Honoring those who perished on the street

By Tom Carter

More than 100 people stood on the steps of City Hall in cold, pouring rain last Dec. 21 at 5:30 p.m. to give a final act of dignity to the homeless who have died on the city’s unforgiving streets during the year in fair weather or foul.

As the name and age of each person was read, a Tibetan bell was struck, ringing out an eerie note that hung mournfully in the air, then faded into the night.

“It’s a unique service that gives us pause to remember,” says Michael Pappas, executive director of San Francisco Interfaith Council, which co-sponsors the memorial with Night Ministries. “I’m moved by it.”

The memorial for the homeless will happen again — for the 26th time, same winter solstice day, same time, but across the street in Civic Center Plaza, where it also has been held in recent years. The public is welcome at this hour-long interfaith, nondenominational recognition of the dead. Organizers say about 100 names will be acknowledged and a few hymns will be sung and prayers offered.

The Health Department supplies the names, though some are John Does, and often the list is supplemented by friends of SRO residents who have died on the streets, or not.

“Yes, some have died nameless,” says Rev. Maggie Henderson, pastor at Old First Presbyterian, who has helped organize the memorial. “But all these people had families. It’s a sorrow.”

Rev. Glenda Hope, the retired Presbyterian minister whose Network Ministries

Boeddeker is No. 9

Park tops 212 others in city ranking

By Tom Carter

A city study has again proved what Tenderloin residents have known for two years — that their new Boeddeker Park is top notch, a shining diamond in the rough.

A controller’s office team has ranked Boeddeker in the top 10 among San Francisco’s 221 parks for the second year in a row. It started in December 2014 when the park reopened after a $9.3 million makeover.

The rating for the 2015-16 year, which came out in October, gave the 1-acre site a 96.1%, good for ninth place. The previous year, at 98.8%, Boeddeker ranked No. 2 in the city behind another recently renovated park, Cabrillo Playground. The Outer Richmond site is about the size of Boeddeker and repeated at No. 1 in the latest report, dropping slightly from 99% to 98.2%.

“It’s great, but not surprising,” Betty Traynor said of Boeddeker’s showing. For years she has been facilitator for monthly Friends of Boeddeker Park meetings and was the steady hand when Boeddeker was criticized as a poorly designed, thick-fenced fortress hiding drug dealing that scared people away. The regular meetings and Traynor’s ability to listen to volunteers’ suggestions and keep improvement projects on track were a factor influencing Trust for Public Land to spearhead the complete park redo.

Boeddeker, Traynor said, continues to improve with its programs for the young and old and also has flourishing gardens of plants, bushes and herbs in the north sector near Ellis Street. There doesn’t appear to be safety issues, not like before.

Five years ago, the Park Maintenance Standards’ report ranked Boeddeker near the bottom of the list. It was about the time that Trust for Public Land’s Jake Gilchrist began attending...
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Changing Steps
The new steps were stunning a week ago, their dark green thickness as velvety as Wimbledon lawn until a water main broke down the block. Workmen dug down to fix it and a brown river gushed my way, depositing mud the sun turned to dust. Everyone tracked it up, oh yes. Dust ingrained the treads, dirt darkened every corner. Beauty dies fast in a city.

— Tom Carter

Tom Carter, for many years The Extra’s community reporter, has an additional talent as a writer.

The journalist who reported on “Murder in the Tenderloin,” wrote the obituary for legendary AIDS pioneer Hank Wilson, the “Teresa of the Tenderloin,” documented the cultural pluralism that makes the neighborhood its own Diverse City and has chronicled Boeddeker Park’s transformation step-by-step from sordid to sensational, gets introspective in his newfound freedom as a writer.
Homeless memorial

A unique opportunity for community service providers served the Tenderloin for decades, started the homeless memorial in 1990 and sponsored it until three years ago.

“The paper had reported that 16 people had frozen to death,” she said, explaining the origin of the ceremony to The Extra in 2010: “We were just becoming aware of it. But 16 of us got together and walked to every spot — all in the Tenderloin — where someone had died.”

“And we stopped there and were silent and someone slowly beat a drum. No one had a name. And then we moved on to the next place. At the end I said a prayer. And that was it.”

Now, crowds of about 100 holding candles show up for the ceremony. Many meet an hour ahead at 4:30 p.m. at St. Anthony’s, 150 Golden Gate Ave., for a brief remembrance, then march together to the Civic Center. Musicians might play at the memorial, or singers or choirs might sing, and the dead are acknowledged.

Since Interfaith took it over, we have not been asked to co-sponsor an so have not been involved,” Jennifer Friesdenbach, executive director of the Coalition on Homelessness, said in an email.

The Coalition was a co-sponsor previously for 15 years. “Typically, about 100 people pass away homeless, and they either get the names from various service providers or from the medical examin-er’s office.”

“The memorial in the past has been a time to honor people who have died without a home many of preventable causes, and many premature because of their housing status.”

Learn about life in the Tenderloin

Read DEATH IN THE TENDERLOIN

99 obituaries from the Central City Extra
Stories of people who lived and died in the neighborhood
5 journalistic essays shed light on central city life:
• Faces of Death
• Causes of Death
• Rev. Glenda Hope: The Closer
• Murder in the Tenderloin
• Analysis of Those Who Died

These are some of the people who made living in the Tenderloin special: Leroy Looper, pioneer of supportive housing; Joe Jackson, union organizer who never stopped organizing; Steve Conley, champion of populist causes; Darwin Diaz, fighter for the rights of the mentally ill; John Melone, feisty advocate for senior housing and health care; Jesse Morris, budding rock star; Hank Wilson, AIDS pioneer known as “Teresa of the Tenderloin”; and the dozens of other men and women who lived quietly — or not — in the neighborhood.

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CENTRAL CITY EXTRA
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The TOYCO Single Room Occupancy (SRO) Housing Waiting List is open for the Knox and the Rayesian House. If your name is currently on any TOYCO Housing Waiting List and you would like information on your current status, please call the TOYCO Marketing Office at 415-957-0227 on Fridays only.

Building Size & Amenities

The Knox SRO located at 241-6th St. & Trumbull is accepting applications and has an OPEN WAITLIST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building</th>
<th>Size &amp; Amenities</th>
<th>Max/Min Household Income Limits</th>
<th>Rent as of Feb. 1, 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knox SRO</td>
<td>1 Person or Couple</td>
<td>$34,600/year</td>
<td>Move-in deposit: $687</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Room size: 10½ x 16'</td>
<td>1 person</td>
<td>Monthly rent: $687 plus utilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi-Private bathroom: 7' x 7'</td>
<td>2 person</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unit amenities: sink, microwave, refrigerator, 2-burner stove, close, single bed</td>
<td>Minimum income of $1,574/month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Building amenities: small gym, library, private lounge, roof top garden, community kitchen, laundry facility, 24 hour staff &amp; surveillance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hotel Isabel

Located at 1095 Mission St.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building</th>
<th>Size &amp; Amenities</th>
<th>Max/Min Household Income Limits</th>
<th>Rent as of Feb. 1, 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SRO 1 Person or Couple</td>
<td>Room single: 10½ x 12, shared bathroom</td>
<td>$34,600/year</td>
<td>Move-in deposit: $687</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Double occupancy: 12x12, shared bathroom</td>
<td>1 person</td>
<td>Monthly rent: $687 plus utilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unit amenities: sink, microwave, refrigerator, 2-burner stove, close, single bed</td>
<td>Minimum income of $8094/month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Building amenities: community kitchen, 24 hour staff &amp; surveillance, laundry facility</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Boeddeker’s a 9 — special, but down from 2nd place last year

As a whole, the eight District 6 parks didn’t do too bad, either: 85.8%, up .3% from an average of 85.8%, about the same as the previous year (see sidebar). That puts D6 in fourth place among the 11 supervisorial districts. The score was also a tad higher than the city average of 85.5%. A score of 85 is pretty good, the report said, indicating adequate maintenance.

A data shocker in the report was the Tenderloin Children’s Recreation Center’s score. The center on Ellis Street near Hyde plummeted 21.2 points in fiscal 2015-16 to 71.9% from its 92% score the previous year — continuing the slide from 96.1% five years ago. The report cited “litter, paint and rust/rot on play structures” as a common problem at some parks with the biggest decreases.

By contrast, Boeddeker Park, long the ugly sister of Tenderloin playgrounds, nailed a perfect 100% for its playground feature for the second straight year, making it the city’s leader again. Its green and royal blue play equipment in the 2,800-square-foot children’s playground includes a slide, swings and huge jungle gym, still pristine and resting on a comfortable surface made of 100% recycled rubber. Boeddeker offers full-court basketball, volleyball, rubber. Boeddeker offers full-court basket-

RATINGS FOR DISTRICT 6 PARKS

The eight parks in District 6, which serve 74,000 residents, did fairly well in the last evaluation by an inspecting team from the controller’s office; although none showed the dramatic improvement from five years ago that Boeddeker has.

Boeddeker jumped 21.2 points from a 74.9% rating in the 2011 report to 96.1% in 2016, as the little fifth-of-an-acre Sgt. John Macauley Park at Larkin and O’Farrell streets moved up from 86.5% to 90% in the same period.

The biggest drops were at Tenderloin Recreation Center on Ellis Street, 82.8%, down from 96.1%; a loss of 13.3 percentage points; Gene Friend Recreation Center on Sixth Street at Folsom, 96% to 85.1%; Victoria Manalo Draves Park, nearby on Folsom, lost 8.4 percentage points, going from 96% to 87.6%.

The others: the 5.4-acre Joseph L. Alioto Performing Arts Piazza in Civic Center, 76.7% down from 80.8%; South Park, at 64 South Park Ave., 92.5%, down from 94.5%; and Turk-Hyde Mini Park 79.3%, down from 83.5%.

— Tom Carter

Boeddeker Park

In the human world the Land of the Dead is where lost poems go to die outside Boeddeker Park The park was originally built by vultures as a nest composed of yellowed obituary columns, their blind eyes and feathers falling on forbidden words.

— Ed Bowers

NOTES FROM THE TENDERLOIN

Ed Bowers has been poetizing in the Tenderloin for a long time. Bowers covered the neighborhood’s Art Beat for The Extra for a while, then led poetry jams at the iconic 21 Club. His homage to that dive bar, “21 Poems for the 21 Club,” was published by Study Center Press. Prolific Bowers became an award-winning journalist with his rhythmic riffs on Tenderloin National Forest, the Main Library and other neighborhood highlights on the front page of The Extra.

Here is the lead from a tome he shared at the Poetry in the Park event in October.

News meetings in search of underused, needed parks that could become a project if they had an active, supportive group of volunteers.

“When we started the planning back in 2006,” says Gilchrist, now a supervisory project manager with Rec and Park. “We were really committed to investing in the park for future generations of Tenderloin residents. We created some bold ideas for improving Boeddeker — the fact that the park received such high scores is a reflection of our commitment to listening to and integrating the ideas of our staff and partners.”

The dream that came true celebrated its second anniversary Dec. 15. “We were really committed to investing in 2006,” says Gilchrist, now a supervisory project manager with Rec and Park.

“The fact that the park received such high scores is a reflection of our commitment to listening to and integrating the ideas of our staff and partners,” says Gilchrist.

Boeddeker Park

In the human world, the Land of the Dead is where lost poems go to die.

outside Boeddeker Park

The park was originally built by vultures as a nest, composed of yellowed obituary columns, their blind eyes and feathers falling on forbidden words.

— Ed Bowers

Ancient spirits read their disembodied midnight poems, outside, beyond children and cops, around a merry-go-round tree to prisoners of World War 3 glowing in the dark neon nights full of poetry, illuminating its whispered curses in blank verse.

shot from Saturday night specials.

Neighborhood poet Ed Bowers on Turk Street in 2015.

For left, PE teacher Noah Blakely and his students use Father Alfred E. Boeddeker Park regularly, washing the half-court basketball court regularly, washing the half-court basketball court.
Whether we’re in a historic drought or facing severe storms in an El Niño year, the weather can have a serious impact on our electric system. That’s why PG&E and its team of meteorologists monitor the weather 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. We send crews out ahead of storms and extreme weather to minimize any outages.

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As a meteorologist, I work to make sure PG&E crews are ready for any weather. We want our customers to be prepared too.
SPECIAL EVENTS
Gilde holiday events, 330 Ellis. Dec 17, Toy Giveaway, 9-11 a.m.; Dec 24, House of Prime Rib luncheon, 10:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m., Dec 25, Christmas celebrations: breakfast, 7:30-9 a.m., celebrations 9-11 a.m., Christmas meal, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.; Dec 30, Nov. Russian Celebration, 4-6 p.m. music, games, storytelling, drumming, holiday meal.
Fine Forgiveness Program, Jan 3-Feb 14, SF Public Library waives lat fees on all returned books, CDs, DVDs and other materials, regardless of how long overdue. During its last amnesty program, in 2009, SFLP received more than 30,000 overdue items and waived $500,000 worth of fees. Info: sfpl.org.
Demonstration Gardens 8th birthday party, open house, Jan 6, 4-6 p.m. 333 Golden Gate Ave. Visit with Cape Society artists, environmental justice activists, garden stewards, friends and family. Gardens are a program of Faithful Fruits Street Ministry and Hastings College of the Law. In demonstration garden.org.
ARTS EVENTS
REGULAR SCHEDULE
HOUSING
Tenant Associations Coalition of San Francisco, 1st Wednesday of each month, noon, 201 Turk St., Community Room. Contact Michael Nulty, 339-8327. Resident unity, leadership training.
HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH
CBHS Client Council, 3rd Tuesday of month, 3 p.m., 1380 Howard, Room 515. Consumer advisors from self-help groups and mental health consumer advocates. Public welcome. Info: 253-3659. Call ahead on meeting location may change.
Healthcare Action Team, 2nd Wednesday of month, 1010 Mission St., Bayview Health Community Center, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Focus on increasing supportive home services, expanded eligibility for home care, improved discharge planning. Light lunch. Call Lisa Magno, 546-1347.
Hoarding and Cluttering Support Groups, weekly meetings at various times, conducted by Mental Health Association of San Francisco, 670 Market St., Suite 202. Info: 415-2625 or mentalhealthsf.org/group-search.
Mental Health Board, 3rd Wednesday of the month, 6:30-8:30 p.m., City Hall, room 278. CBHS advisory committee, open to the public. Call: 255-3475.
Tenderloin Healthy Corner Store Coalition, 4th Thursday, 3 p.m., Kelly Cullen Community Building, 200 Golden Gate Ave., 2nd floor auditorium or 5th floor gym. Public invited to discuss legislation that encourages corner stores to sell fresh food and reduce tobacco and alcohol sales. Info: Jenny Estrada, jesenialdynt@gmail.com, 887-2483.
SOMA Police Community Relations Forum, 4th Monday of each month, 6-7:30 p.m. Location varies. To receive monthly email info: 538-8100 x202.
Tenderloin Police Station Community Meeting, 1st Tuesday of month, 6 p.m., police station community room, 301 Eddy St. Call Susa Black, 435-7930.
NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT
Alliance for a Better District 2, 2nd Tuesday of month, 6 p.m., 230 Eddy St. Contact Michael Nulty, 403-1904 or sf@district2@yahoo.com, a distributor improvement association.
Friends of Boudin Park, 3rd Thursday of the month, 3:30 p.m., park clubhouse, Eddy and Jones. Info: Betty Traynor, 931-1126.
Friend Recreation Center Advisory Board, 3rd Thursday of month, 6 p.m. Works to protect SOMA resources for all residents. Friend Rec Center, 210 Sixth St. Info: Tim Figurella, 554-9520.
Tenderloin Community Benefit District Full board meets 3rd Monday of each month, 5 p.m, City Hall, 250-4812.
Safe Haven Project, 4th Tuesday of month, 3 p.m., 519 Ellis St. (Senator Hotel). Contact 563-2226, x115, or centralmarket@sbcglobal.net.
SOMA Community Stabilization Fund Advisory Committee, 3rd Tuesday of month, 5:30 p.m., 1 South Van Ness, 2nd floor. Info: Claudine Del Rosario, 701-5506.
SENIORS AND DISABLED
Mayor’s Disability Council, 3rd Friday of month, 1-3 p.m., City Hall, room 401. Call 554-6769. Open to the public.
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COMMUNITY CALENDAR