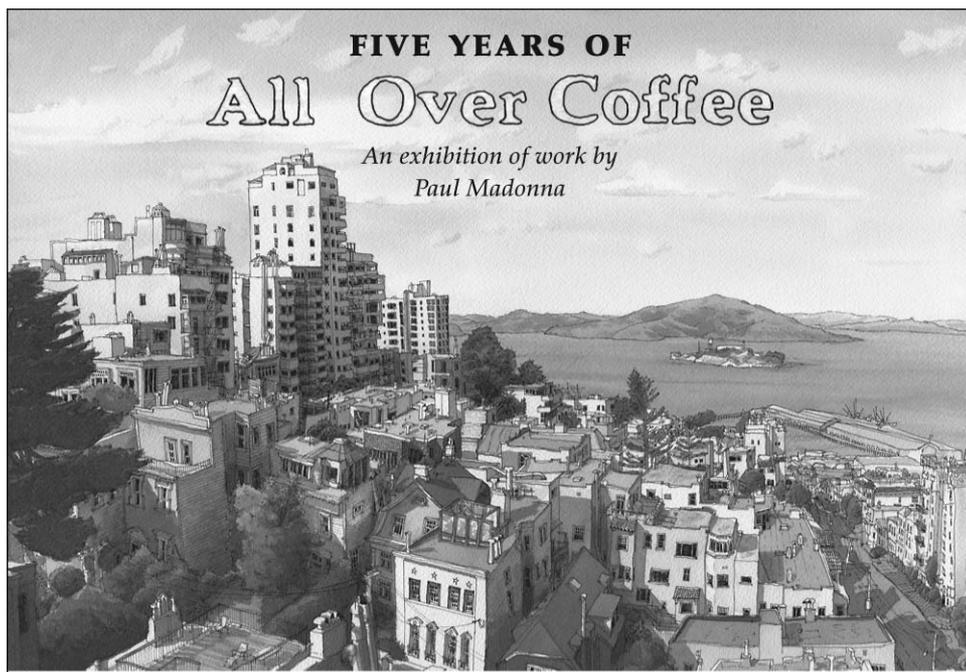
St. Anthony’s will move its dining room temporarily to 150 Golden Gate during construction, then return to 121 Golden Gate when construction is completed. Mercy Housing is seeking a HUD grant to finance the senior housing there, Christen said. If the HUD grant comes through, Mercy will have to offer the senior housing rentals citywide, not solely to TL seniors. Qualified seniors, those whose annual income is 50% or less than HUD’s \$67,800 median income for San Francisco, would pay one-third of the market rate rents. ■

GOOD NEWS for...

TL RESIDENTS Beginning May 4, the Salvation Army’s Kroc Center, which opened last June, gears up for the summer with expanded hours and changes to some membership options. The skylighted gym, for basketball and other sports, now will be open for all ages Mon. through Fri. 3-9 p.m. and Sat. noon-9 p.m. Game room hours, also for all ages, will be 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Mon. through Fri. and noon-9 p.m. Sat. The facility includes a fitness center — with 40 aerobic and cardio machines — and a swimming pool for free swim classes and aerobic exercise. Memberships and use fees, which vary by age, are \$5/day for adults and \$3/day for youth and seniors. New this summer are a 10-day adult pass for only \$35, and discounts on quarterly and annual memberships. Monthly memberships will be discontinued. Info: 345-3400.

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

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