Why no Y? TL leaders demand answers

No new facility 7 years after Central closed

by Markosia Beggs

flowers, shrubs, vegetables and herbs line three sides of the vacant lot at 335 Golden Gate Ave. An Anna's hummingbird named Maxine flits among this unexpected Tenderloin greenness, flashing iridescence.

The 12,000-square-foot paved lot, owned by Hastings law school, is where the Central YMCA for seven years has been planning to build a new Y in collaboration with Hastings. Nothing definitive has happened. Fingers are pointing. Explanations for the stall are less than convincing to the ardent supporters who want a full-service Y back in the central city.

The paved lot and leased space next door have been Central Y's temporary home since it shuttered 220 Golden Gate Ave. in 2009 after 102 years. Shih Yu-hang, Central Y pays Hastings a token $2 per year to use the lot for basketball and the community garden. At 587 Golden Gate, it leases 5,500 square feet of ground-floor retail space in Hastings' garage for a small fitness center, several offices and a meeting area with a kitchen.

Hastings once said it might invest in a new Y on the undeveloped lot, but the recession has hit the law school hard and it's scaled back what it says it can do.

A lot of ducks have to line up before the Central Y project could get moving. In the end, however, it's the association — the YMCA of San Francisco, Central's parent company — that holds the purse strings for major expenditures involving its 14 branches, and only it can press the project start button.

In July, longtime Central members and advocates, unhappy about being kept in the dark, began organizing, putting together a Facebook page, starting a petition and putting messages around the Y's West Portal campus.

Dina Hilliard

"Is there a plan to build a new Y? ... Yes or no?"

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The rendering by MWAArchitects of a new Central Y is where it's at. Rendering by MWAArchitects.

This rendering is of a new Central Y that was already in the planning stage, the YMCA said in 2009.

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When St. Anthony’s warm and friendly Dining Room opened Oct. 4, 1950, founder Father Alfred Boedeker, who eschewed the cold words soup kitchen, expected to serve 150 meals to the poor. But 400 “guests” arrived. Somehow, all got fed.

The kitchen was in a windowless basement at the end of an auto repair shop ramp and the Franciscan friars, who had bought the 45 Jones St. building, called their success the “Miracle on Jones Street.” The miracle of feeding throngs of the poor has continued 565 days a year. The number of meals served last year averaged 2,743; the peak was 3,635. But the sagging building where 38 million meals were served in 62 years was demolished in September.

The dining operation moved across the street to 150 Golden Gate Ave. in February. It will move back in 2014 into a $22 million, 10-story structure featuring an arcade where the people in line are protected from the weather. The new street-level dining room — this one with windows — will be 43% larger, seating for 240 at a time. The building will also have 90 units of affordable housing for seniors, and a full floor for a free clothing program and a social work center for counseling.

The old building had the health clinic, a tech lab and a social work center that annual-ly served 2,000 low-income people. The programs grew out of needs the friars recognized in the Dining Room. St. Anthony’s wide reputation drew politicians and celebrities. Among the happy servers: Sen. Hubert Humphrey, actors Dan-ny Thomas, James Arness and Jane Wyman. In 2009, Nancy Pelosi helped serve meal No. 35,000,000 and the late billionaire Warren Hellman, “a generous donor,” played with his Wranglers band in a fundraiser for the new Dining Room. Last year, the Giants’ Barry Zito pitched in to serve, and the day before New Year’s Eve the entire University of Illinois football team tackled the chore before their Fight Hunger Bowl game at AT&T Park.

St. Francis mayors loved the place and so did clothier Adolph Schuman, who pro-duced the Lilli Ann line. He got some friends together, including then-Mayor Dianne Feinstein, to create a fund for St. Anthony’s. After Schuman died in 1985, the first Saturday every November a special meal was served to honor his birthday. The Dining Room blos-somed with cut flowers, tablecloths and festive live music. The food was to die for; “I remember lamb shanks this big,” says Barry Stenger, St. Anthony’s communication director, his hand showing a 5-inch span. “Steaks and prime rib, too.”

Schuman Days ended last year after 22 years and, because of lean times, the funds were shifted to the general fund to help pro-vide daily meals.

St. Anthony’s staff say that more than one-third of its diners rely on the luncheon meal as their only food each day. They arrive from all over town. Last year they consumed more than 2 million pounds of food. A fond farewell was staged in February for the building designated for destruction.

A local auto repair shop parked cars from the 1940s and ’50s out front, nostalgic for the era when it was created. Out on the street, there

38 MILLION MEALS

As the wrecking ball descended on St. Anthony’s old office and Dining Room complex on Golden Gate Avenue, the great jaws of a huge machine ripped the façade, revealing a mural of St. Francis where an office used to be. The mural soon was chewed up and spit out as rubble.

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ART LOVERS The third annual 2 Blocks of Art continues Oct. 18, spotlighting Central Market’s diverse creative community — 100 artists in 25 locations on Sixth Street between Market and Howard and, this year for the first time, along Market from Fifth to Seventh streets as well. Highlights of the 4-8 p.m. event are an outdoor photography installation by noted Ray Cayetano Jr., illustrated, life-size portraits of Central Market residents by Joel Phillips, cut-out-paper fashions by Hector Manuel, and Tenderloin-based dance company Theatre Flamenco’s performance of the 21 Club’s stained-glass windows. The collective effort produces the event. “2 Blocks of Art” runs 2-6 p.m. on the second Saturday of each month. For more information, check it out on the map, and add it to your calendar. The 21 Club is an open house for the community.” Lead sponsor of the free art walk is the Mission Grants for the Arts, a local nonprofit economic developer that produces the event. “2 Blocks of Art is a source of real poetry, all the more so because it is underappreciated.”

Tom Carter

TENDERTOWN "There’s a war going on and I’m just a soldier in the trenches," singer-songwriter John Cafferty said Wednesday at the 21 Club. Cafferty, who grew up in the Tenderloin, was one of several musicians and others who taped a video that will air on Oct. 25 during the annual telethon “Health Care and Homelessness.”

Muralist Mona Caron puts finishing touches on Trailhead at Market and McAllister, a new ground-floor business in the Renoir Hotel. She completed a larger mural, wrapped around a building at Golden Gate and Jones, in 2010.

S AN FRANCISCO’S history of great writing goes back a long way. I am a San Francisco poet and have chosen to live in the center of this literat- ary city. The Tenderloin spirit, whether anybody wants to believe it or not, is a source of real poetry. Not only because it is nighttime, and everyone is being invited to recite words they think are beautiful, but because the Tenderloin is where poetry is born. That’s wonderful. But don’t forget: The Tenderloin is The Midnight Sun with The Sun On Fire. It is Poetry Central. So there.

Ed Bowers

Ed Bowers at the piano in the 21 Club.

Call all Poets to the Land of the Dead

BY ED Bowers

S tories of the Tenderloin are being told in this zone. Many people may fear the Tenderloin, but it is a place of poetry. It is a source of real poetry, all the more so because it is underappreciated. A lot of people who think of poetry as only floating around, yet it is a source of real poetry. Not only because it is nighttime, and everyone is being invited to recite words they think are beautiful, but because the Tenderloin is where poetry is born. That’s wonderful. But don’t forget: The Tenderloin is The Midnight Sun with The Sun On Fire.

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Central City Extra is a member of the San Francisco Newspaper Publishers Association, Society of Professional Journalists, Northern California Chapter, and San Francisco Press Club.
SAN FRANCISCO NEEDS A NEW DEAL
The Central City Votes Together 2012

YES ON C
Affordable homes and living wage work for San Franciscans.

YES ON E
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Spread the word.

Most formerly incarcerated community members can vote in California.

Register to vote by October 22nd
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YES ON G  Protect the democratic process
NO ON 32  Preserve the rights of workers
YES ON 34  End the death penalty
YES ON 36  Reform three strikes

“Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services.”

Article 25 UN Declaration of Human Rights

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How would you invest San Francisco’s transportation dollars?
Between now and 2040, $64 billion dollars will be available to support San Francisco transportation. The San Francisco County Transportation Authority wants your opinion on how best to spend it. Repaving streets, building better bicycle lanes, constructing rapid transit lines, or making pedestrian safety improvements are just a few of the possibilities.

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Applications will be accepted beginning October 1, 2012 through November 30, 2012; or the first 125 qualified applicants.

To qualify, you must meet the following criteria:

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of the possibilities.

improvements are just a few

or making pedestrian safety

constructing rapid transit lines,

streets, building better bike lanes,

on how best to spend it. Repaving

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From the Heart of San Francisco

99 stories of residents who died
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140 pages, including neighborhood map, index of deceased
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$29.95 for full-color edition
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“Obituaries published in the Tenderloin newspaper, Central City Extra, are astonishing, unvarnished revelations, sometimes stark, sometimes wondrous. These posthumous stories, now in book form, become deeply revelatory about the people and the neighborhood. Death in the Tenderloin is a miracle of sensitive, yet matter-of-fact reportage, the tales simply, factually told, but poignant in their declarative simplicity.”

— Jim Mildon, Writer and Editor

TO ORDER: Email Leonor@studycenter.org
History makes way for St. Anthony’s future

Memorable meals

The Extra went to the demolition site to photograph the spectacle, and to ask observers: What was the best meal you had in the Dining Room.

“You know, I always felt confident after a meal there. That’s what a full stomach does for you. I’m trying to remember just one. You’d think

And I try to tell people where to go — that’s the way I learned about it. Fallow, scarred and ordinary, the old, though internationally famous, oasis for the poor died loudly over a week of awesome destruction in September. People on the sidewalk stopped to stare. They were mesmerized by the scale of the job. Most had memories from behind the walls they saw being brutally chomped down.

The scene looked like a feeding frenzy. Giant yellow machines with long, flexible necks and gaping steel jaws relentlessly sank shiny metal teeth into walls and floors like starving mutant dinosaurs. The sounds were tantalizing, sometimes bone-jarring. Steel girders and fire escapes groaned and screamed in feeble resistance as the jaws ripped them away. At times, the jaws drooled plaster, quivering steel rods and timber hanging out its sides. A constant silver stream of water kept the eerie puffs of gray dust from wafting into the neighborhood. The machines’ giant tracks rolled over the debris, crunching it into a sickening mush, once the refuge of the poor and hungry. The motor-noise of the beasts — and the deafening hammering that one machine made with its long ramrod — reverberated in the cavernous concrete neighborhood, jarring office workers blocks away. ‘The earth moved,’ one Page Hotel resident said next door. ‘It was like an earthquake.’

Bill Lohr
Thanksgiving or Christmas would stand out but no, they were all good. And every meal, I ate all the food.

Kelvin Anderson
A ghostly cloud of dust rises from falling plaster and concrete, but a steady stream of water controls the air-borne particles.

The Schuman meal in either 1996 or ’97. Steak and lobster! Schuman’s widow attended and wanted something really special. The sea and turf menu was advertised in advance. Usually about 2,000 people a day came. That day, it was probably 2,700, a big crowd — and at the beginning of the month.

The Dining Room walls that Painters’ Union volunteers painted 62 years ago became an outlet for personal feelings; people were invited to write on them or start the demolition by knocking off a piece to take home as a souvenir. As a closing ritual, the St. Anthony of Padua statue that had marked the Dining Room entrance for 50 years was carried down Golden Gate Avenue to the interim spot.

‘We can live without the building, we can’t live without the love,’ was one sentiment scrawled on a wall. ‘Thanks for the love you put out, sharing and uplifting us in moments of grief and sorrow,’ was another.

Communications Director Karl Robillard remembers an eerie time nine years ago, not quite a miracle, but a quick response to keep the flow of daily meals unbroken. A power outage stopped the legendary hot lunch cold. But from hundreds of cans of tuna, volunteers fixed 3,000 sandwiches for bag lunches. And as a silent testament to St. Anthony’s community building, Robillard said, ‘most chose to stay and eat together in the dining room’ in dim candlelight flickering off the murals.

Another memorable meal wasn’t in the Dining Room at all but on the second floor in the Poverello Room, run by secular Franciscans for a buck on Sundays, a big pancake breakfast. The meal moved to 550 Golden Gate Ave. around 2004, Robillard said.

‘For street people,’ one man on the sidewalk said with pride of the Dining Room, ‘you can’t go wrong and I try to tell people where to go — that’s the way I learned about it.’

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Continued from page 1

Demolishing the landmark St. Anthony Foundation offices and Dining Room buildings began Sept. 4. Next door is St. Boniface Church with De Marillac Academy at right.
Chicken and rice. Biggs has lived at the Boyd Hotel next door for a year and a half, which made the soup kitchen very convenient.

Memorable meals

“Hot dogs and baked beans on Labor Day — and chili dogs anytime. She came from Alabama three years ago, was homeless three months and ate every day at St. Anthony’s.”

“Barbeque chicken used to be served in whole pieces. Now, they cut it up. I first started coming nine years ago and I eat there every day. They treat everyone with dignity and respect. I volunteered there, too.”

“Meatloaf was the best in his 12-year experience. Hurrying to get in line for lunch at the new spot, he didn’t have time to say more.”

Once the demolition was under way, the sounds of monster machines reverberated through the neighborhood and shook the ground. At left, the upper floors of Hastings law school’s student housing building on nearby McAllister Street can be seen. Below: The place where several thousand people dined daily for 62 years becomes an empty bowl of rubble, as seen from a room in the Boyd Hotel next door. Cleanup operations on the site continue into October.

Perhaps the best spot in his 12-year experience, Biggs has lived at the Boyd Hotel next door for a year and a half, which made the soup kitchen very convenient.

“This used to be a special pancake breakfast on Sundays. Lunch was free but Sunday breakfast was $1. Five or six guys would throw in their dollars for anyone who didn’t have it. We’d get a big stack of pancakes and good strong coffee that was free, 50 cents more for sausage. It’s what I heard about when I first came here in 2003. And it was clean and safe, an amazing place.”

“Prime rib and real ribs! I love eating at St. Anthony’s. That’s why I’m here.”

“Memorable meals”

Clarisa Ferguson

“I came from Alabama three years ago, was homeless three months and ate every day at St. Anthony’s.”

Mark Anthony

“Once the demolition was under way, the sounds of monster machines reverberated through the neighborhood and shook the ground. At left, the upper floors of Hastings law school’s student housing building on nearby McAllister Street can be seen. Below: The place where several thousand people dined daily for 62 years becomes an empty bowl of rubble, as seen from a room in the Boyd Hotel next door. Cleanup operations on the site continue into October.”

Photos by Tom Carter
Why no Y? TL leaders confront the association
Continued from page 1

ting pressure on the parent association to make good on its years-old commit-
ment. Tenderloin movers and shakers have joined the nascent campaign, and the
logjam may be starting to break up.
"I'd been working in the garden with sensors and heard so much planning
and dissatisfaction," says Kasey Asberry, once a Central employee but now a
volunteer who directs the
project as part of her master's degree program at S.F. State. "They felt
ignored by the association and wanted what they believed had been prom-
ised them — a new Y." Many also won-
dered why the old Y had to be sold and
couldn't be renovated.

"There were moves to renovate
the building going back 30 years, but
the cost was always astronomical, as
much as $25 million in 1998," says Car-
mela Gold, Central Y's former execu-
tive director. "We even started capital
campaigns, but the reality was that the
building was too huge for us to operate
— we only needed about a third of it."

Promise of a new facility
By the early 2000s, Central staff, its
board of managers, and the board of
directors of the association had agreed
that building a new facility was a smart-
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board of managers, and the board of

8
opened in 1910.

room, "as advertised when the Central Y
140 "sleeping rooms with hot and cold
ing rooms, restaurants and, upstairs, the
foot pool, gyms, showers, lockers, meet-
revival building with its 30-foot by 80-
grand, columned, Italian renaissance
was for sale, the swan song for the
community meeting that 220 Golden Gate
er option, Gold says. "I raised my family
down the street, and we've been members for 30 years," said Joseph Asberry, husband of Kasey.
"The association owes us an answer
about why it hasn't delivered. There've
been cuts in staff and hours with no di-
scussion about the future, and we want
to know why."

Staff was cut 25% in July, youth
programming fell to five days a week
from six, and fitness room hours were
slashed by 18 hours a week.

Kasey Asberry had invited associ-
ation board members to the meeting.
None showed, but they were represent-
ed by Chip Rich, vice president of oper-
ations at the association.

He seemed surprised by the blun-
ness of some comments and questions:
"We don't just want to be told what's
happening — we want to be part of
the planning and development and
fundraising." And "Are you having dis-
tusion with Hastings and, if so, what's
happening?"

"Is there a plan to build a new Y
in this community? Yes or no?" asked TL CBD Director Dina Hilliard.

Rich's response was a shade below
positive: "The commitment is still there,
so I'd have to say yes."

Hilliard pushed: "How could you
do that without an executive director
here?"

Rich was terse. "The decision to
build at a new site lives with the CEO
and board of the YMCA of San Francisco,
not the executive director of Central."

Longtime director ousted
That's another messy part of this
story. Gold, a tireless, much-admired
promoter of the Y and its role in the
community, told The Extra, "After 18
years as executive director, I moved to
a new half-time position as the director
of capital planning for the Central Y in
August 2010. The position was defund-
ed in September 2011."

Andrea Jones, named ED when
2005, she announced at a com-
munity meeting that 220 Golden Gate
was for sale, the swan song for the
community meeting that 220 Golden Gate

Asberry agreed to coordinate meet-
ings of a new Friends of the Central Y,
inviting 'the bigger community to try
to kick the project into high gear,' she
says. At the July 18 meeting, 70 people
jammed Central's small meeting room
to hear speakers and ask questions.

"The Y is the neighborhood’s living
room, and what matters is the will to
get a new one built," said Elvin Padilla,
executive director of Tenderloin Eco-
nomic Development Project, which
coordinates initiatives with commu-
nity organizations, businesses, founda-
tions and city agencies to strengthen
the neighborhood. He assured the au-
dience that 'raising the money can be
done.'

David Seward, Hastings’ CFO for 18
years and the school’s primary spokes-
man for the Y/Hastings project, said
Hastings is still very much in. 'We're
committed to keeping the lot avail-
able for the Y, and I'm optimistic that
the facility will be built,' he said, "but
we can't promise it will be available in
perpetuity."

Central Y members had plenty to
say. 'I raised my family down the street
and we've been members for 30 years,' said Joseph Asberry, husband of Kasey.
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