

The Semaphore

A Publication of the TELEGRAPH HILL DWELLERS

For Better or Worse?

Are we heading into the future or living in the past?

see page 27

ISSUE 180
SUMMER 2007



THE SEMAPHORE # 180 SUMMER 2007

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER



THE PARKING METER & THE LITTLE BUDDHA

By Vedica Puri

Between the first and second series of Filbert Street stairs, there is an amazing little Shangri-La off to the right. It is a short stone path leading to a darling deck and bench nestled in an array of flowers and trees. The most humorous part of this Shangri-La is the real parking meter built into the ground at the edge of the deck.

But most important is the teeny tiny Buddha figure that has been artfully and firmly placed on the top of the meter. Nothing reminds me more to deep breathe and remember that no matter how chaotic it can get—peaceful, rationale forces can and should always triumph.

I have been visiting the deck a lot lately as the THD continues to be engaged in an epic struggle – how do we raise money for the cash-strapped Port without selling off our priceless waterfront? This time the struggle is over proposed legislation by the Port of San Francisco to lift ‘public trust’ restrictions on 11 lots (known as ‘seawall lots’), most of which are along the Western side of the Embarcadero¹. Senator Carole Migden is carrying this legislation and has

1. Four of these lots fall within the THD's boundaries. Three of those four lots are within the Northeast Waterfront Historic District and are zoned at 40 feet (the fourth lot is at 65 feet). (For all the details, go to thd.org under the “Officer, Directors and Committees” link and click on the Waterfront Committee section.)

been both sympathetic and savvy about the Port’s needs and neighborhood’s concerns. The THD’s Waterfront Committee is committed to revitalizing our relationship with the Port, its Director, Commissioners and staffers. To do just this, we spent countless hours meeting with the Port, preparing revised drafts of the legislation and discussing ways to help the Port get revenue, give developers certainty and, yet, protect the neighborhood.

We thought we were there. We issued our position letter on June 12 stating we could not support the legislation without protecting *existing* height limits on the 4 of the 11 lots in our area – three at 40 feet and the third at 65 feet. The co-chairs of the

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Waterfront Committee, Paul Kohler and I, testified before the Port Commissioners in June reiterating this same point. In other words, we made sure our position was as clear and up front as the Port's position that it needs to develop underutilized lots for revenue. Our belief is that if the Port gets to develop these prime lots, it only makes sense that the neighborhood's Northeast Waterfront Historic District height protections remain in place. Indeed, if there were no plans to upzone (increase the height limits) on these four lots—then what was the harm in including them into the legislation? We were thrilled when, after meeting with all the neighborhood interests, Senator Migden amended the bill by incorporating the existing height limits into the legislation on these 4 lots.

The legislation made it out of the State Senate's

Natural Resources Committee in a key 8-1 vote on July 2, 2007. Right before this vote, we heard that the Port was none too happy with the neighborhood coalition's line in the sand over height limits on 4 of the 11 lots and was threatening to withdraw the legislation in its entirety. We were shocked. We had done everything we could to work together on this bill and were hearing that all that hard work meant nothing to the Port because our amendments had been incorporated into the bill. Why were the height limits on 4 lots a deal breaker if there were no plans, as we have been assured, to upzone these lots? What about the other lots the Port could develop? One example of a lot that will necessarily generate revenue is the Giant's parking lot (known as seawall lot 337); the Port is proposing to place a condos complex there near 100 feet high (for context, the Embarcadero freeway was 84 feet).

The Port is making the following arguments against incorporating height limits into a state bill:

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(1) it's 'bad public policy;' (2) the state has no interest in local zoning issues; (3) a few "well-heeled" neighbors should not dictate local zoning and (4) you can't design a good looking building within the 40-foot restriction.

First, what public policy prohibits protecting historic districts and existing protections in state legislation? If someone can tell us the public policy that is so violated by protecting existing height limits, we are willing to listen. But no one has yet. Indeed, it is bad public policy to trounce over historic district ordinances and local protections.

Second, saying the state has no interest in San Francisco's waterfront height limits makes no practical sense. That's like the child who says to the parent "I can do whatever I want with my room because it's my room" while forgetting the room is merely part of the house. The waterfront is a vital part of the state; if the Port wants wholesale exemptions to develop parts of it there is no reason those exemptions cannot be tailored and conditioned.

Third, to anyone who says—"it's all about rich people living on the hill" preserving their views and "a privileged few" can't speak for the city—ask yourselves this: who stands to be most impacted by changes to the waterfront? First, the view being preserved is not just *from* the hill but rather, it is the public vista from the Embarcadero up to the hill. This public vista is considered so important that it is cited in the San Francisco General Plan and the Waterfront Land Use Plan's Design & Access Element. This is not about a 'privileged few' or about rich people. To cast the debate in those terms is desperate and hits far below the belt. It is also those folks who live and work in and around the Waterfront. Those who have organized and become the Telegraph Hill Dwellers, the Barbary Coast Neighborhood Association (BCNA), San Francisco Tomorrow (SFT) and the Friends of Golden Gateway (FOGG). It is these groups

that represent thousands of Waterfront residents, merchants, workers and the interests of the public. There has always been a historic connection between the northeast waterfront and Telegraph Hill. When maritime trade thrived, the hill housed the waterfront workers and the area below the hill comprised the commercial warehouse district. I have yet to hear one compelling reason why that connection cannot be preserved and respected in the legislation.

And what evidence is there that the only interested parties are a few Waterfront residents? It is of city-wide concern that we not return to the days where the Embarcadero Freeway, at 84 feet, separated the City from its Waterfront. Part of that city-wide concern translated into the Northeast Waterfront Historic District Ordinance, passed by the Board of Supervisors in 1983—the Board represents the entire city. The height limits in that ordinance should and must be respected; which the current legislation, as amended by Senator Migden, does.

Finally, I find it hard to believe that no one, anywhere in this city, state or country, can design an attractive 40-foot building that can turn a profit. As the President of BNCA, a well-known realtor in the area, was recently quoted as saying—if 40-foot buildings with tasteful condos are built, he can sell them "in a day."

We can all agree that we cannot sell our Waterfront to the highest bidder—whether it be seawall lot by seawall lot or Pier by Pier. The compromise the neighborhood is making is that we are agreeing that the Port may lift the public trust restrictions to allow the Port to develop 11 lots, with only 4 of them to be restricted by existing height limits. This is more than a fair solution to at least begin to place a dent in the Port's revenue problems. For now, SB 815, as amended, is the little buddha on top of the parking meter that is the Port's financial woes.



NORTHEAST SAN FRANCISCO CONSERVANCY ACQUIRES MAJOR ADDITION TO THE GRACE MARCHANT GARDEN

Since 2001 the Northeast San Francisco Conservancy ("NESFC") has held and monitored a Conservation Easement over 22-30 Alta Street, the lot located at the eastern end of Alta Street extending north to the Filbert Steps. The lot includes a significant portion of the northern-most portion of the Grace Marchant Garden. Following a 1992 landslide at the end of Alta Street, the City demolished the apartment building that formerly occupied the site at 22-30 Alta. Since 1994 this property has been the subject of an application to build a large multi-level single-family structure that would cast shade on the gardens below. After years of neighborhood opposition to the development, the owners granted a conservation easement to NESFC to protect the lower-most portion of the lot in its natural open space condition, in return for allowing development to proceed on the southern portion of the lot. Although a permit was



issued for the proposed building, it was revoked by the City for failure to proceed in a timely fashion.

However, a new building permit application was re-filed. Tiring of contention and dreading years of major construction activity and all the accompanying impacts, nearby neighbors asked the Trust for Public Land ("TPL")¹ for assistance to acquire the entire site with the intention of allowing the land to remain as natural open space and to extend the boundaries of the Grace Marchant Garden. TPL successfully negotiated an agreement with the owner, conditioned on raising the funds necessary to cover the purchase price on or before July 1, 2007. As a result of the generous donations of many individuals, local philanthropists and charitable foundations, TPL was able to purchase the property on June 29, 2007, and donate it to the Conservancy as a permanent expansion of the Grace Marchant Garden. ✦

CORRECTION: It was Danny Macchiarini, not his late father Peter, who created "The Wave," one of the new fire pits at Ocean Beach. Our apologies to Danny.

1. The Trust for Public Land (TPL) is a national, nonprofit, land conservation organization that conserves land for people to enjoy as parks, community gardens, historic sites, rural lands, and other natural places, ensuring livable communities for generations to come. For more information go to: www.tpl.org.

PHOTO OF NANCY SHANAHAN IN THE MARCHANT GARDEN BY SCOTT PARKER AT THE TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND

WHAT IS THE NORTHEAST SAN FRANCISCO CONSERVANCY?

By Nancy Shanahan

Incorporated in early 2001 the Conservancy is a non profit California public benefit corporation formed to "further the conservation, preservation, protection and enhancement of scenic, historical, cultural, and/or recreational values of parks, open spaces and architectural and historical resources, and the maintenance of cultural, economic and social diversity, primarily in the neighborhoods located in the northeast area of the City, including Telegraph Hill, North Beach, Jackson Square, Russian Hill, Chinatown, Nob Hill and the Northeast Waterfront." NESFC is a qualified tax

exempt entity under section 501(c)(3), which means that it is eligible to receive grants from other tax exempt entities and that all donations to it are fully deductible from state and federal taxes.

The original incorporators included past THD presidents Joe Luttrell and Gerry Crowley, along with Joe Butler, James Attwood, Nancy Shanahan and Hisashi Sugaya. Joe Luttrell and James Attwood have transitioned off the Board, now replaced by Katherine Petrin and Judith Powell. NESFC was formed primarily to carry out activities THD is unable to do—to attract grants and



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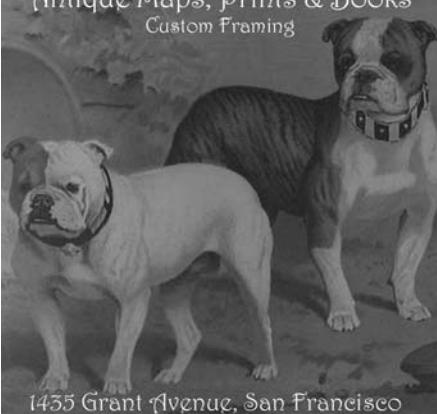
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What is Northeast SF Conservancy?

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tax deductible donations to fund worthy neighborhood projects, and to acquire land, conservation easements or development rights to protect open spaces, trees and gardens, parks, public vistas and historic resources.

Conservancy's Ongoing Projects.

In addition to preserving and enhancing the Grace Marchant Garden in the heart of the Telegraph Hill Historic District, the NESFC has been engaged in the following projects:

Oral History Project

NESFC acts as fiscal sponsor for the North Beach Oral History Project, a special project of THD, to record the histories of long time residents, artists, poets, and business owners with deep family roots in North Beach and Telegraph Hill. Private donations and foundation grants, including a start-up grant from the San Francisco Foundation, are being used to train volunteers to professionally conduct oral history interviews, and to record, transcribe and publish the interviews. To date over 20 interviews have been conducted, transcribed and published, with a list three times as long of potential "narrators." Most recently published are the histories of Richard Monaco, Tom Cara and Virginia and Elios Anderlini. Copies are available at the History Room of the San Francisco Public Library, the North Beach Branch Library, and at the Bancroft California History Library at UC Berkeley. They are also being placed in the University of Minnesota Immigration History Research Center. Copies are available to THD members from our own "lending library." Call Audrey Tomaselli at 391-1792 if you would like to borrow any of them for a week.

Valetta Heslett Garden.

NESFC acts as fiscal sponsor for enhancing the Valetta Heslett Garden along the Greenwich Steps in the Telegraph Hill Historic District, another project of THD. Nearby neighbors organized around improving the gardens in this unimproved street right-of-way, attracting private donations and grants from San Francisco Beautiful and Levi Foundation, to maintain the beauty of these gardens and natural open spaces. Volunteers provide the

labor, with expenses for plant materials and irrigation improvements paid for by NESFC from grants and donations.

Marion Place

NESFC has also agreed to act as fiscal sponsor for a project to improve and enhance Marion Place, a pedestrian lane on Russian Hill. Immediate neighbors, organized originally around saving the lane from being developed into a private driveway, are working to maintain this narrow, unpaved right-of-way as landscaped open space. Volunteers provide the labor, with expenses for plants and irrigation improvements to be paid for by NESFC from grants and private donations.

Parks and Trees Fund

With a start-up grant provided by the nonprofit corporation, Pelican Media, NESFC acts as fiscal sponsor to attract donations for the purpose of planting street trees and preserving and expanding neighborhood parks and green spaces in support of THD's Parks and Trees Committee.

North Beach Survey

The original North Beach Architectural and Cultural Survey was undertaken by the late Anne Bloomfield and officially adopted by the City in the 1999. It represents the most comprehensive record of architecturally important buildings in North Beach and serves as a useful tool to guide private individuals and public agencies in decision-making that affects the preservation of historic resources in North Beach. NESFC is updating and expanding the original survey boundaries with a generous start up grant from the Bland Family Foundation. Michael Corbett, a preeminent architectural historian, has been engaged to oversee the research and writing and to train and assist volunteers who are working on this project.

Russian Hill Survey

With a generous grant from the David L. Klein, Jr. Foundation, supplemented by numerous donations from individuals committed to preserving the historic resources of Russian Hill, NESFC has undertaken a project to complete an architectural and cultural survey of the historic buildings on the west and north slopes of Russian Hill, towards the goal of protecting these resources from demolition or major alteration. NESFC has hired architectural

PLANNING & ZONING REPORT



by Nancy Shanahan

BROADWAY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL DISTRICT (Broadway NCD):

(The Broadway Corridor Subcommittee is chaired by Mike Madrid.)

Once the bank of America, then the fast food restaurant Carl's Jr., and most recently a string of short-lived restaurants and nightclubs, 270 Columbus (at the corner of Broadway) has found new life. **E Tutto Qua**, a lively new Italian restaurant from the Steps of Rome team, opened at this location in June and appears to be an instant success. This new addition has been joined by old Broadway favorite **Enrico's**, which reopened its famous doors in July with new management, a new look, but hopefully some of the old atmosphere. Sadly, **Andrew Jaeger's House of Seafood** and jazz, a bright spot on the Broadway strip, will be closing, apparently a victim of a familiar north Beach scourge—high rents.

NORTH BEACH NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL DISTRICT (NBNCD):

427 Columbus. Galletti Shoe Repair has closed and Pantia Rei Restaurant would like to expand into the adjacent retail space and modify the historic storefront to accommodate the proposed new use. This would require two Conditional Use approvals from the Planning Commission: the first to convert a retail use into restaur-

ant use, and a second to expand the restaurant in excess of the size permitted in the NBNCD.

722 Columbus (Holistic Solutions). On July 12th, in response to widespread opposition by neighborhood residents and organizations, the Planning Commission determined that the permit to allow this medical cannabis dispensary (MCD) to continue in operation should be denied. Following the Planning Department's disapproval of the permit, the project sponsor will have 15 days to appeal to the Board of Appeals that will have the final say on this matter. If the project sponsor appeals, the MCD will be allowed to operate until the appeal process has reached its conclusion. If there is no appeal, or if the disapproval is upheld by the Board of Appeals, the MCD will be required to shut down.

1400 Grant (formerly Pixi). A new "small serve restaurant" called "Honeydoo" is being proposed for this location at Grant and Green. A Conditional Use authorization by the Planning Commission is required to change the use of this space from retail to restaurant.

1544 Grant (Macchiarini's Creative Design and Metalworks Gallery). In conjunction with Danny Macchiarini's plans to move his business to a new location at 1544 Grant, he is proposing to restore the storefront to its historical appearance—returning the clearstory windows and traditional storefront entry and windows. P & Z has indicated support for this proposal.

What is Northeast SF Conservancy?

continued

historian William Kostura to research and prepare the survey report.

Wild Parrots of Tel. Hill—Habitat Project

Helping to preserve trees and other habitat on Telegraph Hill for the wild parrots who make their home here, NESFC worked with local residents and City officials to pass legislation to provide for pruning Cypress Trees located on a vacant parcel of land off the Greenwich Steps, and for planting new trees to eventually replace them. Contributions were received from over 40 individuals #180 • Summer 2007

vidual donors for these activities, which included a grant from NESFC to the Department of Public Works who will oversee the pruning and replanting.

Northeast Waterfront Historic District Photo Project

NESFC has obtained digital images of the original photos taken in the early 1980s when the Northeast Waterfront Historic District was designated, with THD's support, as an historic district. A project is underway to

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627 Vallejo Street (formerly Rossi's Market). A new owner and operator are planning to fill the long-vacant Rossi's Market building with a new Italian market. Because the operation will include a deli and tables, a Conditional Use approval from the Planning Commission will be required for "small self-service restaurant" use. Conditions of approval will provide that the deli will occupy an area under 940 sq. feet and will be operated as an integral part of the market under a single operator. The plans include the preservation and revival of the exterior features of this streamline moderne building.

RESIDENTIAL PROJECTS:

251 Chestnut. A proposal to add approximately 2,000 square feet to the existing building, including a third floor and new exterior design.

30 Edith. A proposal to replace the existing 2-story building with a 4-story structure on this narrow alley has met neighborhood opposition.

467-69 Filbert. A proposal to modify the existing 2-unit building to relocate the fire escape to the rear of the

building, add an elevator, making significant changes to the front facade (a new bay window), and modify the rooftop.

735-43 Green. A proposal to modify the two historic buildings on this site, build a third new building in the existing open space area and construct an underground parking garage under the entire site.

1 Montague Place. A proposal to add a third story to this 2-story building and expand the garage into the required rear yard area to accommodate off-street parking for two cars. The Variance required for the rear yard expansion has been denied by the Planning Department.

3 Montague Place. A proposal to expand the third floor penthouse of this building is subject to a previously recorded Notice of Special Restrictions (NSR) limiting further expansion of the building envelope.

1131 Montgomery. A proposal to add a new two-unit, 3,250 sq. ft. addition behind the existing 1906 cottage is undergoing design review to ensure protection of the historic cottage, design compatibility of the new structure with neighborhood character, and protection of the mid-block open space as well as the light and air to neighboring buildings.

1409 Montgomery. Nearby neighbors made a presentation to P & Z describing the "serial demolition" of this building that has occurred over the last 6 years of ongoing construction without any neighborhood notification. Although the original permit was for seismic retrofit and interior improvements, there is nothing left of the original structure, and currently a new roof deck, with solid walls, a spa and landscaping are being build.

1420 Montgomery. Although the original permit was *only* for interior remodeling and the addition of a small elevator that cannot be seen from the public right of way, the roof has been completely removed and the owners are pursuing by a separate permit the addition of a 4,000 sq. ft. roof deck containing a kitchen and dining area and multiple viewing areas, solar panels and skylights. Other exterior changes would alter the window configuration of this 1960 Gardner Daly building.

97-99 Telegraph Hill Blvd. Proposed changes to this building, located immediately east and adjacent to Pioneer Park land, include the addition of a new stair penthouse

THE TRIANGLE REPORT

It is official. As of this July, the City and County of San Francisco is the holder of title to the property commonly known as 701 Lombard Street. Since counsel for the previous owners formally agreed to drop the appeal as to the issue of the City's right to take the property, any decision on appeal will NOT affect the City's ownership of the site.

Those of us who have toiled on this case now look forward to visiting the site once it becomes a city park!

PLANNING & ZONING

and roof deck. In response to the Committee's request, storey poles were erected to show the size and visibility of these proposed new rooftop features. The proposal also includes the construction of a new "front" entry off the existing pedestrian path, which path is located on park property and leads south from the undeveloped Filbert St. right of way to the Greenwich St. Steps. In connection with the new entry, the proposal also calls for widening the path by approximately 2 feet further onto the park property, which would require approval by the Rec. & Park Commission as well as the Board of Supervisors.

376-78 Union and 527-31 Union. Two separate proposals to add garages on Union Street will eliminate more on street parking and result in sidewalk modifications that will impede pedestrian movement.

414 Vallejo. A proposal to remodel this existing 3-unit building located on the Vallejo Steps. Originally constructed in 1906, a glass penthouse structure was added to the top. The proposal is to maintain the envelope and expand the owner's unit, while addressing seismic issues and attempting to make the building exterior more cohesive.

TELEGRAPH HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT

22-30 Alta. As reported elsewhere in this issue, thanks to the generous donations of many individuals, local philanthropists and charitable foundations the Trust for Public Land successfully purchased this vacant parcel, and donated it to the Northeast San Francisco Conservancy as a permanent addition to the Grace Marchant Garden.

Historic District Expansion Legislation. Legislation is being considered to expand the historic district boundaries to include additional cliff lots and to provide greater protections for gardens and open spaces contributing to the setting and character of the historic district.

230 Filbert. Construction is underway on previously approved alterations to this historic cottage. Although excavation is required to add a room below the cottage, the height is not being altered at all and the exterior of this 18?? cottage is being carefully preserved in tact.

239 Greenwich (Garden Lot). A proposal to con-

struct new stairs and railings and to re-landscape this open space parcel in the historic Heslett Compound, which was the first garden of Valetta Heslett, daughter of Grace Marchant, before she expanded her gardening efforts into the undeveloped Greenwich Street right-of-way.

22 Napier. Proposal to add a new deck at the rear of this historic cottage will require a Landmarks Board review and a Certificate of Appropriateness

OTHER PROJECTS OF INTEREST

1 Columbus Ave. (Colombo Building). Good news for the preservation of the Colombo Building. Pursuant to a bidding process for the sale of the Colombo Building, the City College Board of Trustees approved Luigi Barassi as the purchaser of the Colombo Building. Mr. Barassi is working with the Friends of the Colombo Building to restore the building and maintain its historic uses.

City College Chinatown/North Beach Campus Project (Washington & Kearny). City College has released its Environmental Impact Report for its proposal to construct a 17-story 238-foot high building to house the new Chinatown/North Beach campus at the corner of Washington & Kearny and a public hearing was held on June 14, 2007. Opposition to the proposal is based on its height (245 feet far exceeds the height limit in the area) and design (inconsistent with the character of the surrounding area) and the fact that it would shade Portsmouth Square.

717 Battery (Musto Building). A proposed project to construct forty (40) new condominium units would add 2-stories on top of the historic 3-story Musto Building. In order to provide parking for 36 cars, the project would also include the construction of a new 4-story building facing Pacific Ave. that would completely fill in all of the open space on the lot. No retail use is proposed at the ground floor level, and on the Pacific Ave. side the ground floor would be dominated by garage openings, resulting in a project that would be unattractive and incompatible with the pedestrian experience.





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IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT US: THD LEADERS LOOK BEYOND THE HILL

By Sally Towse

As we walked down to the annual Tel Hi dinner in May, I wondered which of the usual suspects we'd see. You know the usual suspects. You bump into them at outdoor movie nights at Washington Square and cleanup days at Pioneer Park. You see them at public hearings, North Beach Citizens events and NEWAG meetings. The usual suspects are long-time THD supporters, board members and committee chairs who are also involved in a wide variety of non-THD projects.

What non-THD issues and groups might you be interested in if you only knew about them? I asked four of the usual suspects (Paul Scott, Anne Halsted, Julie Christensen and Gail Switzer) about their pet projects. I wound up with a very long list of causes but, as the editor of the Semaphore told me a fifteen thousand word document was not in the cards, I decided to focus on just a few of the causes these four neighborhood heroes connect to:

SPUR (www.spur.org)

The San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Association, a non-partisan public-policy think tank, will be fifty years old in 2009. Member newsletters contain meaty analyses covering local issues, housing, transportation, planning, good government, and environmental sustainability. SPUR holds noontime forums (free for members, \$5 for non-members). A recent forum, "Pricing and Mobility," posed the question, "Should San Francisco manage congestion by charging a user fee for vehicles entering the downtown area?"

Says Anne Halstead, "SPUR provides a chance to hear about all kinds of city-wide issues and to participate in an organization with a broader city-wide horizon that considers residential, business and labor interests, as well as planning and environ-

mental perspectives on issues such as transportation, housing, and open space." Julie Christensen simply calls SPUR, "category-defying." Both are currently on SPUR's Board. If you are a policy wonk or just want to discuss how to make the city a better place, SPUR is the place to be.

One Atmosphere and the San Francisco Climate Challenge (www.sfclimatechallenge.org)

Last year, Paul Scott and a few friends started One Atmosphere to focus on global warming issues. This fall, One Atmosphere unveils its first project, SF Climate Challenge—a joint campaign with SF Environment (www.sfenvironment.org) and the Sierra Club. The Climate Challenge is a city-wide competition between teams of households to see who can reduce their energy use the most for one PG&E billing period.

"The winners will win cash and other cool prizes," Scott says. The goal behind the competition is to show people how easy it is, with relatively simple, small changes, to reduce energy consumption. "We're hoping that participating in the contest will kind of be like quitting smoking for a month. It'll help break old habits and make new positive ones, which are all for the better. With any luck, this will be a hit, and we can take it to other cities." One Atmosphere wants both volunteers and contest participants. For more information check out the Web site above.

Tel-Hi (<http://www.tel-hi.org>)

The Telegraph Hill Neighborhood Center (660 Lombard St) has been "providing programs for low to moderate income children, youth, families and seniors" since 1890. Julie Christensen calls Tel-Hi, "the grand dame."

Want to get involved? The Center can always
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Beyond the Hill

continued

use supporting members and money for programs, but also, Gail Switzer adds, "Volunteers are needed in numerous capacities. All of the programs use volunteers as general assistants in the programs or you can use your special skills or talents to teach a class or provide a service. Whether it's tutoring in the after-school program, reading to or playing with the pre-schoolers, visiting with or teaching a class to the seniors, there are many rewarding ways to become involved with the programs. Tel-Hi also uses volunteers to help with work days. Recently almost 100 volunteers painted the entire inside of the Center."

North Beach Citizens

www.northbeachcitizens.org

What round up of local "good causes" wouldn't include North Beach Citizens. For the past seven years

NBC has reached out to the homeless and low-income citizens of North Beach, giving them the support and services they need to receive benefits to which they're entitled, to find housing, and to deal with the problems that put them on the street in the first place.

Gail Switzer started as a volunteer at the NBC drop-in center at 720 Columbus Avenue and is now a Board member. "The program has succeeded beyond what I had believed possible," Switzer says. "In the last two years, due to NBC's housing stabilization program, 61 clients have obtained housing, staved off eviction, or returned home to housing. Executive Director Kristie Fairchild and her small staff respect and care for the citizens and are creative and persistent in searching for solutions."

continued

THE NEW THD T-SHIRT IS HERE

Show off your neighborhood pride with the new Telegraph Hill Dwellers t-shirt. The 100% cotton black t-shirt features NORTH BEACH on the chest, and the THD logo on the right sleeve. Also available as a 100% cotton fleece long-sleeved hooded pullover sweatshirt for those chilly San Francisco summer nights. Quantities are limited, so reserve yours today



THD T-SHIRT

\$12-members
\$15-non members
Available in sizes:
Youth
Small (adult)
Large (youth)
Adult (unisex)
Medium
Large
X-Large

THD SWEATSHIRT

\$22-members
\$28-non members
Available in Adult Unisex sizes only:
Medium
Large
X-Large

Contact Sarah Kliban to reserve or purchase your shirts- 781-2278
Cash & checks only please

Beyond the Hill

continued

Friends of Joe DiMaggio Playground (dimaggioplayground.org)

Julie Christensen originally got involved with the playground after swimmers asked for her help when the pool at the playground was sinking. She stayed to help organize and fundraise for the pool, Clubhouse and bocce court renovations. The group is now involved with plans for a new North Beach Library. Christensen would like to add green space, create a more flexible/adaptable playground plan and safer, more attractive facilities. Interested in helping? E-mail julie@surfacework.com.

Pioneer Park Project

According to Julie Christensen, "Thirty-six neighbors formed the core of this group founded in 1996. Project members were responsible for adding the retaining walls and lawn south of Coit Tower, as well as additional pedestrian stairways to facilitate travel around the hill and reduce erosion-causing,

improvised paths. The group also worked to increase native plants. This had the effect of increasing habitat and reducing maintenance and the need for heavy irrigation. Efforts are just beginning to address the aging cypress trees north of the tower and the somewhat scruffy area surrounding the parking lot." How can other THD members get involved? Show up for the once-a-month Saturday morning work efforts. Get involved. E-mail julie@surfacework.com.

Other Worthy Projects

Gail Switzer also volunteers with AARP Tax-Aide (www.aarp.org/money/taxaide/), which helps seniors and low-income persons complete their tax returns. Switzer says, "Although there are always questions and always something new, the process of doing the returns is not difficult. The real rewards are working with the people. Most are very grateful for the help and make you feel as though you're an absolute genius, if not a saint." Paul Scott wants you to get involved with Citizens to Save the Waterfront, a group concerned with development on the waterfront. The group was instrumental in defeating the Mills proposal for Piers 25-27. Contact pdscott@sbcglobal.net. Anne Halsted suggests getting involved with the Northeast Waterfront Advisory Group (NEWAG), an advisory group to the Port of San Francisco that focuses on Port property between Pier 35 and the Ferry Building area.

Also mentioned by one or more of the usual suspects were Food Runners (www.foodrunners.org/), the Piazza St Francis project, SF Beautiful (sfbeautiful.org), Neighborhood Parks Council (www.sfnpc.org), Maritime Parks Association (www.maritime.org), Heritage (www.sfheritage.org), Shrine of St Francis, North Beach Garden Club (e-mail nbgc@mindspring.com), Renew SF (renewsf.org), Friends of Washington Square, and Film Night in the Park (for a schedule check www.sfntf.org. Show up! Have a good time!)

Pick a project. Get involved. Hang out with neighbors. Enjoy yourself. GO!



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RESTAURANT REVIEW

SOTTO MARE, West Coast Oysteria & Seafood Restaurant



By Carol Peterson

SOTTO MARE, West Coast Oysteria & Seafood Restaurant

552 Green St., (415) 398-3181 ★★ ★ ½

Rarely do we have the opportunity of completing a full circle in our lifetime but that is exactly what Tarcisio Fiorucci, aka Gigi of Sotto Mare has done. Gigi was the owner of the once famous Montclair restaurant at 552 Green Street that closed in 1972 when Dante Benedetti's New Pisa came to occupy the premises. After many years of owning thirteen quality restaurants all over the world, Gigi has returned home to the same location where he started. And are we lucky to have him here

Although this is a brand new restaurant, it looks like it has been at this location for a hundred years. The walls are covered with old pictures, large stuffed fish, sterling silver spoon racks, old cigarette ads and photos of Gigi and his many restaurants accompanied by menus from these places. The floor is an old fashioned small hexagonal tile seldom seen after 1940. When Gigi opened a few months ago, the only place to sit was at the marble bar, where diners watched everything being prepared. Now the seating has been expanded to a larger bar and four tables along the wall. This is and always will be a small restaurant and that is the charm of the place. When asked about the size and the inexpensive prices, Gigi said, "This is the last restaurant I am going to have. It's not about the money but making people happy with good food."

Now, let's talk about the food. Where in town can you get oysters shucked in front of you for \$1 each, every night? They are tender and fresh, leaving your taste buds resonating with flavors of the sea. The specialty of the house is sand dabs, and Gigi's are a

supreme treat. They are always fresh that day and grilled to perfection. The small platter they are served on is generously full of this succulent, delicate fish that is accompanied by a freshly grilled vegetable.

According to Gigi, "My partner is a seafood broker and I want our customers to always have the freshest fish in town. If we have any sand dabs left over from one day, we filet them and flash freeze them in salt water to ensure their freshness." Either the fresh or the frozen, is a delight. The chowder is also not to be missed. My worst fear in ordering clam chowder is that it will have a floury, thick, gooey base. Not at Sotto Mare. The clams are fresh; the cream is not over done.

On one visit, Gigi's cooks were experimenting with a fried muscle sandwich served with garlic aioli and lettuce on a crunchy roll. Gigi, please, please, please put this item on the menu! I felt like I had been transported to New Orleans and was eating a wonderful Po Boy. The muscle has an entirely different taste when fried, a whole new eating adventure. Be assured, anything you order at Sotto Mare is going to be fresh and wonderful. There are no desserts at this seafood place and none are needed. (Gigi instead has a printed notice that directs you to the other locations in the neighborhood that specialize in after dinner treats.)

The service at Soto Mare is excellent and the staff is friendly and helpful. Picture yourself in a small Italian restaurant from an earlier time in North Beach where you are made to feel part of the family, a place where you can greet your neighbor and make a new friend.

Green Street is coming alive with great eateries and I say to Gigi of Sotto Mare, "I am so glad you are back in the neighborhood."



THE ALFA NOSE

THE SPIDER VELOCE SPINS INTO THE SUMMER OF LOVE, IN 2007 STYLE.



By Kathleen Cannon

All You Need Is Love? Really?

Forty years ago it was. While 1967 was the “published summer of love,” according to Tom Whelan, editor of the *North Beach Aquarium*, “1966 was the real summer of love, when all of S.F. attended the earthquake anniversary ceremony.” Where were *you* in the Summer of Love? Assuming you were there, can you remember it (as the saying goes)? Tripping by North Beach Restaurant, I posed that question to lunching neighbors. Young Whelan was delivering *S.F. Chronicles* and growing up in the backyard of Haight-Ashbury. Lorenzo Petroni was working at Scoma’s, waiting on Louie Prima and Jerry Garcia (not together). He opened NBR in 1970. Away at Phillips Exeter, Tony Gantner read an *Oracle* article on a “Human Be In” sent by his girlfriend and sped back to S.F. for “the greatest 1967 concert ever at The Avalon Ballroom ... The Doors. Only 300 people attended because the group was from L.A., but when Jim Morrison sang ‘Light My Fire’ my girlfriend screamed uncontrollably and ran toward the stage in her Alvin Duskin Peace Dress with all the other girls.” Around the curvaceous Broadway corner, Ward

Dunham recalled the hard-core strippers being upstaged by “college girls giving it away for free,” and the Beatles and Rolling Stones hanging out at Enrico’s. Myself, I remember The Warlocks (who morphed into The Grateful Dead) warming up at Magoos’ Pizza Parlor in Menlo Park where I snuck in (literally on my hands and knees), and I got hooked. Way underage, more than once I was catapulted by Bill Graham (in his white shirt) into The Fillmore to take off with The Jefferson Airplane, Quicksilver Messenger Service and Janis Joplin (or The Dead). Afterward, we picked up hot French bread from the side door of the bakery at Union and Grant and drove to Coit Tower for a midnight snacks and a fantastic view.

Wheels on Fire

This year, my Fourth of July fireworks view was from the 11th story of the politically incorrect Fontana apartments overlooking Aquatic Park. From this vantage point, I can attest that the pyrotechnics at all sites—Aquatic Park, the Embarcadero and around the Barbary corner—went off at the same time. Now that’s synchronized. On the Fourth, most of The Hill establishments were “Closed,” the merchants enjoying the ultra clear day. But along Grant Avenue, Live Worms Gallery was previewing portraits of locals by owner Kevin Brown. (He *does* draw things other than red swirls.) Kevin and friend Glen Moriwaki returned from the South of France, where they go annually to paint. Glen also hosts a painting workshop in the Caunes-Minervois, Langeudoc region, site of the famous cave paintings, a subject he includes in his classes at SFSU. Our talk was that Glen could provide a brief presentation on

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THE ALFA NOSE



Kevin Brown and Glen Moriwaki's at Morikwaki's Live Worms Gallery show.

this subject, with photos, to THD at Worms ... for those of us who may not get to the South of France in the immediate future.

No tourists at Trieste ... Just Terry Tarnoff

and his beautiful artist wife, Tina. Tina is showing all over town, including Vesuvio on Sept. 1. Terry's classic (and very funny) "Bone Man of Benares" is premiering at the famous off-Broadway Rattlesnake Theatre (way off S.F. Broadway, as in NYC). A one-act play, based on a section of his book, it involves the protagonist in a momentous encounter with a holy man on the Ganges (both smoking a chilim). Terry's book is also being translated into Italian and several other languages ... as are poet Jack Hirschman's books. Newly returned from Italy, Jack was looking forward to the upcoming congregation of International Poets (from England to Chile to China, and Italy, of course) which was to kick off in Jack Kerouac Alley on July 26. The event appropriately moved into the Palace of Fine Arts on July 27, with readings at branch libraries, cafe hot spots and the Beat Musuem.

Beep

Spider would like you know that cartoonist and Telegraph Hill aficionado Phil Frank, who entertained THDers with his wonderfully whimsical and local artwork at the April THD dinner, is also a very respected "car guy." Phil has collected and restored vintage MGs and Jaguars for decades. Not only that, but he once drove across country with his family in a Model A Ford.

On Grant Avenue, artist John Mattos, who created THD's 50th anniversary art, still resides at 1546, the location of The Place, Kerouac's "evil bar" in *Big Sur* where John once worked.

Chin Chin

The old Condor is again the old Condor, so where is Andrew Jaeger? AJ leased a house in Sausalito for one year, per Dick Boyd.... The current owners of the constantly changing restaurant (formerly La Felce) are expecting to sell their \$30K business (aka liquor license) for 10 times the price ... not bad for three months work.... On Bay Street, Caesar's, which incidentally serves killer calamari, is a generous donator to the Aids Walk.... The Garfield School auction at Live Worms collected a generous amount of donations from local merchants —new science programs will be safe. Margo St. James was at Fisherman's Wharf for the 40th anniversary of Coyote, a "not so free" love group.... See you in Golden Gate Park on Sept. 2 for the Summer of Love celebration—all generations may wear flowers.

Also ... who do we see about live opera in Washington Square for Columbus Day? The Sunset Scavengers' choreography is great, but a little Puccini would add Old World spice.



ORAL HISTORY BRINGS NORTH BEACH'S PAST TO LIFE

For several years now volunteers with THD's North Beach Oral History Project have collected the stories of long time residents who have deep roots in Telegraph Hill and North Beach. To date over 20 interviews have been conducted, transcribed and published, with at least 60 more folks identified as potential "narrators." Pictured below are three residents who have shared their lives with our interviewers.

You can delve into this goldmine of neighborhood lore by visiting the North Beach Library where the interviews are housed or by calling Audrey Tomaselli at 391-1792 if you'd like to borrow any of them for a week.

NORMA TEALDI

The Community Center

We owned a grocery store at Vallejo and Montgomery starting in 1923. My father kept it open five in the morning till ten at night. Our



customers were all very nice. We had a lot of, "Oh, I'll pay tomorrow, Fred." And we'd write

down their names. They wouldn't even sign their names. We'd say, "OK. See you next week when you get paid." Then also we'd give free vegetables. Some people would just come down and say, "Fred, I need some vegetables for soup." We would give them a carrot, a leek, some celery, a tomato, and maybe string beans, and wrap them up in some newspaper. Then about eight o'clock the Italian men that lived around here would come in, get some wooden boxes to sit on, and have a little gathering, smoking their Toscani cigars, and talking about politics or something. Just men. Eventually they got tired or my father would say, in Italian, "you got to go, you got to go home. Sono le dieci." It's ten o'clock. He would close the store and come home. He didn't have to stay open. But that was their time.

JOE JACHETTA

The Good Old Days'

There were six flats in our building. Six

families. You know, it was a working class building and quite often people would come down the back stairs and instead of going down into the basement to get out of the house, they would just walk through my Mother's flat. I remember in the evening sometimes sitting there and we were having dinner around the table, and people would be walking through. Nobody cared. It was just, "Hi, how are you. I'm going out on a date." And we had the only telephone in the building. And everybody would use that phone. All six flats. We would be having dinner and quite often there would be somebody phoning. People didn't phone like they do now. Phoning was to talk with doctors. They came from all over the neighborhood to use my mother's phone.

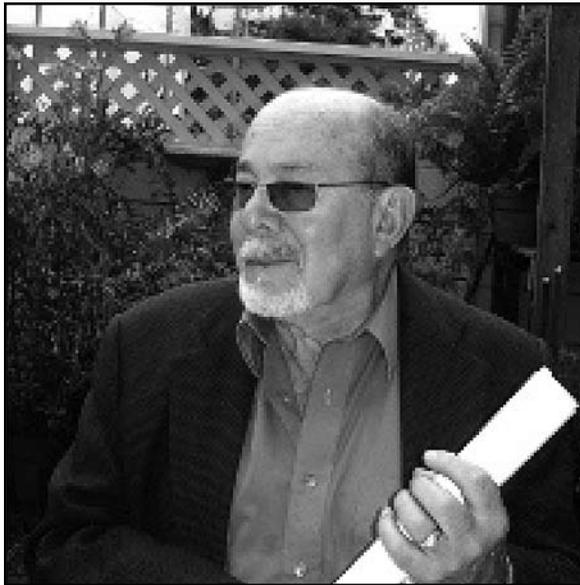
block! I suppose that's what they mean by the good old days.



VIRGINIA ANEROLINI

Sounds from the Past

I can still hear the horses coming up Union Street. Cloppety-clop-clop, cloppety-clop-clop. Then slipping back on the cobblestones. You could hear the clop, clop, then the slipping back as they pulled those heavy carts. It was hard on the horses; they'd slip back, and then keep going very slowly up the hill, but always there was that heavy clacking sound on the rounded cobblestones. Lots of the wagons were hauling heavy loads of coal. And these wagons would stop in front of the houses that had ordered coal like ours. We had a coal and wood stove for the kitchen; that heated the whole house. We had long corridors. We needed a lot of heat, a lot of coal.



Nobody else had one. And our family also had one of the few radios. People next door, people two houses away came over to listen. It was just a way of life. Like I told you, I was better off then, I just never knew it. I was the rich kid on the

ORAL HISTORY THROWS A LUNCHEON BASH

By Rozell Overmire

Forty hungry people arrived at Alta Street on June 2 for a lunch to celebrate the past eight years of effort that has produced 14 oral histories for the THD project. Ten more are in the works. The narrators and their interviewers, editors, transcribers, photo preparers, librarians, instructors, historians and relatives of the narrators came to meet each other and do what they like best—exchange stories about our neighborhood.

Eight narrators came, mostly in their 80s and 90s. By contrast, to make the neighborhood oral history family complete, one of the transcribers brought her 10-month old daughter. Oral histories are gener-

ally about families. Of course, each is different but narrators are invited to include a family biographical page that traces their family back a few generations.

Virginia Anderlini, the most recently published narrator, is a member of a family that has lived on Telegraph Hill for several generations. She was born 95 years ago, in the building next to Speedy's Market at Union and Montgomery. She now lives on Montgomery at Filbert, one block away. Her husband, Andy, created a beautiful rose garden there, which neighbors and visitors to our neighborhood all cherish. At the party, one of the other narrators remembered her as a young woman and told us of her "movie-star beauty." He said, "She is still beautiful."

Here is a story concerning two of our narrators:

Joe Jachetta grew up on the east side of the Hill (Vallejo near Montgomery) and Sal Colla grew up on the west side (Francisco near Stockton). Both were born and raised here and lived most of their adult lives here. Both are in their 80s. Both are well known in the Italian community; they have several friends in common. Yet neither knew the other existed and only met for the first time at the party.

Then they started sharing memories. Sal was reminiscing about his father, who walked up and down Telegraph Hill selling fish, which he carried in a big basket strapped to his shoulders.



L to R: Vera Ransom (narrator); Jonee Levy (interviewer); Allison Faison and Baby Chloe (transcriber); Carol Weisner (interviewer); Add Bonn (narrator); Norma Tealdi (narrator).

Oral History Luncheon

continued

His father would pick up the fish at the wharf early in the morning. Sal recalled what a wonderful, hard-working man his father was. He recalled the deep indentations in his dad's shoulders from years of carrying the fish, which he sold to housewives as he walked up and down Telegraph Hill.

Joe said, "I remember him. He used to announce his arrival on each street by blowing a little horn."

"Oh yes," said Sal. "I had forgotten all about that little horn."

Another narrator, Norma Tealdi, whose father operated a grocery on Montgomery and Filbert for many years, mentioned that after the recent slide on the south side of Telegraph Hill, she and her two sisters were told by the City that they must evacuate their apartment building immediately.

"I'm in the middle of making apple sauce and I'm not leaving until the

apple sauce is finished," she told the official who came to remove her. She took the apple sauce with her. The Tealdi apartments were red-tagged and the Tealdi sisters only recently returned to their apartments after months of waiting.

How can you share in this wealth of family stories about your neighborhood? Excerpts of some of the oral histories are on our website at: www.thd.org. (Also see excerpts on pp 20 of this issue.)

All 14 completed interviews are available at the North Beach Library. Just ask the librarians for them at the main desk. You can read them in the library although you can't check them out because the only

other copies in existence are given to the families of narrators and to the Main S.F. Library history room and the U.C. Berkeley Bancroft Library.

Come be part of our family. It will take you back in time and make you want to preserve your family stories. ✂



THD MEMBER TO GIVE NORTH BEACH LIBRARY PRESENTATION

Longtime THD member and photographer Jean Dierkes-Carlisle will be speaking at the North Beach Library in September on a topic she knows a lot about. She'll be sharing her knowledge of *The SS Stephan Hopkins*, the only U.S. merchant ship to sink a German warship during World War II.

The reason for Dierkes-Carlisle's expertise on this subject springs from the fact that her father, Charles Fitzgerald, was the first assistant engineer aboard this ship during the Atlantic Ocean battle in which both the German raider, *Stier* and the *Hopkins* ended up at the bottom of the sea. Fitzgerald lost his
Issue #180 • Summer 2007

life in the encounter.

Jean has spent many years researching the history of the *Hopkins* and has shared her expertise with Gerald Remnick, the author of *Action in the South Atlantic*, a well-received narrative account of the *Hopkins*' last (and only) battle. Jean will have copies of this book available at her presentation.

The title of Jean's talk, *A Sailor's Daughter: Life without Father* provides a preview of how Jean intends to personalize her presentation.

Place: North Beach Library

Date and Time: September 25, 7PM

✂
23

ANNOUNCING THE NEW THD ART, CULTURE AND HISTORY SUB-COMMITTEE

By Termeh Yeghiazarian

A community is not defined by its geographic boundaries and architectural presence alone. Although THD has made great effort to preserve the architectural character of North Beach and has organized social events to strengthen community bonds, our neighborhood's art and cultural activities have generally been left to the residents and merchants. "As they should be," you might argue. Bear with me, however, as I explain why, as the new THD historian, I feel the need to focus on the art and culture in our neighborhood.

About 15 years ago, when I moved to San Francisco from New York, I was captivated by the palpable sense of history and cultural uniqueness in North Beach. At that time, bars and restaurants had not yet dominated Grant Avenue and although very lively at night, the drowsy, quiet mid-days easily reinforced the area's small-town personality. It was clear to me that this neighborhood was primarily residential, one deeply rooted in a colorful past.

So many of the businesses, seemingly untouched by the passage of time, were either still run by the original owner or a family member who took over. One could learn about the neighborhood's history by sim-

ply chatting up the person behind the counter and hanging out at one of the old cafes or bars.

So, after having fallen in love with and living in this little bohemian neighborhood for 16 years, you can imagine my shock when, recently, after telling a co-worker who has lived in San Francisco for only a year that I live in North Beach, her response was to burst into laughter, asking, "Do people actually live in North Beach?"

So many of North Beach's gems and service businesses have disappeared in the past 10 years, making it difficult for a newcomer to see the resident community and the strong cultural past that still holds it together. Bars and restaurants continue to proliferate, dominating the area as the main attraction. These days even the locals seem oblivious to the artistic presence in this neighborhood that continues to survive despite much economic disadvantage.

Very few North Beach residents are aware that THD volunteers have spent countless hours gathering data that will, eventually, establish this neighborhood as an historic district. Most of this information records the architectural and demographic history of the neighborhood. I have been involved with this effort for many years, gathering census information

and creating biographies of prominent North Beach architects. At the same time, THD's Oral History Project has been going on for many years (although it has received very little exposure). And, similarly, artists in North Beach continue their work almost miraculously, with few resources, feeling unappreciated, constantly faced with challenges such as rent increases and lack of exhibit space.

The new Art, Culture & History sub-committee hopes to maintain a year-round culture and art agenda, creating opportunities

continued on page 26



Charter members of the new Art, Culture and History Subcommittee (l-r) Elaine Turner, Sarah Kliban, Sherry O'Donnell and Gerry Hurtado

GOOGLING NORTH BEACH

By Mikkel and Rebecca Aaland

What is this neighborhood we live in? Perspective is important when it is so easy to get lost in the day-to-day details, and right now we are looking at our neighborhood from a long way off. As we write, we are in the Aaland family home in Ulefoss, Norway, where we bring our girls every summer. It gives us a chance to see our home in San Francisco from afar, as a foreigner might.

For fun we googled “North Beach” to see what would come up on the screen. Whoa! We got over 132 million entries for various places by that name, but it’s dominated by our very own. Mentions of North Beach, Maryland and a North Beach club in Chicago are few and far between. When we add “San Francisco,” the list shortens to 11.6 million entries, containing more than 661,000 images and 294 videos.

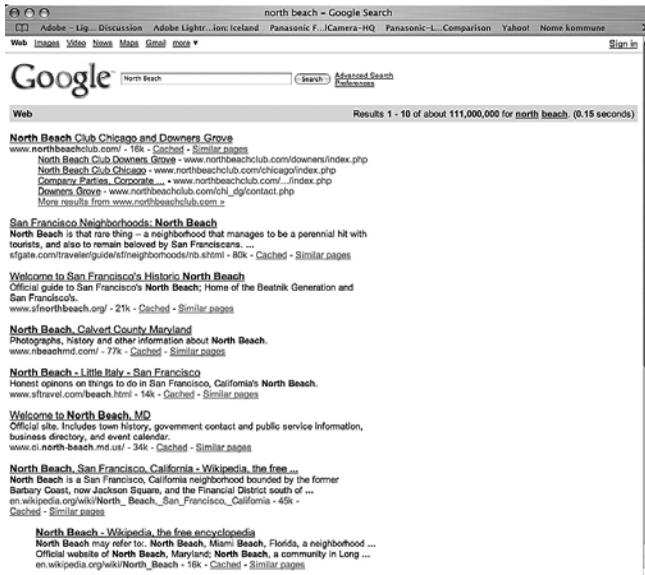
So we’re known out there in Googleville. No secrets, though. The majority of the sites are mad-

deningly similar. Hundreds of travel sites extol Little Italy with its restaurants, a neighborhood even San Franciscans love to love. Many mention the Beats and Kerouac; others cite Italian-American ballplayers, including Mr. DiMaggio. They all try to get us to eat, stay and play there.

With the eyes of an outsider, the more of the sites we read the more we want to go there. What a plethora of sights and delights await, all perched under Lombard’s famous curves, surrounded by the fabled hills.

But is North Beach captured here? Do we recognize *our* North Beach? Mikkel is gratified that Caffe Trieste, his daily morning haunt, appears on the second page of listings. But he doesn’t find a description of his morning ritual, and the unspoken rule that allows regulars to work without chatting at small tables with only a nod of greeting to each other.

Coit Tower, the Filbert and Greenwich steps, the parrots, City Lights Bookstore and exotic Broadway are all here on Google, open secrets and treasures for all seekers. Yet is North



THD BOARD MOTIONS

FOR THE MONTHS OF APRIL-JUNE 2007

April: No Motions

May: Motion: To contribute \$1500 to Telegraph Hill Neighborhood Center.
The Motion was approved.

June: No Motions. ✂

Googling North Beach *continued*

Beach simply the sum of its many parts—restaurants, Washington Square, bars and great espresso, The Art Institute patio with its magnificent view?

If we came to visit from this tiny Norwegian town, we could come prepared with more facts and knowledge than many North Beach locals have, but with no idea of the real spirit and community that lives today. What of the Telegraph Hill Dwellers and its many fights? What of the community of parents at the local schools, or the spirit of the neighborhood welcoming all to an outdoor movie? We may sense it while we visit, and we might sigh, “We want to live here sometime.”

While we are gone a German screenwriter couple is subletting our home. They are in love with North Beach and reluctant to go back to their dynamic, vibrant artsy neighborhood in Berlin. Why? They e-mail us often here of their amazing days working under the shadow of Coit Tower, jogging by the Bay. They love eating Ferry Building treats at home as much as eating out, and daily espresso at Trieste is a must. They have caught the rhythm of life in the ‘hood, its essence, and they want more. ✂

New THD Committee *continued from page 24*

to showcase North Beach artists, poets and writers while promoting a continuing cultural dialogue. We are looking for volunteers with an interest in planning cultural events, so, if interested, don't hold back. There are plenty of ideas already in the works and your participation will only make the art and culture in our neighborhood stronger.

Our goal is to highlight the cultural and artistic life of our beloved neighborhood and create a more balanced and wholesome North Beach experience for residents and visitors alike. If you are interested in becoming involved, e-mail me at historian@thd.org. ✂

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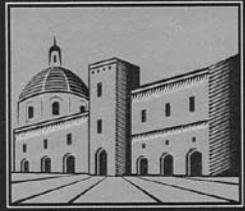
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NORTH BEACH NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL DISTRICT CONTROLS AT 20 —A SURVEY OF CHANGES

By Mary Lipian and Nancy Shanahan
Co-Chairs, THD Planning and Zoning

It has been just over 20 years since the city adopted neighborhood commercial district zoning tailored to over 20 individual neighborhood commercial areas in the City, including North Beach. THD played a significant role influencing the creation of the North Beach Neighborhood Commercial District (NBNCD) Ordinance¹ to help ensure that our cherished business area would remain economically vital and retain its character, with an appropriate balance of neighborhood serving concerns. So how has the mix of businesses changed? What are the trends? Are there more or less vacant storefronts? What has been the result of these laws? Read on, the findings are quite interesting.

First a little background. In 1999 THD conducted a survey of all the businesses in the NBNCD [See map on page 29] to document the composition of businesses in the district, and determine how the mix of commercial business had changed over the first decade of the commercial district controls. Stashed away in THD's archives we uncovered a similar survey, which THD completed in 1986. The 1986 survey includes a photograph of each business and information about it at that time. This early effort by THD helped facilitate the Board of Supervisors' enactment of the NBNCD ordinance in 1987. While acknowledging that "North Beach's eating, drinking and entertainment establishments remain open into the evening to serve a much wider trade area and attract many tourists," the 1987 controls were intended to stem the loss of

1. The NBNCD Ordinance is found in Sec. 722.1 of the San Francisco Planning Code.



550 Green Street, 1986

neighborhood-serving stores by encouraging small-scale neighborhood serving businesses and imposing special controls to limit additional ground story eating and drinking, entertainment, bank and office uses. The ordinance does this by permitting certain types of uses that provide neighborhood-serving retail sales and services (such as hardware stores, grocery stores, shoe stores, stationary stores, to name a few), prohibits others (such as gas stations, large fast food restaurants, chain stores, new banks, adult entertainment) and requires conditional use (CU)

Commercial District Controls At 20 *continued from previous page*

authorization² from the Planning Commission for certain other uses (among these are restaurants and bars, entertainment uses, late night hours, banks, offices, liquor stores, tourist hotels and use sizes over 2,000 square feet). Uses requiring CU authorization are only allowed upon a finding by the Planning Commission at a public hearing that the use and/or size of the use are “necessary or desirable for, and compatible with, the neighborhood.”

To update the survey in 1999, members of THD’s Planning & Zoning Committee surveyed the 417 business within the NBNCD boundaries which encompasses most of the commercial establishments north of Broadway (which is in its own district) including those on Columbus, Grant, Powell, Green, Vallejo and Stockton. Committee members also scanned all of the photos from the 1986 survey and re-photographed each of the same storefronts in 1999. The results of the 1999 survey and neighborhood efforts around that time to keep Starbucks, Rite Aid and other chain stores from locating in North Beach led to the enactment of additional controls prohibiting chain stores or “formula retail” (defined as any business having at least 11 similar establishments anywhere in the United States). The 1999 survey also revealed that many spaces had been merged into larger ones, which led to the enactment of new limits on the size of businesses that could move in without CU authorization in an effort to keep and attract more small scale neighborhood-serving businesses of the type that would maintain the character of North Beach and balance the types of retail uses in the area.

Now, in 2007, twenty years after the enactment of the NBNCD controls, THD has updated the survey again to see what kind of changes have occurred since 1999.

Survey Results

2. Conditional Use Authorizations are governed by Sec. 303 of the San Francisco Planning Code.

The results from the first survey (reported in the Summer 1999 Semaphore) looked at the changes in the 13 years between 1986 when the NBNCD zoning controls were first enacted and 1999. Below are our findings from the 2007 update. One important change since 1986 is that the total number of businesses within the NBNCD boundaries have decreased by roughly 10% from 417 surveyed in 1986 to approximately 380 in 2007 due to demolitions, conversions of sites to condos and storefront consolidations.

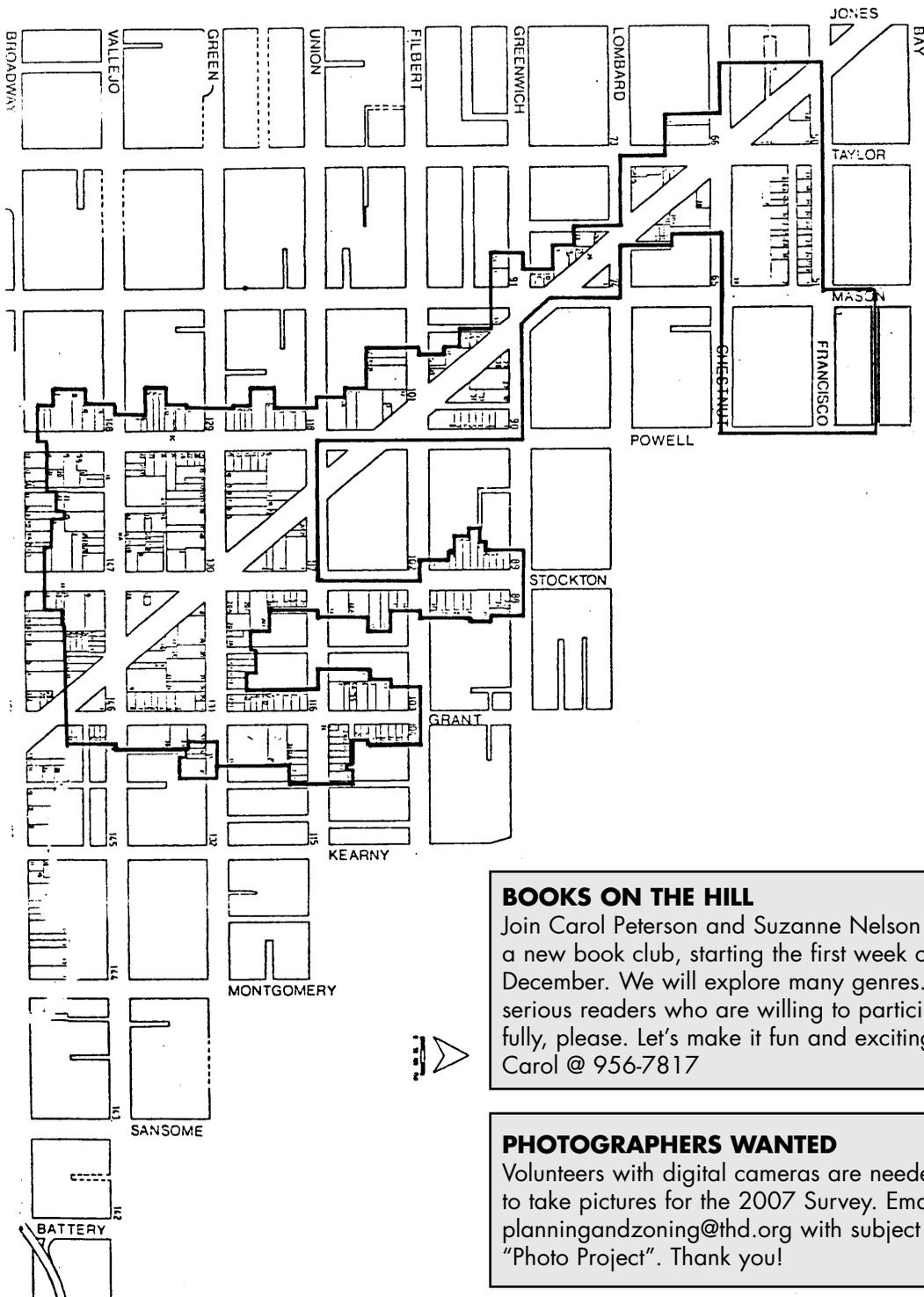
Vacancies Have Decreased

There are 33% fewer vacancies today than there were in 1986. From 1986 to 1999, vacancies decreased 16% from 45 to 38 vacant storefronts (interesting note: mostly *after* the Embarcadero Freeway was closed in 1989). Vacancies continued to decrease an additional 21% between 1999 and 2007 to 30 currently vacant storefronts. Today, less than 8% of all the storefronts in the NBNCD are vacant.

Storefront Consolidations Have Slowed

Between 1986 and 1999 a total of 26 storefront consolidations occurred (where two or more small storefronts were combined to accommodate use by larger businesses). Of these, 14 were restaurants that expanded into adjacent non-restaurant spaces. For example, the restaurant now operating as Trattoria Pinocchio (at the corner of Columbus and Vallejo) occupies three former storefronts, including those that were once the Postermat (401 Columbus), Little City Press (658 Vallejo), and Litho Printing Company (650 Vallejo); Stinking Rose occupies four former storefronts (317, 325, 329 and 331 Columbus); Caffè Grecco (432 Columbus) expanded into a former clothing store; and Burgermeister (755 Columbus) expanded into a space formerly occupied by Columbus Camera. The good news

continued on page 30



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 Join Carol Peterson and Suzanne Nelson in a new book club, starting the first week of December. We will explore many genres. Only serious readers who are willing to participate fully, please. Let's make it fun and exciting. Call Carol @ 956-7817

PHOTOGRAPHERS WANTED
 Volunteers with digital cameras are needed to take pictures for the 2007 Survey. Email planningandzoning@thd.org with subject line "Photo Project". Thank you!

Commercial District Controls At 20

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is that the enactment in 1999 of new limits on permitted use size in the NBNCD³ effectively slowed this trend (only 6 of the 26 consolidations occurred since 1999) and during the past two years 2 large storefronts were actually re-divided into smaller retail spaces, including the New Pisa Restaurant at 550 Green Street, which became two new restaurants—Nua Restaurant and Sotto Mare Oyster Bar—and the old Figoni Hardware space at 1339-51 Grant which was returned to its original two-storefront configuration as Live Worms Gallery and I Dream of Cake.

Restaurants and Bars Uses Have Increased

Since 1987 when the zoning controls were enacted, all new restaurants and bars in the NBNCD are required to get a special CU authorization from the Planning Commission. The 2007 survey revealed that in spite of this requirement, restaurants and bars increased overall by 34 % since 1986, now occupying approximately 31% of all ground floor uses in the NBNCD, or roughly 1 out of every 3 retail spaces. However, if we look only at the survey results for the 4 blocks of Grant, the results reveal an acceleration of this trend: restaurants and bars on Grant increased overall by 82% since 1986, primarily due to a 100% increase in full service restaurants. Here is how the results break out for the entire district:

• **Full-Service Restaurants** (where you order your food and are served at a table) increased 23% from 3. Beginning in 1999, uses in the NBNCD up to 1,999 sq. feet are permitted, uses between 2,000 sq. ft. and 3,999 sq. ft. require a CU authorization, and uses 4,000 sq. feet and above are not permitted.



1351 Grant Street, 1986

57 to 70 between 1986 and 1999, and continued to increase another 4% between 1999 and 2007 to a new high of 73 storefront spaces, for a total increase of 28% since 1986. Today, over 19% of all ground floor retail spaces in the NBNCD are occupied by full service restaurants. Here are a few examples of what these 16 new restaurants replaced: a furniture store, a pharmacy, a kitchen appliance store, a photo processor, a video store, the Postermat, Little City Press, Litho Printing Company, Record Hardware and the postcard shop on Grant Avenue.

• **Small Self-Service Restaurants** (where you order and pay in advance at the counter, the food is ready-to-eat, there may or may not be tables, but must be less than 1000 sq. feet) increased 48% from 21 to 31 between 1986 and 1999, then continued to increase another 10% between 1999 and 2007 to 34, for a total increase of 62% since 1986. Therefore, 9 % of all ground floor retail spaces in the NBNCD are now occupied by small self-service restaurant use, which includes delis, ice cream stores, bakeries, sandwich shops, coffee houses and eateries like Golden Boy Pizza. Some examples of what these have replaced are: clothing stores,

Commercial District Controls At 20 *continued*

a camera store, two grocery stores and a business providing computer repair service.

- **Bars** increased by 44% between 1986 and 2007, from 34 to 49 (these numbers include a total of 33 bars that are currently authorized to operate in conjunction with full-service restaurants). By way of background, in order to serve liquor other than beer and wine in conjunction with a full-service restaurant, a CU authorization for “bar use” is required. A small self-service restaurant, on the other hand, may not serve liquor other than beer and wine in conjunction with its food service —bar use is not permitted.⁴ A trend noted in the 2007 survey is that at least 5 restaurants appear to be operating as “bars” even though they are only authorized to serve wine and beer and/or liquor in conjunction with food service under an approved restaurant use. One example is Magnet Lounge on Upper Grant, which is required to operate as a small self-service restaurant.

Financial Services and Business and Professional Services Have Decreased

In 1986, the neighborhood was losing neighborhood serving businesses and upper-story residential units due to the relocation of banks, businesses and offices from downtown to North Beach. To address this threat, the NBNCD zoning controls prohibit new financial services (banks) from locating in the portion of the district south of Union Street and require new banks locating north of Union Street to obtain a CU authorization. Business and professional services (real estate, architects, legal, insurance, and travel service) require a CU authorization to occupy storefronts. Further, conversion of residential units to retail uses on second stories and above is prohibited. As a result of these controls, the number of banks decreased 33% from 9 to 6 between 1986 and 1999 and remains at 6 today. Business and professional services 4. This discussion does not address the state liquor licensing requirements of the ABC.

vices increased 23% from 31 to 38 between 1986 and 1999, but, interestingly, stopped their meteoric rise and actually decreased 11% from 38 to 34 since 1999. Banks and offices now occupy approximately 11% of all ground floor retail spaces in the NBNCD.

New Residential Use Eliminated Ground Floor Retail Spaces

Even though the NBNCD controls were designed to encourage housing development in new buildings *above* the first story with retail uses below in order to preserve the mixed used character of North Beach, the survey found that between 1986 and 2007, as a result of an increasing number of condominium projects, residential use of ground floor retail spaces increased by 450% from 2 to 11 resulting in the elimination of 2 grocery stores, light manufacturing, auto service, personal services and a number of other retail storefronts in the NBNCD. For example, the North Beach Villa (at 600 Chestnut) replaced a grocery store, and multiple condo projects on Vandewater changed the character of that tree-lined mixed-use street by displacing Edwardo’s Pasta & Tortellini Factory, a painter’s shop and an architect’s office.

Light Manufacturing Has Decreased

Between 1986 and 2007, light manufacturing (garment manufacturing, food preparation and wholesaling) decreased 61% from 23 to 9, including the afore-mentioned Edwardo’s Pasta & Tortellini Factory, Panama Ravioli Factory on Grant, Florence Ravioli Factory on Stockton, and Washington (kitchen) Supply on Powell.

Other Retail Sales and Services

In order to encourage neighborhood-serving retail sales and services (such as hardware stores, grocery stores, shoe stores, stationary stores, etc.) the NBNCD controls permit these uses *without* requiring a CU authorization from the Planning Commission.

Commercial District Controls At 20 *continued*

The 2007 survey revealed that retail sales and services decreased overall by 11 % since 1986, from 136 to 121, while restaurant and bar use increased overall by 34 % during the same period. The Planning Code breaks out retail sales and services into a number of sub-categories. Here is how a few of these break out:

- **General and specialty grocery stores** (corner grocery stores, liquor, candy, coffee, meats, produce) decreased 7% between 1986 and 1999, from 29 to 27, then plunged an additional 23% from 27 to 22, for a total decrease since 1986 of 32%.
- **Household goods and services** (paint, fixtures and hardware) decreased 60% between 1986 and 1999, from 5 to 2, remaining constant at 2. These losses included Record Hardware and Fioni Hardware.
- **Books, stationary and music stores** decreased 14% between 1986 and 1999, from 7 to 6, then returned to 7 by 2007.
- **Antiques, art galleries and framing services** decreased 29% between 1986 and 1999, from 14 down to 10; then made a comeback between 1999 and 2007 with a 70% increase from 10 to 17 during this period, with such new stores as Schein & Schein (antique maps and prints), Magpie Gallery, Asia Gallery, Paul Thiebaud Gallery, Conor Fennessy Antiques and Live Worms Gallery, to name a few.
- **Self-service laundromats and dry cleaning stores** increased 86% between 1986 and 1999, from 7 to 13, then increased an additional 8% from 13 to 14, for a total increase since 1986 of 100%.
- **Personal services** (beauty salons, nail salons, tattoo parlors, dance, exercise) increased 33% between 1986 and 1999, from 18 to 24, then increased another 13% from 24 to 27, for a total increase since 1986 of 50%. This increase is due largely to an increase in hair and nail salons.
- **Apparel and accessories** increased 10% between 1986 and 1999, from 21 to 23, then decreased 26% between 1999 and 2007, down to 17, for a

total decrease since 1986 of 19%.

CU Applications between 1987 and 2006

Based on the City's records, North Beach has had the most CU applications of any neighborhood commercial district in the City, with 151 applications filed between 1987 and 2006. The most common case types in North Beach were full service restaurants (30), bars (23), entertainment uses (18) small self service restaurants (15) and use sizes (13). Of these, only 5 applications were disapproved—2 for bars, 4 for full service restaurants and 1 for use size. The Planning Commission approved 91% of all CU application in North Beach during this period.

So what's it all mean?

Obviously, North Beach continues to be an extremely desirable place to do business. Vacancies continue to decrease and commercial rents continue to increase. Clearly, restaurants and bars, now occupying 31% of all retail spaces, continue to proliferate as the number of local resident-serving businesses such as hardware stores, shoe stores and the like continue to decline. We've heard many complaints about the proliferation of restaurants and the loss of neighborhood serving businesses. Others say that it's the inevitable result of internet shopping and competition with big box retail stores. Proponents of new restaurants and bars say that no business can survive in North Beach today without revenue from alcohol sales to pay the rents. If this is so, are the commercial rents narrowing the odds of balancing the mix between neighborhood-serving stores and restaurants and bars?

Are the current zoning controls in the NBNCD working to maintain a healthy balance as they were originally designed to do or should they be updated?

Legislation championed by THD to ban chain stores achieved its goals to maintain the unique nature of the business environment. Amendments

Commercial District Controls At 20 *continued from previous page*

supported by THD halted the flood of banks and downtown businesses into North Beach and successfully stemmed the loss of small storefronts from large unit mergers to maintain the small-scale storefronts that characterize North Beach. Should THD push for additional controls to limit new bars and restaurants in order to maintain the current mix of businesses as other neighborhoods including the Mission and Haight have done? Should we work to encourage more small-scale resident-serving businesses to locate in the commercial district?

It's important that we hear what you have to say. Each of THD's efforts to make the Planning Code more effective and relevant has required a lot of community support. Your input will help guide how we

will proceed and what our neighborhood will look like. Please take a moment and weigh in by emailing your comments to planningandzoning@thd.org making sure to put "NBNCD" in the subject line.

The authors wish to offer a special thanks to Jeanne Milligan for her help in the re-survey efforts. ✦

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continued from page 9

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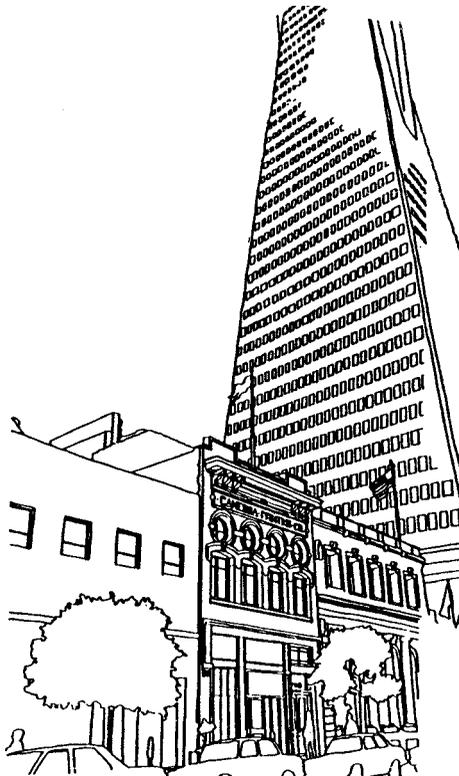
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Gather a few friends, hippie or not, and join City Guides' treasure hunt, to prowling the gardens, streets and alleyways of the Haight-Ashbury, chasing down clues about those heady days of the Summer of Love. If you weren't there 40 years ago, put some flowers in your hair and pretend you were.

You don't need to be a history buff to solve a series of street puzzles leading you to the places, spaces and objects that shaped the Haight. You'll meet some characters from the recent and early past of the neighborhood. You'll retrace the steps of the Grateful Dead, and discover how Golden Gate Park was transformed from sand dunes to a hippie hangout.

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The Summer of Love is the fifth City Guides



treasure hunt, raising funds to support the group that provides free walking tours of the city year-round, including tours of North Beach and Telegraph Hill.

Prizes are awarded for the team that comes in first with the most correct answers, and for the best team name. (If you don't have a team, City Guides will assign you to one.) For the details, check www.sfcityguides.org.

City Guides Summer of Love Treasure Hunt Sept. 30, 11 a.m.—5:30 p.m., Kezar Pavilion, 755 Stanyan St.

\$40 per person, tax deductible (\$45

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Check www.sfcityguides.org for complete schedule
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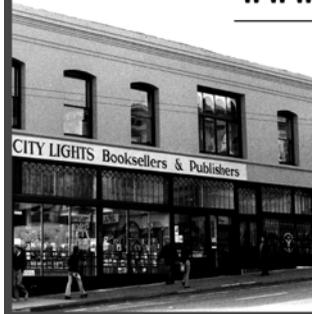
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THD COMMITTEES NEED YOU

You can make a difference! Join one of THD's committees, meet and work with your fellow Hill Dwellers to improve life on the Hill.

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PLANNING AND ZONING. Nancy Shanahan, 986-7094, Mary Lipian, 391-5652. Monitors and reviews proposed development projects for consistency with applicable City ordinances. Works with Planning Department staff and represents THD before the Landmarks Board, Planning Commission, Zoning Administrator and other regulating bodies to protect historic resources and maintain neighborhood character. Assists members to learn more about and participate in planning and zoning issues.

SEMAPHORE. Editor, Art Peterson 956-7817; artpeterson@writingproject.org. The editor and staff produce a quarterly magazine for THD members.

PROGRAM. Arranges social events, including quarterly membership meetings and get-acquainted social functions.

BUDGET. Greg Chiampou, gchiampou@sbcglobal.net. As prescribed in bylaws for Treasurer.

MEMBERSHIP. Pat Lusse, membership@thd.org. As prescribed in Bylaws for Financial Secretary.

ARCHIVIST: Rozell Overmire, rozell@ureach.com

SPECIAL COMMITTEES AND PROJECTS

PARKS AND TREES. Information and projects concerning local parks, green spaces and street trees.

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT. Audrey Tomaselli, 391-1792; tmsli@sonic.net. Rozell Overmire, 989-3545, rozell@ureach.com. Taped interviews provide historical documentation of living and working in the neighborhood.

THD WEB SITE. Webmaster, Al Fontes, 433-6515; webmaster@thd.org. Shared information about meetings, local concerns and events.

LIAISONS WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

COALITION FOR SAN FRANCISCO NEIGHBORHOODS. Representative, Gerry Crowley, 781-4201; gerrycrowley@aol.com. City-wide organization interacts with other neighborhoods to discuss common problems.

NORTH BEACH NEIGHBORHOOD COALITION. Representative, Gerry Crowley, 781-4201; gerrycrowley@aol.com. Tel-Hi-sponsored group of residents, merchants and government agencies working together to address neighborhood issues.

N.E.R.T. Jack Oswald, jack@oswald.com. Energizes members to take emergency disaster response training program sponsored by the City.

WEB SITE = www.thd.org

Whether you want to catch up on THD's Oral Histories, see what the THD is up to, or submit old photos of the Hill, www.thd.org is the place to go. Use the Web site to discover or email information about upcoming meetings in the neighborhood and at City agencies, and ideas and concerns you want the rest of us to know about between *Semaphores*.

THD CALENDAR

SCHEDULES OF COMMITTEE

MEETINGS

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Look to the THD website for information on THD events.

Log on to <http://www.thd.org>

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