



San Francisco Tomorrow

Working to Protect the Urban Environment

Issue 330 *Will you want to live in San Francisco – Tomorrow* **September 2009**

COMMUNITY Farmers' Markets



The Inner Sunset is now a better place to live, thanks to the new Farmer's Market. Beyond having fresher, riper, tastier fruits and vegetables a short walk away, the Inner Sunset is becoming more of a community. Getting the Market up and running took the concerted effort of a core of dedicated souls, lots of meetings, large and small, and the support of Supervisor Ross Mirkarimi and his staff. About nine months after the members of the Inner Sunset Park Neighbors (ISPN) initiated the process, their market opened the first of June.

Every Sunday morning a couple dozen vendors take over a little public parking lot on 9th Avenue just south of Irving Street. Because it is a neighborhood association sponsored market, along with the vegetables, fruits, breads, flowers, fish, tofu, etc. a stall is provided for the ISPN and three more for rotating local merchants, non-profits, and one for live music. The SFPD, NERT, Mount Sutro Stewards, Academy of Sciences and many others take turns staffing an information booth. Because of the visibility of the ISPN at the market its membership has increased from 72 to over 300 households in the few months the market has been in place. In July, over one hundred people showed up for a neighborhood clean up and spent a Saturday morning sweeping and painting out graffiti.

This kind of neighborhood community building gives every citizen an opportunity to get involved in a positive way. The Farmer's Market is also building communications links when numbers are needed at City Hall. The Inner Sunset's voice was heard in the blockage of 240 giant AT&T boxes to be scattered throughout the City. Some of the same community rose up against a proposal to charge admission fees at the Botanical Garden.

Not to be confused with the big farmers markets at the Ferry Building or on Alemany, small neighborhood markets are springing up throughout the City--Bayview, Fillmore, Stonestown, Divisadero, Castro, and the venerable Noe. Each relates to their community in a unique way.

Because the new neighborhood farmers' markets are smaller, small farmers that find it difficult or impossible to get into the larger markets have increased opportunities to sell their products and their numbers are growing as the number of markets increases. For more info visit the site of the Pacific Coast Farmers' Market Association www.pcfma.com

HISTORIC PRESERVATION: OUR SAN FRANCISCO BRANCH LIBRARIES

Quietly woven into the history and tapestry of San Francisco's neighborhoods, eight Appleton & Wolfard libraries, built between 1951 and 1966, were designed as democratic community and learning centers---rather than as civic monuments of noblesse oblige. The eight branch libraries architecturally capture one of the most significant periods in the transformation of the American public library system. The hospitable simplicity, clubhouse-like spaciousness, asymmetrical gables, wide eave overhangs, ample fenestration, masonry walls and exterior patios celebrate the shift from social control to democratic social service. With their harmonious connectivity to streets, open space and urban life, the libraries continue as energetic neighborhood hubs.

Appleton & Wolfard designed more libraries in San Francisco than any other single firm in the city's history. Largely unaltered today, the eight branch libraries were the largest ones built in San Francisco at the time, reflecting the City's greatest capital expenditure in the Library modernization movement. Their signature style showcases the best principles of mid-twentieth century American public library design.

SHORTSIGHTED DEMOLITIONS OF MODERN HISTORIC RESOURCES

Recently, neighborhood organizations and historic preservationists have been mobilized by the proposed demolitions of two functional Appleton & Wolfard libraries, the Ortega and North Beach, as well as incompatible alterations to the Merced Library. These demolitions contradict the Library's original master plans which promised that the upgrades would not alter the Appleton & Wolfard libraries modern character significantly.

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Prop A general obligation bonds for branch renovations have been spent. Revenue bonds must be sold to pay for upcoming projects. The debt incurred will be **repaid with set-aside money from the general fund**, thus decreasing operating budgets of ALL branch libraries.

Historic preservation is the most sustainable construction methodology, conserving resources as well as cost. And preservationists expected these precepts would benefit the Branch Library Improvement Program (BLIP). Instead, demolition, not preservation will soon take Ortega and North Beach libraries.

FLAWED PUBLIC PROCESS

The Ortega Branch demolition received no environmental evaluation. Neighborhood organizations have awakened too late to question a dubious public process that will demolish a historic resource. A last minute attempt to save the building failed at the Board of Appeals.

The North Beach library is also threatened with demolition, however the North Beach library plans will be subject to an EIR within which historical significance will be examined.

"The North Beach Library appears to be individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and the California Register of Historical Resources. In addition, the building could be part of a multiple property listing, along with the seven other branch libraries by the architectural firm of Appleton & Wolfard." "Having undergone virtually no alterations, the North Beach Branch Library retains excellent integrity to convey its historical significance. Demolition of the North Beach Branch Library constitutes a 'substantial adverse change' to an individual historical resource." says Alice Carey & Co., preservation consultant.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Join with "*Friends of Appleton-Wolfard Libraries*" in advocating for a multiple property listing of Parkside (1951), Marina (1953), Ortega (1955), Merced (1957), North Beach (1958), Eureka (1960), Western Addition (1965) and Excelsior (1966) libraries, documenting the common context for thematically related properties. As summarized in the Urban Design Element of the San Francisco General Plan: "*Historic buildings, and in fact nearly all older buildings regardless of their historic affiliations provide a richness of character, texture and human scale that is unlikely to be repeated often in new development. They help characterize many neighborhoods of the city, and establish landmarks and focal points that contribute to the city pattern.*"

Write and urge the respectful historic preservation of our eight Appleton & Wolfard Libraries.
Supervisor David Chiu (Board President), Luis Herrera (City Librarian), Historic Preservation Commission:
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San Francisco's Central Subway Debacle

(Politicians Paint Themselves into a Corner---But There's a Way Out!)

Transportation in northeast San Francisco is complicated, especially in the north-south direction. Because of the Nob Hill/Russian Hill barrier to the West and the Financial Center gridlock to the East there are not enough north-south streets to accommodate both traffic and a well-functioning bus system. When crowded Chinatown was losing its Embarcadero Freeway access, then Mayor Willie Brown promised another way in. Hence the push for a Central Subway.

The problem is that the San Francisco Municipal Transit Agency (SFMTA) and San Francisco County Transportation Authority (SFCTA) have jointly dreamed up a \$1.6 billion monster that is neither fish nor fowl. Despite its huge cost and anticipated future drain on Muni's operating budget, the proposed subway would neither serve most of Chinatown nor function effectively as part of a future cross-town line.

Today Chinatown extends at least as far north as Filbert, a full eight blocks north of Washington. For this reason, much of Chinatown, as well as all of the North Beach, Telegraph Hill, Russian Hill, Fisherman's Wharf, Polk Gulch, Marina, Cow Hollow and Presidio neighborhoods, would get no benefit from the Central Subway. To make matters worse, the plan would include the elimination of 76,400 bus hours a year from the bus lines currently operating on Stockton Street.

The proposed subway would reroute the T-Line away from the Market Street subway, thereby ending the direct connections that today's T-Line riders from southeastern San Francisco enjoy to other Muni lines.

And finally, there is the subway's excessive depth. Because of the proposed subway's deep and badly-located stations, the walking and access times needed to reach the loading platforms 50 to 90 feet below grade would be much longer than the times required to access today's buses. *These factors combine to make the perceived trip times for most users actually longer via subway than via today's buses. It is for this reason that the Central Subway EIR/S shows that virtually no one who currently drives along the Corridor would abandon his or her automobile for the subway.*

With the funds that have been set aside for the Central Subway, there is an opportunity to do something magnificent...for Chinatown, the rest of northeastern San Francisco, in fact for all of San Francisco. As San Francisco Tomorrow and others have been pointing out for years, there are a variety of ways of improving north-south transit connections along the Third/Fourth and Stockton/Columbus Corridor. However, without a groundswell of public opinion this will not occur because unfortunately the two sponsoring transportation agencies and their consultants have dug in their heels and so far appear content to push blindly ahead with their fatally-flawed deep tunnel regardless of the facts of the situation.

Other cities have already built system-wide transit solutions--Portland and Zurich, for example-- for far less funding.

See www.SaveMuni.com and challenge public officials for a better transportation future!

Now What's Up at the Presidio? Opposition from neighborhood groups and national groups, plus opposition by the National Parks Service, finally forced Gap founder Don Fisher to withdraw his controversial modern art museum proposal on July 2. Many breathed a sigh of relief, accompanied by a hope that now the Main Post area could become the Presidio's historical heart. But instead of getting behind the development of the bowling alley site for a most appropriate use, a Presidio Historical Museum, the Presidio Trust has continued along its merry way. It is still proposing a large hotel and multiplex theater, in addition to the demolition of the bowling alley for a yet-to-be-determined use. The continued attempt by Trust staff to cram too many uses, too large and auto-attracting, onto the Main Post site, and to virtually ignore its historic significance, will no doubt raise public opposition once again.

The cultural integrity of Japantown is at stake.

A proposal for the redevelopment of Japantown put forward by the Planning Department has been turned down by the Planning Commission. The majority of the speakers at recent hearings stated their opposition to the Planning Department's plan which would have demolished and closed the Japan Center and Garage for two to three years (or longer). The merchants in the center and nearby would have been devastated by such a prolonged closure. No reasonable plan was proposed to provide for merchant relocation, retention, and temporary parking. The resultant Japan Center would be dramatically smaller. The proposal for development of Geary Boulevard with a cascade of high-rise, high-end residences is an affront to community needs, participation and good design. Every such high-rise proposal, in fact, costs the city more for infrastructure and services than it pays. It certainly is not the fine grained design claimed by the department proposal.

Rebuffed, planning staff has been directed to work with the community regarding cultural preservation,

the provision of mixed-income housing, the retention of existing merchants, structural analysis of Japan Center garage, mitigation of neighborhood impacts during potential construction, proposed tower heights, and the need to provide more direction as the plan is implemented. Planning Staff admitted it was their plan, and not necessarily the Community's plan. It is important to note that many of the ideas expressed in the focus groups were not adopted in the Draft Plan.

The planners believe that by using the Japan Center as a "cash cow", it would be economically possible both to sustain the Japan Center as an international commercial and cultural icon of the Japanese American tradition and sustain the developer's economic needs. To do as the developer and staff recommend would require transformation of the area into a high-end, high-rise residential project with minor Japanese commercial and cultural filigree.

SFT Picnic at Candlestick Point State Park , July 15



COMMUNITY
Farmers' Markets



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