No. 1 worry as park opens: Will it finally now be safe?

Much trepidation at final outreach as premiere nears

By Tom Carter

AFTER A SWEEPING renovation closed Boeddeker Park for two years, the new $9.3 million version was celebrated Dec. 10 in a grand reopening. Mayor Lee and other dignitaries brimmed with optimism that the park will bring recreational vitality to the city's poorest, most congested community.

But the acre greenpatch in a sea of cement is still pestered by the question haunting it since it opened in 1985: Is it safe now?

Nearly three decades in the dark, for- tunately park, staff and police battled drug dealing, drunkenness and erratic behavior. Families stayed away in droves. Then, in recent years, squeezed by bud get cuts that shortened open hours, the park closed frequently. Residents couldn't keep track of when it was open.

Park safety, the No. 1 concern seven years ago that spurred the renovation, domi nated questions put to officials Nov. 20 at the police station's community room during the final outreach meeting of the protracted redesign process.

A woman with two children asked how families can be assured the park won't harbor drunks and druggies.

"The layers," responded Jeff Suss, Rec and Park property manager, who fielded the maj ority of questions during the 90-minute meeting. It wasn't a flip answer. Earlier, Suss had described various ways the park will be closely monitored.

From the new glassy clubhouse, staff can easily view the grounds that are now on one level, not two, as before. Staff, who will be on hand whenever the park is open, will be out there round and round — fun at the opening of the renovated Boeddeker Park.

"I walked through the park ... and almost broke into tears." -Steve Gomowski

Rec and Park

1,100 kids missing

Or are they? City says yes, others say no and maybe

By Tom Carter

ELEVEN HUNDRED kids, most of them poorer than church mice by city standards, went missing from the Tenderloin three years ago. Nobody knows where they scammed or why. To another neighborhood? Another town?

There are theories. One is they upgrade d to another neighborhood. Another is they left the exorbitant city for a lot cheaper digs. Yet another is they really aren't missing at all — and never were.

However, from a Human Services Agen cy report, "Total Children in the Tenderloin 1990-2011," the numbers tell this story.

The population of under-18s in the TL in 1990 was 2,061 and, in 2000, it was 3,026. But in 2011 it plumped to 1,919, an unprece dented loss of 1,107 kids in the past decade.

"The number of children in the Tender loin has changed a lot," Dan Kelly, Human Services director of planning, said after de livering statistics on neighborhoods at a May meeting of the San Francisco Family Economic Success Forum at the new Federal Building. He explained why the Tenderloin has been so affected: "I think rental subsidies to get people out is significant, and creeping gentrification. The Tenderloin isn't immune."

He cited the Tenderloin rental spiral, a 25% rise from 2011 to 2013. It's not the 41% rise citywide, but significant in the city's poorest neighborhood.

"There have been shifts," acknowledges Maria Su, director of the S.F. Department of Children, Youth and Their Families. "And we're tracking data to find where the families are. Yes, there has been a decline in Ten derloin children that we have to face. But programs are still needed in the neighbor hood."

What defines the Tenderloin are four census tracts: 122-125. The boundaries: Mar ket, Van Ness, Post and Powell.

With an $80 million budget, DCYF administers grants to nonprofits that partner with public and private schools to provide services, programs and child care. DCYF grants enable each school to have after-school programs, Su says.

Su can't quantify how many programs have dropped away from the one neigh borhood public school, Tenderloin Commu nity, or how many have increased in other schools because Tenderloin children and their families moved to greener pastures. The department doesn't have that data.

"We're asking how it affects the social network and its vitality," she says. "A loss of children in one neighborhood increases school-based, after-school funds elsewhere. There is so much movement and it's hard to track district-to-district. Tracking region to region is easier — from the city to Marin or Contra Costa counties, we see families moving," Su says.

"And for families still here, what does it mean with more adults? Is it hard to be the only family on the block? We don't have the answer for that, or what it can mean to our culture. But we want to give families the support they need!"
walking the park. So will TL police officers “hand-picked by Capt. (Jason) Cherniss,” Suess said. Even looking in from outside, visibility will be improved with the thinner, more transparent perimeter fencing.

Department of Public Works “amateurs” also will do periodic walk-throughs. Safe Passage will run safety programs. And three security cameras mounted near the main Eddy Street entrance will be watching 24/7. Three more cameras are inside the clubhouse.

There are no guarantees, Suess said, noting that the police station is literally across the street.

What about the surrounding sidewalk? another woman asked.

DPW street cleanings and beat cops will be keeping sidewalks clear and there are no no-parking red and white stripes on the north side of Eddy Street, where cars used to linger for hours, some occupants suspected of dubious activities. But sidewalk domino games often covered drug dealing.

But is the staff trained? to identify and deal with bad actors? Earl Bates asked from the back of the room.

Monday through Friday, the Boys & Girls Club is the main tenant, occupying its own programs and those of other nonprofits like the YMCA that have contracts to run programs at the park. On weekends, Rec and Park takes over, completing the year-round, seven-days-a-week, 9 a.m.-7 p.m. hours.

“We have the best players,” Suess said. And the only park closures he said. And the only park closures he could imagine, he said, might be for removing big trees.

“If you see something that needs attention, call 311,” Cismowski said. He expects community involvement in this. “You can address” issues.

Boys & Girls Club director Iesan Looper reviewed the kinds of programs that the club and its nonprofit partners will offer in more than 100 hours of activities weekly. But he said the club’s youth programs at the park are already filled and so are Glide’s. Not so of the YMCA’s, he said, which is moving all its programs to the park — “70 to 80 hours a week of senior, adult and after-school youth programs.”

An unexpected clubhouse feature will be availability for birthday parties, free of charge. “You have to have a permit,” said a Rec and Park representative; “but you will not be charged a fee.”

On weekends, Jamie Hopper, who formerly worked at Boeddeker, will be Rec and Park’s overseer when such programs as zumba dancing exercise, tai chi and street hockey will be offered.

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COVER: The new clubhouse at Boeddeker Park may be a community service to the city, as the city has a two-year commitment to the facility.

CENTRAL CITY EXTRA / DECEMBER 2014 – JANUARY 2015

CENTRAL CITY EXTRA is published monthly by the nonprofit San Francisco Study Center Inc., 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. The contents are copyrighted by the San Francisco Study Center Center, 8/19 Eddy Street, Suite 50C, San Francisco, CA 94109.

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CENTRAL CITY EXTRA is a member of the SAN FRANCISCO NEIGHBORHOOD PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION, SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS, NORTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER, AND SAN FRANCISCO PENINSULA PRESS CLUB

CENTRAL CITY EXTRA / DECEMBER 2014 – JANUARY 2015

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Park gets big piece of new $1 million for Tenderloin from health partnership

Boeddeker Park’s splashy reopening was enhanced by the announcement of $400,000 in grants from a new neighborhood initiative — the Tenderloin Health Improvement Partnership. The TL Boys & Girls Club will start 2015 with $250,000 more for Boeddeker staff and program supplies, and Safe Passage will get $150,000 to make sure kids can move safely around their hood, including getting to the park and back home.

Saint Francis Foundation is the lead partner of the initiative, which promises to give $1 million next year to improve Tenderloin residents’ health and safety. Foundation President Kevin Causey calls it “the single largest financial commitment for a collective impact project to date in the Tenderloin and is the beginning of a long-term commitment.”

Saint Francis Foundation is putting in the lion’s share — $750,000. Other founding partners include Saint Francis Memorial Hospital $125,000; Wells Fargo $50,000; and Citi Community Development $25,000; PG&E $25,000; and Georgette M. Beainy Trust $30,000.

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The San Francisco Foundation, dignity health and Twitter announced. (Twitter has put in an additional $35,000 into the park’s success. The TL Boys & Girl’s Club’s annual budget for 2014-15 was a modest $402,755 before the windfall from the Partnership. Safe Passage has operated on less than a shoestring since it started in 2006. “The $150,000 partnership grant is the first real funding Safe Passage has ever had,” says Kate Robinson, program director. The program grew out of concern for the safety of kids making their way through an unsavory gauntlet of drug dealing and seedy characters hanging out in the Tenderloin’s wild microhood, Leavenworth/Lower Eddy.

The grant will pay for Safe Passage programs at Boeddeker and elsewhere and for a staff of two. Robinson and Dina Hilliard, new executive director. Distribution of the remaining $600,000 HIP largesse isn’t final yet. Causey says, but some grants have been announced. $100,000 to Tenderloin Economic Development Project to promote neighborhood stores, restaurants and other businesses, and $139,000 to Green Mobile Health Education Kitchen Project, which teaches TL residents about the benefits of healthy meals, nontoxic cleaning products and physical activity.

There’s no request for proposal process for the grants. HIP’s Community Advisory Committee recommends grantees to Saint Francis Foundation based on “community-generated priorities,” Causey says. “The $1 million represents the pool of available resources [now]. Tenderloin HIP continues to attract new funders and anticipates that the funding pool will grow.”

— Marjorie Beggs

ELECTION ’14

Kim’s easy win — not like in November 2010

Jane Kim eked out a win four years ago in the District 6 supervisor seat, beating Debra Walker by only 1,337 votes. Last month, she won by a margin of 4,263 votes, garnering 67% of all ballots.

On one level, the elections were poles, if not polls, apart. Kim ran against 13 other candidates in 2010. The ranked-choice voting went to 11 rounds, each pass eliminating one or more of her competitors until she and Walker were left to split the remaining 16,593 votes.

Kim faced only three challengers in November: Michael Nulty, Jamie Whitaker and David Carlos Salaverry.

In his first bid for public office, Nulty — executive director of Alliance for a Better District 6, founder of a tenants’ organization, member of The Extra’s Editorial Advisory Committee and longtime community activist — came in a respectable second, drawing 11.21% of the vote. Whitaker was a close third at 11.14% and Salaverry 9.24%. Kim got a majority of the 13,090 ballots cast for District 6 supervisor right away, so no ranked-choice rounds were needed.

Despite the differences, Kim’s first two elections shared some similarities, including dismal voter turnout. Civic Center/Downtown and SoMa, the bulk of District 6, were scraping the bottom in November, with 45% and 47% of registered voters going to the polls, compared with the citywide turnout of 55%. Four years ago, when 61% voted citywide, the District 6 hoods came in at 48% and 55%.

In the supervisory race, the two elections also had a surprising bottom line: Kim’s total votes were eerily close — 8,865 in 2010 and 8,827 in 2014.

Election results 2014 and 2010:

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<th>November 2014</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jane Kim</td>
<td>8,865 66.83%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Michael Nulty</td>
<td>1,458 11.14%</td>
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<td>Jamie Whitaker</td>
<td>1,209 9.24%</td>
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<td>David Carlos Salaverry</td>
<td>1,102 8.60%</td>
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<td>Write-In</td>
<td>134 1.08%</td>
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<td>Total ballots</td>
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*Data does not change as ranked-choice rounds eliminate other candidates.
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One Kings lane, which had largely be back at the table next year, as will players in the game, presumably will gibility for the six-year exclusion from through their remaining years of eli-

mend firms' benefits are now locked in each year, as the companies pledged in the agreements meant to mitigate in-terest to give more. Otherwise,

T he biggest companies enjoy-

Big 3 tax-break companies get new break

CAC bows to city, locks in pacts for 3-5 years

Big 3 tax-break companies get new break
People of the Tenderloin

With this issue, Central City Extra launches a photojournalism series to put the Tenderloin’s people on display. It taps the talents of Paul Dunn, whose “Farmers on the Roof” feature in The Extra won first place in the S.F. Peninsula Press Club’s recent annual awards. People make a neighborhood and the Tenderloin is San Francisco’s most diverse. This series will show them in action.

It’s possible that some children were adrift in the city with no neighborhood connection. The homeless children count has risen disturbingly, according to Jennifer Friedenbach, Coalition on Homelessness executive director. Nearly 2,100 in San Francisco now, some with parents, some without, a surge from the 844 in 2005. Moreover, it’s unlikely any of the TL kids will return.

To one highly respected child and family authority in the Tenderloin, the loss is way off the beam.

Midge Wilson, founder and executive director of Bay Area Women and Children’s Center — a neighborhood safety net since 1981 — says not so. BAWCC, which serves 600 neighborhood women and children each week, is based at Tenderloin Community Building, keeping her especially close to the population. Wilson counts 3,500 kids in the Tenderloin.

“We call it our Tenderloin Kids Count. I’ve sent out teams of college kids, interns, building to residential building, who ask building managers and owners for the numbers, ages and races of kids living here.”

“We’ve done it four times over 34 years, and the numbers are always about the same, around 3,500. And that’s what we go with. We share that information with others who work with families and children in the Tenderloin. It’s a compelling figure in an area so small.”

What makes her count credible, she says, is the teams’ ability to get a more accurate count than the census. Her teams aren’t counting for the government; they’re counting for Wilson’s center and for money and grants it might land to help neighborhood kids and their moms, great selling points. More kids means more leverage.

By contrast, HSA does it with census tracts, 122 data annually based on results of the American Community Survey, a mandatory calculation that invites 1 in 38 households to answer survey questions online or by mail. The Census Bureau compiles the numbers for civic and academic institutions and businesses to use. The data also help the feds and states determine how to distribute more than $400 billion each year.

Wilson counts Tenderloin kids, using the same boundaries as HSA, but HSA does it with census tracts, 122 through 125.

“The census,” Wilson says, “is always an undercount. Large families are typical here. Let’s say there’s a family of six. But they will only report two kids because they’re afraid they might not be able to stay there if they say more. We talk to the families and neighbors. Once we found as many as 10 people living in one small room on Leavenworth.”

“With the census, Wilson says, “it’s always an undercount. Large families are typical here. Let’s say there’s a family of six. But they will only report two kids because they’re afraid they might not be able to stay there if they say more. We talk to the families and neighbors. Once we found as many as 10 people living in one small room on Leavenworth.”

Wilson’s first count was in 1984, the last in March 2007. Since then, she says, something unusual has occurred. “People were cooperative then, but the mood in the Tenderloin has changed in recent years. People have grown more suspicious and protective of their privacy. They’re more reserved about specifics about children.”

The last crew she sent out in the summer of 2012 were three college students and a high school senior. They were armed with IDs and brochures about BAWCC. They came back almost empty-handed, rebuffed because people wouldn’t talk to them.

“I thought we’d get information like we did before,” Wilson says. “But I’m really comfortable using that, 3,500 number. If anything, I err on the conservative side.”

A decline in neighborhood children surely would show up in the Tenderloin Community Elementary School’s records. The school district’s 2013-14 data show enrollment was 364. A school spokesman said this year it is 375 and was 388 in 2012. For nine years before that, the K-5 school’s enrollments never dropped below 351.

Certainly, there’s been a shift in children in the Tenderloin, and Wilson marvels at the diversity it has brought to the school on Eddy near Van Ness she helped found 18 years ago.

Thirty years ago, Wilson says, two-thirds of the children were Asian and Pacific Islander. Ten years ago an influx of Arabic and Latino children began with a "wonderfully diverse" result.

The district website shows the school’s makeup last fall: Hispanic 34%, Asian 20%, other white 14%, African American 13%, Filipino 5%, American Indian 1%, Pacific Islander 1%, multiple

Fourth- and fifth-grade students visiting the Janice Mirikitani Family, (Above) Youth and Childcare Center gather outside the center in November on their way to the Tenderloin Children’s Playgrunnd. Short walk away. Tigette Mills. (Below) San Francisco City Impact Academy fourth-grader, participates in a science project.
Central City Extra / December 2014 – January 2015

Tenderloin kids

The classes are all full," Wilson says. "If the school is under capacity, it's by very few. We're well beyond the original numbers. We're packed."

Where a decline does show up during the past decade is at Tenderloin Children's Playground a few blocks away on Ellis Street.

"As far as playground participation goes, yes, I did see the difference," says Rec and Park's Kay Rodriguez, who worked at the park from 1995 to 2009. "But I'm not sure why (it happened). There were a number of factors."

At first, she said, Tenderloin Playground was the only facility around with an after-school program. Then Glide created one. Soon all the schools had them: "I don't remember when," Rodriguez said. "But the kids would go directly into them. It happened really fast. DCYF was funding them."

And summers from 1995 to 2002 would see maybe 300 kids on the playground. "It's still the only safe place in the neighborhood to run around — it's still the sanctuary!" But those numbers plummeted by 2009 to 100, sometimes down to 20, she said.

"It fluctuates in the Tenderloin. No one really stays there permanently. They (families) get a Section 8 and go to another part of the city. And the city is working faster to get them out. The numbers dropped drastically."

The park had an after-school tutoring program with 25 kids until 2009 when the department said to stop helping with homework because the job at the park was recreation. "We lost all those kids," Rodriguez said.

The park had seven employees in 2002, now it has two.

HSA's Kelly is pretty sure subsidized housing played a role by relocating the missing children, as Rodriguez suggests. But again, quantifying the egress is problematic. "We only have partial program numbers," Kelly said after consulting HSA's Housing and Homeless program about its effort to get families out of SROs and to rent-subsidized apartments.

The Tenderloin Housing Clinic ran the HSA program under contract from 2007 to 2012. The last two years, the rent subsidy program has focused more on families in homeless shelters and their wait lists while the SRO families program went to an organization called First Avenues. But the data show only former SRO residents who "transition successfully" off their rental subsidy, not those who get the subsidy. During THC's five years it was 59 families with First Avenues it's been 20.

"The Tenderloin has the perception of being temporary, but it's a huge achievement if they (families) can move out," says So of DCYF. "They work very very hard to get into permanent housing. My concern is if they are doubling up elsewhere, maybe 'in the Sunset or Bayside. Others — low- to middle-income families — may have said, 'We can't live like this. ' They weren't rich enough to live here. The $55,000-$80,000-a-year families don't qualify and are left out of other subsidies. So they go somewhere affordable."

Even so, the majority of the 1,100 children lost from the Tenderloin were missing persons report: 1,107 tenderloin kids neighborhood stability at stake as views of a mobile population clash over proving who really lives here

Continued on page 6
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from families below the drastically low federal poverty line (FPL), which applies in the lower 48 states. The FPL for a single parent with two children is $19,760 or $1,647 a month.

HSA’s figures show 1,146 “poor children” in the TL in 2000 and just 527 in the neighborhood in 2011, a loss of 619.

“100% (of the FPL) is very poor given the city’s high standard of living, utter destitution,” said Tiffany Torrevillas, HSA planning analyst and census wonk, in an email to The Extra. “It might be more realistic to run these numbers at a higher threshold (it would yield a higher number of ‘poor children’). Many SF departments define poverty at 200% or 300% FPL because even at these higher levels families are struggling to survive.” She said that for a family of three, 200% is about $39,600; 300% is $59,400.

“The self-sufficiency standard from the Insight Center is $61,100 for a single parent with two children,” she added. “This is about 300% FPL.”

The Oakland-based Insight Center calculates the income needed by working families to meet their basic needs in every California county.

“The census data just isn’t there to understand where the families that left the Tenderloin ended up moving to,” Torrevillas added. “We can look at movement between cities, but not at the neighborhood level.”

The city itself has been bleeding children for some time. Census figures show there were 116,749 kids under 18 in San Francisco in 1990, or 16% of the population. By 2010, it was 107,524, or 13%. Possibly, the squeeze on the Tenderloin is part of the trend, only more pronounced.

HSA reported that 8,200 households with incomes of over $75,000 moved into the city in 2007. Five years later, 12,200 with $75,000 incomes moved here. Another HSA report shows that from 1990 to 2012 San Francisco’s upper class grew by 2%, the middle class shrank by 9% and the lower class grew by 4%. What this means to the 3,421 families in the Tenderloin, as of 2012, is anybody’s guess.

“But in schools all over the city we see enrollment trends going up,” says Su.

Yet another census figure HSA uses — an American Community Survey update on the population of Tenderloin children — showed 2,087 of them living in the Tenderloin in 2012 with 535, or 26%, below FPL.

What can the gain of 168 kids mean?

“I wouldn’t dare to guess,” Su said.

This is a double issue of The Extra, for December and January. We will be back to our regular monthly publishing in February.

Meantime, Central City Extra and San Francisco Study Center wish our readers happy holidays and a joyful new Year.
Two dozen activists and nonprofit leaders gathered Dec. 3 to memorialize Garth Ferguson, the bold activist who had worked with him — “he could be a pain in the ass” — gave an unexpected version of Mr. Ferguson’s vision. He got hit by more cars and Muni buses than anyone I know,” Williams said. “Muni drivers didn’t have a vendetta against him — his vision was bad.”

But Mr. Ferguson’s insight was evident, Williams said, recalling once when POWER members were nervous. “He was a kind of poet and warrior with an impish quality. He cast quite a shadow. He made you think maybe this can work — that something good can happen here. And I want to thank him for continuing to remind us.”

Community Housing Partnership organizer James Tracy said when he once invited Mr. Ferguson to speak at a week-long training for organizers, he always seemed miffed. “It was like how you can take because “you knew where the food was coming from.”

Mr. Ferguson was a founder of the Coalition on Homelessness in 1987.

“They spent a lot of time (with us) in the early days,” said Jennifer Friedenbach, executive director. “He was the moral compass for the Coalition, and he always came back at the times we needed him. He was essential in keeping us on track and bringing true to what we were fighting for.”

“He did the work for decades. He did the work the whole program. His presence in the United Nations Plaza disappeared.”

Mr. Ferguson was ravaged by AIDS-related discrimination and put up $500 million to search for its cure. As people died all around them — at least 20 perished at the vigil site — the activists in the plaza’s tent town became a human billboard for human rights advocates. “There was a five-day rainstorm and the wind just took all of our stuff and blew it away. There was no place to stay”

A 2011 resolution by Supervisor David Campos to recognize the vigil’s importance with a commemorative plaque passed but never was implemented. Resolutions, explained Campos aide Nathan Albee, do not have the force of law.

Still, Mr. Ferguson’s commitment to the demonstration and a lifetime of activism stands him tall in the memory of his friends, but he’s otherwise anonymous in the historic vigil alongside his fellow fallen activists.

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Jesse Cottonham
Human Performance Senior Specialist

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Glamorgeddon: Chi-poster advertises the reasons for the seasons. Info: theexit.org, Dec. 28, 1:30-3 p.m., Main Library, Koret Community Center, located at 88 – 6th St. If your name is currently on any TODCO Housing Waiting List, you may apply. Call 519 Ellis St. (Senator Hotel). Contact: 563-3205, for the meeting. 519 Ellis St. (Senator Hotel). Contact: 563-3205, for the meeting. 519 Ellis St. (Senator Hotel). Contact: 563-3205, for the meeting. 519 Ellis St. (Senator Hotel). Contact: 563-3205, for the meeting.

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552-8100