New SoMa Health Center finally opens

$47 million project: clinic plus housing

BY TOM CARTER

Westbrook Plaza, a SoMa project 20 years in the making, was dedicated June 9 as the city’s first combo housing and health center in San Francisco forged from the ground up by a public and private partnership.

The $47 million project on Seventh Street between Folsom and Howard houses the new nonprofit South of Market Health Center, a state-of-the-art medical and dental clinic occupying 20,000 square feet on two floors in one of the plaza’s two Mercy Housing Corp. buildings. Together they contain 49 units of low-cost family housing.

The five- and four-story buildings were financed by the Redevelopment Agency, tax credits and loans from U.S. Bank, Wells Fargo and National Cooperative Bank.

Master of Ceremonies Charles Range, health center executive director, told 80 well-wishers baking under a noon sun in the breezeway between the buildings that the health center board in 1991 had voted to build a new facility with no inkling how that would be achieved. The old SoMa Health Center, established in 1973, three blocks away at 261 Minna St. was staffed and outfitted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. But the building, a gift from a private citizen, was severely damaged by the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake.

Over the past 15 years, the west SoMa neighborhood has seen the rise of 2,210 new units of affordable housing and increasing health care needs for adults and children.

The half-acre complex, owned and operated by Mercy Housing, is named after activist Elouise Westbrook, who came from Texas in the 1940s and settled South of the Mission in 1961 “This helps fulfill the city’s objective” (for low-cost housing)

Mayor Ed Lee

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Slot. She advocated for better housing and health care and was a charter member of the SoMa clinic when it opened. Skilled and unflappable over 60 years, Westbrook served on many boards and presided over the San Francisco Housing Authority Commission. In 1999, the National Association of Community Health Centers gave her its Lifetime Achievement Award. Westbrook, 96, could not attend, but was represented by 10 family members, including the youngest, Evelyn Snelgro, 4, her great-great-granddaughter.

‘This helps fulfill the city’s objective to provide more low-cost housing,” said Mayor Ed Lee, one of more than a dozen speakers over 2½ hours. “I want the governor to come here and see how we’ve done this,” he said, making a pointed reference to Redevelopment’s role, providing about a third of the project funds for the clinic. Range said. Its $4.5 million bought the land and started construction and, as a result, banks got on board and completed the financing.

Westbrook resident Jocelyn Kwa, a single mom with two kids, said through tears that she was ‘‘trying just to survive’’ when her name was chosen from a pool of 2,000 in a housing lottery. She and the children occupy an 880-square-foot, two-bedroom apartment. ‘‘I just feel so lucky,’’ she cried. The main building on Seventh Street houses the health clinic and 30 units above. The four stories of housing behind it face Moss Street and contain 19 apartments, a laundry, multipurpose community room and computer room with five PCs for residents’ use.

Families that qualify for the furnished, one-, two- and three-bedroom units must earn no more than 80% of Area Median Income levels, $67,860 for a family of four.

The health clinic opened in May with 42 full-time administrative, IT and medical personnel, headed by three doctors. It expects to double its multiethnic patient load from 75 a day at the Minna Street clinic to 150 a day, or 10,000 patients a year — 65% of them expected to be uninsured. Many are double- or triple-diagnosed with mental health, substance abuse and chronic medical conditions, Range said.

The clinic, closed Sundays, charges on a sliding scale based on federal poverty guidelines. It is one of the 10 facilities comprising the San Francisco Community Clinic Consortium, which includes Curry Senior Center, Glide Health Services and Saint Anthony Free Medical Clinic.

Dental Gemma Ferrer, in her state-of-the-art dental clinic with six chairs in the SoMa Health Center, will soon be joined by a second dentist.

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Good News

Music lovers

Bankrolled by $4,100 in TL CBD grants, Boeddeker Park’s stage will offer at least seven summer and fall music concerts. People in Plazas music got $2,100 and returns to Boeddeker Park for the first time in three years at noon on July 19, Aug. 16 and Sept. 20. It was announced at the Friends of Boeddeker Park’s May meeting. At least four more concerts will be scheduled for the park through a $2,000 CBD grant to the Friends. Chair Betty Traynor said the jazz group Melvin and the Mellotones, which canceled June 21 as the first concert in that series and was replaced by a jazz trio, plays Aug. 14.

In another announcement, tai chi sessions will continue at the park on Thursdays, 11 a.m. to noon.

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This self-portrait by surrealist John Wotipka rivals Edvard Munch’s “The Scream” for its personal intensity.
Super market – central city’s

Heart of the City

The Heart of the City market continually evolves. A year ago, its board hired Kate Creps as operations director to begin to reach out to the community and to ‘re-image’ the market. She has planned a number of ‘eating healthy’ after-school sessions, culminating with the youngsters touring the market and hearing from the farmers. She has colorfully redesigned the Website, created a Facebook page and is launching a monthly email newsletter to farmers and customers. This summer there is to be a lunching with tables and chairs under a large canopy. A half dozen hot food vendors, allowed into the market eight years ago to raise more money (the trucks pay $45 a day, farmers pay $30 for a space), will be supplemented soon by specialists. “We don’t want to duplicate anything in the neighborhood,” Creps says. “I’m looking for people who create specialties, like baked goods, to bring to the market.”

The Wednesday crowds he sees now are back and so is the market — it’s kickin’, it’ll be fun, a family thing.”

Garrone’s parents were Santa Clara County farmers but he was a San Francisco police dispatcher in 1981. Then, a retired Balboa High School music teacher advised him to get into mushrooms. “Customers have changed,” he says. “It was wall to wall people. It’s not as good now as it was — it will never be — but it is a good market and it holds its own. I told my wife, ‘We’ll do it one year.’

Now, Garrone fungi-farms 60,000 square feet. He sells shitake, king trumpets, morel, porcini, lion’s mane, white and yellow tree mushrooms. So he and his schoolteacher wife, Toby, took the plunge. They rented a Hunters Point warehouse for a dime a square foot after the Navy pulled out. Sawdust, which is what the mushrooms grow in, was free for the taking. Garrone’s parents were Santa Clara County farmers but he was a San Francisco police dispatcher in 1981. Then, a retired Balboa High School music teacher advised him to get into mushrooms. “Customers have changed,” he says. “It was wall to wall people. It’s not as good now as it was — it will never be — but it is a good market and it holds its own. I told my wife, ‘We’ll do it one year.’

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Twenty-five years ago “people bought bigger,” says Francesca Cipponeri, who farms 45 acres in almonds and fruit in Hughson (between Modesto and Turlock) with husband Vince, who stays in the field working with his son Vince Jr., and grandson, Ryan. They’ve been at the market since 1986. “Several pounds. Now they pick exactly, maybe a piece or two more. They were making jelly and jam. Now it’s easier to buy it in a store.”

She’s one of five organic farmers at the Wednesday market. She was 16 and living in Italy when she married Vince, and they came to Northern California to begin a farm life. Vince first came to the market in 1982, a “23-year-old greenhorn,” to work in her mother’s space. “I used to sell and buy a flat of strawberries until he finally gets it.”

Compounding the economic downturn is the lack of competition. In 1982, she says there were eight shippers in the Castroville area, and it’s consolidated into one distributor, one company. “All went bankrupt or were swallowed up.” Meanwhile, big grocers are stocking the produce is fresh, it’s cheap, it’s good, and it’s consolidated into one distributor, one company. “All went bankrupt or were swallowed up.” Meanwhile, big grocers are stocking it’s consolidated into one distributor, one company. “All went bankrupt or were swallowed up.” Meanwhile, big grocers are stocking produce from Mexico, she says. “Salinas is in the same boat, consoli- dated. How can that be any good for someone selling produce? That tells the story.”

What did you buy at the Farmers’ Market today?

Sal Mora, Tenderloin
I usually buy bok choy, green- or red-leaf lettuce, flowers, oranges and cherries. The oranges and cherries are for me, so I have something to nibble on, and the flowers are for the ladies at the church I go to. I have a lot of lady friends, and they love flowers! The lettuce and bok choy are for the chickens I keep at the Howard Langton Community Garden. I raised them from babies, and I’m pretty close to them.

Janie N., San Francisco
I bought a coriander, bell peppers and lemons. The coriander I sautéed with olive oil, garlic and red-wine vinegar. I do the peppers with red onions, sauté them with green bell peppers and add egg whites for a scramble in the morning. I also bought some yam leaves for a mental health program I work for – I buy all the veggies for them weekly. I bring the cook recipes I get from all the vendors here from other countries.

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Gary D. Mallin, Sunset
I bought lettuce, onions, radishes, cherries and peaches. Also some wild stripey that you can’t get at other places. I’m basically making salads and eating as much raw food as I can. I shop more often – it gives me an excuse to come out this way. It’s convenient and easy. A lot of farmers’ markets are upscale. This one is proletarian, not bourgeoisie. It caters to people who are struggling to make the middle class. They didn’t come here in a Lexus, unlike the one at the Ferry Building.
Free toilet gets reprieve until 2012

BY TOM CARTER

The Tenderloin CBD voted in June to extend its free bathroom program at Rescue Mission for another six months despite low usage during the 90-day pilot earlier this year that cost the CBD an average $5 a flush. The experiment made the toilet available to the public weekdays through April, 10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. On average, only 11 people a day used it. As before, the CBD will fund the project with $3,000 a month for supplies and a toilet monitor, at $9.79 an hour, to keep order and compile data. To the $7,800 total the board is adding $500 this time for plumbing repairs, to be updated only if needed. The toilet at 140 Turk St. reopens July 1. Board President Clint Ladine, a Rescue Mission employee, said he had worried about the lack of repair money in the pilot budget when the mission would have had to handle mechanical problems — so he bought a snake. Ladine used it once on one stoppage, he said. Otherwise, the project went trouble-free.

The CBD’s Public Rights of Way Committee that recommended the six months also asked the mission to post the toilet’s operating hours and disburse a flyer with a map on it. No outreach had been before. ‘Folks don’t know where it is and when it’s open,’ Dina Hilliard, interim manager, said.

Renting porta-potties to enhance the campaign wasn’t discussed. The PROW committee will take that up at its next meeting and also compare the costs of renting a mobile toilet. The public toilet, Hilliard said later. In other action, the board approved 18.5% hike in the annual property assessment for the district’s 698 property owners. The committee hadn’t raised the assessment in two years and, under its rules, it could have jump the rate 2.8% per annum, based on the CBD’s Consumer Price Index guideline. The hike will add $14,000 to the roughly $1 million 2011-12 budget and will help offset buying a sidewalk cleaning machine for $80,000.

The search for an executive director is continuing following the resignation of Manager Elaine Zamora in February, when Hilliard, her associate manager, took over as interim head. Compass Point has been hired by the mayor’s Office of Economic and Workforce Development to conduct the job description and search, survey the nine-member board and train it and the new hire on procedures, roles and management. The deadline for applications is July 5. It could be late August before the board does the hiring, Hilliard said.

Meanwhile, she is trying to get her $55,000 salary adjusted upward. Zamora started at $80,000 but was reduced somewhat what when Hilliard was hired as her assistant. Hilliard said she voluntarily took on the additional responsibilities without a pay hike until April 1, when a new hire, retitled executive director, was expected. But the process has stretched on.

“In August I don’t even know if I’ll have a job,” Hilliard said. Her salary was on the agenda but when Ladine announced the board would go into executive session to consider it, OWE’s Trina Villanueva reminded him that because the agenda didn’t mention the executive session would be held, according to the Brown Act, the board couldn’t take it up. It had to be announced at least 24 hours in advance, she said.

The matter was scheduled for a special session, June 24.

GREGORY ENGLISH
44 years in San Francisco

Gregory English’s sister Gwendolyn and a handful of his friends gathered at the West Hotel on June 14 to remember the former shoe salesman and mechanic who’d lived there only a few months after his nearby residence of more than two decades burned down.

Rev. Glenda Hope officiated at the memorial service in the hotel basement. After some prayers, Monica, a social worker at the hotel, opened the reflections part of the memorial by recalling how “regardless of how he was feeling, one thing he always promised me was some down-home cooking — I’m gonna make you some down-home cooking.”

“He’s always going to be in my heart because he was always there when I needed him,” one resident said. “He was my buddy, always kind to me.”

Gwendolyn English tearfully described how she and Gregory, their mom and a younger brother, Fenton, arrived in California on the Greyhound bus from Shreveport, La., back in 1967 to join her father, Willie, 74, who still lives in Oakland.

“I’ve been taking care of Gregory all my life,” she said, but as his sick cell amanda had worsened in the last couple of years, she said, “We got extra close.”

The siblings were longtime residents of the Francisco Towers, on the next block of Eddy, and relocated to the West after a fire shredded that building earlier in the year.

Mr. English’s illness had cost him an eye and then a leg. Nonetheless, his sister said, “He was just the type of person that always kept a positive attitude.”

Everyone who spoke said that despite the challenges his poor health presented, he was unfailingly smiling and cheerful. Mr. English was 50 when he died, leaving behind his sister, father and two daughters, Adrianna and Kristiana.

Amanda, another hotel resident, recalled them passing time sitting in the sun outside on Eddy Street “Every once in a while our wheelchairs would get locked together. We were really close!”

— MARK HEDDN

OBITUARIES

FEEL LONELY? DEPRESSED? TRAPPED?
CALL • CHAT
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Obituary: Mr. English

July 8th, 2011, 7-9pm
Stoking the Fire, Stringing the Harp Performance and Conversation featuring Storyteller Brian Rohr. Themes include: feeling lost, unexpected companionship, artistry and renewal.

$10 Suggested Donation (No one turned away)

July 15th, 2011, 7-9pm
Anthology Release Party & Performance
Bay area writers and poets will read from our new anthology of creative writing and visual arts, Living in the Land of the Dead.

Learn more about the CMCBD’s Board of Directors Meetings and Committees, and how you can get involved.

415 957 5985 | www.central-market.org

CMCBD Board of Directors Meetings
Second Tuesday of Every Month, 3-5 p.m., Hotel Whitcomb, 1233 Market Street, Second Floor

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July Performances

Central Market
COMMUNITY BENEFIT DISTRICT

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

This month’s calendar is abbreviated because of space concerns. The full calendar will return next month.

SAFETY

Neighborhood Emergency Response Team Training (NERT), Central city residents can take the S.F. Fire Department’s free disaster preparedness and response training at neighborhood locations. www.sfgov.org/nert, or LL Aramian, 970-2022.

SoMa Police Community Relations Forum, 4th Monday of the month, 6-7:30 p.m. Location varies. To receive monthly email info: Metal Amtai, 539-8100 x202 or mamtilk@msn.com.

Tenderloin Police Station Community Meeting, last Tuesday of the month, 6 p.m., police station Community Room, 301 Eddy St. Call Susa Black, 345-7203. Neighborhood safety.

NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT

Alliance for a Better District 6, 1st Wednesday of the month, 6 p.m., 230 Eddy St. Contact Michael Nulty, 820-1560 or sf_d6@sfpo.org, a districtwide improvement association.


Friends of Boeddeker Park, 2nd Thursday of the month, 3:30 p.m., Boeddeker Rec Center, 340 Eddy St. Plan park events, activities and improvements. Contact Betty Traynor, 931-1126.

Gene Friend Recreation Center Advisory Board, 3rd Thursday of the month, 5 p.m., Boardroom 206, 1777 Fillmore St. Call Susa Black, 345-7203. Neighborhood safety.

COMMUNITY:

REGULAR SCHEDULE

SoMa Community Stabilization Fund Advisory Committee, 3rd Thursday of the month, 5:30 p.m., 1 South Van Ness, 3rd floor. Info: Clay de los Rios 749-2519.

South of Market Project Area Committee, 3rd Monday of the month, 6 p.m., 1039 Folsom St. Health, Safety and Human Services Committee meets monthly on the 1st Tuesday after the 1st Monday, 1039 Folsom, noon. 487-2166 or www.sompac.org.

Tenderloin Futures Collaborative, 3rd Wednesday of the month, 11 a.m.-noon, Tenderloin Police Community Room, 301 Eddy. Presentations on issues of interest to neighborhood residents, nonprofits and businesses. Information: 928-6209.

Tenderloin Neighborhood Association, 2nd Friday of the month, 842 Geary St., 5 p.m. Nonprofit focuses on health and wellness activities to promote neighborhood interactions. Info: tenderloinneighborhood@yahoo.com.

SENIORS AND DISABLED

Mayor’s Disability Council, 3rd Friday of the month, 1-3 p.m., City Hall, room 400. Call: 554-6789. Open to the public.

Senior Action Network, general meeting, 2nd Thursday of the month, 3:30 p.m., Boeddeker Rec Center, 340 Eddy St. Plan park events, activities and improvements. Contact Betty Traynor, 931-1126.

Gene Friend Recreation Center Advisory Board, 3rd Thursday of the month, 5 p.m., Boardroom 206, 1777 Fillmore St. Call Susa Black, 345-7203. Neighborhood safety.

SoMa Police Community Relations Forum, 4th Monday of the month, 6-7:30 p.m. Location varies. To receive monthly email info: Metal Amtai, 539-8100 x202 or mamtilk@msn.com.

Tenderloin Police Station Community Meeting, last Tuesday of the month, 6 p.m., police station Community Room, 301 Eddy St. Call Susa Black, 345-7203. Neighborhood safety.

Neighborhood Emergency Response Team Training (NERT), Central city residents can take the S.F. Fire Department’s free disaster preparedness and response training at neighborhood locations. www.sfgov.org/nert, or LL Aramian, 970-2022.

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Bringing AT&T customers a stronger network faster.

AT&T customers, including those who join us from T-Mobile, will see significant service improvements from the merger. The addition of T-Mobile’s spectrum resources and thousands of cell sites will quickly increase capacity and coverage, resulting in better call reliability and data speeds.

Mobile data traffic on AT&T’s network has grown 8,000% over the last four years. With tablets, cloud computing, and a new generation of bandwidth-hungry devices on the horizon, demand is expected to increase an additional 8-10 times by 2015.

Integrating T-Mobile’s network resources, while continuing AT&T’s network investment, is the surest, fastest, and most efficient way to meet this challenge.

Continued innovation for T-Mobile customers.

Through the integration with AT&T, T-Mobile customers can continue to enjoy innovative technologies, devices, and services for many years to come. They will have the freedom to keep their existing pricing plans and phones, and will benefit in the future with expanded capabilities.

T-Mobile customers will also benefit from network enhancements — such as improved coverage in remote regions and access to AT&T’s planned next generation networks.

Reaching more of California with LTE.

LTE technology is a super-fast way to connect to the Internet. The combination of AT&T and T-Mobile will allow AT&T to expand its LTE wireless broadband network to cover over 98% of California residents. That means one million more people in California, many in small towns and rural areas, will get access to LTE due to the merger.

Our customers will get a stronger network. The state will get a new choice for broadband. And more of California will get access to a cutting-edge wireless network and all the opportunities it brings.

MobilizeEverything.com