



# San Francisco Tomorrow

*Since 1970, Working to Protect the Urban Environment*

**Issue 370**

Will you want to live in San Francisco... Tomorrow?

**Oct / Nov 2015**

## **We Still Care about the Waterfront**

At a recent meeting of SFT's Waterfront Committee, Byron Rhett and Diane Oshima, Director and Assistant Director for Waterfront Planning for the Port of San Francisco, summarized the history of the Waterfront Land Use Plan and talked about the Port's intention to revise the plan to reflect new issues and changed conditions since the Plan was first approved by the Port Commission in 1997. Over the summer, the Port advertised for applicants to serve on a new Waterfront Plan working group. A 30-member group has been formed, representing various interest areas in all 11 city districts, with specific neighborhood planning efforts in the northeast quadrant and the southern reaches of the Bayfront as well as regional interests. In addition, 7 advisory teams will focus on specific issues as requested by the working group. The update will continue through 2016.

Many of the Port's successes since 1997 have been due, not to the Plan itself, but to efforts to address gaps in the original plan. SFT participated in years of negotiations that resulted in the addition of an urban design and public access element to the Plan, the adoption of a Special Area Plan by the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) to guide pier removal and renovation, and the establishment of the Embarcadero Historic District.

Successful developments have occurred at the Ferry Building, Piers 1 1/2, 3, 5 and 15 and have activated the Embarcadero, which now forms the most heavily used open space on the east side of the City. A Pier 70 historic district has been established, and renovation of the historic buildings on 20th Street and the development of Crane Cove Park are underway. Less successful development proposals should also inform the process, including the Malrite museum at Pier 45, the Pier 27-29 shopping mall, and repeated attempts to develop the oversized and crumbling Piers 30-32.

What needs to be considered in the plan update? Some suggestions at our meeting included:

Sea-level rise. The Port is especially vulnerable, yet this issue was not addressed in the original plan. The Port is convening have an interagency co-ordination team, since there are so many agencies with shared jurisdiction and responsibility to

prepare the city's perimeter for massive intrusion of sea water. Resilience is the key new buzzword; it means we must be ready.

Traffic. This is a severely limiting factor in the reuse or development - including maritime uses - of Port properties along the Embarcadero. Can the City figure out how to reduce cars and create functional transit options in the northeast quadrant of the City?

Maritime and industrial uses. The Port has a clear mandate to maintain and enhance its maritime role. In the past 20 years, that has been less about cargo and more about transportation, as ferry service on the Bay has exploded. But the Port now also has some of the last industrial space in the City. What role should the Port play in ensuring that the City has sufficient space for light industrial uses?

Money. The Port owns hundreds of acres of land covered with historic or just old buildings. Its 10-year Capital plan identifies roughly \$2 billion in needed maintenance, restoration and seismic upgrades, but identifies funding sources for less than half that amount. The City and the Port have worked together successfully to fund open space improvements on Port property. Can that cooperation be extended to other Port needs?

What is your priority for the Waterfront Plan update? Get on the Port's mailing list and participate in the process (<http://tinyurl.com/orgz169>). And join the discussion at SFT's quarterly waterfront meetings.

-- Mary Anne Miller, Jennifer Clary

## **It's Coming!**

Wed., Dec 9, 5:30 p.m. SFT Holiday Party - join the familiar gang, as well as some new friends! Good food, lots of politicos. Just fill out and mail in the response card on page 3.

## Appeal to Board of Supervisors on Parkmerced

In August of 2014, the First District Court of Appeals issued its decision in favor of Parkmerced development interests in the case of San Francisco Tomorrow et al vs. the City and County of San Francisco et al.. When the project, which currently houses about 8,000 residents, is completed in 2040, an additional 14,000 people will be living in the 152-acre neighborhood, in tower after tower, rather than garden apartments. Parkmerced, already one of the densest developments in San Francisco, will soon become even more crowded.

### Notices and Maps

On September 29, 2015 the Board of Supervisors heard an appeal of project maps felt to have been wrongly approved by the Department of Public Works because of numerous errors, anomalies and omissions. The maps were to delineate the planned scope of construction in the future development of Parkmerced. It was hoped that bringing these irregularities to the Board would result in their correction and make the construction process more transparent and harmonious.

### Violations of Due Process

The appeal noted numerous violations of due process for tenants who live in Parkmerced. For example, on certain projects, no public hearings were held and individuals were not provided the required ten days to appeal the notice of approval. Another issue, as noted above, was regarding inconsistencies between notices and project maps sent to residents. When the maps were received, they were confusing or had blatant discrepancies and numerous typographical errors; many notices did not even include maps at all. These errors in themselves should require re-noticing.

### Ownership and Tax Liability

There were also questions regarding the ownership of the Parkmerced units. On one day alone (11-10-14), three deeds of ownership of the same piece of property were transferred several times within minutes. This behavior needed to be explained by the ownership. With ownership of property being unclear, taxes owned by Parkmerced management are difficult to determine and are confusing at best. Over \$800,000 in taxes are due the City that are unpaid by property owners in Parkmerced. Week after week and month after month, who is responsible for these taxes is unclear because of a failure of the Tax Record Department. Should any accidents happen, ownership of property is especially important to determine liability to the injured.

After listening to the presentation, the Board of Supervisors ruled against the appeal and in favor of proceeding at full speed with the Parkmerced development.

-- Glenn Rogers

## SFT Drought Panel

On October 6, San Francisco Tomorrow and the Potrero Hill Democratic Club hosted an informational panel on the drought and its Bay Area ramifications. The discussion was moderated by PHDC's Loretta Lynch, former CPUC president, and panelists included Jennifer Clary, Water Program Manager of Clean Water Action; Barry Nelson, BCDC Commissioner and Principal of Western Water Strategies; and Food and Water Watch California Director Adam Scow.

The bad news is that with climate change accelerating, our drought issues can only get worse. We are not in a four-year drought, as is often said; we are in the 15th year of an extended dry spell, and the worldwide tendency is overwhelmingly toward drier conditions. Experts also agree that in the future, California's normal alternation between wetter years and drier years will become exaggerated, with more of the precipitation coming as quick-to-run-off floods and downpours, and less remaining as snow and groundwater.

Water rights are vastly oversubscribed in California. There has been no control at all over the use of groundwater, which is considered private property. The beast in the room is agriculture, which uses 80% of the state's water - every year they pump as much out of the ground as is used by the rest of the state in total. The overuse of surface water by agriculture is the primary factor driving many fish and wildfowl towards extinction.

The good news is that our water issues can be solved, and fairly easily; as environmentalist Dorothy Green wrote, California has a water management problem, not a water supply problem. It's only the politics that present difficulty, particularly since so many of our officeholders are controlled by deep-pocketed agricultural interests. If there is a positive side to a drought, though, it's that it tends to induce people to act right away on things that have been stalled for a long time; thus in 2014 a water bond was passed, and for the first time ever, the state began the process of regulating groundwater. The most important thing going forward is for citizens to make water a serious political issue; for instance, by pressing candidates on it during interviews and public appearances.

In San Francisco, the good news is that we use only about a quarter of the state average. The bad news is that cheap water from the Tuolumne has left little incentive for recycling or other measures, which will become essential as shortages mount. The city is just beginning to recycle water for Golden Gate Park, and additional projects are at least on the drawing board.

You can read more about the discussion, and watch the video, on our website.

-- Jeff Whittington

## Saving Chinatown from... Whom?

For those who haven't heard, the Sam Wo restaurant reopened October 21st on the south side of Portsmouth Square. The force responsible is Steven Lee, a community-minded small businessman and entertainment promoter who received a phone call from the Rev. Norman Fong, head of the Chinatown Community Development Center, with the challenge, "Hey Steven, do you want to try to save Sam Wo?" Well, he's done it, with the help of other community-minded investors.

At the long-awaited reopening press conference, Lee introduced the Ho family, who had thought all was lost after the Department of Public Health closed Sam Wo's historic doors in the narrow alley space on Washington above Grant, where Mr. Ho had fed diners all day and into the wee hours (3 am) for over 30 years. His has not been the only Chinatown restaurant to suffer the fate of closure by the health department due to the aging buildings in Chinatown.

But of course, age is not the only hazard the neighborhood faces. The next speaker was Gordon Chin, recently retired director of CCDC, whose book *Building Community Chinatown Style* chronicles half a century of community activism to preserve Chinatown's character in the face of a host of economic and demographic threats. After joking that he would work the 9 pm to 4 am night shift at Sam Wo, Chin pointed to the Empress' icon building as the next endangered community icon.

A photo in the Oct 22-28 SF Weekly shows Chin holding up marketing materials for a project at the recently-shuttered (due itself to uncertainty about the building's future) Empress' former home, 838 Grant, that portray its conversion to high-tech office space. The purported buyer is none other than Richard Blum's international real estate behemoth, CBRE. Another high-rise commercial office building has already begun construction at the corner of Pine and Kearny. The big dollar players appear to be coming for the neighborhood.

Like community groups in the Mission and other neighborhoods, CCDC, the Chinatown Progressive Association, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, and kindred organizations have been worried about the encroachment of "tech" for some time. "If tech offices invade Chinatown buildings, there is no way our community-serving merchants can compete with them on rent," Chinese Chamber President Eddie Au said recently. "We will be driven out of Chinatown." The groups have responded by forming a coalition with Supervisors Campos and Yee to fight the incursion using a strict interpretation of zoning laws.

Unfortunately, this broad net may be sweeping up more than its intended catch. When three local women opened a coworking space called 1920C at 950 Grant earlier this year, CCDC tried to make an example of them for committing the kind of zoning violation they plan to use to keep "big tech" out, holding a scathing press conference and threatening legal action. "That model, if it takes off, will be devastating" said Planning Commissioner and CCDC

Deputy Director Cindy Wu at the time.

But 1920C cofounder Jenny Chan, a onetime CCDC volunteer herself, protests that targeting her company is absurdly wide of the mark. "We're a small business, not a corporation at all," she says, likening her coworking space to similar ones that have existed in the Empress' building for many years. Moreover, "We're not a tech company by any means."

Further action has been delayed until the results of the Nov 3 election are known. Does this represent a slippery slope or a call to new thinking about a community plan for Chinatown?

-- Lotus Fong, Jeff Whittington

### Wayne Roderick Lectures @ EBRPD

Nov. 14: Flora of the Western Cape, South Africa.

Ted Kipping.

Nov. 21: From Parking Lot to Paradise - A Wild

Garden in the Heart of Los Angeles. Carol Bornstein.

Nov. 28: Fall Color in the Klamath Mountains. Glenn Keator.

### RESPONSE CARD

San Francisco Tomorrow's December 9, 2015  
Holiday Party

Yes! I would like to support San Francisco  
Tomorrow

Please list me as a \_\_\_ Sponsor (\$60)  
\_\_\_ Patron (\$100) \_\_\_ Guardian (\$250)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Names of Attendees (if available):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I cannot sponsor, but enclosed is my payment  
for \_\_\_ entries @ \$35 each

Responses received by November 16th will be  
acknowledged in the invitation

Send checks to SFT, 351 Guerrero SF 94103  
or call (415) 585-9489

Your contribution will also be counted as your  
2016 membership dues

## A Word from SFPUC

### Rainwater Harvesting Program Opens

Collecting rain for reuse dates back to the third century BC. Rainwater harvesting is growing in popularity as people look for ways to use water resources more wisely. Though we are currently in a drought, we still expect rain this winter. Don't let that rainwater go to waste! We want to help you harvest it. Our FREE Residential Rain Barrel Program is now back in place. Find out how to start saving our most precious resource today:  
<http://tinyurl.com/oqco59l>



### Cleaner Energy for 2016

Starting in 2016, different parts of San Francisco will begin receiving SFPUC's CleanPowerSF Green product (cleaner energy at or below current rates). PG&E continues to maintain the power grid, troubleshoot outages, and send you a monthly bill; but you begin receiving cleaner energy for no more than you currently pay. CleanPowerSF will also offer SuperGreen - 100% renewable energy - for a slight premium. Learn more and enroll early: <http://tinyurl.com/q6cega5>

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